



Irish Pet Advertising Advisory Group

Puppy Fun and Games – Week 4

The Science

In Week 4 the puppy is starting to develop his play behaviour, and also, if given the chance, his problems-solving behaviour. It is also a good time for him to begin to learn how to deal with the inevitable frustrations in life.

In this week, the puppy needs some challenges – things to carry, pull, climb on, move around, tug with his littermates etc. This helps develop strength, coordination, agility – and sharing. Puppies deprived of this can grow up to be poor learners – or certainly slower than they would be otherwise. They also can grow up unable to deal with frustration – which can result in serious behaviour or temperament problems.

It is easy to get concerned if the mother now seems a bit rough at times – maybe walking off when they are trying to suckle, or growls at them or even stands on them but it is important that you are not over-protective, as this is also teaching the puppies how to cope with frustration and learn to overcome it.

This is also the week to start to spend more time with each puppy individually – slowly increasing the time they spend away from their littermates and their mother. This will help to prevent separation problems, will develop independence and will encourage bonding with humans.

Once again, some breeds or types may not have reached this stage yet, but it is important to provide these things so they can interact with them and learn from them, when they are ready.

Suggested Tasks

1. Introduce more different surfaces into the puppy pen. Vet bed, crunched up newspaper, carpet (you can get off-cuts or samples from your local carpet shop), lino, rubber mat – anything and everything you can think of that is safe and will give the puppies lots of different tactile sensations.
2. Add things that the puppies can begin to experiment with - tug toys, Kongs, tunnels, upside down cardboard boxes with holes cut out, large

pieces of sheepskin, handle-less bucket or basin on its side, bits of blanket tied at one end to the pen, a bundled up blanket that they have to clamber over... Anything that is safe – and always under your supervision.

3. Take each puppy out of the pen and spend progressively longer time with him away from his littermates – up to 10 minutes. During these times, go through the tasks for Week 3. Don't do them all every time – just one or two each time. Make sure the puppy has some relaxing time too. Continue getting the puppies used to being handled – including ears, mouth, feet etc. Use tiny but tasty treats as soon as weaning begins, to ensure that he associates being handled with positive experiences.
4. Begin to teach each puppy to get used to being gently restrained. Kneel on the floor with him between your open legs with your hands linked in front of his chest. Hold him gently for 3 seconds and then let him go (as long as he is calm and not wriggling!). Build up very slowly to 30 seconds, with plenty of reward, so he gets used to dealing with the potential frustration of being restrained.
5. As much as possible, start to move the puppies as a litter around the house to different rooms with different noises, surfaces, activity levels (this should include the garden or patio if it is summer – but always under supervision to avoid any accidents).



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