

# CRITICAL PERIODS IN A DOG'S LIFE

## DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

### **0 to 7 Weeks**

#### **Neonatal, Transition, Awareness, and Canine Socialization**

Puppy is with mother and littermates. During this period, puppy learns about social interaction, play, and inhibiting aggression from mother and littermates. Puppy learns to use species specific behaviors that make him a dog. Practices body postures, facial expressions, and vocalizations and learns their effects on siblings. Plays chase games to learn coordination and timing, greeting behaviors to learn body postures and fight games teach him use of his body. Learns to accept discipline during this time from his mother. Learns bite inhibitions and weaning. Mother dogs set up the puppies for these lessons. (Very important to let mother dog stay with pups to teach these lessons.) Puppies must stay with their mother and littermates during this critical period. Puppies learn the most important lesson in their lives - they learn to accept discipline.

### **7 to 12 Weeks**

#### **Human Socialization Period**

The puppy now has the brain waves of an adult dog, but his attention span is short. This period is when the most rapid learning occurs. Learning at this age is permanent so this is a perfect time to start training. Also, this is the ideal time to introduce the puppy to things that will play an important part in his life. Introduce the puppy to different people, places, animals, and sounds in a positive, non-threatening way.

### **8 to 11 Weeks**

#### **Fear Imprint Period**

Avoid frightening the puppy during this period. Any traumatic, frightening or painful experience will have a more lasting effect on the puppy than if it occurred at any other time in its life. Avoid any elective surgery at this time.

## **13 to 16 Weeks**

### **Seniority Classification Period or**

#### **The Age of Cutting**

Puppy cuts teeth and apron strings! Puppy begins testing who is going to be pack leader. From 13 weeks on, if puppy attempts to bite, even in play, it is an attempt to dominate. You must discourage any and all biting because such biting is a sign of dominance! (\*Note: A quick pinch of the puppy's lip while staring him in the eye and hollering in his face works well in most puppies.) Pup is attempting to clarify and resolve the question of leadership. (Establishing rules for pup extremely important at this time.) It is important that you are a strong and consistent leader. Formal training must begin. Such training will help you establish your leadership.

## **4 to 8 Months**

### **Play Instinct Period**

#### **Flight Instinct Period**

Puppy may wander and ignore you. It is very important that you keep the puppy on a leash at this time! The way that you handle the puppy at this time determines if the puppy will come to you when called. At about 4-1/2 months, the puppy loses his milk teeth and gets his adult teeth. That's when puppy begins serious chewing! A dog's teeth don't set in his jaw until between 6 and 10 months. During this time, the puppy has a physical need to exercise his mouth by chewing.

## **6 to 14 Months**

### **Second Fear Imprint Period or**

#### **Fear of New Situations Period**

Dog again shows fear of new situations and even familiar situations. Dog may be reluctant to approach someone or something new. It is important that you are patient and act very matter-of-fact in these situations. Never force the dog to face the situation. DO NOT pet the frightened puppy or talk in soothing tones. The puppy will interpret such responses as praise for being frightened. Training will help improve the dog's confidence. Use treats and positive methods to coach dog at this time. Any training classes began at this age needs to be fun and non-stressful for the dog.

## **1 to 4 Years**

### **Maturity Period**

You may encounter increased aggression and renewed testing for dominance. Continue to train your dog during this period. Neuter or spay now.