

Raised Right



by Kim Russell

Puppies can bring endless joy and new life to the home of a family who has been eagerly awaiting his arrival. They have done their research, chosen the right breed for them, contacted breeders to learn more, they have learned how to feed, care for and train their new wiggling, licking, chewing, pooping, peeing, whining, nipping, barking bundle of love with four legs and fur. You, as the breeder have chosen this family just as much as they have chosen you and your breed. A bond will be formed between you and that family through this puppy. As the breeder, what have you done to ensure that the puppy you are entrusting them with has a solid foundation and understanding of life and how to maneuver his way through the strange human world around him?

Being a breeder is challenging at the best of times but giving our pups the best possible start in life should always be our first priority. Beyond the basics of ensuring healthy, stable parents, proper health care and a wholesome diet, we need to supply our puppies with **experiences** before they leave our homes that will give them the foundations, skills and confidence to navigate the world that is now laid out in front of them.

I like to believe that a well-bred dog with good, strong genetics doesn't need a lot of "help" to be a welcome member of society. Confidence, resiliency, social and environmental soundness are all traits that can be passed along through a pup's parents, as can the opposite, but of course, as good breeders, we are not breeding from such stock. Now that we have a litter

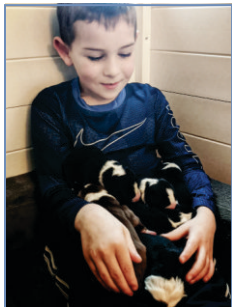
of puppies with the genetics to support them, we need to provide an upbringing that will give them the chance to flourish. By providing them with various experiences that challenge them before they leave our home, we give them the chance to process things that may at first be scary, surprising or exciting while still having the support system of their dam, litter mates and their breeder to encourage and teach them that all will be OK, thereby creating a lasting resiliency.

Our social expectations of dogs are ever increasing and as our dogs are part of our day to day life we need them to be stable in many different situations. So what EXACTLY can you do to lay some foundations and help them be outstanding ambassadors for *your* breed? It all starts at home!

Potty training starts as soon as puppies' eyes and ears are open and they are able to move around their whelping pen. My set up allows me to create a large area (approximately 2ft x 6ft that I fill with pine pellet horse bedding). This quickly becomes the target area for puppies to do their business and sets a very solid foundation of them being clean and knowing where to potty and where not. This transfers very easily to grass or stone areas once the puppies have gone into their new homes. Owners really appreciate this skill!

Allowing visitors while pups are young may seem like a risk but the benefits are very much worth it in my honest opinion as long as obvious precautions are taken.

My young son has grown up in my whelping boxes, helping to raise pups and that has ingrained a love of



children into my pups that shines through long after they have left here... it might be worth borrowing some children from time to time while you have puppies. 😊 Men, women, people with hats, a limp, in a wheelchair, deep voices all make an impact on a puppy's brain and

how they will interact in the future when meeting new people.



As your puppies are growing and learning how to use their legs and bodies it is wise to supply them with **different surfaces** such as carpet, turf, wet grass, dirt,



hard surface flooring, tarps, a kiddie pool full of plastic balls, uneven/off balance surfaces such as wobble boards to name a few. A solid sense of body awareness will allow your puppies to confidently conquer the never ending places their paws will carry them over their lifetime!

Field trips! Who doesn't love a field trip!? I know it may sound like a lot of work to load multiple puppies into your vehicle and transport them to different places only to unload them and then spend your time wrangling them while they all take off in 13 different directions...but the enrichment and exposure to different environments during those impressionable first few months will carry them through life on in so many ways. I like to make friends with teachers, librarians, owners of grooming salons, training centers and of course my vet office so that my pups can visit multiple people as well as visit a new place all while getting nothing but a positive experience. Just the journey in the car to get to and from each place is making a great impression and teach pups to be good travelers. Other ideas are The Home Depot,

various pet stores, Tractor Supply Company, patios or coffee shops (might be a one puppy at a time trip) or even just a friend or neighbors backyard. The options are endless and the experiences are priceless.

Something else I like my pups to know about are what I call **Real Life: "get over it this how things are" Situations.** Being handled by you, your vet, groomer, boarding facility, dog walker needs to come easy to a dog in life or it makes for a stressful situation for all involved. Get VERY hands on with your puppies...even if it makes them uncomfortable for a short time. Once they realize that whatever is happening will not 'hurt them' they will accept what you're doing and settle. Teaching a puppy to calmly accept handling such as nail trims, bathing, brushing, looking in ears/mouth/eyes, laying on their side so you can look at their feet or belly when they are tiny is FAR easier than when they are bigger, stronger and more determined teenagers!

Crate Training and accepting confinement and separation from you or your family is also a vital part of a puppy rearing. All too many times puppies go home never knowing what it's like to be away from their siblings which in itself is that much more traumatic when it happens away from the only place they have known. Do yourself and your puppy owners a favor and teach your puppies to be ok with this. Take a few minutes for each pup each day once and feed them a meal in a crate, give them a chewy that will keep them busy but also drive home the point that good things happen in that crate.

The skills that puppies are able to learn before leaving a breeder's home are seemingly endless but I think I've covered some of the most important points and all of these can be applied to or modified to work for any breed!

I did the thing!

