

The New Arrival

by Carol Gannaway

You are about to bring home a new member of your family, an eight to ten week old puppy, are you ready? Or is this the scene at your house you haven't slept in a week, your hands are shredded from sharp teeth, your legs scratched from razor-like toenails, and you doubt your carpets will ever be the same. I am going to share with you some ideas of how to successfully welcome this four-legged stranger into your home. It is amazing how a creature so small and cute can turn a household into complete turmoil!

You want to do everything correctly, but there is so much to think about, introductions to the rest of the family, housebreaking, sleeping through the night, playing, and training. It is up to the new family to create the most positive environment possible. With some planning and realizing a puppy is a lot of work you can be prepared for the little rascal and help him grow into the happy, healthy adult dog you envision.

A good place to start is to select a veterinarian. There is nothing like word-of-mouth so talk to your dog owning friends. You will want to take your pup in for a check-up shortly after you get him so I would do a "meet and greet" with the veterinarian you are choosing before you get your puppy. To do this, call and set up an appointment to meet the veterinarian explaining your situation. While making the appointment pay attention to these details:

- Do you have to wait days for the appointment?
- Is the receptionist friendly?
- Once at the office look around; is the area clean?
- Were you able to see the veterinarian on schedule or were you kept waiting?
- How does this veterinarian handle after-hours emergencies?

There are also some things to do around the home front to get ready. You should first puppy-proof your house and yard, concentrating on the area of confinement you plan to use, such as your kitchen, laundry room, or bathroom. You will want to use baby gates to keep the puppy confined to whatever room you choose. Try to avoid closing the puppy in a room with a door as that may cause feelings of isolation, and most certainly, damage to the door when scratching commences.

Electric outlets should be covered, electrical cords kept out of reach, areas where your puppy could get stuck blocked off, and items that are begging to be chewed should be moved out of harm's way. Get down low and look around from the puppy's point of view. You are going to try and not miss anything, but don't be surprised if you do.

In your area of confinement you'll want to put a crate for your baby to rest in and a place for you to put him when you can't keep an eye on him. A crate is an airline-type kennel used in the home to keep puppies safe. They are a wonderful tool in the housebreaking process and can help you all survive the chewing phases a normal puppy needs to go through. The crate will become like

den and is a cozy place for a puppy to call home. To help the crate seem inviting during your puppy's first few hours at home toss treats into the crate often, praising the pup when inside. You might put his toys in the crate leaving the door open for easy access. This is one investment not to overlook in your puppy purchases; you will be thankful for the entire life of your puppy that you crate trained him.

As previously mentioned a crate is a wonderful tool, but there are some rules for its proper use:

1. Never use the crate for punishment, although it is helpful as a time-out area if you put the puppy in the crate matter-of-factly.
2. The crate you purchase should be large enough for your puppy to lay in comfortably as an adult.
3. A young puppy should not be closed in the crate for more than an hour at a time. If you need to be gone longer than this, use your area of confinement with the crate in that area and the door open or off.