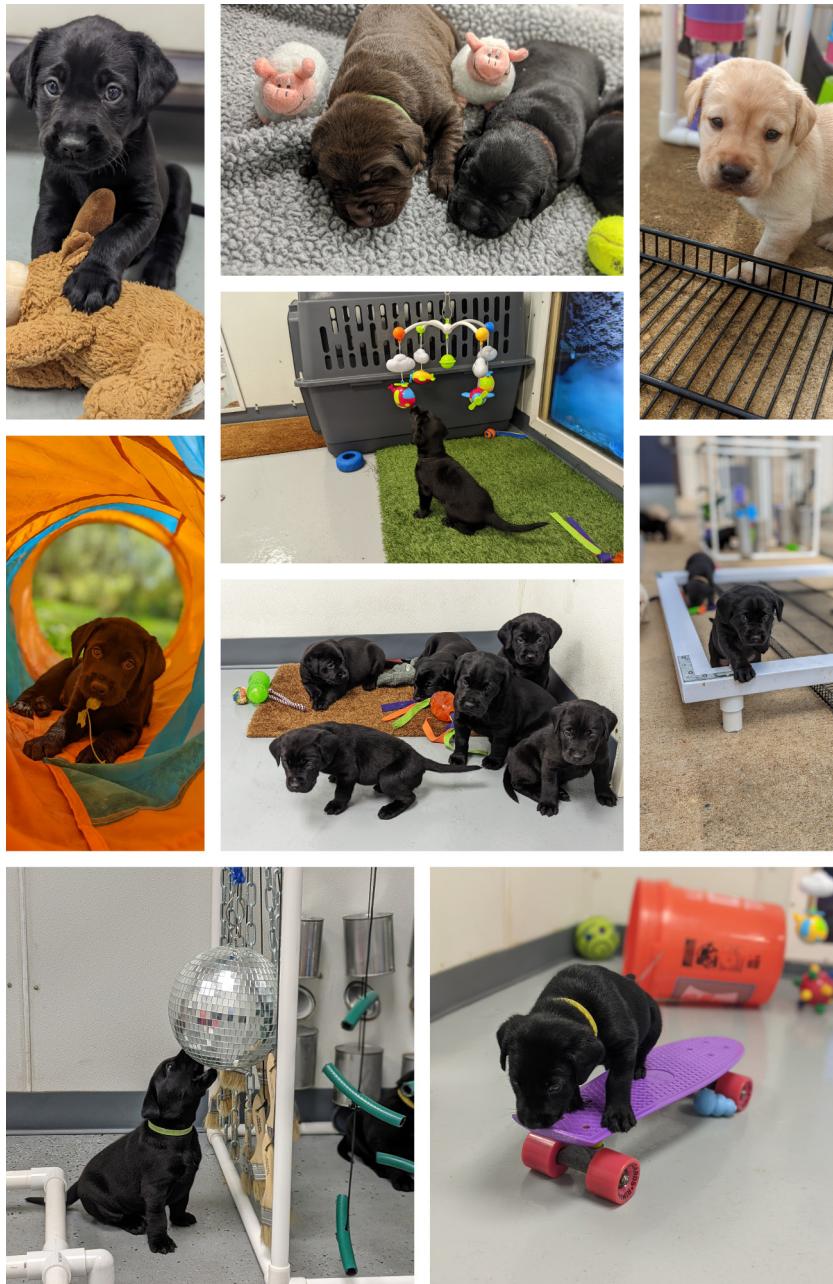


Early Puppy Socialization Manual

Canine Performance Sciences



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What Is Early Socialization?

Early socialization is a key stage in a puppy's life that takes place between birth and 16 weeks of age. During this critical time, puppies are first exposed to new people, animals, environments, and experiences in a safe and positive way. This period is essential for shaping how they will continue to respond to the world around them as they grow.

By introducing puppies to a variety of sights, sounds, surfaces, and objects, early socialization helps them develop confidence and adaptability. It teaches them how to stay calm and comfortable in different situations, like meeting strangers, hearing loud noises, or walking on new surfaces. This foundation is important because it reduces fear and builds trust, helping puppies grow into well-behaved and emotionally balanced adult dogs.

The goal of early socialization is to prepare puppies for the challenges they may face later in life. For working dogs, this means getting used to the variety of environments they will encounter, such as crowded streets, busy offices, or quiet homes. The experiences they have during this time set the stage for a lifetime of success, allowing them to confidently support and assist the people who will depend on them.

In short, early socialization gives puppies the tools they need to thrive. Socialization sets puppies up for success with people, other dogs and animals, and in new spaces. It's a small investment of time that creates lasting benefits, helping puppies grow into happy, well-adjusted dogs that are ready to make a difference in the world.

Why Is Early Socialization Important?

Early socialization takes just a little time each day, but it gives puppies lifelong benefits, helping them get ready for their important roles as working dogs. This process introduces puppies to different sounds, surfaces, objects, and environments in a safe and positive way. It helps them grow more confident and become better prepared to handle stressors they might face in the real world.

Socialization also helps trainers spot any behaviors that might need extra attention before they become a problem. By giving these puppies their best start, trainers can help them grow into well-behaved and successful working dogs. This doesn't just benefit the dogs—it ensures they're ready to perform the job they were born to do.

In short, early socialization is a key step in helping puppies succeed. It builds trust and confidence, prepares them to go boldly into the world.



What Does Early Socialization Include?

When starting an early socialization program for puppies, many items commonly found in the home can be used. These items are grouped into specific categories, including:

Sounds: Frequent and varied sound exposure helps puppies become comfortable with different auditory experiences. This might include the radio, television, metal measuring cups, or pebbles inside plastic containers or tin cans.

Surfaces: Gradually introducing puppies to diverse textures helps them navigate different environments with ease. Examples include metal cookie trays, textured rugs or mats, and old tires.

Novel objects: Exposure to new items helps puppies build curiosity and adaptability. Items might include things such as statues, dolls or action figures, shiny objects, etc. to expose puppies to new and unfamiliar sights.

Animated objects: Exposing puppies to moving objects early helps puppies feel secure with motion and objects in the environment that may suddenly move or appear quickly. This includes items like round snow saucers, vacuums, and skateboards.

Within each of these categories, gradual, consistent exposure is key, with a focus on making every experience safe and positive.

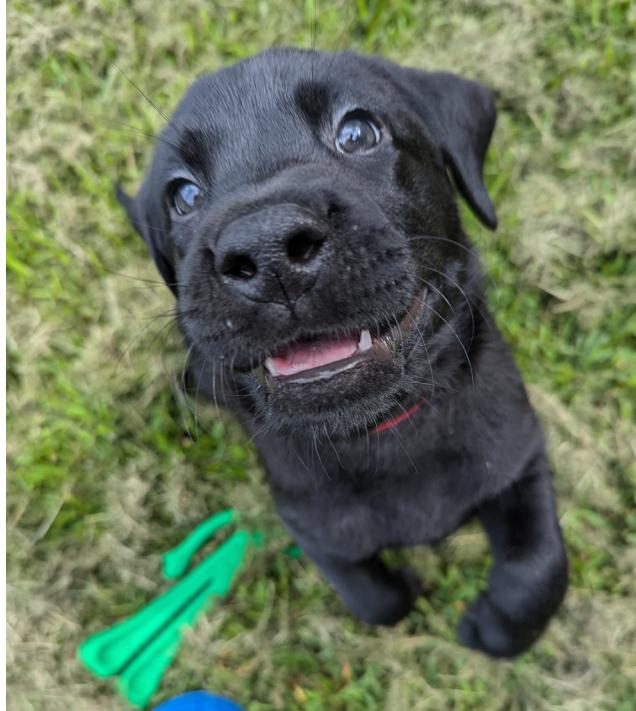
It's also vital to expose puppies to humans of all ages, genders, and appearances to familiarize them with different people. All socialization efforts should be controlled and tailored to avoid overwhelming the puppies, ensuring they associate these experiences with positive outcomes.

Identification of fear reactions within a puppy at an early age allows trainers to address these behaviors before they become a problem and ensures puppies grow into well-adjusted and capable working dogs.



Stages of Early Puppy Development

Puppies develop rapidly during early life. The first few weeks after birth are marked by significant changes in sensory and physical capabilities. Behavioral development also begins as puppies experience new things and acquire new abilities. The purpose of Canine Performance Science's Early Puppy Development program is to target these new abilities and physical developments as they emerge in order to help puppies develop into confident adult dogs.



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Neonatal Period (Birth - 2 Weeks)

Development

During the Neonatal period puppies are completely dependent on the dam for care. They will spend 90% of the day sleeping. During this period, the puppies' eyes and ears are closed, meaning that they cannot see or hear. Rather, this period is marked by rapid physical growth; by day 10, puppies will typically have doubled their bodyweight.

Training

Beginning on day 3 after birth, start gently handling the puppies. Hold them for brief periods of time and give them a daily physical exam in your lap, away from the litter. Keep these sessions brief, 30-60 seconds per puppy.

While puppies are next to the litter, begin tactile stimulation. Gently stroke the puppy with rubber gloves, a towel, and a soft toothbrush. Note if the puppy shows signs of stress such as crying or recoiling. Beginning in week 2, gently rustle a plastic and/or paper bag near the puppy to see if the puppy's ears have opened.

Highlights

Development: Rapid physical growth

Training: Begin handling and tactile stimulation

Husbandry: Puppies will remain with the dam for the majority of the day. Dewclaws will be removed on day 3. Continue checking dewclaw removal site for healing through day 15.

Husbandry

During this time, puppies will stay with their mother for the majority of the day. During cleaning, puppies should be placed in a tote with blankets and warm water bottles. Puppies will have their dewclaws removed on day 3. Be sure to complete training prior to dew claw removal. Each day following dewclaw removal, continuing through day 15, check the dewclaw removal site to ensure healthy healing.



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Transitional Period (2-3 Weeks)

Development

During the transitional period, puppies begin to become more mobile. The puppies will learn to stand and crawl forwards and backwards. Their eyes and ears will open during this period and the startle response appears. Puppies will begin to show interest in their littermates during this stage and the teeth will begin to emerge.

Training

Continue tactile stimulation and handling through the end of week 2. At the start of week 3, most puppies will have open eyes and ears. At this point, begin individual training activities in the playroom. Place a black rubber mat in front of the TV and place the puppy on the mat. Begin introducing the puppy to a variety of mild acoustic (e.g. a mobile ringer on low volume, the TV on low volume) and visual stimuli (e.g. hanging items in playroom). Encourage the puppy to move over the rubber matting to help further develop leg and core strength. All puppies should also receive a daily, brief physical examination on the treatment table in the treatment room. Examine the puppy's eyes, ears, nose, mouth, feet, etc. to help the puppy get used to being handled.

Husbandry

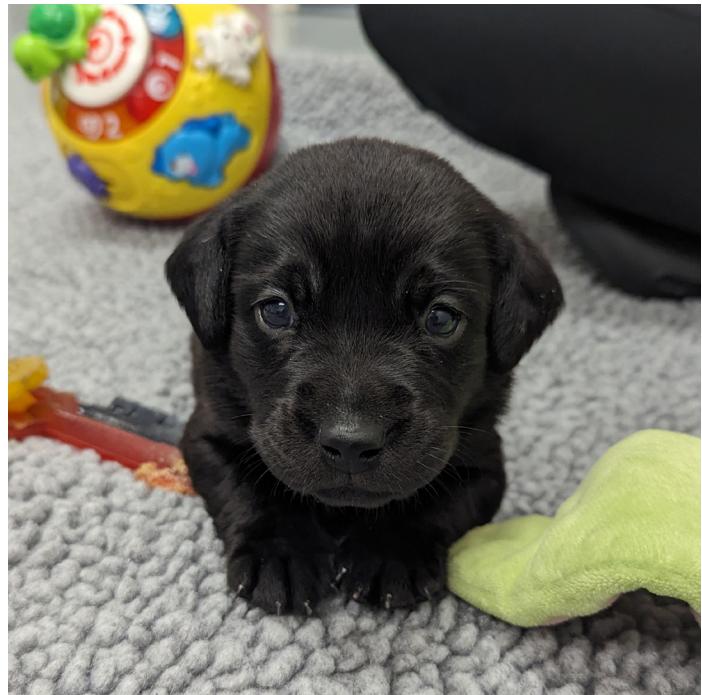
Through the end of week 2, puppies will primarily stay with their mother throughout the day. During cleaning, puppies can be kept in a tote with blankets (the warm water bottles are no longer needed). At the beginning of week 3, puppies will begin to spend part of the day away from mom. During this time, puppies should be kept in an X-pen in the playroom. The floor should be covered with a grey mat and soft toys should be provided. Rolled up towels should be placed underneath the grey mat to create "hills" for the puppies to move over.

Highlights

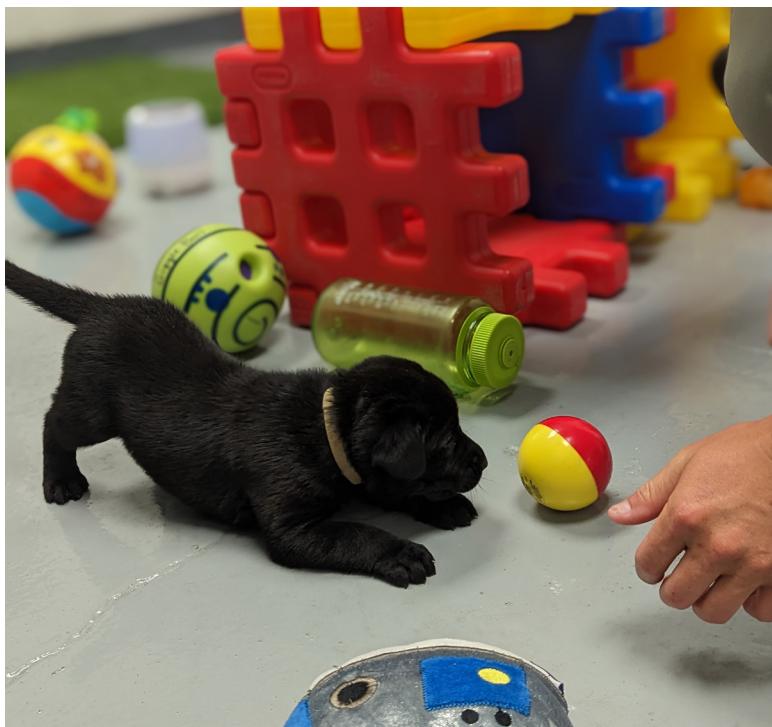
Development: Eyes and ears open. Puppies begin to become mobile.

Training: Continue tactile stimulation. Begin to introduce mild visual and acoustic stimuli.

Husbandry: Beginning in week 3, puppies should spend part of the day away from mom.



Sensitive Period for Socialization (3 - 14 Weeks)



Overview

The sensitive period for socialization begins at 3 weeks and continues through 14 weeks of age. During this time, puppies begin to develop their individual personalities. They become more independent from the dam and begin to play and explore more flexibly. Hearing and vision, as well as coordination, continue to improve. During this time, puppies begin to learn what is “safe”. Therefore, it is critical to introduce puppies new people, places, and things.

Puppies move out of the nursery at 7 weeks of age. The following sections will go through each week of early development from 4 to 7 weeks individually.



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Week 4

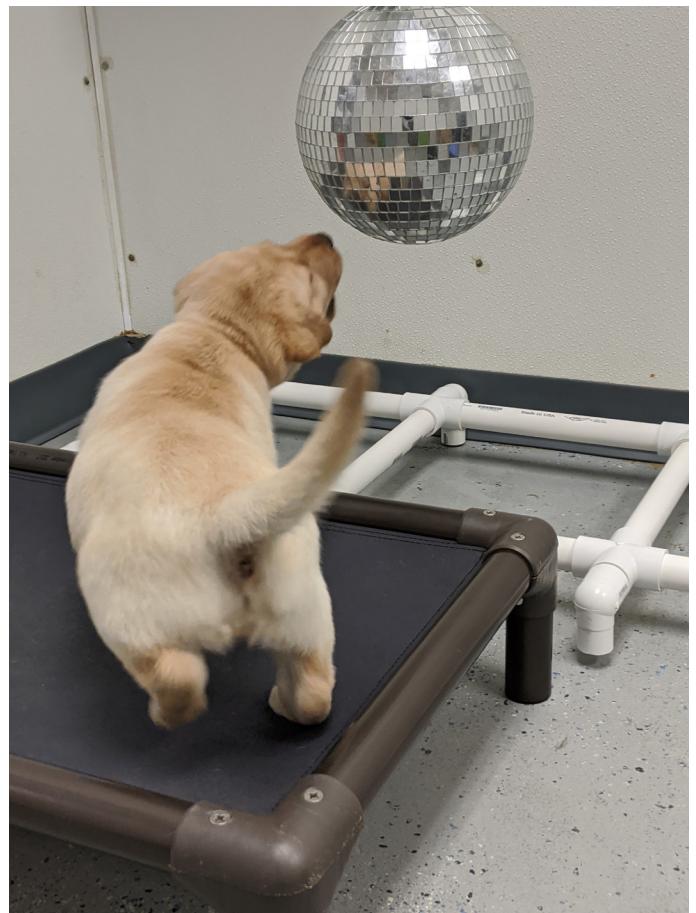
Training

Continue encouraging puppies to move around and explore the playroom to develop leg and core muscles. Add different surfaces (e.g. carpets, tarps, mylar blankets, etc.) and obstacles (e.g. ladder, wobble board, buckets, etc.) for puppies to move over and around. Wear the poncho during this individual time to begin acclimating puppies to people in unique dress. Begin encouraging puppies to interact with toys and building possession using soft toys, tug toys, and squeaky toys. Encourage tugging (always let the puppy win the toy - build confidence!) and be sure to incorporate a mix of hard and soft toys.

Outside of the playroom, begin conditioning the puppy to spend time alone (as they would on the truck or in the kennels). Crate the puppy for a period of 5 seconds. Make sure the puppy is calm when you remove them from the crate, don't reward crying. Puppies should also be carried around inside the office and outside to experience new environments and people. Remember, the puppies are not yet vaccinated so they should not be placed on the ground.

Husbandry

During this week, puppies will continue to spend part of the day in the playroom and the rest of the day with mom. Puppies will also begin to eat blended food. This should be done in the Adventure Box so that, as puppies are eating, they are also experiencing body contact with the items hanging from the Adventure Box. This will help to reduce body sensitivity.



Week 5

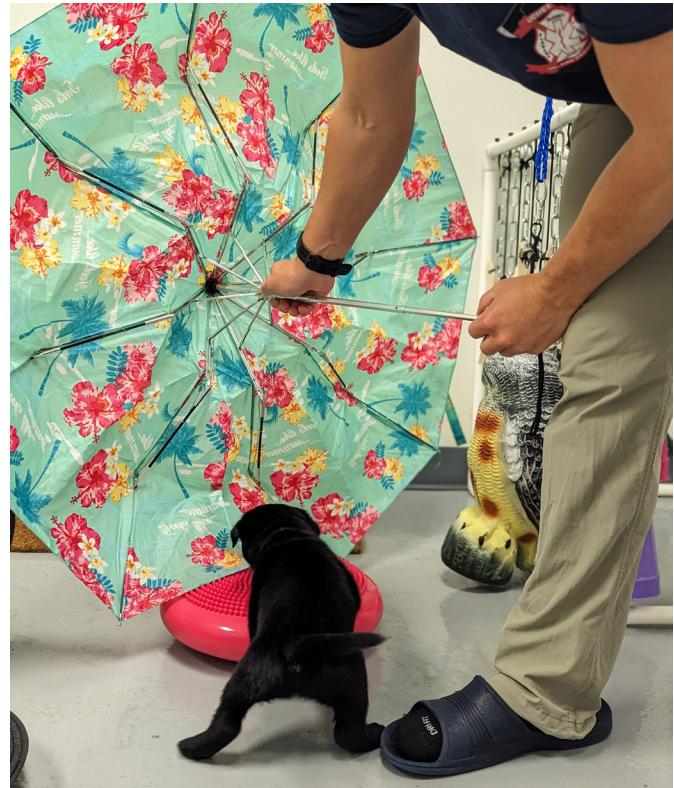
Training

Begin to gradually increase the intensity of visual and acoustic stimuli by increasing mobile ringer volume, introducing noise makers, and introducing the mirror. Start slow and gradually increase the intensity of the stimulus as puppies adapt. During this week, animated stimuli such as the umbrella and rolling items will be introduced. Encourage exploration of stimuli in the playroom and movement on/over the obstacles. Begin exposing puppies to various costumes and masks daily. Continue to build possession by encouraging play with the toys, particularly playing tug.

This week, the puppies will be introduced to the dock and the cart. The whole litter should be allowed to play outside on the dock. Put toys and obstacles out for puppies to interact with. For the cart, puppies should be placed in one of the crates with a littermate (or two depending on space) This should occur *inside* the GT building. The focus for this week is getting puppies used to being on the cart, do not move the cart.

Husbandry

Starting this week, puppies will spend all day away from mom. During this time, they should stay in the playroom.

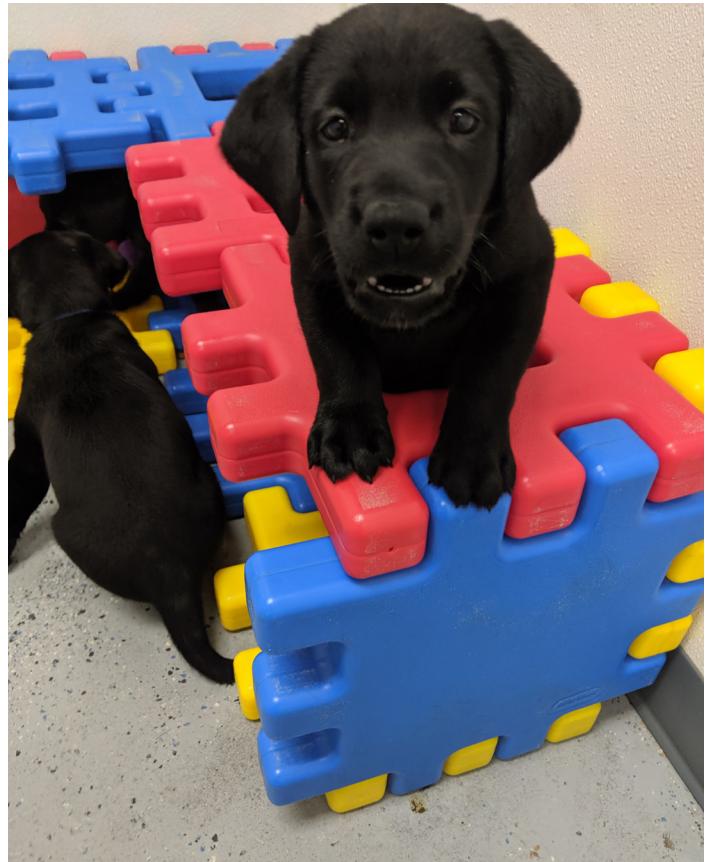


Week 6

Training

Continue to gradually increase intensity of stimuli in the playroom. This week, puppies will begin exposure to the animated bats, Unicorn Bot, and bumble ball. Introduce these to the puppies as a group before individual exposure. Continue wearing costumes and masks, this week the puppies should also be exposed to the Burqa. Begin giving the puppies short tosses with the toys to encourage retrieval and toy engagement.

Outside of the nursery, continue to give puppies time to play as a litter on the dock. This week, allow them to move in and out of the doorway to the docking area on their own. Puppies should be placed on the cart with a littermate again this week, however, this week the cart may be rolled some. Keep the duration short at first and slowly build. This will help prepare puppies to ride on the trucks. Finally, ensure that the puppies meet an unfamiliar person at least twice a week.



Husbandry

During this week, puppies will continue to spend the day in the playroom, away from mom. At the end of this week they will be weaned from mom. Starting this week, puppies can begin eating soaked food instead of blended food.



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Week 6

Training

Continue to gradually increase intensity of stimuli in the playroom. This week, puppies will begin exposure to the haunted mirror, talking skull, and flailing man. Introduce these to the puppies as a group before individual exposure. Continue wearing costumes and masks, this week the puppies should also be exposed to someone wearing both the Burqa and the poncho.

The puppies will be vaccinated this week, which means they can now be placed on the ground inside of the GT offices and can visit the yard. When visiting the office or the yard, be sure to bring toys (and obstacles for the yard) for the puppies to interact with. They can also play as a group in the baby pool, if weather allows.

Husbandry

This is the final week the puppies will spend in the nursery. The puppies will get vaccinated at the beginning of this week. The puppies should also be completely separated from mom at the beginning of this week. The puppies should be given dry dog food this week.



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