

# Impact Periods

## **FEAR IMPACT PERIOD (8-11 Weeks)**

During the Fear Impact Period, from eight to eleven weeks, any traumatic, painful, or frightening experience will have a more lasting impact on the puppy than if it had occurred at any other time. It is the puppy's perception of the experience that is important, not that of the owner.

For example, a trip to the animal hospital during this period, if unpleasant, could forever make a dog apprehensive about going to the veterinarian. By taking along a toy and some treats and making the experience pleasant and fun, the potentially negative impact is alleviated.

## **SENIORITY CLASSIFICATION PERIOD (13 to 16 Weeks)**

This critical period, from thirteen to sixteen weeks, is also known as the "Age of Cutting" - cutting teeth and cutting the apron strings.

During the Seniority Classification Period, the dog attempts to clarify and resolve the question of leadership.

## **FLIGHT INSTINCT PERIOD (4 to 8 Months)**

The Flight Instinct Period occurs sometime between four and eight months of age. This is the time when a puppy will test his wings. He will venture off on his own and may turn a deaf ear when called.

The Flight Instinct Period lasts from a few days to several weeks. How the dog is handled during this stage will mean the difference between a dog that doesn't come when called and one who responds readily. Because most dog owners are not aware of this naturally occurring developmental stage, they react incorrectly, thereby creating a problem for themselves.

This emergence of the Flight Instinct is another reason for starting puppies in obedience class before this age.

There is a physiological change that corresponds with the Flight Instinct Period - teething. While the adult teeth come through the gums prior to six months of age, they don't set in the jaw until between six and ten months. There is a physiological need for him to exercise his mouth at this time.

## **SECOND FEAR IMPACT PERIOD (6 to 14 Months)**

This Fear Impact Period, also called the Fear of New Situations Period, is not as well defined as the first. The Second Fear Impact Period corresponds with growth spurts. Hence, it may occur more than once as the dog matures.

What marks the Second Fear Impact Period is a change in the behavior of the now adolescent dog. He may suddenly be reluctant to approach something new, or be frightened of something or someone familiar. When a dog is exhibiting fear or reluctance, he should not be forced into a confrontation, bullied into being brave, or reinforced in his fear through soothing tones and petting. Force can frighten the dog further, and soothing tones only serve to encourage his fear.

His fear should be handled with patience and kindness. The dog is permitted to work it out for himself without being forced to deal with something he perceives as dangerous. Training during this period puts the dog in a position of success, so his self-confidence will be built up.