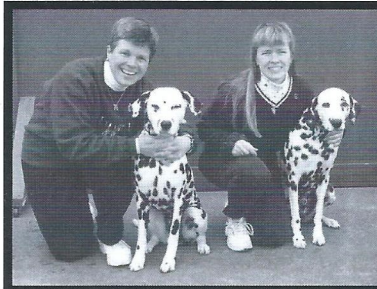


Ask the Obedience Experts

Puppy Training Tips

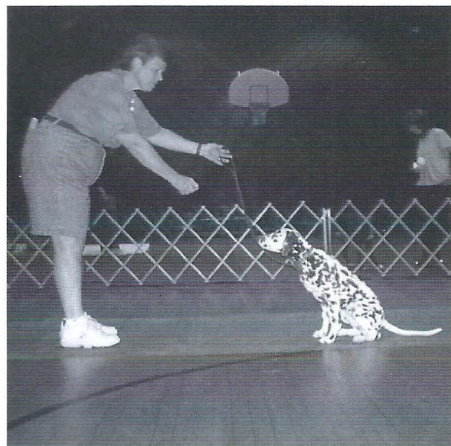
By Elaine Hamill and Amy D. Stephens



Fall is fast approaching, and on the cooler breezes we are beginning to find hints of that all too familiar aroma we all love – PUPPY BREATH! Several of our friends and neighbors have added new members to their households for various reasons and future goals. With those pups in mind, we decided to devote this edition of our column to the beginnings of training with a new puppy. As most of our readers know, we tend to start early with a lot of the concepts that will be necessary for success in the obedience and agility rings in the future. Elaine has one such new addition in her house; thus all of these ideas are fresh for her! So, with “Linus” as our demonstration puppy, here is Elaine with some helpful tidbits.

Puppy Training Tips

Ah, the new puppy in your house. The clean slate waiting for input. The potential for future glories and triumphs – or not! Here is my list of suggestions to set up your puppy’s mind and body for the future; a dog version of “dress for success” if you will.



Recall foundation work. Photos Yogi Cutitta.



Start NOW! The day my pup comes home I start working with him. Teach him the right responses before he picks the wrong ones. It’s so easy to teach an 8 to 10 week old pup to come to you for a treat in your fingers, and to sit for that treat. Move the food up and back over his head as he comes to you and he will sit as his eyes follow the treat. This teaches him the foundation for recalls, sits in general and the auto-sit in front; the concepts of working for you to earn praise and food and the release concept (“OK!”). Meanwhile, he’s learning his name and housebreaking is made easier, assuming

you feed him for eliminating on cue outdoors. Lots of chances to practice this one with the constant trips outdoors at this age!

Next, I add the other positions: down and stand. From the sit, move the food down and forward away from him. The pup follows the food and downs. The stand can be taught from the sit or not, it’s your choice. The important part is to teach the pup to let you fuss over his foot placement and freeze in that position. From the sit, I just move the food forward at his eye level. I add the “stay” to these positions for just a nanosecond; if he can freeze without me holding him there for just a moment, I’m happy. We can build the stay concept from there. If he moves, then I have asked him to hold the stay too long. What I want to do is release him just before he breaks (if possible).

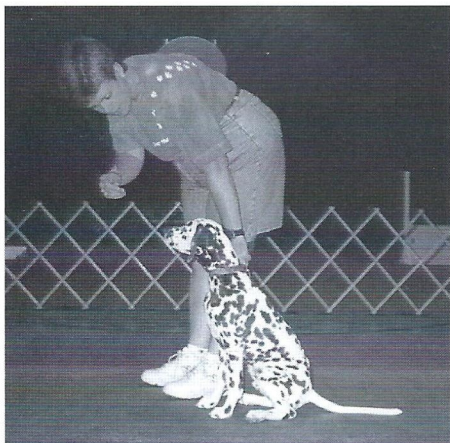


Introducing the down.



Intro to retrieving: find an elongated narrow space - a hallway works great. You stand at one end, blocking the pup’s exit. Now, one at a time, throw a plastic dumbbell, a leather scent article, and a metal article, all just for play retrieves. Anything goes as long as your pup brings the object back to you in some fashion. You can add wood if you plan to go to Canada or a glove but I have found that my Dals have no problem with picking up cloth. If you don’t have real articles, improvise – a spoon will do for a metal object, for example. I do this for a maximum of 5 minutes and then put the objects away until next time. Now your pup is used to picking up all types of materials and getting the retrieve concept started.

Time for jumps! Set up any high/bar jump with the crosspiece



Teaching the stand.



about three feet long and anything else you have handy, but scaled down to puppy size. Our goal is to successfully introduce the different looks and feels of the equipment.

Later, but before six months, I introduce marking a target. With the pup sitting in heel position, I point to a largish piece of food about four feet away that he can easily see, using the same signal as I would for a glove retrieve in Utility. As soon as the pup stares at

on the ground – a height of about four inches. Run over the middle of the jump with your pup and praise joyfully. Form and concept are now set! The broad jump comes later, because it's too big to squish down to four inches, so wait until the pup is about four to five months old. When you are ready to introduce the broad jump, put two or three boards touching or overlapping, with the first board angled up, and run over it together. Now he's seen all the obedience equipment and how it works and he's about four or five months old. If agility is also in the plans, this is the time for a wobble board and a tunnel

the food, I release him and he goes and eats it. Now he knows to look where you point; a valuable skill for finding a stray tennis ball, too! Later, you can use this set up to start go-out training by marking a toy or food four feet from the baby gate and working back from there.

As you have probably figured out by now, this is just a very brief description to get you started. Your pup's "life lessons," all the critical commands like "leave it," "off," "quiet," "out," and "NO," will be a big part of his early learning, as will all the happy praise words. We are trying to teach the puppy commu-

nication and get him out there to see the tools that will be part of his future. I haven't even mentioned car rides; a pup that can't relax in a car and a crate is at a huge disadvantage as soon as he leaves the house. Socialization is the most important piece of your pup's education, but that goes without saying nowadays – thank goodness. These ideas are for furthering your performance objectives with your new star. Start early and keep it fun; anything is possible! Enjoy!



Marking the target.

