

Your Saint Bernard

Basic Care Booklet



Your Saint Bernard

Basic Information and Care

In order to keep you updated on the latest insights and techniques on taking care of your Saint Bernard, the Education Committee of the Saint Bernard Club of America is pleased to provide you with the information contained within this booklet.

Topics you will find inside include, but are not limited to, housetraining, crate training, grooming, bloat, exercise and socialization.

Owning a Saint Bernard is a great pleasure and also a responsibility. Like every dog, they need regular exercise, veterinary care, and good nutrition. Their massive size makes them very warm to cuddle with in the winter, but it also presents some unique medical issues. You will need to provide extra care in early years to prevent problems. Good nutrition is critical. You will also need to be able to provide adequate housing, fencing, and sufficient space for them to exercise properly so your Saint stays healthy.

The information presented is to assist you as new Saint Bernard owners. Should you have concerns regarding the topics herein, it is suggested that the services of a licensed professional be sought.

A healthy, well trained Saint Bernard makes for a happy Saint living his life with happy owners.

If you seek additional information on the breed, go to the Saint Bernard Club of America website: www.saintbernardclub.org. At this website, you can also subscribe to the breed publication, "The Saint Fancier".

If you seek more in depth information and knowledge on the breed, you will find a link to the Saint Bernard University courses on the Saint Bernard Club of America website.

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Table of Contents

Crate Training	Page 3
House Training	Page 5
Grooming	Page 10
Recommended Feeding and Nutrition	Page 15
Bloat	Page 16
Exercise	Page 18
Socialization	Page 19
Dogs and Children	Page 23
Hallmarks of Adolescents	Page 25
Difficult Problem Solving	Page 27
Conclusion	Page 30

Crate Training

If your Saint will not be living outdoors, one of the first things to teach your newly acquired puppy is not to eliminate in the house. There are many ways to do this; however, breeders and trainers agree the way to do this is to use a crate.

Even though there are no more Saint Bernards living in the wild, it does not alter the fact that they are den animals. A domestic dog will consider a crate to be its den and will be comfortable there. The instinctive desire for a den is the basis for crate training.

Many pet owners see a crate as being a jail or cruel. Dogs do not see it this way. To a dog, it is his den, his home. Some dogs will seek out den-like areas under desks and behind furniture when a crate is not available. A crate can help with housebreaking and chewing, separation anxiety, barking, and increases management within the house. A dog that is crate trained is also easier to travel with and easier to confine in the event of illness or injury. Crating provides a dog with a safe place of his very own. Providing a crate is just as necessary from a safety standpoint as providing a crib or playpen for a baby or toddler.

Make sure that the crate is the correct size for the dog. It should be one and a half times the length of the dog (not counting the tail) and tall enough for him to stand up comfortably. The crate should be placed in a quiet but well-trafficked part of the house – not right next to the front door, and not in the basement. If the dog is housebroken and has been trained not to chew on fabric, bedding can be placed in the crate. A chew toy or two should also be in the crate. While the crate is an excellent tool, it should never be used as punishment. Puppies should never be crated longer than the number of months old they are plus one. As an example, a three-month-old puppy should not be crated more than four hours, even in the best situations where he has been exercised, has eliminated and has plenty of chew toys.

To get your dog or puppy accustomed to a crate, place treats and toys in the crate and just allow him to enter the crate to get them. You may also set his food bowl at the back of the crate and allow him to eat in the crate with the door open. After a few days, give your puppy lots of exercise late in the

evening so he is really tired. His last meal and water should be provided three to four hours prior to bedtime, and he should be given a chew toy. When you are ready to go to bed and the house will be dark and quiet, the tired puppy should be given his last chance to eliminate. Take him to his crate, place him in it, give him a chew toy, turn out the lights and go to bed. You may want to keep the crate in your bedroom until he is properly crate-trained, so you can quiet him if he is fussing or complaining or take him out if he truly needs to eliminate. Do not let your puppy out of the crate if he's just complaining about being in the crate. If he has been prepared properly to be in the crate, then he should be so tired with a nice new chew toy and an empty bladder that he will just fall asleep. Do not put your puppy to bed in the crate if the rest of the household is still up.

Once your dog or puppy has been desensitized properly to a crate, it can be used as a tool for many of the behavior problems mentioned earlier:

- To help with housebreaking – The crate can help you use the dog's natural denning instincts. He will be motivated to "hold it" as he will not want to eliminate in his den.
- To help with separation anxiety – The crate can be used to develop slowly a "safe" area for your dog. The times your dog is asked to be in the crate must make him feel safe and fall below his threshold for anxious behavior.
- To help with management - The crate can be a "playpen" where your dog can be kept for short periods of time when you cannot watch him closely enough to ensure that he will not have a housebreaking accident or "practice" unwanted behaviors in the house.

House Training

As previously touched upon, owning a Saint Bernard is a great pleasure and also a responsibility. To begin this section, we will focus on regular exercise. Saints need exercise to stay healthy. You will need to be able to provide adequate housing, fencing, and provide sufficient space for them to exercise properly so your Saint stays healthy.

Many breeders advocate living totally outdoors during the first 12 months of life. All yards and play areas should be totally fenced. Regular walks and time to roam in a large, safe exercise area are important. Outdoor natural surfaces are best for any Saint, especially puppies.

If your dogs will be indoors, plan to keep your Saint outside as much as possible for the first year so he can develop strong muscles. All indoor areas should have non-slip surfaces to prevent injury. Large, machine washable rubber-backed rugs work great on ceramic and wood floors, and the entire area should be covered. Puppies that slip on floors have a much higher risk of developing orthopedic problems. Non-slip floors indoors will help prevent hip issues.

Regardless of whether your dog is indoors or outdoors, exercise is imperative. If the muscles become weak because he is indoors and a couch potato, joint injury often occurs. Good muscling significantly lowers the possibility of hip dysplasia, and outdoor activity is important. Without adequate exercise, your pup will lack rear muscle mass and chest development as compared to those Saints reared outdoors. The consequence of the lack of rear muscle mass is increased hip problems associated with joint laxity because of the lack of muscle mass to stabilize the joint.

One last point: a Saint in good shape, in lean condition is much better off than one that is overweight. An overweight Saint carries around extra weight, putting undue pressure on the skeletal system, muscular system and causing the organs to work harder than if the Saint was fit.

The following housetraining information pertains to those dogs that spend time indoors.

A puppy can only control himself (in hours) the number of months old he is plus one, max (for example, a three-month-old could hold it a max of four hours). It is important not to ask a puppy to control himself longer than he physically can. The premise behind housetraining is to take advantage of the fact that dogs are den animals and generally will not eliminate where they sleep. Exceptions are:

- Dogs that are in crates too large (dogs can sleep in one end and eliminate in the other).
- Dogs that have lived in small cages in pet stores and have learned to eliminate in a cage.
- Crates that have blankets or absorbent items in the crate.
- Dogs left too long in the crate and cannot hold it any longer.

When house training your dog, there are a few things to remember: You should select the correct or desired potty area. Every time you take your puppy to the potty spot and he eliminates there, praise him. Your puppy needs to understand that eliminating in the correct spot is always a rewarding behavior. Do not allow him to run loose in the house without constant supervision. It is your responsibility to be sure your puppy eliminates in the correct area. When he is in the house, he should be on a leash and in your presence to avoid accidents. Management of this behavior cannot be overemphasized. Do not punish your puppy for having an accident. It is counterproductive to spank a puppy or rub his nose in his urine or feces. This will typically cause your puppy to be hesitant to eliminate in front of you. This makes praising your puppy for going in the correct spot impossible because he is afraid to go in your presence. He will often learn just to sneak off into an out-of-the-way place to avoid detection.

- Clean up all "accidents" with an odor-neutralizing product such as Nature's Miracle. Most cleaning products will not get rid of the odor, thus increasing the chances your dog will eliminate in the same place again. You can also mix three parts water to one part white vinegar to clean.
- If your dog is having difficulty with housebreaking, do not allow him to see you clean up feces or urine.
- When housebreaking your puppy, take him out immediately after: waking up or resting, drinking water, eating, playing, training and actively sniffing (this applies to dogs, as well).

If an accident starts to occur in the house, you should make an inconspicuous noise to startle your puppy (without frightening him) and immediately take him to his potty spot. The noise is intended to interrupt him before he finished going potty. When he resumes eliminating in the correct area, you should praise and reward him for the proper behavior. If accidents are occurring in the house, you need to supervise him more closely, or it will take a very long time to successfully housetrain him.

Consistency is critical; creating daily housetraining routines for your puppy will help with consistency in his behavior. Feeding your puppy at the same time every day, taking him to potty through the same door every day, and going to the same potty spot every time are all good examples. No matter what your day-to-day schedule is, try to keep the days similar. Don't have two totally different schedules on weekdays and weekends.

You may find it helpful to teach your pup to eliminate on cue. Wait to begin teaching an elimination cue until you have at least several days of a good elimination routine. Start watching for indicators that he is about to relieve himself (i.e., sniffing the ground, circling) in the bathroom area, then say the cue you wish to use to tell your puppy to eliminate (i.e. "outside" or "go potty"). Give the cue immediately before he begins eliminating or once he begins eliminating. Saying the elimination cue too soon or too excitedly may be too distracting and prevent him from eliminating at that moment. Don't give the cue when your puppy doesn't actually have to go. Wait to praise him until immediately after eliminations to avoid getting him so excited that he stops eliminating.

Withholding food and water a minimum of two to three hours before bedtime and exercising your puppy sufficiently prior to bedtime will increase the likelihood of fewer accidents.

The generalized schedule below is for pups eight weeks to six months. In the end, it has been noted how to modify it for pups six to eight months. The schedule is made on the premise of no one being home during the day for approximately eight hours and the pup must be kept inside the house.

- 1) Wake up and carry/lead pup to the elimination spot. He should eliminate within five minutes. Praise him for eliminating.
- 2) Give him 30 minutes of off-leash free-time (play outside, practice obedience, and praise him for acting in a calm manner.
- 3) After free-time play, bring pup in to be fed. If he eliminated earlier, make sure you praised him. If pup did not eliminate previously, watch him closely.
- 4) After eating, take the pup out immediately. He should eliminate again. Give pup an extra 10 minutes out to potty since he ate.
- 5) Pup gets 30 more minutes of off-leash free time as previously described or allow the pup to follow you through the house on a leash.
- 6) Tie the pup for 15 minutes while you finish getting ready to leave. He should rest during this time.
- 7) Take the pup out one last time before you leave.
- 8) Place the pup in his crate which is located inside an x-pen. The crate will be placed within the x-pen, with the crate door open, leaving enough room for a puppy pad (the pup can sleep in his crate, then step right outside his crate to use the puppy pad). He should not have the x-pen to run around in. Configure the x-pen so he has enough room to come out of his crate and eliminate on the puppy pads. The pup's water and his second meal should be in the crate with him. Don't forget, an eight-week puppy can only hold it three hours (two months of age plus one). For every month, add one more hour to his "hold time". By the time the pup reaches eight months, he should be able to hold it nine hours. After four months, the pup will only require the first and last feeding. Always take into consideration the pup is growing and will have to move into the next appropriately sized crate, as well as maneuvering it within the x-pen.

9) Once you arrive home, take the pup out immediately to eliminate.

10) Bring pup in the house to be fed and watered for 15 minutes.

11) Take the pup back out to the potty spot. Whether he eliminates or not, allow pup to remain outside for one hour.

12) Bring him in the house and watch closely for 15-30 minutes. Before the 30 minutes are up, take the pup back to potty. Once he does, praise him.

13) Bring pup in for one hour in the family room or wherever the family gathers. Be sure to play with the pup (and his toy) for at least 20 minutes. Before the hour is up, take the pup to potty again. If he has an accident, clean the spot with an odor neutralizing agent.

14) Bring him back in for an hour or so of family time.

15) Take the pup out one last time to the potty spot where he should eliminate.

16) Put the pup to bed (only put pup to bed when household is going to bed).

Pup will probably wake you in the night to potty before you wake for the next day. Once the pup hits six or seven months, he/she should be able to hold it the entire night (assuming it is a seven- or eight-hour night).

Once the pup gets to six months, you should be able to eliminate the following steps:

5 and 6 – you can leave the dog off leash once the dog begins to be able to hold it longer.

8 – Could be eliminated (let the pup run loose in the house; I would not recommend this). If you continue to crate, be sure and leave water in for the pup as well as puppy pads.

10 – Should be able to take leash off instead of leaving it on.

13 and 14 – Once the pup begins to hold it for longer periods of time, you can eliminate taking him out every hour.

Grooming

Grooming is as important to us as it is to our dogs. It is a necessity. Grooming includes brushing and combing, clipping toenails, cleaning ears, brushing teeth and occasionally trimming hair.

Brush

It is essential to learn how to brush your dog and to do so before every bath. If you do not get the mats out of the coat before a bath, the tangles will tighten and be harder to comb out.

Brushing improves the appearance as well as increasing the circulation of the skin, helps distribute oils and removes dirt and dead flaky skin.

The proper equipment to maintain a coat in top condition:

- Bristle brush
- Curved wire slicker brush
- Wide-toothed comb (1¼ to 1½ inches long)
- Thinning shears

Short- and longhair saints have in each hair follicle, a primary or guard hair which is a part of the outer coat, and several secondary hairs that make up the undercoat. The goal is to brush the coat down to the skin without actually brushing the skin. To do this, push the coat back with one hand and brush the hair down, a little at a time, with your other hand, using the slicker brush, brushing one small area at a time. Be careful not to brush the skin with the slicker as it can cause to skin to become red and irritated.

You can also "line comb" using the same method of pushing the coat back with one hand and combing the undercoat out of one small area at a time with the wide toothed comb.

Brush and comb systematically, begin by brushing the head and ears, then chest, legs and so on . . . You should do one side of the dog one day and the other side the next day.

After line brushing or line combing, give your dog a quick once over with a bristle brush. The bristles should be long enough to reach through the hair coat to the skin. An inadequate bristle brush may cause mats. Short, dense

bristle brushes are fine for short coats while long coats will need a brush with longer, wider spaced bristles.

In order to ensure your dog gets brushed once per week, establish a brushing routine that is comfortable for you and your dog.

Bath Time

Using an appropriate shampoo is important. A dog shampoo or baby shampoo is best.

To prepare your dog for his bath, plug a cotton ball in each ear to keep water from getting in. The water should be comfortably warm. Try to enlist a helper when bathing your dog. Using a pitcher, bucket, slow running hose or a shower attachment with a long hose, wet the dog's entire back, working the water into the coat over the entire dog. Apply shampoo to the back and work it over the entire coat, being sure to wash the legs, belly and rear of the dog. Wash the head last and be sure not to get soap in his eyes. Rinse your dog thoroughly; beginning with the head first and working your way back to the rear. Continue rinsing until all the soap is gone then squeeze out any excess water. Make sure your dog is completely dry in order to avoid hot spots. You can dry your dog, one of the two ways:

- Towel dry then allow him to dry in a warm area.
- Use a dog dryer (human hair dryers are too hot for a dog's skin). The noise made by the dog dryer may be one to which the dog must gradually become accustomed. Drying a dog is easier if he is crated.

Once dry, brush your dog with a bristle brush, following the natural flow of the hair.

After the bath would be a good time to trim around your dog's feet. Trim the fur around the pads and between the toes with thinning shears. This helps your dog move more freely and allows better circulation of air year round which helps keep the feet dry, free from bacterial infection and free from discoloration. Trimming in the winter is important as it keeps snow

from balling up between the toes so snow won't pack in around them. It is also recommended to wash the pads regularly in the winter. Applying petroleum jelly will help avoid burns from salted walkways and prevent cracking.

Generally, your dog will need a bath every two or three months. Line brushing and line combing help keep your dog's coat in top condition between baths.

Brushing Teeth

Brushing your dog's teeth is part of his daily grooming regimen. To begin, rub your puppy's mouth and gums for a few days. After a few days, put dog toothpaste on your finger and rub your puppy's mouth and gums. Next, brush his gums and teeth gently with doggie toothpaste (do not use toothpaste for people to avoid stomach upset.) While brushing up and down may be easier, it is more effective to brush in a circular motion. Your dog's teeth should be brushed daily. Once completed, praise and play with him so he associated this activity in a positive manner.

Establish a Routine

Your dog's teeth will need to be brushed daily. Weekly you should line comb or line brush his coat, plus you should run your hands all over your dog, checking for any new or unusual bumps. Check the fur around the pads and between the toes and trim if needed.

Trimming Nails

When it comes to clipping toenails, some Saints take it in stride while others try to convince you it is a painful experience.

Cutting nails requires time and patience. It is easier to do with two people rather than one, and it is extremely helpful to begin trimming nails when your dog is a pup. Do not physically overpower your dog, muzzle your dog or back your dog into a corner in order to trim his nails. This will only lead to an unpleasant experience for you and your dog.

Put your dog wherever you will be cutting his nails each time (floor, grooming table, back porch, etc.). In order to get the pup used to the idea of getting his nails trimmed, stroke the pup's legs and feet while, talking calmly and offering treats. Before the pup reaches his tolerance point, release and praise him. Increase the amount of time you do this based on the pup's tolerance. Do not exceed his tolerance level. This should be a pleasant experience. Continue with this exercise but add manipulation of the toes and nails while watching for the pup to remain calm and wait for his treat. At this point, cut a nail. If the pup accepts it, cut another, if not, release him, but remember to praise and treat him once released. Repeat the desensitization exercises again until the pup accepts his nails being clipped. Success in clipping could take a few days or weeks. If your dog has had an unpleasant experience in the past with nail clipping, it may take a bit longer.

When clipping the nails, hold the dog's paw securely in one hand while clipping the nail with the other. Remove only the tip of the nail so as not to cut the quick of your dog, causing the nail to bleed. When looking at the nails after clipping look for a dark dot which is the blood vessel. When you see this dot you have cut the nail back far enough. Any more clipping and you will cause the dog pain and the nail to bleed. If your dog has dew claws, be sure and clip them, as well.

Use a guillotine type clippers with pups, then move to heavy duty plier clippers for older dogs. Be sure the clipper is sharp: a dull clipper will crush the nail rather than cutting it and will cause pain to the nail bed.

If you prefer to grind instead of clip, purchase a Dremel. When grinding the nail, make two or three passes across the nail at a time. Move the tool away from the nail frequently so heat will not build up and cause pain.

You will need to check your puppy's nails every week and an adult's every two weeks. Only clip the nails if needed.

Cleaning Ears

Your dog's ears should be inspected weekly or more often if there have been any recent problems with his ears. By looking for signs of ear disease you can prevent the spread of infection to the middle and inner ears.

If you begin inspecting and cleaning your dog's ears as a puppy, he will come to tolerate this activity. Start the inspection by lifting the ear flap and looking into the canal with a flashlight. You should see a clean surface, similar to the skin on the hairless part of your dog's belly. If wax or a hair plug is blocking the ear, clean it out. Remove the plug by plucking it out with your fingers or with hemostats. The dead hair will come out but the live hair will remain. Be sure all obstructions have been removed. If there is an abundance of hair in the ear, carefully trim it away with round ended scissors. Once you have removed any obstructions, it is now time to remove the excess wax using an ear massage at the base of the ear to spread the solution around. With a cotton ball, stick your finger into your dog's ear as far down in the canal as you can. Use as many cotton balls as it takes to clean out the wax and ear solution. Next, smell the ear. A healthy ear should have a warm waxy smell while an unpleasant or strong odor suggests an infection requiring a vet's assistance. Once you finish inspecting and cleaning the ear, reward your dog with a treat and praise.

Never clean your dog's ear too frequently or vigorously as this could cause irritation. If you use a Q-tip, make sure you can always see the tip of the Q-tip while in your dog's ear canal. Never use ear powders or thick ointments as they can prevent the ear from getting adequate ventilation and from seeing the ear clearly.

Recommended Feeding And Nutrition

A healthy routine, both inside and out, begins in your dog's food dish. Dry kibble should be the basic food. Most dry kibble is corn, rice or soybean based. Premium dry kibble has meat or fish as the first ingredients listed. These foods are more expensive but you feed less of it. The lesser quality kibble contains fillers which means you must feed more of it. Select a food with 22% to 26% protein and 12% to 16% fat for optimal nutrition and growth for pups and adults. It is recommended to feed pups as well as adults, an adult food, not a puppy food. Do not push your pup for fast growth, as it can lead to lameness that can destroy a healthy and long life.

Calcium increases the chance of your dog developing OCD. Feeding a premium kibble lessens the chances of developing OCD.

Vitamin C is needed for good bone development and strengthening surrounding ligaments. Dogs get adequate amounts of Vitamin C from their food; however, if you plan to supplement, add it slowly. Sudden increases in Vitamin C can cause diarrhea. Recommended dosage is 1,000 mg per day; feeding 500 mg with the morning meal and 500 mg with the afternoon meal.

Communal feeding or feeding more than one dog from one bowl cannot guarantee every dog is getting enough to eat. Each dog should have his own bowl, and at feeding time the bowls should be placed a few feet apart. Set a schedule for feeding with at least two meals per day. Leave the bowls out 15 to 20 minutes, then remove. Wash each bowl completely. Be sure and check the dog food as well as the bowl for mold before serving.

Feed your dog in stainless steel bowls. Plastic bowls have been known to give off fumes that cause allergies in dogs. Using stainless steel bowls may save you expensive trips to the vet.

BLOAT

There are two elements to GDV or Gastric Dilation Volvulus; bloat and torsion. Bloat is the buildup of gases, and torsion is the twisting of the stomach.

There are no conclusive findings as to what causes GDV. Some possible causes are included but are not limited to:

- Stress (dog shows, whelping, change in routine, mating, new dog in the house, thunder and lightning, etc...)
- Rapid eating
- Elevated food bowls
- Exercise before, and especially after, eating
- Fearful or anxious temperament
- Prone to stress

It is important to recognize the symptoms of GDV. Once you notice the symptoms, you have very little time to get medical attention for your dog (maybe minutes, maybe hours). Some symptoms include but are not limited to:

- Unsuccessful vomiting (nothing comes up but foam and/or mucus)
- Doesn't act like himself (may ask to go out in the middle of the night)
- Very anxious and/or restless
- Hunched up appearance
- Lack of normal digestive sounds in the stomach
- Bloated abdomen (feels tight, sounds like a drum when tapped)
- Whining
- Licking the air
- Drinking excessively
- Apparent weakness (can't stand or stands spread legged)
- Collapse

How do we prevent this? Some strategies for reducing the chances of bloat are included but are not limited to:

- Avoid highly stressful situations or minimize the stress as much as possible.
- Do not use an elevated food bowl.
- Do not exercise for at least one hour before and especially after eating
- Feed two or three meals per day, not one.
- Do not give water one hour before or after meals but ensure fresh water is available other times.
- Always keep a product containing simethicone on hand to treat his symptoms (Gas-X, Mylanta Gas).
- If changing foods, do it gradually over several weeks.

It is imperative you know your dog well; it could save his life.

Exercise

Exercise is needed to keep your dog fit and trim. Your dog will appreciate a daily walk even if he has a large yard in which to run and explore. A long walk means exercise for you and your dog. It will help relax and revive you and your dog plus build a bond between you and your Saint. Begin walking your dog slowly, gradually increasing the length of your walks as your dog's, as well as your, stamina increases. If you decide to try carting or weight pulling with your dog, give him a warm-up period of exercise and a cool down period to prevent muscle strains and sprains. Be careful not to over exercise your pup, even as he becomes a young dog. Their bones are soft and spongy and do not completely ossify until 18 months to two years of age. Any exercise should be controlled. Gentle play with pups will strengthen muscles, ligaments and tendons. Do not allow you dog to jump in and out of trucks, which could stress soft bones, muscles and ligaments. Also, he should not be allowed to perform long jumps, high jumps, broad jumps or any formal agility training. Lastly, do not allow him to participate in weight pulling, carting or road running until the bones are fully hardened which could take up to two years. When puppies play with each other, they will rest when appropriate; however, when playing with adults, they will tend to overdo their play and will be more prone to injuries.

As previously discussed, regardless of whether your dog is indoors or outdoors, exercise is imperative. If the muscles become weak because he is indoors and a couch potato, joint injury often occurs. Good muscling significantly lowers the expression of hip dysplasia, and outdoor activity is important. Without adequate exercise, your pup will lack rear muscles mass and chest development as compared to those Saints reared outdoors. The consequence of the lack of rear muscle mass is increased hip problems associated with joint laxity due to the lack of muscle mass to stabilize the joint.

Ensuring your Saint gets enough exercise and interaction/play with you and your family will result in a healthy, happy companion.

Socialization

It is important to raise emotionally healthy puppies. Your pup's adult personality will be shaped by his breed, his individual genetic makeup and socialization. Breed characteristics and genetic makeup cannot be altered; however, through socialization you can help shape and mold his personality. Bad training and bad socialization can ruin even the most promising puppy. It is imperative that you take what good breeding he has and develop the best possible personality.

If you and the breeder know the stages of your pups growth and development, both of you can assist in giving him the best start in life.

Dogs go through developmental periods. By understanding these stages, you will know what training can be done to help you in socialization.

- Fear Imprint Period: 6 – 10 Weeks
- Bonding Period: Begins at 7 Weeks
- Socialization Period: 7 – 16 Weeks

During the fear imprint period, your pup is very impressionable and sensitive to both positive and negative environmental experiences. Avoid training that involves yelling, choke chain corrections, noise makers, squirt bottles, shock collars, or any other strong corrections. Any training conducted during this period should be positive in nature; lots of praise and rewards for good behavior. If a fear is developed during this period, it will take time to help your pup erase its memory of such an event, if it can be erased at all. Lots of human interaction is critical during this time. Friendly faces and voices, along with petting and stroking are essential. To help your pup focus on your face, make non-threatening eye contact with him. The eye contact, interaction and positive training during this period are a must.

During the bonding period, your pup is most impressionable and is open and able to bond with other dogs and/or people. It is critical that breeders and you focus on proper socialization during this period. This includes avoiding stressful or overwhelming situations. Also, any interaction with humans

must be positive, mild and gentle in nature. Do not force your pup to explore new things, but instead, expose him to new things and allow him to explore them at his own pace.

The socialization period is another critical stage. You should take advantage of every opportunity to socialize your pup to as many new and different situations as possible. Keep in mind the same do's and don'ts apply as in the bonding period. Socialization is imperative; dogs that are not properly socialized have a much greater chance of biting someone and then ending up euthanized. After the socialization period ends, your dog can still be socialized, but this learning will occur at a slower rate.

So what is socialization? It is desensitizing a dog to the things he will encounter in daily life by teaching him not to react. It is imperative your pup is positively exposed to the various situations and environments that he may encounter throughout life. All exposure must be introduced at the dog's pace to ensure a positive experience; otherwise if you force an introduction, you will get a negative reaction

What if your dog is over-reacting to other dogs, weird or uncommon noises, cars, bicycles, and new people or people different from you? You will have to desensitize him to the environment or person to which he reacted. Begin by exposing him to this environment or person in small increments, ensuring only positive associations are made. Do not overexpose your dog, as you will have the opposite effect, creating negative associations instead of positive, and thus your dog will become more fearful and/or aggressive.

A good example of properly socializing your puppy would be taking your puppy to a place where other dogs and people congregate, such as pet stores, dog parks or training classes. Begin by exposing him to other dogs and people at a distance where he is comfortable. Praise your pup verbally, as well as with treats and pets as long as he is calm. Your dog will take treats if he is comfortable. If he starts getting scared, move him farther away from the dogs and people that scare him until he is calm and comfortable again. Start moving in closer; it may take hours, days or weeks to move your dog in close to the other dogs and people. The trick is to ensure you always keep it positive no matter how long it takes to get your dog accustomed to the dogs and people.

If your dog does not get properly socialized, this could lead to problems such as being shy, over-reacting, freezing or withdrawing when petted and

startling easily by the routine (children squealing, cars, bikes, automatic doors, etc. ...) He could even become fearfully aggressive when people make direct eye contact or direct frontal approaches and/or make movements over the dog's head, neck, or shoulder area when trying to pet him.

What can lead to improper socialization? An example would be if you take you pup to a pet store, dog park or training class, but instead of keeping the dog a distance from the other dogs and people, you make him move closer to the dogs and people than he is comfortable. You push your dog, even though he is visibly nervous (eyes dilated, stiff, low body posture, hair on back up, unwilling to take food treats). Your push will make your dog become more apprehensive each and every time he is in this situation. Your dog's behavior will get increasingly worse, even becoming dog or people aggressive.

You must give your dog every opportunity for socialization; you owe it to him and yourself.

Know your pup and what his body language is telling you in order to know if he is being properly socialized or is being overwhelmed. If your pup is calm and comfortable, he will appear relaxed and happy during socialization; however, if you are forcing socialization on your puppy, your pup will shake, freeze up, or try to hide or run away. If your pup is hungry during socializing activities, treats will be more effective for distracting your pup from something that scares him. Use the treats to redirect the puppy's attention and then calmly get the puppy out of that situation. Reintroduce him to the same situation in slower smaller steps to build up his confidence. You can use the treat to coax your dog into the same or a new situation. Also, you can have a stranger give your dog treats to encourage him to approach them.

A few last thoughts about socializing your puppy. You can safely socialize your pup while protecting him from contagious diseases such as Parvo. Don't take your pup where other dogs have been; instead, take him to places where other dogs don't usually go, like shopping centers or friends' homes. Attempt on a daily basis to introduce him to as many different people as possible: tall people, short people, children, people wearing hats, etc., and remember to have these people give your pup treats. Get your puppy in a playgroup with other healthy, vaccinated puppies, as well as exposing him to healthy friendly adult dogs. A puppy can be taken many

places to socialize with people and healthy, fully vaccinated dogs. While it is important to be concerned with keeping your pup from contracting Parvo, you must remember that it does not claim nearly as many lives as behavioral problems do.

Dogs and Children

If you are going to mix dogs and children, safety is first. This means awareness on your part. Be aware that any dog can bite, but most do not. A good rule of thumb is to treat dogs with good people manners and they will return the favor; give them respect, space, love and patience. Prevention is the key. Do not leave it up to the dog to be responsible. As the parent/owner, it is up to you to prevent incidences between your children and the family dog, your children and other dogs and your dog with other children.

First and foremost, children always should be closely supervised when around pups and dogs. Children should not be allowed to get closer to their own dog or any dog other than a comfortable, conversation distance. They need their flight space (never crowd or corner a dog, as he will feel he has to attack or be attacked). A pet on the ear by a child can be followed by a yank, pinch or poke in the eye causing the dog to bite. The usual response by Mom is why did the dog bite, but in reality, the child was the instigator. Do not let children stare at the family dog, rub noses with the dog, or play any face-to-face games. Also, children should never be allowed to be near the dog's food or water dish. Children should be made aware that all pups and dogs they meet are not like their own (they cannot run up to them, stare them in the face, stand nose-to-nose, squeal or give big bear hugs.) NEVER allow a child to tease a dog. People don't like to be teased; neither do dogs. Teasing a dog will only lead to a bad outcome in which the dog will be blamed when in reality, he was provoked.

What if a child gets nipped? Do not punish either the child or the dog but find out what each was doing that led to the incident. You will need to explain to the child that the nip was a way of the dog saying he doesn't want you to do what you were doing.

You must learn to read canine expressions and body postures that may precede a bite. A steady stare is a warning signal. If the family dog does it, you can distract him with a command, a toy, a treat, etc. If you get a steady stare from a strange dog, curled lip or a growl, take this as a serious warning. Do not run or stare back but walk away, sideways, if possible. If you get this type of behavior from your dog, get immediate help from a professional dog trainer.

To repeat, as this subject is very important, if you are going to mix dogs and children, safety is first. Prevention is the key. Do not leave it up to the dog to be responsible. As the parent/owner, it is up to you to prevent incidents between your children and the family dog, your children and other dogs, and your dog with other children.

The Hallmarks of Adolescence

Your Saint is no longer a puppy, but neither is he a fully matured dog. As a puppy, he would never have challenged you, but now he will not pay attention to you; he is a total brat. This is a very normal occurrence in his life. He is in the transition state of growing up. Like teenagers, your Saint has too much energy and not enough to do. This could happen at six months or seven months, then again at 12 months, or if he is slow to mature, this could happen at 18 months and then again at two years of age. Your Saint is challenging your leadership and trying your patience. Some go through chewing frenzies, are full of themselves and appear deaf to you commands. Males may become more intense and excitable, less friendly toward other males, lift his leg and want to investigate everything. In females, it begins with the onset of estrus. She will act silly, exhibit erratic behavior, be moody, lethargic, and perhaps aggressive and not respond to known commands. It is at this time, you wonder if getting a Saint was such a good idea after all. Away with the cute, non-challenging puppy and hello to an uncontrollable hormone raging huge teenager trying to become an adult. Remember – DO NOT lose your patience and think it is hopeless, as you dog will know the difference and take advantage of it every time.

The dog you want does not happen overnight. You must meet this with an attitude of determination and a will to be consistent with your dog. You must channel his energy and exuberance into fun, games, exercise and work. Keep him interested and busy. Saints long for fun, games and work. An untrained and under-exercised Saint is bored and will make trouble. The best approach is to keep teaching new and challenging, interesting, even complicated games while continually changing the pattern and environment. It is critical to exercise your Saint both physically and mentally; a walk along with games would be very beneficial. Make sure you consistently insist on good behavior in all situations; going inside and out, on a walk, when strangers approach, etc.... Remember, left to his own devices, your Saint will not outgrow his problems. You must take charge of your adolescent as the leader and work with him to get him through this period in his life. If you are struggling getting through this teenage stage, you may want to enroll or re-enroll in a training class in order to establish routine and weekly goals. Nothing makes a dog feel more secure than having a strong leader. It would be a waste of your time trying to train your Saintly teenager without being the leader. If your Saint does not have a leader, he will take on the role himself. As the leader, there are things you must remember when interacting with your dog.

- Praise him with treats, pets and hugs. Praise him for behavior you expect; ignore the behavior you do not want. Always be watching for the acceptable behavior and praise. For example, if the dog is sitting still in the den, praise him. If he gets up and in your face ignore him. Once he quiets down, reward him again. He will come to understand the behavior that will get him attention and treats.
- Reprimand by taking away something the dog values (treat, toy, or attention) until he complies. If you must reprimand with a leash correction, do it quickly to surprise the dog, then once he complies give him treats and pets.
- Give permission – permission for whatever he is about to do, if it is OK with you. You are subtly teaching him to look up to you for approval and permission.
- Deny permission – he may sleep on your couch but can't sleep on a couch elsewhere. Also he should only get on your couch with permission.
- When doing a sit/stay, if he breaks, put him back. For every time he breaks a sit/stay, put him back. After a few minutes, he will realize what you want. You will do it with no yelling, screaming, or electronic devices.
- Be a model. A leader behaves with confidence. It will comfort your Saint to know he is under your leadership.

Remember, it is up to you to help your dog get through this time in his life. You will have to step up and work harder with your Saint, but in the end, it will be worth it. With patience and determination, both you and your Saint will be successful and have a wonderful relationship into the future.

Difficult Problem Solving

Your Saint barks when left alone, when the doorbell rings, when a stranger comes to visit, to go in and out; he barks incessantly, the barks go on and on. Never place your dog in a situation where he will be incapable of not barking and then attempt to train him to be quiet. Determine the stimulus causing him to bark, then the distance from the stimulus your dog will not bark. Once you find that distance and he stops barking, reward his quiet behavior. Slowly decrease the distance and increase the rewards as it becomes more difficult for him to be quiet. Try to keep his attention on you instead of on the stimulus and again, treat him for being quiet. You may have to back away from the stimulus and start over if he cannot be quiet from the particular distance. Remember, you should reward your dog for good behavior in situations where he CAN be quiet. DO NOT put your dog in situations where he cannot be quiet as you are setting him up to fail. Make sure the treats you are using are valued by your dog; if not, you may need to try another treat or even a toy. You want to teach him the behavior you expect through positive means (treat, pets, toys), instead of any type of physical correction.

Chewing

Your pup is teething and chewing and chewing. To get through the teething stage, you must provide him with plenty of chew toys. Nylabones and Kongs are the recommended. Stuff your Kong with peanut butter or a specially manufactured treat made specifically to stuff into Kongs. Soak your Nylabone in bouillon flavored water. These can be given immediately or frozen and given later. Rope toys, fuzzy toys and the like are made from materials similar to everyday items like slippers, clothes, etc. Dogs do not know the difference between what he is supposed to chew and what he should not. Make sure your pup doesn't have access to items he is not allowed to chew. It is your responsibility to set him up to succeed. By leaving items out you don't want chewed, your pup will fail.

If you find your older dog is past the teething stage but still chewing, this would be indicative of boredom or stress. Alleviate this by spending more time exercising him and training him. Walking and playing with your dog will make him less likely to chew. The exercise and play will not only benefit your dog but you, as well. To aid your dog when he wants to chew, provide him with suitable chew toys such as Nylabones and Kongs and lastly, crate him if you cannot supervise him.

Digging

Digging is a common problem that dog owners face. You need to determine what is causing the behavior and then work on those issues. As with other issues, it is important to praise the behavior you want instead of "correcting" the inappropriate behaviors. Attempting to correct the behavior after the fact is a waste of time. If you correct your dog for digging every time you come home, he will begin to associate your coming home negatively. If you see your dog digging, toss a shaker can to get his attention (soda can filled with a few coins). Make sure he does not see you toss the can; you do not want him to know you are responsible. Once you have your dog's attention, redirect him to another activity (playing, fetching, etc.). Praise your dog when you see him engaging in appropriate behaviors in your yard (playing, lounging, etc. . . . just not digging). Your dog will begin to understand what behaviors get him praise and what behaviors get him ignored (digging).

Fill the holes already dug daily with your dog's stool and lava rocks and cover it with about one inch of dirt. Your dog should not dig in this spot again. He should stop digging or he will move to another spot. If he does, cover those holes the same way. After a few weeks, the dog should stop digging. Do not let the dog see you filling the holes. Also, do not let your dog see you digging in your yard or garden; your dog will "follow the leader" and assume this is acceptable behavior.

If your dog is digging to find a cool spot, give your dog more options. Install an awning, get him a fan, provide an area he can go to with A/C, get him a kiddie pool (fill with 1 to 2 inches of water), etc. . . . If he has options for staying, he should not dig.

If your dog is digging out of boredom, it is because he is not getting enough exercise. The more energy you can help him expend, the less likely he will want to dig. Try taking him for a walk in the morning if you must leave him alone the rest of the day. Hide three toys along with treats around the yard daily, especially in the places he normally digs. The next day, hide three new toys and treats (take up the toys and uneaten treats from the previous day). Rotate the toys (three per day), ensuring the same toys are not offered on consecutive days. Also, be sure you are feeding your dog a premium dog food. Lesser quality foods are loaded with sugars that give your dog more energy.

If your dog is digging to escape, attempt to make your yard a positive place; a place of enjoyment. Play with your dog in the yard, give your dog interactive toys while in the yard, feed your dogs in the yard, etc. . . .

If your dog is digging because of separation anxiety, do not address the digging but the separation anxiety itself. How do you know if the dog has separation anxiety? If you leave your house for 15-20 minutes, return and your dog is digging frantically, chewing inappropriate items, scratching to get in the door or barking and howling, your dog could have separation anxiety. Consult a professional dog trainer for help.

Conclusion

Most new Saint owners have an expectation of what they want their new puppy to become. The problem is they either do not know what to do or are not willing to put in the time and effort required to do so.

It is up to you to ensure your Saint becomes a well-rounded, happy, integral part of your family through proper crate and house training, grooming, good nutrition, exercise, socialization and much more. It requires consistency, effort and patience, to name a few, on your part, but will be well worth it. It is your responsibility to ensure your new family member has the best life possible.