

Puppyhood: Immaturity vs. Capability *(continued from page 6)*

When a puppy has been totally controlled, it will grow up thinking that everything they do will be directed by a human — they will always look to that person and wait for directions.

This is great for an obedience dog but not what we're looking for in a gun dog.

We'd rather have an independent dog that will go after a crippled bird on its own as opposed to a dog that waits for us to tell it what to do and where to go to find that wounded game. We want a trained dog that can and will think.

Fostering leadership



Teaching puppies to relax on the chain sets the tone for later education by showing them how to accept restraint and be content wherever they have to be.

The kind of control we do want with our puppies is leadership. Dogs, just like people, need and want to have structure in their lives. They want to belong to the pack. Puppies, just like people, want to look up to and follow a leader who is confident, efficient, consistent, and organized. This gives them a feeling of security.

What can we do to encourage this feeling of leadership? Puppies want to learn, and the basis for their thinking for the rest of their lives is formed during the first six months.

If a puppy thinks it can do what it wants, whenever it wants, with whatever it wants at three months of age, it will have the same thoughts as a three year old adult dog. Our leadership begins with making our puppy secure with our control.

The best way to start this process is by simply holding your puppy. When we pick up a puppy, we cradle it gently in our arms. Usually the pup will wriggle and squirm, and while they do, we simply continue to hold them, gently yet firmly. It's not necessary to say or do anything else at this moment; just let the pup work it out while you hold it. Once the puppy settles down and is quiet and still, we will gently set it down. This teaches the puppy at a very early age that we are the Alpha in their pack, and they will submit

to our leadership.

Another important step in asserting our leadership is teaching puppies not to jump up on us. Jumping is a form of dominant behavior, and while it may be cute at three months and a few pounds, it's a nuisance at three years and 80 pounds!

Our preferred way of eliminating the jumping is to tap, very gently, on the toes of the hind feet as the puppy starts to jump up. Don't try to step hard or squash their toes; the objective is respect, not pain. After a few episodes of this, your puppy will come close to you and pause, waiting for you to reach for it, without jumping up. We start this at eight weeks, since it is much easier to prevent a bad habit than fix one later.

If we are consistently calm and steady in our behavior around our puppies, they will become secure in our leadership. If something happens that frightens them, use the same calming technique we described above. Don't overreact or panic, since an out-of-control leader is the last thing they need at that moment.

Often, if something is new or scary, your puppy will look to you to see how you are reacting, and will take their cue from you. If you act confident, they will be confident. Even if you are nervous about something, don't let on that you feel that way. Always act as if everything is fine. On the other hand, if you tell your pup by your actions and attitude that the world is a scary place, you will raise a spooky puppy.

The chain gang



This little guy is perfectly content to be right where he is. Note the relaxed facial expression and the position of the tail — this is a happy and confident pup!

Puppies can learn to be tied on the chain gang as early as eight weeks. This is usually the first time they are restricted; but given time to adjust, they will learn that being restricted is okay and that life can be an adventure wherever they are.

Another valuable training tool that can be utilized is the puppy dragline.

This is a short piece of rope about three feet long attached to a correctly fitted collar, or it can be tied around the puppy's neck, fitted the same as a collar so it can't slip off. (Never use a slipknot that can tighten and choke!)

The line allows the puppy freedom to roam around, while at the same time get-

ting it used to having a rope around its legs and the feel of a pull on the neck.

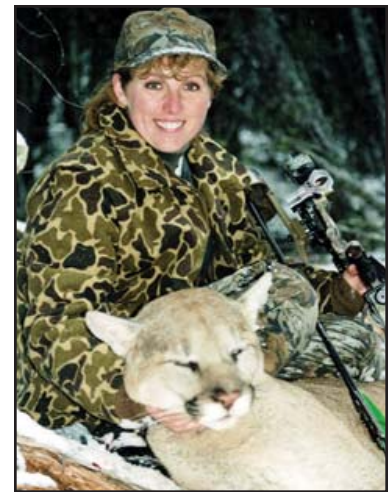
Puppies in a group will lead-break one another, since the dragging rope is just begging to be picked up and pulled on; few pups can resist the temptation to grab that rope as it goes past them. They have a good time and a big adventure while learning that a tug on their neck means give in, go along. This makes leading lessons much easier, since the pups don't intimidate one another when playing this little game.

As you train your new puppy, have realistic expectations and make plans in small steps, with the final goal in mind. Don't expect mature behavior in an immature dog.

Let your puppy have a childhood full of leadership, learning, and fun, and your final product will be a dog that thinks but has its energy channeled into working within a successful pack, with you as the leader. The genetics are pre-programmed into our pups, but we are solely responsible for the rest.

Our goal is to utilize and make the most of all the potential that is bred into our puppies, with the end product being a gun dog that will do us proud.

- Sharon Potter
www.redbranchkennels.com



Boykin Spaniel Grooming Directions

Step 1. Make sure that your dog has been bathed within the last 24 hours and is thoroughly dry. Use a dog shampoo with a color enhancer or a good oatmeal shampoo. Use a dog conditioner all over the dog's coat to enhance to shine and feel. Make sure both shampoo and conditioner are thoroughly rinsed from the coat.

2. Top Coat: You will need clippers and a #10 blade. (Oster makes an affordable clipper and I encourage you to invest in a good brand of clippers. Expect to pay at least \$100.00. Start at the neck and continue to the base of the tail and down the sides even with the elbows. Shave in the direction of hair growth. Use a stripping knife (PetEdge.com) to blend in the feathering on the sides and loin area.

3. Feet: Remove all hair between the pads on the bottom of the feet. A pair of blunt curved shears and toe clippers are needed. First clip the nail being very careful not to hit the quick. Trim the hair from the sides of the feet. Brush the hair on the top of the feet in the direction of growth and trim the tops of the feet of any unruly hairs that may stick out.

4. Clipper cutting: Use your clippers with a #10 blade against the growth of the hair on the sides of the face from the cheek bone to the end of the muzzle. Clipper the top of the muzzle against the growth. Clipper the top of the head against the growth direction and 1/3 the distance down the ears in the opposite direction of hair growth. Clipper the neck area opposite the growth direction from the breastbone to the chin. Blend in any rough edges with the stripping knife.

5. Finishing touches: Clipper under the nail in the opposite direction of hair growth. Use a stripping stone (petEgde.com) to blend in any unruly edges. The final appearance should look smooth. There should be no hair hanging off the end of the tail or under the tail.

REMEMBER ~ THE BOYKIN SPANIEL HAS BEEN APPROVED TO ADVANCE TO THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB MISC. CLASS, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2008.



Cutter



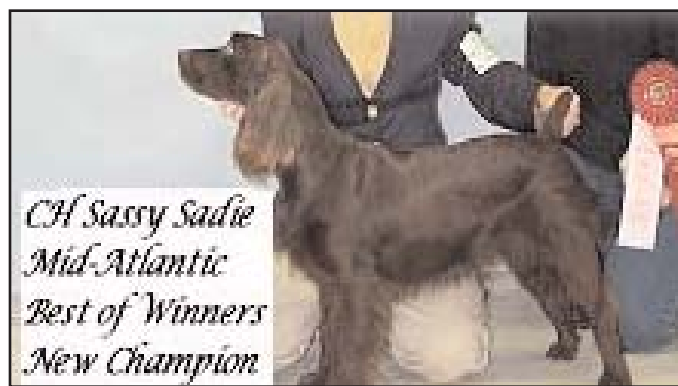
Cocoa



Bailey



Surfer



*CH Sassy Sadie
Mid-Atlantic
Best of Winners
New Champion*