

- Although feeding time is important, it's also vital to include petting, talking and playing, in order to help your puppy build good "people skills." Well socialized mothers are more likely to have well socialized puppies. Puppies "feed" off of their mothers' calm or fearful attitude toward people.
- Puppies are usually weaned at six or seven weeks, but are still learning important skills as their mother gradually leaves them more and more. Ideally, puppies should stay with their littermates (or other role model dogs) for 8 to 12 weeks.
- Puppies separated from their littermates too early often don't develop appropriate "social skills," such as learning how to send and receive signals, what an "inhibited bite" means, how far to go in play wrestling and so forth. Play is important to help puppies increase their physical coordination, social skills and learning limits.
- Skills not acquired during the first eight weeks may be lost forever. While these stages are important and fairly consistent, a dog's mind remains receptive to new experiences and lessons well beyond puppy hood. Most, dogs are still puppies, in mind and body, through the first two years.

The following chart provides general guidelines for the stages of development.

0 - 2 weeks = Neonatal

- Most influenced by their mother
- Touch and taste present at birth

2 - 4 weeks = Transitional

- Most influenced by their mother and littermates
- Eyes open, teeth erupt, hearing and smell developing
- Beginning to stand, walk a little, wag, and bark
- By four or five weeks, sight is well developed

2 -12 weeks = Socialization

- During this period, puppies need opportunities to meet people and other puppies when they have received the appropriate vaccination
- By four to six weeks they're most influenced by their littermates and are learning about being a dog
- From 4 to 12 weeks they're most influenced by their littermates and people. They're also learning to play, including social skills, inhibited bite, social structure/ranking and physical coordination.
- By 3 to 5 weeks they're developing curiosity and exploring new experiences. They need positive "people" experiences during this time.
- By 7 to 9 weeks they're refining their physical skills/coordination (including housetraining) and full use of senses
- By 8 to 10 weeks they experience real fear – when puppies can be alarmed by normal objects and experiences and need positive training
- By 9 to 12 weeks they're refining reactions, social skills (appropriate interactions) with littermates and are exploring the environment, spaces and objects. Beginning to focus on

people. This is a good time to begin training; most classes require proof of the second set of vaccinations to start class.

3 – 6 months = Ranking

- Teething (and associated chewing)
- At 4 months they experience another fear stage

6 – 18 months = Adolescence

- Most influenced by humans and other dogs in your home
- At 7 to 9 months they go through a second chewing phase – part of exploring territory
- Heightened exploration of boundaries, including challenging humans
- If not spayed or neutered, beginnings of sexual behaviour

Puppy classes are VERY important

- To register for a class it is typical that you need to show that your puppy has received their 2nd sets of shots. Puppies can start at 10 weeks of age.
- In a puppy class your puppy can develop “bite inhibition” when playing with other puppies, it will also help your relationship develop with your puppy
- The Calgary Humane Society offers “Precocious Puppies” a six week course for puppies. You can register in person at the Calgary Humane Society or online at www.calgaryhumane.ca