**Raising a French Bulldog Puppy**

**By Errol Tooth - Gesundheit Kennels**

In my humble opinion there is only one thing cuter than a french bulldog and that is a french bulldog puppy! I remember getting my first puppy and seeing those cute eyes and oversized ears and watching how she waddled when walking. Then of course there was the personality, outrageously confident for such a small thing yet still hesitant and looking back for reassurance. As a breeder of frenchies I always get asked by people who adopt my pups what they need to do. With this in mind I have decided to write this article as a simple guide in raising a frenchie within the first 3 months after receiving him/her. There will naturally be a lot of similarities in raising any young puppy but with frenchies due to their physique and personality I hope to give you a bit more specific guidance.

In raising and caring for any puppy there are basically 2 elements that need to be taken care of, the soft side being emotional and mental development and the physical side being things such as food, medicine and shelter etc. The former is probably the trickier so lets start with the physical side which everyone is able to grasp quickly:

**1) Crating**

In my opinion everyone should crate their frenchie puppy when they received them. Why? because like raising a young child every puppy needs a place that they feel safe. See it the same way as a child having their own bed and bedroom. A place where they can go that they know is his/her place to rest, recover and feel secure. It provides the puppy with their own little house within a house. A crate also is going to play a strong part in the toilet training process in the sense that the puppy will try it darnest not soil their crate.

Remember to make the crate comfortable with a nice futon like cushion so it keeps your frenchie warm and cosy and did I mention toys? Yes some toys! Your frenchie needs some to keep it occupied. Make sure the toy has nothing that can be easy bitten off and swallowed to avoid choking. The other thing I find useful is to cover the crate's top, back and sides so it gives the impression of walls i.e. security.

**2) Toilet training**

This is probably the most testing part for puppy owners and more so for those who have not had a dog before. I have to say though with frenchies they learn really quick and the process is not as bad as it could be. Remember a puppy still has a weak bladder so you need to make sure you are like clockwork and take the puppy outside to do its business at regularly scheduled intervals. Even if you think they don't want to go, be clockwork. It will save you from having to clean the carpet and also help the puppy develop the habit of once it goes outside it pees or poos. Its also important that you let the puppy walk itself out. Its tempting to carry him/her out to go to the toilet but the puppy will never learn to go up to the door and therefore give you an indication it wants to go. When the puppy does its business, praise, praise, praise! Make it an enjoyable process for him/her.

**3) Exercise**

Lucky for us Frenchies don't need a lot of exercise (quite different from being occupied) and as a puppy because of their stocky build you need to go easy. This is so that their bones can set. In these first 6 months sleep is a priority, much like a young child sleep promotes growth and mental well being. 30 minute walks a day under the age of 6 months is fine. Try to avoid letting your Frenchie jump off anything high. This to avoid any sprains, dislocations or heaven forbid broken legs. Once you are beyond that point then you can up the activity but go easy - no jogging with you and please take into account summer weather. You do not want to overheat your puppy or dog.

**4) Diet**

The most important part of any growing puppy. Like an army the Frenchie marches on its stomach, at this age nearly all puppies can eat anything however as they get older Frenchies have a tendency to develop food allergies. There are a couple things that most people should consider when choosing the food for your puppy and eventual little companion: 1) Your lifestyle and 2) Your budget. I know a lot of you will think that if you have a Frenchie there is no budget but we all have budgets and lifestyles to take into account.

There are 2 options when it comes to food for frenchies: The raw diet or dried kibble.The raw diet is as the name suggest feeding your dog a diet of raw meat. There are many articles on this outlining the benefits and risk of going raw and I will not go into the detail as there has been a question asked on this FB group with many responses. I will say though that in regards to feeding a puppy my preference is for using a kibble (grain free such as GO, Orijen, Nutrience, Addiction etc) as 1) I do not need to worry about adding supplements to balance the diet e.g. phosphorus, calcium, oil etc. 2) I do not need to worry about bits of bone in the food which can be lethal to a young pup or dog for that matter 3) it suits my lifestyle. This is my preference though and some of you out there I know are strong advocates of raw for your guys and I understand that but if you are going to go raw make sure you do your research as to where you will get your supply and make sure you do not be tempted to mix raw food with dried kibble because you run out of one or the other. The two diets cannot be mixed as they have different digestive times and the last thing you want is for raw food to be sitting in you puppies gut building up bacteria!

The next question is how often do I feed my puppy? This depends on the food you are feeding and all dog food packs will have a guideline and you should follow this as the manufacturer will know the protein content of their kibble.

**5) Rest and Sleep**

All Frenchies love to sleep and your puppy more so! Please don't be alarmed if your puppy sleeps most of the day they are just building up their strength and much like a baby or toddler they need that sleep to grow and be healthy. The tempting thing is always to touch your bundle of joy but please let them sleep. When they want to play they will let you know. So my rule here is leave them alone and LET THEM SLEEP!

**6) Puppy school training & Socializing**

If you have never owned a dog or even if you consider yourself a "professional dog owner" I highly recommend going to a puppy school. The reason for this is two fold. One is that you and your little friend will develop a bond of trust during the training process where you will guide him/her and reward her and then the socialization with other dogs and people.

A puppy school will help you teach your little guy basic skills like lead walking, "stay" on command and recall. These are fundamental for later having a great dog and making your life easy which trust me is a god send when you take your dog out. Have you ever seen a badly behaved dog? If not I suggest you do, you will see the dog out of control and the owner stressed. Why do I think this is important because a well mannered dog makes a dog owners life easy and the long term ownership easy. As a dog breeder I have heard too many stories of people getting dogs and then because they have not spent the time to train their dog adopt him out because "he is uncontrollable" - what a load of rubbish! Like children if you invest the time now in teaching your puppy good habits and manners you will be rewarded when they get older.

I won't recommend in this article any particular puppy school but if you ask questions to people on this site you will get responses and recommendations.

Socialisation - I cannot emphasize this enough. A puppy who has been well socialized will grow up to be a great dog. They will have no fear and importantly will not act out aggressively when approached. They will have been socialized enough to know that when approached not to bite or bark. So how do you socialize your puppy and when should I do it? As a general rule the socialization process can begin publicly once your puppy has completed its series of shots. For those of you who have a backyard and who has a friend with a dog (who has all its shots) you can actually begin socializing your puppy with your friends dog straight away. Here the puppy will learn the rules of play from the older dog and what it can and cannot do. What about people touching your puppy? This can begin as soon as you get your puppy. Allowing people to touch your puppy will make your puppy comfortable being handled and use to getting touched and stroked by strangers (and trust me I have never ever not seen a frenchie puppy attract a crowd! So the sooner the little guy gets use to it the better). One thing I will stress is to not allow people who do not know how to handle a puppy to hold your guy from a height because if they drop him he is likely to break a leg and the healing process at this age can be tricky. So handle with care!!

One thing that was told to me with regards to socializing puppies is to turn them on their back, what this does is make them to be submissive. Its a good trick and has helped me.

I hope this primer is useful and please feel free to ask any questions.

**Errol**

**Gesundheit Kennel**

**October 2017**