***Bringing Home Your New Puppy***

As our puppies head to their new homes we always like to touch base on a common issue that breeders come across with new owners. **REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS**…

You go to the breeder's home. The pups are all social, they are quiet in the pen, the breeder shows you videos of them being totally relaxed etc. Everything looks amazing and you bring your puppy home. Then reality hits. The puppy may cry in the crate for the first few nights making you tired and agitated. The happy social puppy is refusing to greet the half dozen overly excited friends you invited over to see your new puppy. The puppy refuses to walk on a leash. Many are wondering “how did my perfect puppy turn into a nightmare?!”.

With that being said, let's discuss realistic expectations of when a puppy goes home. First of all, the puppy has been in the breeder's home since birth. They had their mother and often littermates with them 24/7. They had their routine, were taught expectations and were completely in their comfort zone. Now suddenly they are taken to a totally new environment. Picture yourself being dropped into an unknown country, in a different part of the world. You know only a few words of their language. Different trees, animals, smells, temperature and people. Now in the middle of this we are switching up your routine, decide to have a party with people you don't know, and ask you to do jobs you have no idea about. Overwhelming to say the least.

This is what every puppy goes through when going to their new home. Stress manifests in different forms. From not eating, reluctance to play and greet people. Being apprehensive at the vet’s office or as strangers reach for them. Diarrhea, vomiting and depression can occur.

***So what can you as a new owner do to help your little one acclimate?***

- Be patient! Most puppies take 3-4 weeks to acclimate to their new home. Repeat after me THREE to FOUR WEEKS! Not a 1-2 days. I can’t stress this enough about how much time is needed for a dog or puppy to feel comfortable in their new home!

- Limit guests during the first week. We understand you are excited to show off your new baby but they need time to adjust. Plan on waiting 1-2 weeks before inviting people over. Ask guests to sit on the ground and let the puppy approach them. No squealing and grabbing the puppy

- Set up a good routine

- Restrict the puppy to a small area of the house. This not only reduces them being overwhelmed but also allows you to watch them

- Don’t expect a 8-14 week old puppy to walk on a leash. Instead work at home with a leash where they are comfortable. Let them drag the leash, use treats to encourage them to walk with you

- If your puppy refuses to walk, give them time. Most of my first trips to town with puppies take quite a while; a walk around a small block can take 1 1/2 hours sometimes. We only move when they initiate the movement as they need time to take in the different environment

- Understand that your puppy needs time to see you as family. Expecting an immediate bond is unrealistic

- Train your puppy 2-3 times a day. This not only helps you to bond but also helps the puppy to look to you for direction and input. You don’t need to have super long training sessions right away. Start with 5 minutes at a time and increase the time as they grow.

- And again… Be patient. Don’t declare “omg there’s something wrong with this dog”. Nothing occurs overnight. Outings should be planned at puppy speed. So while you might imagine a fun walk around the lake in reality your puppy might only be able to handle walking a short distance that day.

Most outings for me take a long time, as you are often just standing still as the puppy cautiously explores the new environment. Patience is key!

Remember if the puppy was wonderful at the breeder’s house but now is struggling, you as the owner, need to help the puppy adjust which takes time, patience and training. Have realistic expectations and give the puppy positive experiences. Each puppy is an individual, don’t compare your current puppy to past pets and judge their behavior based on how another dog handled things. Lastly, try to see things from a puppy’s perspective, put yourself in their paws and adjust situations accordingly.