

# New Pup Coming...

## NOW WHAT?

by Ed Bailey

**M**aybe this is going to be your first pup, the one you have waited forever to get. Or maybe this is the pup to replace your aging hunter who's looking at his last field seasons. Either way, you should be prepared for what surely will be coming down the pipe.

Because you are a sincere, dedicated-to-the-new-dog person, you will have done all your homework. You will have selected the breed and the line within that breed best suited to your lifestyle and manner of hunting, and you will have waited patiently for your pup to be born. Then you will also have checked in with the breeder to make sure the dam and her pups were given the best possible care.

Trying not to be a pain in the breeder's butt, you will have ensured he allows enough time for primary socialization of pups with mother and each other, and that he did a complete job of secondary socialization with adequate people contact. And you will have made sure he has challenged the pups physically and mentally so the pups will be able to cope with whatever life throws at them. Everything should be perfect!

However, there is another thing you should have done. If at all possible, you should have made sure the pup had an olfactory imprint of you before it reaches the age when fear develops. Fear is not present in newborn pups; it develops slowly at first, starting in the fifth week. It increases gradually during the sixth week and then really escalates in the seventh week to reach a level state by the tenth. Therefore, as the potential owner you should have gone to the breeder during the fifth



An olfactory imprint in this 5-1/2-week-old German wirehair means a permanent, positive association with the owner-to-be.

or early part of the sixth week and got right in there handling, fondling and cuddling the pups, especially those you favor as possible keepers, making sure the "possible" pups get a good smell-picture of you firmly imprinted in their developing brains.

The smell imprint of you and the low fear level will become instantly associated, and your smell will be forever associated with low fear, low anxiety. To the pup, from then on and for the rest of its life, your smell will always mean "nothing to fear here" and smelling you will always be a positive reinforcement.

This is the initial step in bonding, establishing a whole load of rapport between you and your dog. And rapport between you and your

dog is most of the battle won right up front. Training will be just that much easier. It really doesn't matter how many people the pup of your choice smells during this critical time because he can easily accommodate them all. Obviously you don't take the pup home at this time; that will come in four or five weeks.

Though the first visit at the pre-fear age is the most important time, another visit or two will strengthen the imprint and help the pup (you've now narrowed down your choices) associate a visual cue and the sound of your voice with the imprinted smell of you. The pup will know you and be comfortable with you, and the trauma of leaving his home for yours will be minimal.



*Obedience training  
Dad's Labrador pup should be a family affair—all members of the family should get involved in the training, and they should consistently enforce all commands.*

If you don't believe the smell imprint is important and permanent, think of those imprints you have. Who doesn't smell Yardley's Old English Lavender and associate it with a visit to Grandmother? Every grandmother I ever knew used that soap, and smelling it even 40 years or so later will take you back to when you were two or three years old and there was Gramma. This is how potent it is in people, and a dog gets a whole lot more through his nose than we do.

But now the pup is in your house, so the ball is pretty much in your court, as it were. Now only you can build on the potential that was bred in from the sire, dam and all the ancestors. This potential was nurtured by your visits, and by the efforts of the breeder in giving the pups a jump-start at life. (For more information on the latter, see "Giving Pups a Head Start" in the April/May 1999 issue.) You now can build on that potential and have your heaven-sent dog, or you can screw up royally and end up with the hound from hell. A third possibility, and perhaps the one most likely, is that you can wind up somewhere in between.

You owe it to yourself, to the breeder and most of all to the dog to make every effort to get up there on the heaven-sent end of the scale. If

this is your first dog and it will be your only dog for the next 10 years or so, your problems will be only slightly less than if you already have a live-in dog. But either way, you can expect some problems if you don't head them off from day one and consistently from then on.

You will have read—no, *studied*—a good book to prepare for the pup. It will tell you how to crate-train, housebreak and feed your pup, and it will give you early training regimens. It will be a world of help for anticipating the normal problems and will go far in smoothing out some pretty big bumps. The one book I would recommend over all others for giving you and your pup a level playing field is *How to Help Gun Dogs Train Themselves*, written by Joan Bailey and published by Swan Valley Press. It is advertised in the classified section of this magazine and is endorsed by a lot of very knowledgeable dog people. But no book I know of will prepare you for all of the things that *might* occur to turn a potential heaven-sent angel into a hound from hell. That's what we will talk about here.

Chances are that you are a one-dog-at-a-time hunter and a family-

type guy, so the dog will live in the home as a part of the family. He will eat, sleep, play, be trained and in general learn everything in the home. What he learns about living with the family and how he responds to the learning will determine whether he will be a dog you can live with or one you would rather live without.

To live in the home, your dog must indeed become a part of the family. That means, as you will learn from a good book, he must have his personal place in the home. But what the books don't tell you is that he also must have his place in the social order of things. He must have his place just as the husband, the wife, the kids, visiting relatives and friends and neighbors have their place in the order of things.

His place in this ordered social group, or his rank if you prefer, must be well established early, as in day one. The way he is treated must be according to his rank and it must be consistent. He cannot be given preferential treatment one time by one person, and then be clobbered the next time for exactly the same thing by someone else, or by the same person, either, for that matter.

The family must decide who is going to be number one in the order—the overall boss, the head trainer of both dog and people. Usually we think that this is the man of the house. Never mind who it really is, just pretend it's the man for the sake of this article and that the wife is second in command. Next come the children, the older over the younger. The youngest child is the low guy on the totem pole. Then comes the dog. He won't be content with this role very long and as he matures, he will be challenging those above him more aggressively, starting with the one(s) closest in the rank order.

This aggressiveness can escalate as happened near here a week ago. A young child got chewed up when a babysitting grandmother left a baby in a crib alone with two family dogs. In this case one dog was older than the other and both were reputed to be friendly, well trained, well adjusted dogs. The child is still alive, but in serious condition in Sick Kids, the very well known



*The older resident dog will always be dominant over the new pup at the beginning, but the owner must make sure it stays that way.*

children's hospital in Toronto. The child was perceived as a threat to the younger, more subordinate dog who wasn't really aware of the rules about people and dogs.

To keep things smooth and well oiled in the home, the person in charge must set out the rules and must train each person in the family in how to handle the dog, precisely what to do when, and how to do it. That assumes the boss knows what to do, and if he doesn't, he must either get help and so find out what to do, or let someone else in the family set the rules. Or if time is a major factor, and there just isn't enough for him to do the job, he should be smart enough and secure enough to delegate the job to whomever can do it.

But let's assume all the ducks are lined up and the man at the top of the order has a plan for making this the best, most balanced pup this side of wherever the Pecos is. He has read the best books, attended dog handling seminars given by qualified obedience trainers, carefully separated the real from the mythical (which was not exactly the words that first came to mind), and was endowed with a reasonable amount of common sense.

First, he must include every

member of the family in the plan, or at least all those old enough and large enough to participate. Pre-walking children and toddlers are pretty much exempt from walking the dog or teaching it how to behave around visitors, but the dog must be aware that even though he can "take" these little tykes, he never is allowed to. Each person should be trained in how the dog is to be trained, starting with housebreaking and kennel training, feeding, playing and going for brisk walks on the leash.

And each person must participate in the training so he or she not only knows how it is to be done, but does it. These normal obedience things must be done in a coordinated, organized way so each person is asserting his/her position relative to the pup-soon-to-become-a-bigger-stronger-dog. If the order is not established in your favor, the pup will soon establish it in his.

Never should the pup become a source of contention or a prize for one child or another, or adults

either. Saying something like "...if you are a good boy, you can play with the puppy" sets up the pup as something special, and any pup quickly picks up on it. After two or three times the pup realizes he is special and he will use the newfound power to raise his status in the dominance ordering. But this is only one way a pup can climb the ordering ladder; there are many others.

We need to take a lesson from the wild canids like the timber wolf. The dominance order of the adults over the pups starts early and is maintained and reinforced frequently throughout the youngster's life. So must it be with a pup. He must be subordinate to everyone until the next pup comes along, when he will move up from lowest to second from the bottom. But if a new child comes along, the dog must move down one step.

The dog should not be beaten, subdued or cowed in any way. He should be secure in his place in the family and that place must be the most subordinate member of the group. Consistency is the best way to keep the dog secure. Inconsistent treatment keeps him confused and stressed. In the worst case scenario, inconsistent treatment of a pup leads to his becoming a loose cannon; at best, he is then a dog with minor or not so minor behavior problems.

But what if the pup is to be the replacement for the aging Queen or King stretched out before you keeping your feet warm on a February night?



*Adult resident dogs need preferential treatment from the outset so the new, incoming pup knows his status and is secure in it.*

Simple. The boss man must lay down the decision that the new pup is not to be favored over the old dog. This is tough love and is difficult even for the most hard-hearted. It may be impossible for the more easily manipulated.

Initially the 10-week-old pup will be so far subordinate to the oldster there will be no conflict. However, if the pup is getting all the attention, all the ooo's and aah's while the old boy or girl is being treated as a second class citizen, the pup will start taking over. By the time puberty arrives he will be making some pretty dangerous take-over moves, and he will be doing it with your backing. Soon he will be picking fights with the old dog any time you or perhaps another member of your family is there to support him—to bolster his courage, so to speak.

At this point many owners—probably most, in fact—will mistake who is really the instigator and will even punish the old dog for picking on the poor little pup. The pup has used you as backup

and is now one step higher than he was. Depending on how aggressive your old dog is, he might become submissive in a passive way or at the other extreme could start a veritable bloodbath.

In the fall when you take them both to the game fields, you will find that not only do you not have the two great hunters you hoped for, you don't even have one. Old Dog will do everything wrong, partly out of cussedness and partly because you are not paying enough attention to him and he knows it. Meanwhile the competitive youngster messes up so badly he will make the old dog look good by comparison.

To avoid all of this, the pup must start second best and must stay that way. This becomes increasingly important as the pup approaches maturity. That means the pup must be trained to accept second place to Old Dog. This training starts with the introduction of the pup to its new house. Do it slowly, and don't rush either dog. When feeding times come feed Old Dog first, pup second.

At first pup will be fed three times a day and Old Dog only once. No problem; give Old Dog a third of his total daily ration at each of three feedings. But *always* feed Old Dog first. Jealousy is as real in dogs as it is in children and it can become just as destructive. It must be avoided, because if it's not it will become a very difficult problem, one that could take months to repair, and even then it will never be a fail-safe thing.

Sleeping arrangements must be considered and planned for well ahead of pup's arrival. The pup should be crate-trained as the older dog should have been. Minimally, each dog must have his own space, each his own bed in his own spot. Old Dog keeps his spot, and pup gets a spot of near-equal value—not one dog in a box in the garage and the other on the foot of somebody's bed.

Each member of the family must be trained to respect these "regulations." It's pretty difficult to keep the kids from the puppy. After all, he's one of them and they relate perfectly. To paraphrase a line from Dickens: "It is the best of times; it is the worst of times." But if you let it,

it will be just the worst of times. For that matter, it's tough to keep dear old dad from gushing all over the pup, having fantasies about future hunts while ignoring the old dog. It takes a really concerted effort.

Training, when the time comes for the real stuff, must follow the same plan. Old Dog comes first. Never mind that he already knows heel, whoa, down, fetch, sit and come; and can do all of that stuff in his sleep. When training pup, Old Dog should be run through his paces first, even something as elementary as walking at heel. Old Dog will be proud as punch to show you, and everyone else who is watching, how well he walks at heel, then will watch knowingly and quietly while pup struggles through it.

Carry the same program through to the hunting field. For at least the first year, take out Old Dog first, then take out the youngster. Don't hunt the two together until pup has developed the self-confidence to hunt on his own. Pair-working a youngster which you have deliberately trained to be the subordinate member of your team will result in him simply following Old Dog rather than developing his own style and at his own pace.

The most difficult scenario is introducing a same sex, nearly mature dog onto the turf of another dog already in residence. In this situation the owner must make the decision regarding which dog should be dominant and then rigidly follow the same path outlined for the introduction of a young dog into an older dog's domain.

This might require some very astute observations and evaluations of who is best suited to be "top dog." The body language can be very subtle and easily missed. There will be lots of jockeying for advantage and you, the owner, knowingly or not and wittingly or not, will be the prize of contention.

It is an awesome responsibility and you will have to rise to it. You must be sure the new dog has his place in the physical or geographical sense, but you must be doubly sure he has his place equally well established in the social ordering as well. Get it right and you can live peacefully. Get it wrong and there is hell to pay. □

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