



Paw Prints

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Columnist

Bringing home puppy

Bringing a new puppy into your home will change your life forever. Puppies are definitely a lot of work, but can also bring plenty of joy to you and your family's world. Raising a puppy takes lots of preparation, practice and patience, plus a good dose of common sense. It can be a rewarding experience, but also pretty exhausting.

Much like human babies, a puppy needs love, attention and playtime. She also needs potty training, vaccinations and toys that she can chew on.

When you first arrive home, your puppy may feel a little apprehensive and will be missing the companionship of her mom and littermates. To help make her transition stress-free, let your puppy explore her surroundings at her own pace. It's very important to supervise her at all times, even if you've puppy-proofed your home.

Kevin and Debbie Dyer,

of Ponderosa Properties, recently became pet parents to an eight-week-old Keeshond puppy. They have had Keeshonds before, but it's been a decade since they've raised one from puppyhood.

The Keeshond is an old dog breed, once a companion and watchdog on the barges and boats that traveled the canals and rivers of Holland in the 17th and 18th centuries, but almost exclusively a companion dog today. Keeshonds are people-lovers willing to participate in all family activities.

The Dyers' puppy, Gracie, came from a huge litter of 10 pups. This is their first female, and she chose them.

The first night in her new home, Gracie missed all her littermates. She had a nice comfortable bed of her own, but wasn't accustomed to her new surroundings yet. When Gracie cried, the Dyers took turns comforting her. And now, one month later at 12 weeks, she sleeps through the night. Gracie is being supervised at all times by her pet parents, but they found that she can run off lickety-split.

While everyone's lifestyle is different, try to put together a consistent schedule for you and your puppy to follow. Consistency and routine will work in your favor, and your puppy's, when it comes to reliable housebreaking, nap times and play times.

The Dyers are consistent pet parents, and Gracie is on a daily routine. Since puppies have small stomachs and need to eat small portions three or

four times a day. Gracie eats breakfast, lunch and dinner the same time each day.

Within a few days of taking your new puppy home, you should bring her to your veterinarian for a general exam and to start on vaccinations. Your vet can help identify any potential health issues early on, and advise you on caring for your puppy long-term.

Gracie had her health checkup and is now on the second round of vaccinations.

Housebreaking is one of the first things you will teach your new puppy. This process can sometimes be quite difficult, though some puppies catch on earlier than others. You should begin house-training as soon as you bring your puppy home, but it takes patience. Puppies are generally not able to control their bladders and bowels until about 12 weeks of age. If your puppy is younger than this, please be patient. Starting early can help get your puppy on a routine.

Gracie began learning to go potty outside right away, every two hours to begin with, and as she matured, she could go longer without an accident. At 12 weeks, Gracie is almost completely housebroken thanks to consistency, and being carefully monitored at all times.

Although it's essential to consistently supervise your puppy during the house-training process, there's bound to be a time when you must leave her home alone for a few hours. Walk your puppy

about one hour before leaving her alone. Take her outside so she can go potty and play a game of fetch or chase to get any excess energy out before you leave. Or you might recruit a puppy-sitter to stay with her for those few hours.

The Dyers have decided not to leave Gracie alone just yet. She goes to work with them every day at Ponderosa Properties. Gracie is also being socialized while spending time at work with her pet parents. Right now the Dyers' schedule is wrapped around Gracie's needs.

The bond you have with your puppy begins the moment he comes into your life and never stops growing. You can nurture this bond through affection, training, grooming, playtime, general exercise and participation in various activities. It's important to spend quality time with your puppy, and though your daily routine will normally be a few walks, and some play, why not make things exciting on occasion by going on an adventure?

Gracie goes on walks and loves to play outside; she enjoys meeting new people wherever she goes. So far one of Gracie's favorite experiences is going to Hoodoo and sliding down a snowy hill on

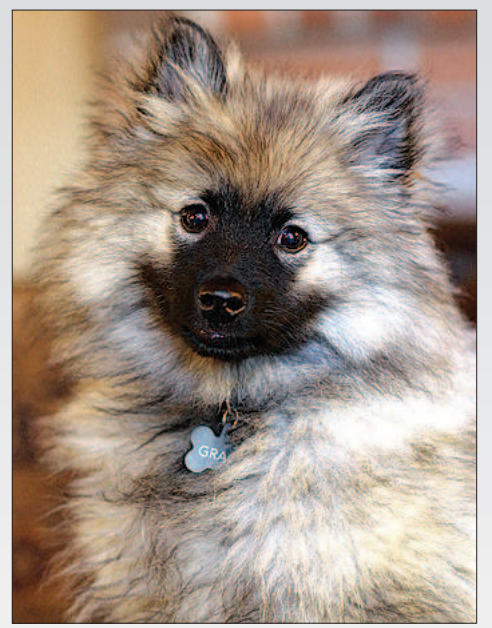


PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Gracie, a Keeshond puppy.

her belly.

Chewing is a very normal behavior for puppies and dogs of all ages. They do it out of pleasure, to relieve stress and to exercise their jaws and teeth. It is your responsibility as a pet parent to provide her with the things she can chew on, like her own special chew toys.

Gracie has a toy-box full of toys to play with and to chew on. The Dyers know how natural it is for puppies to want to chew. It's all about redirecting your puppy to chew what she is supposed to rather than the leg of your couch.

Becoming a new pet parent can be an extremely rewarding experience, but it also carries with it responsibility. A new puppy will become part of the family for her life and you will be responsible for her well-being.

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