

Bimberg Reg'd Boxers

Puppy Phases and Behavior

Fear Phases

Sometimes your puppy will go through fear periods. This is completely normal and can be easily overcome. One day your puppy will become terrified of something they have seen a dozen times. For example, your puppy could suddenly become terrified of the picnic table she has passed everyday for the last month on your daily walks. When this happens, resist the urge to pick up your puppy and comfort her, as this will only reinforce her fear. Cuddling her and soothing her tells her she had a reason to be afraid and exhibiting fear gets rewarded with affection. Instead, show your puppy how un-scary the picnic table is. Walk up to the item that frightens her and talk in cheerful and happy tones. Act as if the object of her fear is something new and exciting to discover. Touch the object and when she realizes it's safe and wanders over, reward her with lots of affection and cheers. Just remember, soothing a fear is bad, overcoming a fear is good!

Testing Boundaries

When puppies get settled into their new family they will often test boundaries to learn where they stand in the social order. These 'tests' come in repeat waves as they grow. There are many things you can do in your house to reinforce your role as the pack leader. Obedience training is a great way to build that type of relationship and puppy classes are a great first step. At home you can practice simple commands by incorporating them into daily activities. For example, teaching your puppy the 'wait' command is great. When you open the crate door, ask your puppy to 'wait' instead of barging through the door as soon as it's opened. Your puppy should wait for you to say 'ok let's go!' before rocketing out of her crate at super sonic speed. The same should go for doors. Tell your puppy to wait before you open a door. She should wait quietly until you say 'ok let's go!'. You can use the wait command for almost everything. It makes your puppy much better mannered and establishes you as the leader everyday. If you are feeding kibble, do not free feed but have scheduled feeding times. This also enforces leadership. Ask your puppy for a sit or a down before you give them a toy or their dinner. In the case of dinner in a crate, put your puppy in a sit stay outside the crate door. Place the food inside, wait a moment, and then say, "Ok, go kennel!" and your dog will rush inside his crate to eat his meal. It's not necessary to establish dominance in an aggressive way. Simple requests, a solid routine, and reinforcing manners all help to remind your puppy who's really in charge.

Fasting Phases

Occasionally your puppy may go through periods of self fasting, especially on a raw diet. When a puppy hits a growth spurt it is very common for them to lose their appetites for a few days. Do not let this behavior alarm you. Once they get over the growth spurt, they will attack their food with renewed vigor and will chow down anything they come across. The biggest thing to remember during this phase is not to alter your feeding routine. It can be very alarming to watch your puppy refuse food and drop a bit of weight and you may be tempted to offer your puppy repeat feedings. Do not alter your routine. Allow your puppy 15 mins to eat their meal. If they still have not eaten after 15 mins, take the meal away and wait until your next scheduled feeding. Altering your feeding schedule and offering meals too often will encourage picky eating habits. Timing meals and staying strong until their fast passes will encourage good eating habits and avoid creating a picky eater.