

# DOG STAR DAILY

## Unwanted Dogs

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At eight weeks of age, many puppies already have incipient or existing behavior and temperament problems. Most puppies are severely under-socialized, even though the Critical Period of Socialization is already nearly two thirds over. Few puppies are housetrained or chewtoy-trained and hardly any have been taught to come, sit and lie down. By the time they enter puppy class at 12-18 weeks of age, most puppies have already developed significant behavior and temperament problems that are already beginning to strain the puppy/owner relationship. Problems increase and rapidly worsen as the puppy collides with adolescence, whereupon many dogs are surrendered to shelters for rehoming.

### The Problems

The developmental course of behavior, temperament and training problems is all too common and usually starts with two simple problems — housesoiling and destructive chewing —two utterly predictable and easily preventable problems.

Puppies leave their original (breeder's) homes at eight weeks of age — when the Critical Period of Socialization is nearly two thirds completed. Certainly, many breeders do a brilliant job socializing, handling and training the young pups. However, some do not. Indeed, far too many eight-week-old puppies are un-socialized, un-housetrained, un-chewtoy-trained and haven't even been taught to sit or lie down. For many of these puppies, their future already looks bleak.



If not immediately trained in their new homes, the puppies will eliminate anywhere and everywhere and chew anything and everything (as they have become accustomed to doing in their previous home). Un-housetrained and destructive puppies are often relegated to the backyard by the time they are four to five months old. The puppies continue to eliminate and chew indiscriminately, and soon learn to learn to dig, bark and escape in their quest for some form of occupational therapy to pass the time of day when left in the yard alone. The lonely puppies become stressed and bored. When occasionally invited indoors, they are overcome with excitement and express their joy by enthusiastically circling, barking and jumping-up and so, they are invited indoors less frequently. When neighbors complain of the excessive barking, the dog, now a six-month-old adolescent, is further confined to the basement or garage. With nothing to do in solitary confinement, the dog destroys the basement. Living in social isolation, the dog begins to de-socialize and is now less inclined to want to greet his owners during their brief and increasingly infrequent visits. The dog becomes wary and harder to catch and may become agitated and snap and lunge if approached. By eight-months of age, the dog is abandoned or surrendered to a shelter to be re-homed.

Rehoming unwanted adult dogs is an extremely expensive, time consuming and labor intensive business. Also, rehoming is not always easy or successful. Many shelter dogs carry significant behavioral baggage from the lack of training in their previous home(s). Whereas most behavior problems may be resolved fairly quickly and easily with appropriate shelter training, dogs with temperament problems, such as anxiety, aggression, and universal fearfulness, often take months, or years, to rehabilitate.

For many unwanted shelter dogs, rehoming is simply not an option.

## The Solution

The time to rescue unwanted adult dogs is during puppyhood. All unwanted shelter dogs were once perfectly normal puppies. Friendly and mannerly (socialized and well-trained) puppies stay in their original homes and don't require rehoming

When choosing a puppy at eight weeks of age: owners must realize that all puppies are different. They may carefully choose one that is well-socialized and well trained, or they might select a "lemon" — a puppy that is already so developmentally retarded that they will be playing catch up for the rest of the dog's life.

At eight weeks of age, all puppies should be: well-socialized, especially to children, men and strangers; eager to approach; easily handled; housetrained and chewtoy-trained; and at the very least trained to come, sit, lie down, stand and rollover.

Having chosen a puppy at eight weeks of age: owners must appreciate the enormous urgency for the puppy's socialization and training over the next few weeks and months. There is so much to do and so little time to do it. The most pressing items on the puppy's educational agenda are: Socialization, socialization and socialization — especially with children, men and strangers; and errorless housetraining and chewtoy -training to prevent excessive barking and separation anxiety.

Regardless of breed or breeding, owners will make or break their puppy during his first couple of weeks and months at home. With timely and appropriate education and training, the puppy will survive, and thrive, to thoroughly enjoy spending his sunset years with his wonderful owners.

Obviously, some puppy owners will require much more guidance than that offered on dogSTARdaily.com, but at least access to dogSTARdaily will keep the puppy on the right track until the owners come under the expert tutelage of a trainer in puppy class.

Early socialization and education will not save every puppy but it will save most, keeping them in their original homes. And certainly, preventing problems during puppyhood is considerably easier and quicker and a whole lot more fun than the prospect of trying to rehabilitate and rehome an unwanted two-year-old dog that is universally fearful and snaps at strangers.

Please forward this pdf to every prospective and new puppy owner that you know. Thank you.

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