



Navarro Small Animal Clinic

5009 Country Club Dr. Victoria, TX 77904 361-573-2491

www.navarrosmallanimalclinic.com

The importance of socialization in dogs

By: Dr. Shana Bohac

As soon as your puppy has his last vaccination you may begin socialization. This is very important! You will want to introduce your dog to new people, places, and in a safe environment, other animals. Socialization is necessary for dogs of all ages, but the earlier you start the better. Experiences with other dogs and puppies help establish social boundaries that are very difficult to learn outside the animal community. Your puppy must feel safe and secure during exposure to new things. The benefit of early exposure helps the puppy be less fearful as an adult. Your dog will develop skills needed to cope with new situation, people, places, and other animals. This will help reduce your stress, as well as his. Socialized pets are friendlier, happier, and more predictable in communal settings.

There are some key things to remember when socializing your dog. Make sure you use a short lead. Avoid long, retractable leashes due to tangling and allowing loss of control. Always be alert and ready to step in to prevent any negative interaction. Always discourage any behavior that may be deemed aggressive, such as growling and lunging. It is very important to make sure that you socialize your puppy with vaccinated dogs and in a safe, monitored environment. Not all pet owners are as responsible as you; therefore their pets may not be vaccinated. If your pet is not fully vaccinated then you should avoid social settings such as pet stores, dog parks, nature trails, etc. Many diseases are spread via direct contact or by ingesting fecal material. Your pet's health should always come first.

It is imperative that you use common sense and be careful that all experiences are positive. Always keep your dog under control and stay aware of other dogs around you. Remember that not all pets will be friendly to a rambunctious puppy. You will want to carry a lot of treats for positive reinforcement. You will also want to keep the experience as upbeat as possible. Let your puppy approach new things on his own and don't force him into anything. If your dog begins to get anxious or overwhelmed then keep the visit short. Keep the experience light-hearted and enjoyable.

Some ideas for socializing your dog include enrolling in obedience class. Every dog should learn to be well behaved around other people and dogs. A structured class is a great environment for your dog to meet new friends as well as learn obedience skills. Local parks and pet stores are also a great place to meet people and pets. Nature trails are also an excellent place to exercise your dog.