

## Puppy Tales - Training begins.....

We now have a puppy, a Border Terrier, and with the resolution that this dog would be much better behaved than our previous dog, I contacted Lez Graham, who runs Trained For Life. A dog behaviour specialist and trainer, Lez offers puppy training, which involves visiting you at home while your puppy is still very young.

On the appointed day Lez arrived, and initially and somewhat surprisingly (to me anyway) completely ignored the dog. She advised to put the dog in her crate, while we sat down at the table and had a chat. What followed was a fascinating three hours, with more discussion than actual training with the dog, and which left us feeling well equipped to get our puppy off to a good start.

Lez explained that although dogs have been domesticated for thousands of years, at heart they are juvenile wolves, and have an inherent pack mentality. This means that they will treat whatever animal that they live with as members of their pack, whether that's another dog, a cat or a human. It is important therefore that humans establish themselves as the lead figure or pack leader if you like, and then maintain that position. By ignoring the dog when she arrived, Lez was letting it know that it wasn't an important member of the family; certainly not as important as myself or my daughter.

In a human family a dog will generally recognise that adults and older children are above them in the hierarchy, (as long as they behave in the right way that is); the dog will look upon younger children as litter mates which is why it's so important to be extra vigilant with young children and puppies (and of course dogs). For dogs not to see us as the pushovers that we are, we need to behave as a pack leader would - this includes eating in front of and before the dog does, going through doors before the dog, not accepting bad behaviour and not allowing the dog to jump up or be carried (thus elevating its status).

During the visit the discussion was interspersed with three short training sessions with the puppy. Lez showed us how to teach our puppy basic commands - sit, down, walking loosely on the lead, recall and leave it. It was



*Sit!*

amazing to see how well the dog responded to Lez, who obviously has such an air of authority that the dog instantly recognised her as someone who was in charge. The puppy picked up the commands pretty quickly, and when my daughter and I tried still responded well.

Lez covered a broad area, including feeding, toilet training, socialisation (very important), why training sessions need to be short, how much exercise the puppy should have, how to deal with puppy biting, how dogs mature. All was explained in a straightforward and interesting way - so much so that my 11 year old daughter managed to maintain a keen interest for the whole time.

We were left with a Training and Behaviour Information pack to refer to when needed; covering all the information Lez had gone through.

It's been a few weeks now since Lez came round, and we are doing very well. One thing I realised afterwards is that it's as important to train the owner as it is the dog, and we are maintaining our position in the pack. I have to admit there are occasional lapses, especially the temptation to have the dog on your lap (only with permission though, she can't just jump up), but overall I think we are on the way to a well behaved and friendly adult dog. Thanks Lez!

Lez Graham MCBFA, MGoDT can be contacted on 07927 420049, or visit [www.trainedforlife.co.uk](http://www.trainedforlife.co.uk)