

# EARLY TRAINING FOR A BULL TERRIER PUPPY

*by Margaret Williams*

## House Training

Your puppy should live in the house with the family, but should have his own bed in the kitchen, where it is warm and out of draughts. A tea chest bound with tin and on battens is ideal. Right from the start, take endless trouble to see he doesn't make any pools in the house during the day. After each meal and as soon as he wakes after a sleep, or is wandering round looking worried, pop him outside, if possible take him to more or less the same place each time, and when he is clean, praise him very well, always using the same words. It is too much to expect a very young puppy to be clean all night, so put a thick layer of newspaper near the back door; the puppy will eventually use this. If he has, just pick it all up and ignore it, but if he has been clean, make a lot of fuss of him.

Never scold or punish a puppy for being dirty. It will only worry and confuse him and so make matters worse. Always let him out last thing at night and very first thing in the morning; go and let him out the moment there are movements or sounds to waken him. Don't let him have the run of the house by himself until he is reliable, but if he does have any accidents, disinfect the places really well, because if there is the trace of a smell, the pup will more than likely think this is the proper place to make a pool. If you are able to have a really good kennel and run, with heat for the winter and shade for the summer, it is ideal for a puppy over four months to spend an hour or two each day in it to enjoy a marrow bone or a peaceful sleep, especially if yours is a busy household. Rest is very important for your puppy.

Teach your puppy to stand quietly on a table to be groomed and examined. This will be a great help if he has to be looked at by a Veterinary Surgeon, or treated for minor ailments. Let him meet as many people and good tempered dogs as possible. He should wear a light leather collar for a short time each day; when he is used to this, attach to it a short cord or thin lead and let this trail for a few minutes while you play with him. Some puppies learn to walk on a lead with no troubles at all after one or two lessons, but with others care and patience and a certain amount of firmness are needed. I think it is important to have a puppy trained to a lead at an early age, because all forms of training should be done on a lead, especially stopping him from jumping up at strangers and generally getting too tough. Don't let any bad habits start; it is so much easier to train good behaviour than correct bad. Use a double chain, leather or nylon, check collar, the kind that will not pull too tight.

Most Bull Terriers love riding in a car, but until you are sure he is not going to be car sick, take him for very short rides in company with another dog or passenger to a wood or field where he can have a romp. Don't take him soon

after he has been fed. If he is sick, or if you want him to behave well when left alone in your car, let him spend short periods in it at home, where you can watch to see that he is quite happy and not chewing anything. It is a good idea to leave a marrow bone with him if he is inclined to be destructive.

All dogs love to be talked to, so the more the better. But don't think a dog understands every word you say to him. They only understand by associations and have fantastic memories. So for actual commands, use only "Good", "Bad", "No", "Leave", "Come", "Stay", "Heel", "Sit" and "Down". Always use the dog's name before any command. Use your voice, i.e. alter your tone to sound "very pleased", "very cross", firm (long drawn out), urgent (high pitched) but don't shout unless really urgent. An excitable puppy needs very slow, quiet handling and a quiet one the reverse. Serious obedience should not be expected until the pup is about six months, but at four months or a little before, he can be taught to Sit, Down and Stay, as it is much easier to put them into these positions when they are small.

Get him used to walking on the lead without pulling on the road and gradually take him where there is traffic, but give him plenty of free running in woods or fields. Only call him when necessary, but each time he comes to you of his own accord, give lots of praise, a titbit, or a little game (a favourite toy, ball or choc drops, etc. carried in your pocket can work wonders in keeping your dog's interest in YOU when out for a walk). Never chase or grab at him if he won't come when called, rather run in the opposite direction or hide. Don't just go on calling, or he will soon completely disregard your voice. Never punish a dog when he comes to you, however naughty he has been. If you have a dog who is naturally disobedient, you must use a long line so that you can keep control.

At six months old he should have a few minutes discipline each day, in your garden or where it is quiet; distractions come later. Teach him to walk, to heel (this is to make him pay attention). Have him on your left, give sharp jerks to get him close to you if he pulls forward, drags back or goes too wide. Do left, right and about turns varying your pace. Also teach him to Sit and Stay and Down and Stay. At first by your left side, when absolutely steady, move gradually away, i.e. one or two steps, then back to dog and so on. When he is absolutely steady, he should be called to sit in front of you.

Everything should be taught on a long, loose lead. In fact, you should never have your dog on a tight lead, this could make him nervous or aggressive. You can shorten up your lead for safety in traffic or crowded places without having it tight. Some training classes are excellent, but my advice is always go first without your dog; a lot of harm can be done to a nervous, excitable or aggressive dog if he is

taken into a noisy crowded hall, especially if the trainers are not good, or know nothing about Bull Terriers.

### **Older dogs who persist in jumping up**

As the dog is about to leap at you, raise right knee sharply to catch the dog in the chest; be careful not to knock him over on his back, especially on a hard surface.

### **Puppies who bite your hands, clothes, etc.**

Hold firmly and if a smack on the behind has no effect, shake and give a sharp smack on the nose. This is the only time I would smack a dog on the face.

Avoid all difficult situations until you know you can cope, i.e. guarding bones or beds, fighting, etc. Bull Terriers should be 100% good tempered with their own people, but occasionally puppies are too possessive with bones, food and beds, etc. and show bad temper, generally just a "try on" and an experienced person can "nip it in the bud", but unless you know you can correct this successfully immediately, avoid any trouble by giving bones and food where they can be enjoyed in peace and see that beds are not in a place where people are constantly going backwards and forwards. Never encourage a bull terrier puppy to guard.

#### *To sum up:*

Play with your dog, but don't get him too rough or excited. Give him lots of affection, but remember, although he lives as one of the family he does not reason as a human being.

Be kind. A frightened or very excited dog cannot learn. Try to read your dog and so understand reasons for behaviour, good or bad.

Be generous with your praise. Try to create situations where your dog is in the right.

Be fair and consistent. Do not lose your temper. You will have the best results if your dog respects you and so feels secure and confident.

Do not overstrain or nag. A few minutes each day is all that is needed. Try to make lessons interesting and fun. Never keep up a bad feeling. Punishment should be short and sharp and only at the actual time of wrong-doing. A sharp smack across the hindquarters, or a good shake, i.e. by taking the puppy firmly by either side of his face, looking into his eyes and scolding.

Ask advice only from the breeder of the puppy, the person from whom you bought him, or someone who knows how to train dogs, Bull Terriers in particular.

### **Difficult Bull Terriers**

All Bull Terriers should be one hundred per cent reliable with their families and friends, but if you already have a dog whose behaviour is unsatisfactory, you will have to be prepared to have lots of patience and understanding. Some people disagree with me, but I am a great believer in avoiding situations which cause fear, possessiveness or aggression, until I have a dog's affection and confidence, and know I can control him, but on the other hand there is no question of who wins, dog or me, it must always be me.

So I would never:-

1. Drag a nervous or shy one round Woolworth's, take on a very busy main road, or force him to be handled by strangers.
2. Give a possessive dog a raw bone and immediately go to take it away again. (Rather give when he goes to bed or in a room or kennel by himself). Neither would I put his bed where people are constantly passing, nor would I allow him to lie on the furniture or in front of the fire.
3. Take a very excitable dog or a fighter into crowded places, or near other dogs, especially noisy or bad tempered ones, until I knew I had complete control.

If after asking advice from the breeder or seller, you find you have a dog you just can't cope with, do not let him go to live a life in kennels after being a family companion.

Do not pass him on without giving the prospective new owner a complete picture of your difficulties, and only let the dog go with an absolute understanding that if he is not happy or a success he will be returned to you. Sometimes a dog who is impossible with one family is perfect with another. If you can't find the ideal home, then there is only one thing to do, and that is to have him put to sleep by your Veterinary Surgeon in your own home.

Please do not let a Bull Terrier who fights run loose where there are other dogs. Either keep him on a lead or a long line, or take him when and where you are pretty certain you will not meet dogs.

### **Training your puppy to show**

You can teach your puppy to show from a very early age, providing you always make it fun and don't do too much of it. I think the best Showmen are those who really love it. I don't care to see a Bull Terrier, who just stands in a rather wooden way, with his eyes fixed only on his handler.

Play with your puppy first, either indoors, or outside, talk to him and get him to look at you, at the same time standing well, then give him a tit-bit or his ball to play with. Teach him to walk on a loose lead, in a circle and up and down, different distances (you may be judged in a small or large ring). When he will do this at home perfectly alone, then make him do it when you have visitors and other distractions. Then outside in a park, recreation ground or fairly busy place.

Do not take him to a show until you feel you have done everything to give him a flying start, i.e.

1. Trained him to pay attention and really enjoy showing off and to behave in the company of other dogs (a good obedience training class may help you here).
2. Taught him to stand, to be handled by you, by friends and by strangers.
3. You have him in top condition which can only be achieved if he is always
  - (a) fed correctly
  - (b) well housed
  - (c) as the right amount of exercise i.e. controlled road work, and free trotting and galloping in fields or woods, or playing with a ball at home.