

Obedience: Refresh for the Holidays

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Social Graces

bring out
your pets'
best behavior



Many owners comment that during the busy holiday season they must keep their dog confined because he or she is unruly. We hear stories of begging, food stealing, jumping up with muddy paws, barking, and other woes. These behaviors should not be acceptable in any holiday house. They are an indication not only of lack of training, but of poor socialization.

We cannot stress enough how important social skills are. If you recognize your best friend in any of the following scenarios, it's time to dust off old obedience skills or learn some new ones.

- Must you lock your dog away when guests are around?
- Or board him when you go on vacation because he is unruly?
- Does your dog bark/growl at guests?
- Does he exhibit inappropriate attention-seeking behavior?
- Or jump on guests?
- Or even worse, beg at the dinner table?

The upcoming holiday season, with its constant stream of guests, is the perfect excuse to make sure that your dog is in tip-top social condition.

Socializing a Pup

Although a good breeder will begin the socialization process in the whelping box, the

pup is still learning important behavior patterns for the first few weeks at home. After about 12 weeks of age, it is imperative to make every effort to expand the pup's horizons and expose him to new people and new situations. Introduce him to all of your friends. Encourage your children to bring over peers so the pup learns to get along with youngsters (if you do not have children, invite neighborhood kids over to interact with the puppy). Take him with you to pet stores. Almost everyone loves a puppy and he will learn that interaction with the human race is nearly always pleasant. And start him with puppy obedience as soon as he's old enough.

Socially-Challenged Adult Dogs

If you haven't gone before, this is the time to take your dog to a basic obedience class and take advantage of the instructor's wisdom. If you have been through obedience, brush up on those skills you've learned. A reliable "Sit," "Stay," or "Down" are invaluable if your dog gets overexcited.

A well-behaved dog is not only a joy to own; he is also a delight to have around when guests are about, a pleasure to walk, is less likely to experience dangerous situations, and is welcome wherever you and your family are welcomed.