

## **Del Cono Sur German Shepherds Picking up Puppy!**

### **Introduction:**

Your puppy will be ready to go home soon. In this document you will find useful information about the process up to this point and what to expect in the near future.

### **Mom, Puppies and Nutrition:**

Different breeds have a slightly different process from the time they are born until they are fully on their own. In German Shepherds this process is fairly consistent.

a) Mom takes care of puppies completely on her own until they are about 3 weeks of age. After that time we start introducing them to soft diets like sour cream, baby food, and baby cereal. At about 4 weeks as we see mom's milk dry out (or mothers unwilling to deal with the new budding teeth) we add soft meats like raw hamburger and ground chicken mixed with oats, or rice. By 5 weeks they are completely dependent on meals provided by caretakers. The introduction to regular kibble happens at around this time. The kibble is usually soaked or ground and mixed with raw meats, or high quality canned food and vegetables. By 6 weeks puppies are completely on their own eating a higher percentage of regular puppy food and less of the human diets. We highly recommend new owners to seek their own style of feeding. Natural foods, vegetables and raw diets are all much healthier than regular commercial kibble but that would be your choice. The rule of thumb is that higher end brands are much more expensive but they are also better for your dog. There is a point at which the expense of commercial foods compete greatly with the work and expense of creating your own so there is a choice to be made. When you pick up your puppy we will provide the brand and about two days of what they are used to so the transition to your choice is not sudden.

### **Vaccines, de-worming, etc.**

At 6 weeks our puppies will receive a wellness check by a Veterinarian. During that time they will be assessed in terms of overall health, normal skeletal construction, heart rhythm, etc. Some vets agree to issue a written statement and some don't. We will provide the information of which hospital administered the health check regardless of whether a written statement was provided or only related to us orally.

At six weeks they will receive the first shot and will have gone through a series of de-worming routines. This is not enough and owners must continue to provide medical care until the puppy's own defenses and immunity (usually when they reach about 30lbs. Or more) take over. Owner will be provided with the sticker of the vaccine received so it can be presented to your vet in first visit.

The recommended routine is shots at 6, 9, and 12 weeks for the common puppy diseases particularly Parvovirus. Other vaccines such as Bordetella, west nile, etc. depends on location and the suggestions of your veterinarian.

Parasites is the most common challenge puppies face. They come in waves and most puppies are affected by one or more of these critters at some point in their young life. We maintain a worming schedule but at the time he or she goes home the challenge is far from over. We recommend taking a stool sample at every vaccination appointment to check for the most common problems: round worms, hook worms, coccidia and giardia.

Signs of trouble with parasites usually is displayed by loose stools, lack of energy, apathy, lack of appetite or vomiting.

Also Heart Worm seems to be more of a problem in our area so check with your veterinarian about the proper age to start prevention.

### **Socialization**

After more than 30 years of experience we learned that the best time for puppies to meet their new owners is during the 8<sup>th</sup> week of age. (in other words once the 7<sup>th</sup> week is completed they are more than ready to go). The eighth through the 12<sup>th</sup> week is critical in a puppy's socialization window. Careful exposure to noises, children, vehicles, large and small objects is critical during this time. It is also best for puppies to all go home at about the same time so no one is left behind devoid of the comfort of the litter but still in the same environment where they grew.

The most important reason for puppies to go home right after the 7<sup>th</sup> week has ended is that by week 9 they enter the first evolutionary "fear imprint stage". This is the time evolution dictates that in order to preserve physical integrity pups must "wake up" to the potentials of harm. Noises, large figures, flapping, looming things and physically painful experiences stay with them for long periods of time. During this window of 9 to 12 weeks it is very important that owners avoid traumatic experiences and introduce things carefully in increments that the puppy can handle well. The next window of the fear imprint stage happens at about 6 to 9 months. During this time it is good to keep introducing them to the normal life stresses of new people, traffic, bicycles, etc. but all with a keen awareness of how the youngster is reacting, backing off a bit when needed and re-introducing the same scenario in smaller increments.

Perhaps the best advice we can give is to remain highly consistent. Maintaining a schedule when the puppy eats, sleeps, plays, gets out and goes to bed is essential in creating a well adjusted, calm and happy puppy. Inconsistency evolves into anxiety problems with dogs. Those who never know when they will be paid attention to will seek

it constantly and by every mean possible, (usually barking and crying). Those who learn to misbehave to get some type of reinforcement (even is it is scolding) will eventually become a nuisance to you and your family. Stay consistent in all matters. Set up specific times and you will succeed.

### **Some useful equipment we recommend**

It is helpful to start off with the right equipment. Puppies have already been introduced to traveling in crates, and sleeping/playing in x-pens. These two elements will be helpful when you need to have your puppy away from you during short times, or when you are at work etc. Nothing is more irritating than coming home to a mess, so projecting and preventing with the right equipment is helpful.

### **“Picking” order.**

There is a misconception that the person/s who have “first pick” has an upper hand on the selection of the litter. Puppies at 7 weeks are far from developed neither mentally of physically to ascertain a degree of “quality” that sets him or her apart from the other puppies. Although structurally speaking, a breeder with a good eye can project possibilities for a show prospect, when it comes to character, mental acuity and other psychological qualities it is still very difficult. Paired with the tremendous impact of correct upbringing and training, it is safe to say that “first pick” and “last pick” is anyone’s guess. Our duty as breeders is to attempt to the best of our ability to guide an owner towards a puppy that may be more or less dominant, display greater or lesser drive, or show a higher sociability than another but the ultimate picture will not be fully developed until they dog is an adult.

This also relates to size. Some of the smaller puppies end up becoming the largest in the group as adults. The breed has size standards it goes by but there may be variations within that standards. Knowing the parents will give you a good impression of what the pups will grow up to be.

You will receive a call from us with a date for making the final transition. If that day is not available we will work with you but please keep in mind that if there are people waiting for your decision in order to be free to make theirs it is critical that you make yourself available at least to make your choice even if the puppy can’t quite go home on that specific day (give a day or two).