

Coming up

At 8 weeks of age the second (minor) fear-imprint period starts. This has its origins from the wolf, where in the wild, pups transition from the den to mixing with helper wolves. We mirror this, transitioning pups from the breeder to their new families and homes at this time. (See more in Part A on the formative period.)

The 8-week fear imprint means that the best time to transition the pups to their new homes actually ranges between 7 and 9 weeks. Because the pups are moving into a fear-imprint period at 8 weeks, extra care needs to be taken during week 8 so they don't get any frights. Being aware of this makes the end of week 7 an important time for you, the owner, to take stock of your personal circumstances and home environment, and of the particular personality of your pup. It may be that your pup is still a little anxious, or your home situation may be less settled than ideal. If this is so, and you think your breeder has the better environment and skills to handle this period, you may choose to delay taking your pup home until she is 9 weeks old. Conversely, if you have the better situation, or you need to get your puppy home for some other reason, you could take your pup home at 7 weeks, or carefully at 8 weeks.

END OF BREEDER'S TIME

Thank you to all those diligent caring breeders out there.

Chapter 19

The owner — your pup is coming home

19.1 8–12 WEEKS: JOINING THE FAMILY AND LEARNING ABOUT THIS NEW WORLD

Critical periods happening at this time are:

- socialisation (3–12 weeks) — adapt to the mentor's world and grow the extended family
- socialisation (7–9 weeks): transition to home and create the lifelong mentor bond
- communication and enrichment (3–16 weeks): the shared language is shaped
- noise (3–10 weeks): continue inoculation against noise phobias
- environmental awareness (9–16 weeks): adapt to the mentor's lifestyle and environment.

Puppy temperament evaluation and issues identification

Before we move into what you need to do week-by-week with your new pup, let's ascertain exactly where your puppy sits in terms of the skills and experiences already acquired, and his individual temperament and needs.

In Part E we talked about a puppy temperament test (see Appendix A or download at www.dogzen.com/puppyzen). We used it as an evaluation tool for you to establish the appropriateness of prospective pups you might be considering. Here, it is a very handy test to do once your pup is home, to identify:

- what behavioural attributes have already been established (creating a baseline for measuring progress over the next few weeks)
- what training tools and techniques have been established
- what training is needed over the next crucial weeks up to 16 weeks of age (training priorities).