

## North East region: puppy raising update - February 2024



Welcome to the latest North East update from the puppy development team.

It's great that the days are slowly starting to lengthen but this wet weather does create its own challenges when we have these wonderful four-pawed creatures in our homes - endless dog towels and mopping muddy paw prints.

I am sure we all have our own techniques for managing this in our homes, but I know I am feeling like my techniques have reached their limits! Never mind, hopefully it can only be drier times to come.

### Keeping our pups at a healthy weight

A key factor for health and wellbeing of our dogs throughout their lives is maintaining a healthy weight from the start. This can be very challenging with navigating growth spurts, hormonal changes, and every pup being different. As well as getting support from our staff - your Puppy Development Advisor (PDA) as well as the dog health and wellbeing team - there are other things you can do to keep on top of undesirable weight changes, but don't hesitate to get in touch if you need to check anything or feel things aren't as they should.

It is great practice to regularly weigh your pup. Many vet practices have scales in the waiting room and will have quiet times of the day when you will be more than welcome to pop in to use the scales, which has the added bonus of making the vet surgery a familiar place to visit. If you can make popping into your vet part of your routine, fortnightly weigh-ins for puppies are ideal; these can then be plotted onto pup's growth chart which will give you an indicator of whether things are on track.

It helps us tremendously if we have an up-to-date weight on our computer system; your PDA will ask for this each time they see you, but you can also log it by contacting Guide Line (0800 78 11 444) and if you are concerned that your puppy is either over or



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under weight, Guide Line will refer your concern to the most appropriate member of staff. It is far easier to make adjustments early on than to address the problem later down the line.

Pups that are overweight will not be able to enter training until their Body Score is at a healthy level so it's important to monitor and to reach out if you have any concerns.

We will set another date to talk about weight and body scores on one of Rebecca's regional Zoom calls to answer any questions you may have.

## Off-Lead Exercise

Off-lead exercise and recall should be an enjoyable part of puppy raising for you all, but it does present its risks and challenges which can lessen the fun. Many of us therefore have taken to using secure dog fields to limit the stresses involved. Whilst these secure fields do have their place it's important, especially for a guide dog puppy, that they don't become the only place for off-lead exercise.

If you can engage with your pup from a young age when they are off-lead they are more likely to develop regular check ins and not roam too far. And if they get the chance to meet other dogs, they will learn essential communication skills which will, hopefully, mean they play more appropriately in the future.

If you're finding yourself in a situation where off-lead exercise is becoming less enjoyable, or you don't feel that there is anywhere suitable in your local area, please speak to your PDA. They will support with setting up extra sessions to help you and your pup to build confidence outside of secure fields.

We sometimes find that we need to use secure fields when adolescence kicks in, so if you have managed to achieve good off-lead skills early on, you will be confident that your pup has the recall and socialisation skills in place to go back out when their hormones settle down again. Another quick reminder, **if your puppy wears a T-touch harness, please remove it, for safety reasons, during off-lead exercise unless told otherwise by your PDA.**

## Our team of puppy raising mentors

Most of our puppy raising schemes around the region are supported by our wonderful team of puppy raising mentors. Our mentors are



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volunteers who have more experience in certain areas of puppy raising and work very closely with the PDAs as well as with Kay, Wendy and me. They provide an extremely valuable support, as well as lived experience of raising puppies for Guide Dogs.

If you are unsure whether there is a mentor in your area, or it is something you're thinking about doing yourself, don't hesitate to contact us for more information.

Thanks again,

**Janet Champion**  
**Canine Assisted Services, Operations Manager - North East**

**Document ends.**



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