



Vizamy Vizslas

Ph: (02) 9862 8852

Email: vizamy@optusnet.com.au

Web: www.vizamy.com

"bright and beautiful"

Congratulations on your purchase of your new Vizsla puppy. With appropriate care and training, your new Vizsla will be a valued member of your family for many years.

Your puppy has been vaccinated, microchipped, tattooed, socialised, regularly wormed, and fed a high quality diet. It is registered with the Royal NSW Canine Council as a pedigreed dog. You also receive a year's membership in the Hungarian Vizsla Club of NSW, which provides a bi-monthly newsletter, gives support to Vizsla owners, and has regular social outings, as well as organising official shows, obedience trials and tracking trials.

I have prepared this guide to help make your transition to Vizsla ownership as easy and happy as possible. It covers behaviour, training, feeding, health and care of your puppy. What I have written here is only a start, and you will enjoy learning more about your puppy every day.

I have provided a food parcel with your puppy so that it can continue to eat the diet it is used to for the next few days, and to tide you over if you have not bought any food yet. I have also given you a section of old towel that has been placed in the puppies' bed for a couple of days. This towel has smells on it that it are familiar and should help your puppy settle in its new bed.

I believe that as the breeder of your puppy, I have a responsibility to it that does not end when it leaves my door, but extends throughout its whole life. This means that you are very welcome to call me at any time for help with queries or problems. You may call me when your Vizsla is twelve weeks, twelve months, or twelve years old! I also welcome updates on how your puppy is going. An occasional photo would be wonderful!

It also means that if in the unlikely event that for some reason you need to rehome your Vizsla, and you do not have anyone you know who would provide a loving home for your dog, you may contact me and I will help find a home for it, and care for it if needed until a suitable new home is found by me or through the Hungarian Vizsla Club of NSW's rescue service.

I wish you and your new puppy a long and happy life together.

Fiona Slattery

Your New Vizsla Puppy

Fiona Slattery

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Your First Week

The first few days that your puppy spends in its new home are important ones. It is a time of major transition for your puppy. Your puppy will be spending its first days away from its litter mates, as well as getting used to new people and a new environment.

It is important in these first few days to keep stress levels down. Stress can predispose your puppy to illness. There are a few things you can do to help this:

- avoid major dietary changes
- let the puppy get used to its new family before introducing it to others
- don't overtire the puppy
- let the puppy have undisturbed sleeping time when it is tired
- let the puppy have the company of people as much as possible
- take the puppy with you to explore your home
- confine the puppy when you are not with it so that it does not get lost or into trouble
- put the puppy to bed at night when it is tired, not when it has just woken up

Your puppy may lose its appetite for a day or two. This is normal. Do not try to tempt it with choice tidbits as this will only make it a fussy eater later. Give it its normal food, and pick up uneaten food after fifteen minutes. You may try it again with food in a couple of hours. It should regain its appetite when it has settled in to your home.

Bedtime can be a time of stress at first. A puppy left alone for the first time will cry, perhaps for hours. Some people take their puppy to bed with them. This is lovely for the puppy, and for people who enjoy this, but you don't have to. Less invasive but still kind to the puppy is to confine it next to your bed for a few days. If it gets upset, you may simply reach down and pat it to reassure it until it calms. When the puppy has had time to get used to the new environment, you may then move it to a more permanent sleeping spot.

If you do want to put the puppy straight away into the laundry or similar, there are a few things you can do to help. Put the puppy to bed when it is tired, not just after a long sleep on your lap. Leave a night light on so it doesn't get lost. Keep it in a small area, again so that it doesn't get lost. Leave it some water to drink. Provide a snuggly bed area. I have provided a bit of bedding with the smell of its whole litter on it to place into its bed, giving it a familiar smell. This should help with the transition.

Typical Vizsla Behaviour

Your Vizsla is not like other dogs and may do things you haven't seen before. They are very demonstratively affectionate. Your return home will be greeted with much excited jumping about and perhaps a Vizsla "song" (you will know it when you hear it). Many Vizslas like to take their owner's hand or arm in their mouth. This is a sign of affection.

Your Vizsla will probably point at things, typically pigeons and similar. It will stalk slowly with head and tail extended then freeze, perhaps remaining motionless for quite a long time. This is instinct. It is a hunt-point-retrieve dog, and all purpose gundog.

It may like to carry things in its mouth, perhaps presenting you with a shoe or toy. This is its retrieving instinct.

If your Vizsla is bored it may become destructive and/or noisy.

It will enjoy swimming. It must have an enjoyable introduction to water, or it will remember the fright and perhaps not enjoy swimming, which would be a shame. Let it splash about in shallow water at first. It will like it if you go in too. It may swim clumsily with much splashing at first but will

soon learn to swim better. Its learning may be hastened if you hold its back end level so it doesn't splash water into its face with its front legs. Wait till your pup is a few months old and developed enough to swim before introducing it to deeper water, though it may enjoy paddling at any age. Be very careful with swimming pools. They can drown in a pool quite easily if they fall in and don't find the exit.

Socialisation

The period up to three months old is a crucial one for your puppy's development. It is a major "imprint" period. It should be introduced to as many different situations and noises as possible. If it misses out on this important socialisation, and stays only in your back yard, it may become over excited or fearful when introduced to these situations later.

This creates a dilemma since your pup is not fully covered against infectious diseases until a few days after its twelve week vaccination.

The solution is to carry the pup whenever there is a chance that unvaccinated dogs have been about, eg. on the street or in the park. Don't take chances.

Take your pup everywhere with you that you can. Let it meet many people, all kinds of people. Kids, men with beards, people wearing hats. Take it to visit vaccinated dogs. (Supervise play with adult or bigger dogs). Take it to your mother's, to your friend's, to puppy school, carry it around the shops. Visit a railway station (lots of action and noises). As wide a variety of situations as you can manage.

Older pups and adult dogs also benefit greatly from exposure to many varied situations, as well as enjoying the time it spends with you. The happiest Vizsla is not a stay-at-home dog. It is a part of your life.

Vizslas and Children

A Vizsla makes an excellent family dog. As an active, non-aggressive, tolerant dog it can make a wonderful companion for your children. There are, however, a few guidelines to remember.

A puppy has not learned the rules of socialisation with humans yet. It may play bite, or try to climb up and over people. Larger children should be able to manage this (with some coaching from parents) but smaller ones cannot. Vizsla puppies should be supervised with young children.

As a Vizsla can be very bouncy, it may inadvertently knock smaller children over.

Young children can be just as unpredictable as young dogs. Even when your dog has matured, knows that it is the bottom ranked of the family, knows not to bite or to jump on people, it is still wise to supervise your dog and young children when together. The dog is likely to put up with most of the things your child may do, but eye poking or whacking with a stick can hurt your dog and may make it fearful or aggressive around children.

During adolescence, a young dog is testing its hierarchical place in its family. At this time, it is especially important to supervise dog/child interactions. A dog that accepted ear pulling or tail grabbing may no longer do so, and may react.

It is especially important to supervise your dog around visiting children, or children in a park or any other place that it might come into contact with them. Children you don't know may not understand the rules of being kind to dogs. They may torment or chase or over-excite your dog. If your dog is hurt or frightened by children, it may be frightened of children for its whole life, and may even become aggressive with them.

Teach your dog bite inhibition.

Adolescence

Adolescent dogs (occurs somewhere between eight and ten months) can change their behaviour dramatically. Your compliant pup may suddenly become pushy and assertive. It may even bite unexpectedly (this is the time when most bites occur – a higher incidence with male dogs). During adolescence, the pup is experiencing hormonal surges. A male dog has the highest levels of

testosterone that it will ever have in its life. Maintain your position as the leader – eat before the dog does (occasionally let it have a scrap), go through doors and gates first when it is on a lead, don't let it put its paws on you and have its head higher. A trained dog will more naturally accept you as its leader since it is used to doing as you ask. The basic obedience you learned in puppy school is all that is needed – regularly practice together. A Vizsla is not as pushy a breed as some, but it's best to be aware of the changes that adolescence can bring. Make sure your dog learns bite inhibition before it reaches adolescence. Make sure you do not leave adolescent dogs and young children together unsupervised.

Bite Inhibition

An important part of socialisation is learning bite inhibition. During this process, a natural one, dogs learn what pressure bite is acceptable. Dogs naturally bite each other in play and in interactions. A well socialised dog will use a low pressure bite that will not injure another dog. This is learned when the puppy interacts with other dogs. However, other dogs may accept a pressure that is not acceptable to humans. We need to teach the puppy how to use no pressure in its bite with humans. Once we have taught this, we can go on to teaching not to bite at all. However, it is important to teach the pressure first as this means that in play, and in the unlikely instance the dog is triggered to bite (for example, if it has been startled) it will use a pressureless bite. (We should note that a terrified dog or a dog in pain, for example, one that has been hit by a car, may bite hard no matter what its socialisation).

Noted dog behaviourist Ian Dunbar lists four stages to developing bite inhibition. This process begins before the dog is 4 ½ months old.

1. Allow the puppy to play bite but only on wrists and hands. By allowing biting at this age, and teaching it what is acceptable, the dog becomes safer as an adult. If it is never allowed to bite, it cannot learn to use a gentle bite. Allow the pup to play bite a lot in order to teach it bite inhibition, that is, what pressure to use. When the puppy bites and it hurts you, make a yelping sound, eg. "ouch" like a yelp. Act injured and don't play with the pup for a short time. Don't allow the pup to bite your hair or clothes as you cannot feel it and cannot give feedback on the pressure of the bite.
2. Decrease the pressure of the pup's bite to no pressure, so that it is just mouthing you. This is done by giving the "ouch" at progressively more gentle pressures. Don't reprimand the pup for biting.
3. Once the pup is mouthing only and not biting, start to decrease the incidence of biting. Teach it "off". You can use a bit of food for this. Have the food in your hand, and the pup will try to get it. Don't let it, by having your fingers around it. When the pup looks like it is about to give up, or is just giving up, say "off". When it gives up and just waits, then say "take" and reward the dog with the food. Pretty soon the pup will realise to leave the food when you say "off" and take it when you say "take". You can then begin to tell the pup "off" when it is mouthing you. Reward it (a pat is fine) when it takes its mouth off you. Let it mouth – tell it off – make a game of it.
4. To remind the dog that teeth on humans is not acceptable, give it tidbits from the hand regularly. Don't let the dog take the food if it touches you with its teeth, only when it takes the food carefully and gently.

Diet

Your puppy has been raised on a diet based mainly on raw skinless chicken necks, and Optimum Puppy, which is a high quality commercial dry food, kennel mince (preferably quite fatty, as pups need the fat for the energy).

It has been having three meals a day.

Meals 1 and 3:

Optimum puppy, lightly soaked in warm water, mixed with kennel mince. Three parts Optimum to one part kennel mince. I have also been sprinkling this meal with acidophilus powder. Your puppy has been eating about 100g of Optimum and 30g of kennel mince in each meal. It may eat a little more or less than this.

Put the plate down and leave it down for fifteen minutes. Remove uneaten food after this time.

Meal 2:

Raw skinless chicken necks, whole. About 3-5, depending on the size of the puppy and the chicken necks.

It will benefit from continuing this diet for the next few days while it settles in. From there, you have several options open to you. You may continue to feed a similar diet, based on chicken necks and other raw meaty bones (lamb flaps are good) along with a high quality commercial food. The raw meaty bones are very good for your dog's teeth and gums.

You may choose to base its diet on a commercial dog food. Use a high quality one, generally not the ones you buy at the supermarket (although some will carry a good brand such as Optimum). It's best to stay away from tinned food. As well as being mostly water (and you are paying for that), it will give your dog stinky faeces. An exception to this is "Nature's Gift" canned dog food, which is a good quality tinned food that is readily available at a reasonable price.

A third option is to choose what is called a "natural" diet, one designed to emulate the diet dogs evolved on. I have fed this diet and found my dogs did very well on it, however it does take a bit more time from you. If you are feeding this diet it is important that they do get a wide variety of foods, not just chicken necks or another type of meaty bone, or they will develop deficiencies. Below, I have included my description of this diet which I wrote when Shaula was a puppy. This time when raising the puppies, I have included commercial food in their diet, mainly because I have young children and was looking for the convenience.

Keep giving three meals a day until the puppy is about 12 weeks old, when you may give 2 meals a day. When the puppy has finished its main growing period, at about 12 months old, you may feed one meal a day, or alternatively keep feeding two smaller meals every day, to minimise risk of bloat.

Let the puppy's condition guide you in how much to feed. It should have a light covering of fat over its ribs, but not too much. You should be able to feel the ribs with ease, but not see them (apart from the last one or two while the dog is moving). Too fat is as bad as too thin.

A natural diet is based 60-80% on RAW MEATY BONES. The balance is a wide variety of foods, mostly raw. This diet is designed to emulate the foods and variety that dogs evolved to eat. It is documented to minimise illness, including cancers, to optimise the weight of the dog and to give excellent health and longevity.

Not only is the natural diet cheaper than a diet based on processed foods - which are manufactured largely from waste by-products from the human food industry such as sweepings from flour mill floors, used (and oxidised) deep-frying oils from food shops, old and out of date meat and the like, it also minimises veterinary expenses by keeping your dog in optimum health

with an efficient immune system and preventing those all-too-common dietary related diseases such as skin conditions.

Some very high quality (and expensive) dry foods may give acceptable results with your dog. However they can never provide the same nutrition as raw foods nor the same enjoyment. Compare a dog eating a meaty bone to one eating a bowl of dry food. Cooking also destroys much of the vitamins and anti-oxidants found in raw vegetables.

Although many people believe it is difficult to feed a dog a balanced diet, it is actually very easy, by feeding your dog a diet based 60-80% on RAW MEATY BONES. The balance is a wide variety of foods, mostly raw.

****Do not cook your dog's food, apart from grain and legume foods****

****Your puppy is the right weight if you can feel a thin layer of fat between the ribs and the skin. DO NOT ALLOW YOUR PUPPY TO BECOME FAT. A fat puppy is an unsound puppy and this will have ramifications for its whole life.****

For health and economy, I recommend that you continue your puppy on the dietary road it has already begun, and feed it a natural diet. Full details of the diet may be obtained in the book "Give Your Dog A Bone" by Dr Ian Billinghurst BVSc (Hons), BScAgr, DipEd, published by Hyland House.

The principles of the diet are to give your dog a wide variety of foods and balance its diet, not in each meal, but over a period of a few days. Starchy (generally grain-based) foods and animal protein foods should be separated (this is the basis of the human "Pritikin Diet"). Grain foods can, however, be beneficially combined with legumes, nuts or seeds.

The diet should be based on 60-80% RAW meaty bones such as chicken necks, preferably skinless, meat offcuts with bones from the butcher or supermarket, and the like. Meat without bones is lacking in essential minerals for your dog. Commercial food companies have latched onto this fact in their promotions. However, meat ON THE BONE is almost a complete meal, since the bones contain all the minerals that the meat lacks. It also provides the dog with exercise while eating, all that satisfying tearing and chewing, and it keeps the teeth and gums in top condition. NEVER FEED COOKED BONES. Cooked bones splinter and can be very dangerous. Raw bones are soft and are not likely to cause problems. Very rarely, a long bone such as in a chicken wing or thigh can be swallowed without being chewed and can wedge inside the dog. Therefore, if your dog tends to bolt its food, stick to chicken necks which are easily available and are made up of many short bones. Most Vizslas are careful eaters.

The rest of the diet should consist of a wide variety of ingredients, mostly raw. The exception to this are the grains and legumes, which should be either sprouted or cooked to make their nutrients available.

Vegetables, especially green leafy vegetables and herbs, are an excellent food for your dog. This emulates the stomach contents of wild dogs' prey, as well as providing a substitute for the faeces a wild dog - and a domesticated dog if it can get to them - eats. Since dogs have slicing and not grinding teeth, they are unable to break the cell walls and release the nutrients for use. We need to do this for them. Pass vegetables through a juicer and feed the pulp (and juice too if you like) or put them into a food processor and process until a gooey paste. I often add a little bit of cat sardines (contain beneficial fatty acids) to make the mixture more palatable. Also add soaked rolled oats, oil (corn oil, sunflower or canola oil, mix them around, they contain different essential fatty acids), brewer's yeast, kelp powder, maybe baked beans. An egg a couple of times a week is excellent.

Dogs also eat fruit, especially over-ripe fruit. My dogs voluntarily scavenge such things as gooey watermelon, pear and apple cores, runny zucchini etc. Excellent food.

A grain meal could be some quick-cooking oats with hot water poured over them and left to soak, or pasta, or leftover breakfast cereal, etc. Add oil, kelp, brewer's yeast, etc. Add some nuts, legumes or seeds to make a complete protein.

Feed liver or other offal once a week. Liver is a natural vitamin and mineral supplement for your dog.

If your puppy is looking a bit thin, which can happen to an active adolescent typically after six months old, add some more fats (uncooked), oils and carbohydrates to its diet.

Live culture yoghurt is an excellent food for your dog. You can easily make it yourself by heating up some UHT milk with powdered milk added (so the total is about double strength) to a heat where you can just hold your fingertip in for the count of five. Add some live yoghurt such as Jalna, Attiki, etc, and mix. Put in a warm or insulated place for a few hours. Presto! Yoghurt. You can even eat it yourself. (If you want to make yoghurt from non-UHT milk, it must be heated to boiling then cooled to the finger count of five temperature).

A puppy diet is:

Meal 1: A milk meal for the calcium. Generally first thing in the morning - allow your puppy to wake up properly. Make the meal into yoghurt if you can (day before).

UHT Whole milk (UHT is easier for your dog to digest)
Powdered milk mixed into the whole milk at the same rate as if it was water
An egg yolk help milk digestion

Meal 2: Raw meaty bones meal. The main meal of the day. If you go to work, just before you go to work. Give it somewhere you don't mind getting a bit messy. Puppy will drag the bones about a bit and have a great time.

Three to four chicken necks at eight weeks.
A lamb or beef offcut with bone in addition will give a bone for puppy to chew on through the day while you go to work.

Meal 3: The other meal. In the evening, perhaps after you have had your dinner. Puppy will not be very hungry for a while after the meaty bones. Vegies juiced (feed pulp and if you don't want it, juice added back in) or food-processed into a paste since puppy cannot chew vegies. Scraps such as carrot peelings, cabbage leaves, broccoli stalks etc are great. If you have them, fresh herbs are wonderful. Particularly good are regular violet or grape vine leaves - these are said to help prevent tumours.

A combination of:
several tablespoons of raw vegies and herbs, pasted
some oil
cup of oats, soaked in boiling water then cooled to warm
some sardines will flavour it
teaspoon of kelp powder
teaspoon of brewer's yeast
perhaps some baked beans
some honey
perhaps some milk powder

As much as puppy eats in fifteen minutes, then take it away. You will soon know how much to give. You don't have to feed all these ingredients at one meal. Give puppy a variety. Plus whatever else you may think of. If it is too much to make this meal every day, make it once a week then freeze in meal sized portions. Not as good as fresh but better than not.

If your puppy is not all that hungry in the evening and doesn't eat its vegies, vary the order of the meals. Give vegie etc meal in the morning, then maybe milk meal when you get home and bones at night. Whatever works for you and your puppy. Don't get too hung up on routine.

Don't supplement with additional artificial calcium. Too much calcium is as bad as too little. This diet should provide all that is needed. In fact, you may not need the milk meal if there are plenty of

bones. Replace it with a raw meaty bone meal. Watch your dog's pasterns (like the front wrists, below the "knee") and feet. If they look at all loose, it may need some more (natural!!!) calcium.

Meal Frequency:

to three months: 3-4 meals daily

3-6 months: 2-3 meals daily (cut out the milk meal if not already)

6-12 months: 2 meals daily

over 12 months: 1 meal daily with regular fast days (say once a week)

To find out more about this diet, read "Give Your Dog A Bone".

Exercise

A puppy should not go for long walks. Let it play and romp and rest when it wants. If you take it on the lead and it gets tired, carry it.

Don't let your puppy jump down or over things that are too high. This could damage the development of its front legs.

Too much up and particularly down stairs is not good for a puppy's legs.

As your puppy gets older it will gradually be able to do more exercise.

At eighteen months it will be old enough to cope with most work, and at two years it can do anything, e.g. a full day's hunting, accompanying a horse for hours, going jogging with you, or going on as long a walk as you are able to.

Training

A Vizsla is a soft natured dog. It does not cope well with harsh reprimand. The emphasis in all training should be on reward and praise.

Remember that dogs do not think like humans. They don't reason and plan like humans. They live very much in the moment. A dog will never act on the motivations of revenge, avarice or similar. It also does not link present with past in an abstract way. If it does something you want it to do, you must reward immediately so it realises what is being rewarded. Similarly, if you come home and find a cushion disemboweled, it is no reprimanding the dog. It won't understand and may become fearful.

Changing Undesirable Behaviour

Undesirable behaviour can be changed by following three points

1. Don't reward the behaviour you want to change.

Many people inadvertently reward their dog for doing things they don't want them to do. For instance, if your puppy is chewing your slippers, don't pick it up and stroke it murmuring "you naughty little thing" affectionately. Sound silly? It happens a lot! Instead, simply remove the slippers without saying anything. Then give the puppy something acceptable to chew. You may pat it for chewing the acceptable item. In this category comes puppies who keep getting on lounges. Usually it has been taught this in the first place by its person who puts it on their lap. The puppy both remembers being on the lounge and can smell its scent there. It won't understand if it's not allowed to get up on its own. Don't pat the puppy when it jumps on to you. If your dog pulls on the lead while walking, don't reward the dog by keeping on walking. Stop and stand still. The dog will wonder what's happening and come back to you. Give it a pat then start walking again. It will learn that if it pulls it doesn't get to go anywhere.

2. Change the situation to prevent the behaviour.

Pick up your slippers. Keep your puppy on a lead when out until it is reliable about coming when called. Put a little fence around the garden or sprinkle paprika on it (this may or may not work) or

keep the puppy in a run when unsupervised until it matures a bit and stops acting like a one dog demolition squad.

A crate can be an invaluable puppy training item. Puppies spend much of their time asleep – let puppy sleep in the crate, and spend time in the crate, when you cannot watch it. That way, it can't get into trouble. You can base your relationship on rewarding the behaviour you want, not reprimanding for behaviour you don't want.

3. Teach an alternative behaviour.

Undesirable behaviour may be changed by teaching a different behaviour. For instance, if your Vizsla jumps up on you, train it to sit. If you think it's about to jump, you can get it to sit instead. Then reward. Pretty soon your Vizsla will know that the way to get pats is to sit. If it runs barking at another person or dog, teach it to come when called, and call it when it runs off. Reward when it gets to you. It will learn that it is nicer to be with you than dashing after people.

Rewards

Rewarding behaviour is called reinforcement. If you say sit and the dog sits, and you immediately give it a pat or a bit of food, you are reinforcing the behaviour and the dog will want to do it again. If you never reward the dog for sitting, eventually it will stop sitting. This is called extinguishing the behaviour. Behaviour should be rewarded every time while the dog is learning, then intermittently, that is, every seven times or so.

Rewards must be given exactly when the dog is doing what you want it to do. If your dog has sat, you move your hand to get some food, the dog jumps up and you give it the food, you have just rewarded the dog for jumping up. It will not associate a reward with a delay of only a few seconds with what it has just done.

Food Rewards

Using food rewards to teach behaviour is quick, easy and enjoyable for dog and owner. Food is used every time when teaching new behaviour, then when the dog knows what to do, only intermittently. This is called operant conditioning, that is, the dog has to do something (operate) to get a reward.

Food is a primary reinforcer, that is, it is very effective at reinforcing the behaviour you want to teach.

Food rewards are best used when the dog is hungry, before it has eaten.

The best food to use is small bits of a soft food. Little bits of meat or a sausage material are good. The cheap supermarket luncheon logs are excellent. Give small bits. The reward should slip down the dog's throat without it having to put its head down or chew.

Other rewards.

Dogs like to be stroked or patted. You will learn what your puppy enjoys. You can also teach it an audible reward such as "good" or a particular whistle. I use an item called a "clicker" that makes a sharp clicking noise. Do this by feeding it a reward when making the noise, such as "gooood" in a highish voice (dogs hear high noises the best). It will come to associate the sound with the reward (Pavlov's "classic conditioning"). Remember that you will have to intermittently give it food or patting at the same time as the sound, or it will stop the association.

Some dogs are not all that keen on food as a reward. Find what it likes best. It might be to chase a ball, or play tug of war with a "fluffy". Use this as the reward. It also works well to change what type of reward the dog gets around. Keep it guessing what it is going to get. It will work better for you.

The Release

Once your dog has done what you want it to do, it needs to be released. It needs to differentiate between obeying you and doing what it wants to do. Never leave your dog without releasing it unless it is on a stay, eg., never say sit then just walk away.

An effective release is "OK" in a happy voice. You might wave your arms and jump about a bit initially to encourage the dog to get up and jump too. "OK" will be an exciting command for your dog.

Commands

Your puppy will be much more rewarding to live with if it understands and obeys the following simple commands. Initial training should be done in an enclosed area which is free of distractions.

Remember, reward every time when learning, then intermittently.

Training is done in increments. Your dog can work out simple steps but not big leaps of understanding. Reward successive approximations, that is, gradually shape the behaviour you want.

A dog's attention span is short and a puppy's even shorter. Fifteen to twenty minutes maximum for an adult. A puppy could be five minutes or even less. (Adult humans can only concentrate hard for about twenty minutes!) If the dog is getting bored, fidgety or distracted, stop that session. Two lessons a day of say ten minutes for an older dog and five for a puppy will teach it quickly and effectively.

There is no one right way to teach a dog. What is right is what is effective and enjoyable for both you and your dog. What follows is one fun and effective way of teaching your dog some simple commands.

1. Teach it its name

This is used to attract its attention before using a command. Basically, when you say its name, it should look at you.

1. Have the puppy in front of you. While your puppy is looking at you, say its name and give it some food at the same time. Use a different tone or word than the one you use when you say its name in conversation. Find the tone that gets the puppy to look at you. You may use a noise such as a whistle to get the puppy to look at you before you say its name.

2. Once this is reliable, say its name when it isn't looking at you. Reward as soon as it looks. The puppy is still in front of you.

Gradually increase the distance. Reward the puppy when it looks. It helps to have taught the puppy "gooooood".

Reward intermittently when it has learnt it.

Use its name to attract its attention when it's not looking at you, before you give it another command. If you already have its attention, you don't need to say its name again (though it won't do harm to do so).

2. Come or Here

This is easily trained. The idea is to make it pleasant to come to you. Make a noise that attracts the dog's attention. Your puppy will already come to a whistle (most times). Then when it gets to you, reward it with a piece of food while saying "come" (or "here"). Associate the word with the position - with you.

Once it does this reliably, say "come" when it is committed, that is, it's on its way and you know it's coming but hasn't arrived yet.

Eventually you can use "come" to initiate the action. You will probably have to attract its attention first by using its name or whistling or whatever.

3. Sit

With the puppy in front of you, hold a piece of food just in front of its nose. It will probably try to lick the food and your hand. Raise the food. It will probably follow the food up with its head, which should have the effect of putting its bottom down. Reward and say "sit" simultaneously as soon as its bottom hits the ground. If it jumps up, you've picked the food up too high.

The pup will soon start to sit when the food goes up. You may start to say sit earlier, when it's committed to the action.

Gradually increase the time interval before the reward.

Eventually you will be able to say "sit" with or without the hand action of the hand moving up, and the puppy will sit.

Teach the same thing with the dog at your side.

4. Stand

While the puppy is sitting, put your hand with some food in front of and level with its nose. Move your hand forward a short distance. It will follow it and stand up. As it does so, say "stand". Then reward.

Gradually increase the time interval before the reward.

Gradually start to reward intermittently.

5. Down or Drop

With the dog in a sit, hold your hand with food in it in front of its nose.

Slowly at first, move your hand forward and down and put your palm downwards so the food is between your hand and the ground.

The dog will have to lie down to get the food. As it does so, say "down" or "drop". If you have trouble getting the dog to put its body down, try leading it down under something such as your leg or a low item that it needs to lie down to get under.

You may find that you have to teach by rewarding successive approximations. First reward when the pup's head goes down, and release. Then reward when it starts to move its legs to go down, and release. Then reward when it's almost down. Finally reward only when it goes all the way down.

Start to say the command before it does it.

Start to delay the reward.

Gradually start to reward intermittently.

6. Stay

There are a couple of ways of teaching "stay". One may work better for you than the other.

First way

Have the dog lying beside you. Your hand closest to the dog lightly holds its collar, not putting pressure on it, but also not letting it move forwards.

Your other hand places some food a little in front of the dog, out of its reach. It will try to get the food. Just hold the dog still with the collar, don't pull against it.

Immediately it stops pulling towards the food, reward it. Reward each time it stops pulling.

Surprisingly soon, it will stop pulling towards the food.

Start saying "stay" while holding your hand in front of its face (this is the stay signal). Then reward.

Start moving your hand from the dog's collar (being ready to grab just in case).

Start extending the time between the command and the reward.

Stop putting food on the ground in front of the dog before asking it to stay.

Teach it to stay in a sit and a stand.

This method sounds a little complex but is actually one of the best ways I have seen to teach a puppy to stay. The dog rapidly begins to understand what is being asked of it.

Second method

Have the dog sitting beside or in front of you.

Say "stay" and move a tiny step away then back immediately before the dog moves. Reward the dog immediately.

Very gradually increase the distance or the time away from the dog (not both at the same time). Reward the dog when you get back to it.

If the dog moves, don't reprimand. Just put the dog back in position and try again, but easier (closer or a shorter time). You have done too much too quickly.

Teach the dog to stay while lying down, then while standing.

Gradually start to delay the reward.

Gradually start to reward intermittently.

Heeling

This is different to just having the dog follow you along any old how. The dog keeps close to your left leg while you are walking. You can be as precise as you want.

Have the dog on your left next to you and food in your hand. Move the hand with the food forward past its nose and say "heel". It will follow the food. Take a few steps forward (2 or 3) keeping the dog's head level with you then give it the food while it is in the right position.

Gradually increase the number of steps forward.

Only reward the dog if it is in the right position.

To introduce turns, put the hand in front of the dog's nose and let it follow the food around as you turn. Do it slowly at first.

Reward the dog when it is in the right position.

Start to reward intermittently.

Lying still

Your dog will benefit from learning to just lie still beside you. It is a good exercise in submission, while being unthreatening, and it is likely to be very useful at times when you don't want a formal "down stay" but just want the dog to lie still beside you.

While your puppy is small, teach it to simply lie still when you hold it down. Have the puppy flat on its side, with its body towards you and legs away from you. If you hold it down, it may struggle at first. Just keep holding it down gently; you may put your body over it if it is difficult. When the puppy stops struggling, immediately praise and release. It will soon learn to just lie still. Start extending the time you want the puppy to lie still for.

Start to handle its body while it is lying still, especially its feet. This will be excellent preparation for trimming its toenails. If a dog has not learned to submit without struggling, it may be almost impossible to trim its toenails. Some dogs are taken to the vet to have their toenails trimmed. By teaching your dog to lie still, you may avoid this.

Practice lying still several times a week. While you are reading or watching television is a good time for this. When your dog understands what you want, you may occasionally ask it to lie still for quite a long time.

Remember

These are just a few of the many things your dog can learn. There are many books and dog training clubs. Some are better than others.

Some dog training schools and clubs train by negative, forceful methods (generally correction training with a checkchain) and/or do long boring drills. Remember that your dog is yours alone. If you don't agree with what you are being told to do, don't do it. You are in charge of yourself and your dog.

Training should and can be a happy, rewarding time for both you and your dog.

House Training

Vizslas are naturally very clean dogs. Housetraining is generally very easy. It does, however, require some vigilance on your part, particularly in the early days. The number one key to housetraining your puppy is to watch it well while inside until it knows to go outside. This is another time where having a crate will be invaluable. Puppies prefer to not toilet in their beds, and so if your Vizsla sleeps in a crate, it will want to wait until it's let out before going to the toilet. Note that if you have a large adult sized crate, and a little puppy, it will be better to divide the crate so puppy has a smaller section while it's growing – or it might decide that the opposite end of the crate is a good place to use.

1. Decide where your puppy's toilet area will be. Places your puppy is less likely to want to go are near food and water, and near its sleeping area. At this age, distances are relative. Right down the back of the yard may be too far for a little puppy. A grassy area is good - they prefer slightly rough ground (it prevents splashback!) If you are confining your dog inside an area that does not include its toilet area, but which is larger than a crate and in which it may decide to toilet, it can help to give it a surface similar to the one you want it to use later. For example, if your pup is in the laundry and you want it to use grass, you can place a sheet of plastic on the floor and top this with a strip of turf.

2. Take your puppy to its toilet spot whenever it is likely to want to go - when it wakes up and after eating. When it is young it can't hold on for long so it will need regular trips outside. An adult dog can hold on for many hours, unless it has a medical problem.

3. Make it easy for your dog. Just hang about until it goes. Then praise it - give it a pat or cuddle. Giving it a small piece of sausage as soon as it goes will strongly encourage it. Once it has gone there the first time, the smell will encourage it on subsequent occasions.

4. Pretty soon, your puppy will be housetrained. The main requirement is vigilance on your part. Prevent accidents before they occur by noticing when your puppy wakes up or is looking restless. A housetrained puppy will head for the door. If it is shut, you need to be on hand to open it.

5. Do not leave your puppy in the house when you are not able to watch it. If you must leave your puppy inside without supervision, restrict its area. Give it a bed to lie on. Cover the rest of the area with newspaper. It will not use its bed, choosing the newspaper. Don't let it get used to going on the floor surface.

6. A couple of accidents are almost inevitable. If this occurs, you must remove the smell. Bicarbonate of soda worked in then vacuumed when dry works well on carpets. Bare floors will benefit from a wipe-over with vinegar or disinfectant.

7. If you are having real problems housetraining the puppy, you may use a rolled up newspaper to help you. Every time the puppy goes to the toilet inside the house, take the rolled up newspaper and hit yourself several times over the head with it, while repeating, "I must watch the puppy better. I must watch the puppy better."

Health

Vaccinations

Your puppy was vaccinated at eight weeks. It will require another vaccination at twelve weeks, and a further one at twelve months. After that, I choose to titre test my dogs rather than vaccinate them. A titre test will check for antibodies for canine diseases. I choose to do this as yearly vaccinations may be associated with immune diseases, and a dog may never need another vaccination after the first set. Many vets are changing to a two or three year revaccination schedule. Some training clubs will accept titre test certificates instead of vaccination certificates. If you do not vaccinate your dog yearly (at which time it will also get a check-up), it is still prudent to take it to the vet once a year for its check-up.

Desexing

Desexing has health and behaviour benefits for both dogs and bitches (and their owners). Six months of age is a good time to get your dog desexed.

Worms

Intestinal worms

Your puppy has been wormed regularly. It will require worming every two weeks until three months old then every three months thereafter. If it is on "Heartgard Plus" or a similar product that treats intestinal worms as well as heartworm, it may only require additional worming for tapeworm.

Heartworm

Heartworm kills dogs. Don't let your dog be a casualty. Give it regular heartworm treatment - either the daily tablets or, more conveniently, the monthly treatments. Your vet will advise you. Your puppy has had its first heartworm treatment already. It requires a further treatment one month after you take it home. It should have a yearly heartworm test, since occasionally a dog will develop heartworm despite tablets (it may have vomited while you weren't watching).

Skin problems

Puppy acne

Your pup may develop acne as it matures. It is generally seen on the belly area and around the elbows. It will go away.

Rashes

Vizslas have a short coat and fine skin. Occasionally a Vizsla may get a rash from long prickly grass or a plant such as Wandering Jew. Some are more sensitive than others. Most Vizslas never get this type of rash.

Hereditary diseases

Vizslas are not a breed prone to hereditary diseases as a rule. Very rarely one might develop a disease such as hip dysplasia or epilepsy. It is extremely unlikely that your puppy will develop one of these problems, but it is as well to be aware of them. Speak to your vet about these if you are concerned.

External Parasites

Fleas

If your home is flea-free, fleas should never be a problem. If you do have fleas, use a flea bomb that kills flea eggs and go out for the day.

Fleas lurk in sleeping areas. Don't let your dog lie in places that have fleas. Don't let dogs with fleas - even a few - come to your home. Chase the neighbor's flea-ey cat out and get rid of flea ridden rats and mice.

Check your dog if you've been to places that might have fleas. With its short dense coat you should be able to see them. They have a hard time moving about in the hair and tend to come out onto the top of the hair to get to a new spot.

A flea comb is a worthwhile purchase.

With a flea free home, your dog's short dense coat and a flea comb, you may never have to resort to chemicals to prevent fleas.

It may be that despite all your precautions, you cannot prevent fleas, especially in hot humid weather. If this is the case, there are a number of effective flea products on the market. Some are not suitable for puppies. Allow your vet to advise you.

Ticks

Paralysis ticks can kill dogs. If your dog has been in a place where ticks might be, such as bush or long grass, check it thoroughly. Ticks can hide in un-obvious places such as in ears or even inside the anus.

If you find a tick, don't squeeze it as you remove it. This will inject more toxin into the dog. You can lever it out or even cut it off. You don't have to get the head out. It will drop off.

If your dog appears to have problems moving its back legs, suspect a tick. Search immediately and remove it if you find one. If you don't find one, it may have dropped off or be hiding in an ear or similar. You must get your dog immediately to a vet for anti-toxin or it may die.

Digestive Problems

Gastric Upsets

Occasionally the puppy may be off its food, or have some vomiting or diarrhoea. A brief episode of one of these symptoms is normal and your puppy will usually get over it quickly. However, if all these symptoms occur together, or if your puppy vomits repeatedly, has watery or reddish diarrhoea, diarrhoea for more than a few hours, or does not want to eat for more than a day, you should take it to the vet.

Acidophilus can help reduce stomach upsets. Vomiting may be reduced by freezing a block of water and giving this to the pup instead of a bowl of water, as a large drink of water may trigger vomiting if the puppy is unwell.

Bloat and Torsion Twist

Bloat occurs when the dog's stomach distends with gas. Torsion twist occurs when the stomach rotates inside the dog's body. They can occur together or by themselves. Each of these conditions can kill dogs. A Vizsla, being a fairly large, deep-chested dog, is at risk for bloat.

If you notice your dog looking uncomfortable or distressed and abdominal swelling behind the ribs, especially on the left side, it could be bloat. To give your dog a chance of surviving, get it to the vet immediately. Other symptoms can be pale gums, and vomiting or retching.

Although we cannot say for certain what causes bloat, there are things we can do to reduce the risks.

- Feed smaller meals, often. Don't allow the dog to gorge until it is very full.

- Feed a natural diet.

- Soak dry food, or restrict water before or after a meal of dry food. (Do not leave soaked dry food lying about to ferment).

- Keep the dog quiet for an hour after a meal.

- Give the dog acidophilus daily.

- Be aware of the dog and its condition after a meal.

- Keep the dog's stress levels down.

Grooming

Nails

The most frequent grooming chore you will have to do is trim your puppy's nails. Vizsla nails are very strong and fast growing. If you neglect its nails, even for a couple of weeks, they will get long, the quick will get long, and you will not be able to get them short again without trimming into the quick - unpleasant for you and especially your dog.

Trim the nails, preferably weekly, with a set of dog nail clippers which can be bought from most good pet suppliers. When the Vizsla is a puppy, the quick can be seen, but when it gets older, it is harder to see. It can be seen as a shadow when the nail is held up to strong light such as sunlight. Hold the foot steady and cut the tip off the nail without touching the quick. If you miss, the bleeding can be stopped by an application of Condy's Crystals, cornflour or one of the commercial preparations for the purpose. However, cutting the quick hurts the dog and makes future trimming more difficult so it is best to avoid this. After trimming, tidy the nail by filing it with a small cross-cut bastard file. Excess length can be taken off at this stage. The file can be bought at a hardware store. A handle makes it easier to use.

Many Vizslas object to having their nails trimmed. Gentle firmness is the answer! Start when the Vizsla is a puppy if you can, but this method can be used from any age. Begin by handling the feet. Hold them and don't let the Vizsla take the foot away from you. The Vizsla is an intelligent dog and if it learns that struggling will get it out of having its nails trimmed, it will struggle every time. Make it pleasant for the dog, pat it, don't fight, don't get cross. Have a helper if you need it. The helper can feed treats when the dog is still – as many as the dog can eat, in succession, if needed. Handle the feet, then handle the toes. When the Vizsla is OK about this, cut a nail. Avoid cutting the quick! If all is well, continue with other nails. Then file. A few token strokes at first, as the Vizsla gets used to it the file can be used more and more. It really does make a difference to the finished nail.

If the Vizsla becomes genuinely frightened at any stage, as it might after a bad experience, don't push it. A bit of stress is OK, patting and stroking will make it feel better, but too much will make things worse. Gentle insistence is the go. After a few experiences where it learns that it doesn't hurt but it can't get out of it, it will submit to your ministrations, if not willingly, at least with resignation.

The lessons the dog has learned in the "lying still" training exercise will help when it comes to cutting the nails.

Coat

Vizslas need little in the way of brushing. A regular going over with a hound glove will remove shedding hair before it gets onto your chairs. Many Vizsla owners find they brush their dogs very rarely.

Ears

Clean when they need it - visible dirt or a bit of an aroma. Monthly or fortnightly should do it.

A good way is to spray some Otoderm (a very mild acid) into the ear, work the ear around a bit to spread the spray around, and leave it a few minutes to soften any deposits. Warm slightly salty water can also be used. Then poke some cotton wool down with your finger (not cotton buds on sticks) and wipe out the softened deposits.

Harder to control is damage to the ear flap. Warm weather which brings the blood to the skin's surface or the slightest hint of blood on the edge of your Vizslas ears will result in all the little flies for miles around coming in for a feed! During summer months coat the outside and inner edge of the ear flaps with vaseline/citronella mixture. The idea is to keep the flies from actually getting at the flesh. Regular spraying with fly repellent would also work. Flies are repelled by citronella, unfortunately so is your dog! So a balance has to be found in the amount of citronella used. If you are not quick enough to prevent fly damage and you find your dog with blood encrusted ear flaps, clean carefully, anoint with Vitamin E cream or lanolin, cover with clean dressing and attach with adhesive tape. Be careful when applying and REMOVING the dressing, our dogs have very fine hair which gives no protection to the skin.

Cuts to the ears bleed like mad, so suppress bleeding by pressure pads and ice packs. Stockholm tar is a good antiseptic. It is surprising how far blood and tar splatter from a well shook ear!! A trip to the vet is advisable! (Diane Masland, Vidiem Vizslas, from Vizsla Views, October 1995)

Bathing

Some Vizslas bathe only when they swim. If you want to give your dog a wash, use a mild one. Palmolive is a good one (mild on hands as well as the dog's skin!) and it doesn't strip the coat of its natural oils. If showing, it also leaves the required "greasy feel".

Please NEVER wash your dog with Gammawash or similar. These compounds are much too strong for your dog, and if old or contaminated with water can KILL your dog. DON'T USE THEM.

Housing

Your Vizsla will appreciate its own bed that is warm and comfortable. It will like to be out of draughts. Shade on hot days, shelter from rain and wind, warmth on cold days. Vizslas, particularly old Vizslas, appreciate a coat on cold nights.

Vizslas must not be able to roam. They are awful with traffic and tempting to unscrupulous people.

Your Vizsla will like to spend as much time as possible with you. It will not mind if you confine it in a run area while you are out, so long as you spend lots of time with it otherwise. If it has comfort, shelter, something to look at, toys, bones to chew, etc., it will keep itself occupied and spend most of its time sleeping while it waits for you to return.

Young puppies may be safest in a run while you are out.

Remember not to give it access to chemicals, power leads, sharp things, etc., or to leave it somewhere with heavy things that it can knock over on itself.

References and Recommended Reading

Bailey, G. (1995). The Perfect Puppy. London: Hamlyn (also published by The Readers Digest). User-friendly guide on how to raise a puppy to become a dog that is a pleasure to have around.

Billinghurst, Dr I (1993). Give Your Dog A Bone. Lithgow: Ian Billinghurst. Information on the natural diet.

Donaldson, J. Culture Clash. Explains how dogs and people see things differently, helps you understand normal dog behaviour. Highly recommended.

Hedberg, K. (1996) The New Dog Owner's Manual. Sydney: The Watermark Press. Comprehensive dog care book by my own vet, Karen Hedberg.

Pryor, K. Don't Shoot the Dog, A Dog and a Dolphin. Two easily understood books by a world renowned trainer about behavioural science and training. The first explains the theory in an entertaining way, the second is the training manual. Highly recommended.

Weston, D. (1990) Dog Training: The Gentle Modern Method. Melbourne: Hyland House. An easily understood reward based dog training guide.