



What to Expect When You Participate in the AKC Patriotic Puppy Program

OVERVIEW

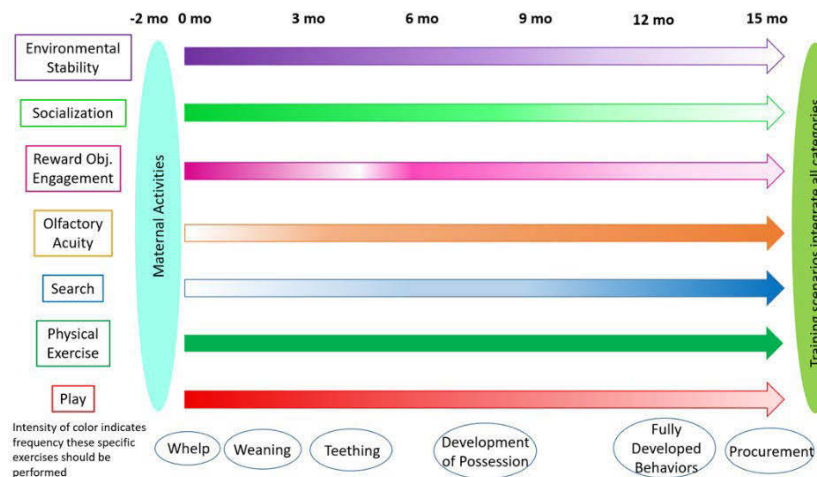
- The Patriotic Puppy Program is a pilot program intended to identify best practices in breeding and raising detection dogs.
- Program participants are provided with remote support from subject matter experts.
- The program targets **Labradors and German Shorthaired Pointers** due to [the general preferences](#) among professionals in the detection dog industry. Other breeds are accepted into the program on an individual basis.
- Participants should be able to commit to **submitting monthly training records** covering different categories of activities. These reports are important because they allow Patriotic Puppy Program Project Manager to provide tailored advice to the participant and to help establish the effectiveness of different training techniques. Participants who cannot provide regular reporting may risk being dropped from the program.
- Experience with external stimuli is crucial throughout the program. Stimuli should include a wide variety of noises and distractions such as sirens, gun blasts, trains, airplanes, large crowd noises, escalators and stairs. Consider the circumstances in which these dogs may be expected to work someday. This is an important aspect to training any dog for detection work; reaction to these out of the norm stimulus is crucial.
- Following successful completion of this program, participants are encouraged to offer their dogs for sale to state/local law enforcement and other canine detection agencies.
- The AKC and the Patriotic Puppy Program do not purchase or broker dogs, but we do support participants in the process of evaluating and placing their dogs.
- Dogs that complete the program successfully will be highlighted on the AKC Detection Dog Task Force website for potential purchasers and future program participants to view.

*THIS PROGRAM IS A COMMITMENT FROM BREEDING/WHELPING TO APPROXIMATELY 15 MONTHS OF AGE, AT WHICH POINT A PUPPY MAY BE PURCHASED AND ACCEPTED INTO ADVANCED TRAINING FOR A CAREER AS A DETECTION DOG.

STAGES OF TRAINING

There are seven categories of exercises, listed on the left: Environmental Stability, Socialization, Reward Object Engagement, Olfactory Acuity, Search, Physical Exercise, and Play. The arrows in the center describe the relative emphasis of each category throughout the dog's development.

Please note that all dogs develop at different ages and rates. This is a generalized overview of best generally recommended practices only, not strict guidelines for the development of an individual detection dog candidate. Please refer to the chart for typical age ranges connected with the activities described below.



1. **Maternal Activities:** During pregnancy, we encourage working breeding females through training exercises that [integrate all categories of activities](#), from simple to complex.
2. **Breeding to Whelp:** During this important stage, there are several important activities for participants to focus on: [Environmental stability](#), [socialization](#), [physical exercise](#), [play](#)
 - a. **Environmental Stability** gets heavy emphasis during the early months. With a good early foundation, as the dog gets older Environmental Stability challenges are incorporated into other exercises rather than worked on separately.



Introduction to external noises and distractions such as sirens, gun blasts, trains, airplanes, large crowd noises, escalators and stairs. This is an important aspect to training any dog for detection work; reaction to these out of the norm stimulus is crucial. The same is true for socialization.

- b. **Socialization** teaches a dog to work around humans and human activities. The dog must not be afraid of people and must not be distracted from his work by their presence. It is important to ensure the dog encounters people of all ages and races, including people with disabilities.
 - c. **Physical Exercise is critically important every day, at every stage.** Physical Exercise creates dogs that are strong, healthy, and resilient. Exercise receives bold emphasis from beginning to end. Physical exercise in the form of **Play** for a young puppy is all fun, no rules.
3. **Weaning:** As the dog matures we gradually [add rules until play](#) morphs into training exercises, which the dog enjoys just as much as his younger self enjoyed unstructured play. Once obedience training gets involved, it's not play, it's obedience.
 4. **Teething:** [Reward Object Engagement](#) should also receive a lot of attention during the early months, although it's important to note that tugging/pulling/twisting should be limited during teething. This activity develops the dog's desire to obtain, play with, and retain a variety of reward objects, such as tennis balls, tug toys, Kongs, etc. This builds up the dog's possession skills, which play a critical role in determining the dog's suitability for detection roles.
 5. **Development of Possession:** [Olfactory Acuity](#) develops the dog's ability to sniff and discern between odors. This stage starts with short, simple exercises in the early months. As the dog develops, this progresses to exercises of longer duration and increasing difficulty. The goal of this stage is not necessarily to teach the dog a particular target odor, but rather to have the dog practice behaviors that will help it learn faster when it is time, later in life, to learn a target odor. Environmental stability should be sufficiently well established that it receives less focus, while ongoing emphasis continues on olfactory acuity and reward object engagement. Increasing focus is placed on search during this period. [Search](#) uses the dog's innate curiosity and desire for reward to build effective search behavior. Exercises that started off extremely short and basic when the puppy

was young become longer and more complex as the dog matures and consistently demonstrates success. Search exercises also incorporate more and more activities from the other categories.

6. **Fully Developed Behaviors:** This stage provides recommended exercises similar to those for working pregnant females. As the dog approaches twelve months of age, [training exercises](#) should integrate all categories of activities. For example, this could include a search problem lasting 10-12 minutes in an unfamiliar environment such as an unexplored playground. The dog must traverse uneven surfaces, go under and over things, stay on task despite human distractions, demonstrate independent search behaviors and olfactory acuity looking for his reward object, engage with the reward object once he finds it, and have the strength and stamina to move energetically throughout the activity. The dog must be confident in unfamiliar situations and unreactive in and around loud noises and crowds.
7. **Procurement:** [At this stage](#), all the various aspect of training and development come together as the dog completes this phase of training and prepares for going to a new home and into advanced training.

ARE YOU UP FOR THE CHALLENGE? IF YOU ARE [APPLY HERE](#)