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**Puppy Classes may positively affect the behaviour of adult dogs separated from their litters too early**

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Puppies prematurely separated from their littermates seem to be more likely to develop undesirable behaviours related to fear or anxiety than puppies that remained with their mothers and siblings until 60 days of age (1). Overall, attendance at puppies' socialization programs has shown to help reducing the risk of developing potential problem behaviours later in life (2,3).

In order to assess whether attendance at puppy classes may counteract the adverse effects of early puppy-litter separation on adult dogs' behaviour, we compared the prevalence of owner-reported behaviours in dogs who were separated early (30-45 days) from their litter with (n=83) versus without (n=72) puppy socialisation class attendance. Owners were asked to complete a questionnaire, providing information about their dogs and whether the animals exhibited any of 14 potential problem behaviours. Pearson's X<sup>2</sup> test of independence in 2x2 contingency tables and binary logistic regressions were applied to analyse the effects of puppy class attendance on behavioural patterns. Given a similar premature separation from the litter, the dogs who had not attended a puppy class had increased odds (p<0.05) of displaying object possessiveness, excessive barking, fearfulness on walks and intraspecific aggression, as reported by the owners, than those who had been to puppy classes. The knowledge that early socialisation and training program may mitigate an already elevated risk of developing potential problem behaviours in adult dogs who were prematurely separated from their litters will prevent later behaviour problems, and prompt intervention programs.

**References**

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