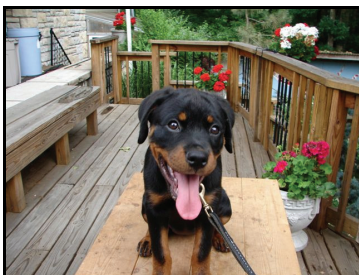


Shyness

A puppy who turns its head to the side and will not look you in the eye is possibly a shy puppy. It is not aggressive in nature but practices avoidance. These pups do not bond well. They remain detached in their relationships and prefer to be alone even if in a room with people. They do not show much personality and act as "dead heads."

Independence

The independent pup is not the same as the shy pup, but he, too, usually avoids eye contact in this test. He is not fearful but sometimes shows aggression. This dog can be a real challenge when it comes to training because he has a mind of his own. However, if a person is an experienced trainer and has a lot of time to devote to the bonding process, this can be a good dog. He will tend to be a "one-man" dog.



When evaluating puppy temperament, you not only want to test mental aptitude and genetic behaviors but also check their energy, focus, and drive. Watch the individual pups as they play with their littermates. Some seem to tire quickly and others are like the Energizer Bunny that just keeps going and going and going. They will continue to bite and tackle their littermates even after the others have quit playing. Some pups lack energy. This may just be age or could be a sign of health issues such as being anemic due to internal parasites. Some pups just don't have very good drives. They do not have that internal switch that makes it almost where they cannot help themselves. They just have to chase that moving object whether it is a leaf blowing in the wind, a ball that has been rolled, or a littermate running away from them.

You definitely want to do some ball work with the puppy to test his prey drive. Ideally, I want a puppy to retrieve instinctively, but would also consider one that can learn very quickly to return with the ball. I also recommend a cloth on a string or stick to see how he goes after it, and for how long. Pups have a short attention span, but I want to find one that can focus longer than others. The ability to focus will be very important in the training process. I also want to test how quickly I can get the pup to refocus after he gets bored or distracted.

The ability to maintain focus goes hand-in-hand, or should I say paw-in-paw, with the temperament trait of determination and problem solving. I like to put an object under a plastic bowl, or

put a ball behind something but still visible, and watch the puppy work and try to figure out how to get it. How long will he try? Will he bark at it? How creative are his attempts? Will he lose interest but then come back again or does he forget that it is there when distracted by something else? I also want to test the puppy's strength of recovery. How does he respond and recover when startled by a loud noise. How does he recover from correction?



I have in no way exhausted the subject of temperament testing, but hopefully we have at least given you some helpful ideas that you can use in selecting your next puppy.

Be sure to join us next issue when we discuss "Preparing for a Puppy: Anticipating the Arrival."



Warren Johnson