

What is Early Neural Stimulation and Why Bother?

The U.S. Military developed a method on their canine program that is the basis of the Early Neural Stimulation Program used here at Heartland Australian Labradoodles. In an effort to improve the performance of dogs used for military purposes, a program called "Bio Sensor" was developed. Utilizing information gleaned from years of research, the military learned that performing early neurological stimulation exercises with puppies could have important and lasting effects. The studies showed that there are specific time periods early in life when neurological stimulation has maximum results. The first period involves a period of time that begins at the third day of life and lasts until the sixteenth day, because this interval of time is a period of rapid neurological growth and development.

The "Bio Sensor" program was also concerned with early neurological stimulation in order to give the dog a superior advantage. Each session involved handling puppies once each day. The workouts required handling them one at a time while performing a series of five exercises. The handling of each pup once per day involves the following exercises, all performed on each pup before moving on to the next pup:

1. Tactile stimulation - holding the pup in one hand, the handler gently tickles the pup between the toes on any one foot using a Q-tip. It is not necessary to see that the pup is feeling the tickle. Time of stimulation 3 - 5 seconds.
2. Head held erect - using both hands, the pup is held perpendicular to the ground, (straight up), so that its head is directly above its tail. Time of stimulation 3 - 5 seconds
3. Head pointed down - holding the pup firmly with both hands the head is reversed and is pointed downward so that it is pointing towards the ground. Time of stimulation 3 - 5 seconds
4. Supine position - hold the pup so that its back is resting in the palm of both hands with its muzzle facing the ceiling. The pup while on its back is allowed to sleep or struggle. Time of stimulation 3-5 seconds.
5. Thermal stimulation - use a damp towel that has been cooled in a refrigerator for at least five minutes. Place the pup on the towel, feet down. The pup is not restrained from moving. Time of stimulation 3-5 seconds.

This type of program does not replace the daily handling each pup receives beginning the moment it is born. Rather, it is in addition to that handling, and is done with the specific timing and purpose maximizing development of the nervous system for trainability.