

# **Camelot Rhodesian Ridgebacks**

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## **The Care and Loving of Your New Rhodesian Ridgeback Puppy**

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## **The first few nights (will be Hell--you might as well expect it)**

For his entire short lifetime, your new puppy has spent virtually all of his time in a warm, cozy environment--first it was mom's womb and then it was the 'puppy pile'. If he got a little cold, he just had to burrow down to the bottom of the pile and he was warm. If he got a little lonesome, there were always plenty of siblings around for comfort. Things are different now that he is removed from his canine companions.

During the day when you are awake and cuddling him in your arms, you are the warm puppy pile. But when he wakes up in the middle of the night he is probably just a little lonesome for his former surroundings, and he probably also needs to pee. Therefore, he will probably cry. This is normal. Unlike puppies, adult dogs do not normally sleep in a heap, and they learn to be independent and self-sufficient while growing up.

What should you do when future Champion Camelot's Mr. Wonderful Ridgeback cries in the night? First, you should remember that a 7- or 8-week-old puppy must sleep in a warm place and does not have the bladder control of an adult; he can only hold himself for five or six hours. Second, dogs have an instinct to not poop or pee where they live (which in this case means their bed). Therefore, if your new puppy wakes up in the night and screams and it has been several hours since he last relieved himself, you should drag yourself out of bed and take the little tyke out for a whiz. After he has finished, you should return him to his bed and go back to yours. [For convenience, you may want to locate his sleeping quarters next to your bed.] If he cries, do not pick him up or remove him from his bed (or open the door if he's in his crate). Rather, comfort him with soft, sleepy words and your fingers to lick until he settles down. If he resumes crying, comfort him again in the same way. If his crying still continues, well, after 30 minutes or so, he will probably cry himself to sleep. The very occasional puppy has a lot of stamina and will cry for hours that first night, and some Ridgebacks are really clever and perfect a heart-wrenching technique known as the 'controlled sob', which is almost guaranteed to get them the attention they want. Should this be your puppy, keep in mind that after two or three hours of adrenalized fretting, Mr. Not-so-Wonderful will probably need to go outside for another piddle.

At this age, puppies grow and mature really fast, and their bladder control matures along with everything else. What was said in the previous paragraph about a 7- or 8-week-old puppy doesn't apply to an 11- or 12-week old puppy. By that time, they should be able to sleep through the night--well, for at least seven hours, without having to go outside for a tinkle. If you have been consistent during the first week or so, you should find that your nights are very soon yours for uninterrupted slumber. In fact, because Ridgebacks are basically couch potatoes, many people find that they soon reach the stage where they are difficult to rouse in the morning.

Of course, if you intend to give Mr. Wonderful bed privileges, you will not have any trouble at all surviving pack separation anxiety; just plop him down next to your pillow the first night and he will be happy as a clam. Don't forget that he will still need to get up and go out for a pee during the night for a week or so. In fact, the real problem here is only with owners who are such sound sleepers that they aren't aware that Mr. Wonderful has awakened at 3 am and is staggering around the bed looking for the most distant spot from the pillow.

## **Crate training (providing your puppy with a life-long secure retreat)**

The best favor you can do for future Ch. Camelot's Mr. Wonderful Ridgeback is to buy him a 'crate' that he can hang out in. There are basically two kinds of crates. An 'airline crate' is made of hard plastic and has metal bar air vents on the sides and a metal-bar door. It is called an airline crate because it is what you would use to take your dog on an airplane trip. The most common brand is called a Vari-Kennel. You can also buy a crate that is made solely of metal bars. This might have an advantage if you live in Hawaii or Saudi Arabia, but it has been our experience that Ridgebacks like the sense or warmth and privacy afforded by the Vari-Kennel.

Vari-Kennels can be bought at most pet supply stores, from vendors at dog shows, and from mail order houses that specialize in pet supplies. They come in several sizes, designated as 200, 400, 500, etc. An adult Ridgeback will need either the 400 (for bitches and modest-sized dogs) or 500 size (for large dogs). There is an even larger Vari-Kennel, a 700, which might be appropriate for a Great Dane or perhaps a Shetland pony, but there are good reasons not to provide Mr. Wonderful with one of these King-Kong Krates. For one thing, you will eventually want to take Mr. Wonderful on a trip and it is really convenient if his crate can go too. It is of course difficult to get the Shetland-pony-size Vari-Kennel into most vehicles, so you lose out on one of the really neat features of crate training. Also, the crate is a place for Mr. Wonderful to curl up for a nap, not a place to play fetch. Finally, we recommend that you put Mr. Wonderful's crate in your bedroom, at least for the first few months, and a 400 or 500 Vari-Kennel just makes a better nightstand than a King-Kong Crate.

The crate should be equipped with a 'crate mat'—something soft and comfy for Mr. Wonderful to curl up on. Most pet supply stores sell various kinds of crate mats made to fit Vari-Kennels and other crates of various sizes. We recommend against mats that are covered foam rubber. Ridgebacks seem to really get off on shredding foam rubber and will rip through the toughest cover to get to the heart of the matter. The first thing you know, your nice new \$50 foam-rubber crate mat has been reduced to rubble. [Although this is a diversion, you also want to avoid doggy beds that are filled with polystyrene beads. There is no sight quite so spectacular as a whole house full of these pesky little white beads, each magnetized with static electricity, after Mr. Wonderful has ripped up the outer cover.] Actually, you can make a perfectly serviceable crate mat by folding up a couple of old blankets so that they fit the dimensions of the crate.

The crate serves several useful functions. First, if Mr. Wonderful gets used to sleeping in it from the time he is a little puppy, it will become his warm, comfortable retreat for the rest of his life. When he has grown up, you will occasionally find that he has curled up in his open crate for a nap, or just to get away from the noise and hubbub of the house. The value of crate training is really apparent on those occasions when you have guests who are uncomfortable with dogs (just put Mr. Wonderful in his crate for a few hours with a special chew) and when you travel (Mr. Wonderful is never away from home, because his crate goes everywhere he does).

Some people have an instinctive prejudice against crates, because they equate them with cages and feel that putting a dog in a crate is like putting an animal in a zoo. What

you should remember is that a Rhodesian Ridgeback (especially a young one) is going to sleep most of the time anyway, so why not sleep in a warm and familiar place like his own crate.

But the really great thing about a crate is that you can use it to potty train your new puppy. Here is how you do it. As we have already explained, dogs have an instinct to not foul their living quarters. So when Mr. Wonderful Ridgeback wakes up from his nap in his crate and needs to go potty, what do you think he will do? You got it—he will yell to get your attention. What he is telling you is that he wants to get out so that he can go do his stuff. At this point you should take him to wherever it is that you are training him to poop and piddle and stand around with him until he does it. Then you praise him extravagantly and take him back in the house. He can stay out in the room with you as long as you are able to supervise him and keep a close eye on him. As soon as you are not able to give MWR your undivided attention, put him back in his crate. Since he is probably exhausted from all the playtime he has just had, he will probably curl up for another nap. When he wakes up again, repeat the whole process.

What you are doing is using the crate to confine the little tyke so that he doesn't wake up from his nap and take a whiz on your Persian rug while you are on the phone or in the shower, or otherwise distracted. Since he doesn't want to piddle on his own Persian rug (his crate mat), he lets you know when he is ready to do his stuff. Then you take him to his potty place and get to give him all the right positive reinforcement for doing it where you want him to do it. Voila! In no time at all you have a house-broken puppy.

As MWR gets the idea that the backyard is the place to do his elimination routine, you will find that he won't have to be confined to his crate at all. In fact, he will soon go to the door and tell you in some doggy way that he needs to heed the call of Nature. But you must be vigilant! Learn his body language. Some puppies will whine or scratch at the door. Some will just pace around looking uncomfortable. The point is, if you don't get the message, pretty soon MWR is going to make his deposit(s) on the floor by the door. Every time you let this happen you have suffered a setback in your house-breaking campaign, because MWR has learned that 'in the house' is an acceptable place to do his nasty stuff. Therefore, even after he has become pretty trustworthy about where he does his business, it is still a good idea to plop the puppy in his crate when you are going to be too busy to pay attention to him. Whereas he might just make a puddle on the floor by the front door (after all, it is a long way from his bed or his rug by the fireplace), he is really going to yell if he is actually in his bed. And you will hear him (I guarantee you, you will hear him) and you can excuse yourself from your phone conversation long enough to take MWR out for his constitutional.

Of course, if MWR is not going to be a sleep-in-the-bed kind of dog, the crate is where he will sleep at night. This is especially important, as you really do want him to tell you that he needs to go out and piddle at 3 am when you are soundly asleep. If he is sleeping on a mat on the floor by your bed, he will just get up and wander around until he thinks he is far enough away from 'home' and do his stuff in some distant corner of your bedroom.

All-in-all, effective crate training is probably the single most important thing that you can do to assure that you and MWR get off to a good start and have a harmonious life

together.

## **Feeding (the little critter needs lots of small meals at first)**

A Rhodesian Ridgeback puppy grows at a prodigious rate, and needs a lot of fuel. Your 12-pound, 8-week-old puppy will expand to 30-40 pounds by four months, 50-60 pounds by six months, and 70-80 pounds by eight months. We start weaning puppies on Eukanuba Large Breed Puppy Chow that is soaked in warm water until the pieces are soft. We feed three times a day, upon waking (about 6 am at our house), in the afternoon (about 2-2:30 pm), and just before bed (about 9:30 pm). As their little mouths get stronger, we reduce the amount of 'soaking' time. By the time they are about two months old, we don't presoak the food at all, just pour a bit of warm water on top. In fact, they soon begin loosening their puppy teeth and it actually helps them in teething to crunch on the hard kibble. You can change to two meals a day at about three months of age.

Feed MWR as much as he wants to eat at each feeding. For an eight-week old puppy, this will probably be about 1 cup of kibble with some warm water (to make a stew not a soup) in each meal. If he wolfs it all down, licks the bowl clean, and searches all around the kitchen for more, give him another half-cup. Pretty soon you will have him calibrated. If he doesn't eat all you give him after 10 minutes, pick up his bowl. Do not leave food out for your puppy all day. 'Free-feeding' can lead to all sorts of problems, including Rotund Ridgebacks and generally picky eaters. It also causes problems later when you want to travel with your pet. When it is time to eat dinner in Peoria, you want MWR to eat dinner now, not dally around for a few hours until he thinks the time is right. If the little critter doesn't eat anything in 15 minutes, don't worry about turning him into a Somalia-dog. He will probably be just that much hungrier at the next feeding time. Besides, we have provided him with lots of puppy fat—he could probably get along without any chow for a few days. Eventually, when he is hungry enough, he will eat.

As he grows, your puppy will need more fuel. A four-month-old Ridgeback puppy will probably eat about 5-6 cups of kibble every day, and he might peak out at 7-8 cups per day. Although most of us like the idea of a rapidly-growing, roly-polly puppy, you want to be careful about over-nutrition. Too-rapid bone growth can actually cause problems, as can too much fat. For this reason, pay careful attention to MWR's physique. If you can see ribs standing out on his side, MWR is not getting enough chow. If you see a little dimple about the diameter of a marble or golf ball just above the base of the tail, between the rear hip bones, MWR is probably getting too chubby.

We use the Eukanuba line of foods for our dogs, with the younger ones (less than about 4 years old) being on the Eukanuba Maintenance (not Performance) and the older, less-active ones being on the Eukanuba Reduced Fat kibble. We start puppies on the Eukanuba Large-Breed Puppy Chow and switch to Maintenance Chow at about nine months of age. In addition to the kibble, in the evening we mush about one tablespoon of canned food (we use Pedigree) into the kibble and water just to spice things up a bit. We continue to feed our adults twice daily (more or less at our breakfast and our dinner) throughout their lives. An adult Ridgeback who has finished growing will eat about 3.5-5 cups of Eukanuba daily, depending on activity level.

If your puppy does develop a weight problem, it is much easier to solve than your

own. This is because MWR's diet is totally under your control. Let's say MWR is eating about 5 cups of dry food and two tablespoons of canned food every day and you decide that he needs to lose three or four pounds. What you do is cut out the canned food (which is just for fun anyway) and reduce the kibble to 4 cups a day. Of course, all Rhodesian Ridgebacks think they are perpetually underfed, and MWR won't like the empty feeling in his stomach one bit. So you make up the missing bulk with something bulky but non-caloric, like puffed wheat.

## **Inoculations (and other ways to minimize health risks during the critical first four months)**

It is very important that a puppy be vaccinated to protect against several infective agents that are particularly devastating to dogs--canine distemper (D), canine adenovirus-2 (A<sub>2</sub>), canine parainfluenza (P), and canine parvovirus-2 (P). We vaccinate our puppies with a combination of modified live viruses (distemper, canine adenovirus-2, parainfluenza) at 7 weeks of age. We recommend three more vaccinations with a combination vaccine that includes modified live parvovirus, distemper, canine adenovirus-2, and canine parainfluenza at 10, 13 and 16 weeks of age. Until recently, it was common practice to vaccinate also against leptospirosis and canine coronavirus. The UC Davis Veterinary School has recently informed veterinarians that coronavirus has been eliminated in Northern California, if not the entire Western United States. Further, the commercial leptospirosis vaccine only provides protection against one or two of the several strains of the virus, and these have also been eliminated. In addition, some veterinarians recommend that puppies be vaccinated against kennel cough (canine infectious tracheobronchitis, caused by *Bordetella bronchiseptica*). Kennel cough is not a very serious disease, being somewhat akin to a bad cold. However, it is highly contagious and the vaccination is simple and does not seem to have associated side reactions, so it is probably a good idea. Most kennels require bordetella vaccination before they will accept a dog.

There is a growing concern that we are overstimulating the immune systems of puppies by challenging them with so many different antigens in the same short period of time. Therefore, with our own dogs, we do not vaccinate for leptospirosis or coronavirus. Our reasons for omitting these two vaccinations, though they are still recommended by many vets are:

1. These pathogens are rare. In fact, Veterinarians in the Western United States were recently advised that Coronavirus has been essentially eradicated, probably due to good vaccination practice.
2. Although leptospirosis and coronavirus infections can be fairly serious, they are not often life-threatening, as is the case with parvo and distemper.
3. Commercial leptospirosis vaccines only cover for one or two of the several strains of leptospirosis and coverage is believed to be for only about 6-7 months. Furthermore, it has recently been found that the strains covered by the vaccine have been essentially eradicated in the United States.
4. There is strong evidence that most allergic responses to vaccination are caused by the leptospirosis component.

However, if your pup will be exposed to farm animals or marine mammals, you may still want to consult with your vet about the advisability of vaccinating for leptospirosis, as these are the principal carriers of the organism.

The final vaccination, for rabies, is given at 16-18 weeks of age. Consult your veterinarian for a full and appropriate schedule of vaccinations, and stick by it. You have put a lot of money and love into MWR by this time and you certainly don't want to jeopardize his health by being careless with his vaccination schedule.

It is not unusual for a puppy (or even an adult) to have a 'shot reaction', which usually appears as a lump under the skin where the shot was given. This bump usually appears within a few days of the vaccination, but it can appear up to two weeks later. It normally lasts a day or two and then subsides. If such a bump appears and persists for a week, consult your vet.

Puppies are particularly vulnerable to parvovirus, which is usually fatal. It is important to keep your puppy away from other dogs until he has completed his full regimen of inoculations. However, parvo is transmitted in the feces so you must also be careful about taking your puppy for walks where infected dogs may have walked and defecated. Finally, there is some evidence that parvo has been carried by flies from one fecal pile to another, so you shouldn't let MWR's poop accumulate in the backyard—he could catch parvo from his own excrement. Keep a poop scooper handy and use it twice a day!

If vaccination is so important, why do we wait until the pup is seven or eight weeks old to start? The answer has to do with an interesting natural protective mechanism. A new-born puppy has no natural antibodies. However, during the first 24-48 hours the milk of the nursing bitch contains colostrum, a material that provides the pups with immunity to various infective agents. We can't vaccinate a very young puppy because the antibodies obtained from the mother would just neutralize the vaccine. Therefore, we must wait until some of the colostrum-induced protection wears off. Full development of the immune system takes several months, so there is a 'window' during which the level of the mother's antibodies have declined significantly, and the pup is just beginning to be capable of making his own antibodies in response to a vaccine. This time is at about seven or eight weeks of age. However, just as this is the optimum time for vaccination, it is also the time that the pup is most susceptible to infection. It is crucial to be vigilant about exposure of the pup during this vulnerable period. Also, don't be deluded into thinking that just because the pup has had one or two vaccinations, it is safe. It takes time to build up the antibody titer, and MWR won't have maximum protection until the whole vaccination course has been finished.

## **Socializing (to other dogs and to people)**

Dogs, and particularly hounds, are pack animals. In the natural state, every individual has his or her place in the pack, and this place is established by a complicated set of interactions with the other members of the pack. When little puppies snarl and growl at each other, it is not all play—they are testing their dominance and establishing just where they belong in the pack. It is important to provide a developing puppy with ample opportunity to play with other puppies and adult dogs because it is through these interactions that they learn how to interact with other dogs. If MWR is completely deprived of canine companionship through his formative months, there is a risk that he will become either overly timid and submissive, or overly aggressive. Just put yourself in his place. Suppose some giant master took you under his wing and kept you completely away from other humans for a few years. How do you think you would react when you finally were permitted to meet other humans? There is a good chance you would feel very frightened and want to run away or hide. Alternatively, you might feel threatened and compelled to drive the others away.

However, don't forget that MWR needs to avoid contact with other dogs as much as possible until he finishes his vaccination regimen. Therefore, between the time he goes home with you (about eight weeks) and the time he finishes his DA<sub>2</sub>PL-P series (about 15 weeks), MWR should be a loner except for canine family members who *don't* go to dog parks. After that, he should have plenty of buddies with whom to play doggy games.

Off-leash dog parks are dandy places for puppy socialization. Unfortunately, they are few and far between. In the East Bay there are two good ones, Ohlone Park in Berkeley and Point Isabel in El Cerrito. The best of these is Point Isabel, several acres of secure park bounded by San Francisco Bay and the United States Bulk Mail Center. You can reach Point Isabel by taking the Central Exit from Interstate 80. Drive West past the large Costco Store and then North along the Bay until you come to the circular parking lot that serves Point Isabel. Remember that when you use Point Isabel to exercise your puppy, you should be a good citizen about picking up his poop (a user group keeps the park stocked with an ample supply of plastic bags for the purpose). Also remember to keep MWR under control. Although it is normal for puppies to rough-house, it is still your responsibility to be the 'alpha' dog and to let him know when he is out of line. We don't want to give Ridgebacks a bad name by letting our little honey be a bully.

Puppies also need to learn how to interact with people. Remember that the little tyke was born into the world being submissive to all adult dogs. As he grows larger and stronger, he will eventually test his rank in the pack against the adult dogs. These tests of dominance might lead to a change in pack rank. More likely, the adult will put MWR in his place and he will remain submissive to the adults. Eventually, when he is fully mature, he will probably become strong enough to establish dominance over one or more of the adults in his pack, and the order will change.

Now it is very important for you to realize that to MWR you are just another adult dog in his pack. As he grows up, he will test your strength and resolve to keep him in his subservient position in the pack. If you want to have a manageable Rhodesian Ridgeback, your job is to maintain your position as 'alpha dog' in your local pack. The way to do this is to maintain firm control from the start, because if you give your 80-pound Ridgeback the upper hand, it is the Devil's own job to convince him to return to his 'beta' position in your local pack. This is why obedience classes are so important.

You can continually remind MWR that you are boss in a lot of very simple little ways. For example, at our house the dogs are not allowed to eat until they are given permission. We usually have five or six adult Ridgebacks in our house. We have taught them that at meal time they are to sit and wait for their food bowl to be placed in front of them. When all of the dogs are seated, with bowl to the fore, one of us stands for 5-15 seconds and just lets them realize that they can't have it until they are given permission. When we say the word 'chow' they are allowed to eat (and usually manage to finish dinner in another 5-15 seconds). Sometimes we have 'spelling tests', by giving incorrect commands (e.g., chair, plow, chop, now, ...). If one of the dogs goes for the bowl on one of these incorrect words, we make them sit back down and wait a little longer before giving the correct command. This little trick is very easy to teach. The reason it works so well is that we do it twice a day, and dogs learn best by repetition, and they quickly learn that they always get their reward eventually.

The 'chow' routine is enormously impressive to guests. More importantly, it serves as a constant reminder to our dogs that we are 'alpha'. There are a number of other everyday situations that can be turned into opportunities to remind MWR that you are boss of your local pack. For example, when you take him out for a walk, he is probably eager to get out the door. Take advantage of this eagerness and let getting out the door become a



reward—to earn it he has to sit inside the door while you walk out and then continue to sit for a few seconds until you give him permission to follow you, using some appropriate command like ‘walk’ or ‘outside’.

You can further reinforce the proper pack order by locating MWR’s crate on the floor in your bedroom. In real dog packs, the alpha dog always gets the prime sleeping place in the den, which is the highest spot. MWR will instinctively recognize your family as a pack if you sleep in the same den, and he will respect your alpha role in the pack if you sleep up on the bed while he is relegated to a lower, not so prime spot.

There is one final point about socializing your dog to people. Most Ridgebacks are very people-oriented and will freely approach strangers. You must remember that there are people in the world who don’t like dogs, or are afraid of dogs. So when rambunctious, 15-month-old, 80-pound Camelot’s Mr. Wonderful Ridgeback bounds across the room to greet a new person, the experience might be quite frightening for the recipient of MWR’s enthusiasm. Remember, not everyone knows that a furiously wagging tail and a crouch with front legs splayed out mean ‘be my friend—let’s play.’ Some people might just interpret this behavior as ‘how dare you come into my space; now you’re going to get what’s coming to you.’ The bottom line is that it would be better for all of us if we taught our Rhodesian Ridgebacks as pups that they are only to approach a person if they are invited to do so. [The authors are probably the very worst offenders. We plead guilty to letting our adult Ridgebacks become entirely too familiar with strangers. But, do as we say, not as we do.]

## **Bite inhibition (nip it in the bud!)**

The primary interface between a puppy and the outside world is his mouth—he eats, howls, and plays with this important organ. If you watch a pack of puppies playing with each other, you will see that they are constantly chewing on ears, legs, tails, and about any other part of an anatomy that can fit into their little mouths. Occasionally this play is punctuated by a sharp yelp from the bitee, which gives the message “Ouch, that’s too hard!” You will see that the response of the bitor is to ease up on the force of his biting. This is the way puppies learn how to play without causing damage to each other.

Puppies are also educated to inhibit their instinctive biting urge by their mother. When a puppy bites down too hard on her teat or ear, her reaction is to place her mouth over the puppy’s head or muzzle and apply gentle pressure. The message here is the same as is given by the fellow puppy: “Hey, don’t you bite so hard!” Actually, mom dog uses this little routine often to discipline her pups. It actually means something like, “Don’t you forget who is boss here!”

Now, when you play with MWR, he will behave pretty much the same way as he does in playing with his mom or puppy fellows. He will chew on your pant leg, tug at your shoelaces (they really like shoelaces), and bite on your hand. As long as he nibbles gently on your fingers, that is ok—after all, you do want him to be willing to have you or the vet (or a dog show judge) open his mouth to look at his pearly whites. However, you will have to let him know what is ok and what is too hard. The most direct way to do this is to tell him in language he understands. Do it like the other pups do—by letting out a piercing shriek and pulling your hand quickly away. Then offer your hand back. If he licks it or mouths it gently, give him a big, gushy “gooooood boy.” If he bites too hard again, repeat the yelp, then growl and pull your hand away. If MWR still bites too hard after three of these admonitions, more drastic action is required. At this point, you can act like mom dog and place your mouth over his little muzzle and give him the “Don’t you forget who is boss here” message. However, most people find that this behavior makes them feel just a little foolish. A more

polished way to handle the situation is to get up, growl and walk away. What you are doing by this gesture is telling MWR "If you're going to bite me too hard even when I tell you it hurts, then you can just play by yourself!" Then let him stew in his loneliness for awhile (it won't be long, since the attention span of a puppy is about three minutes).

## **Obedience training (soon, or you'll regret it!)**

One of the first things you will want to do is enroll future Champion Mr. Wonderful Ridgeback in a puppy training class. These are offered in most communities, usually in the evening at a Community Center. Sometimes they are available through pet supply stores. The Sirius classes, which were started by Ian Dunbar, DVM, are offered in many Bay Area communities. Most puppy classes will not accept your dog until the last shots have been administered (roughly four months of age). The normal format of a puppy class is a one-hour class every week for about eight weeks. There will usually be 10-15 owners with their puppies in these classes, and they cost \$50-75.

Puppy class isn't actually for the puppy; it is for you. You will be taught a series of exercises for your puppy, and it is your responsibility to see that MWR is put through his paces every day for the two months of the course. Usually, you and MWR will learn a few basic commands, including 'sit', 'down', 'stay', and 'come'. Sometimes you will be shown how to teach MWR a few 'fun' commands, such as 'roll over', 'bang, you're dead,' and 'shake hands.' Puppy class is a good starting point, partly because it brings your puppy into regular contact with other young dogs (and therefore contributes to his socialization), and partly because these are really basic commands that he needs to know.

But puppy class is just a beginning. We recommend that you enroll your puppy in a normal obedience class as soon as you finish puppy class, when he is about six months of age. In any event, you should do this before MWR is nine months old. It is essential that you get firm control of MWR while he is still young and relatively pliable. Before you know it, MWR will be strong enough to literally drag you down the street if he takes a mind to.

Just as there are many puppy classes, there are also lots of regular dog obedience classes. Again, they are offered through community centers, pet supply stores, and by local dog clubs. We like the methods of Elen Weiss, who gives classes through the Berkeley Humane Society. We were impressed by the results that Elen got with our first Rhodesian Ridgeback, Morganna. When we got Morganna we were quite naive. To make a long story short, we let Morganna get out of hand. This was in spite of a perfectly good puppy class (taught by Ian Dunbar himself!). Well, when Morganna was nine months old, we realized that we had to call in the Marines, in the form of Elen Weiss. Elen taught us how to teach Morganna to be the lady she is today. Enough said.

## **Chewing (what's his is his and what's yours isn't!)**

Puppy teeth erupt at about three weeks of age. They are sharp as needles, but a little puppy doesn't really have enough strength to do major damage with them. Besides, a little puppy is normally pretty well contained, what with potty training and all that. The trouble begins when the puppy teeth begin to be replaced by adult teeth. The process of teething begins when the puppy is about 4-5 months of age and continues for several months. The first permanent teeth are the incisors, then the premolars and canines, and finally the molars.

When the permanent teeth begin to erupt, the puppy needs to chew. If you aren't

careful, he can chew you out of house and home. You should anticipate this period by beginning immediately to teach MWR what he can and cannot chew. Observe a few simple rules.

- Do not give him old shoes or other such household items as chew toys. [How do you expect the little critter to tell the difference between your old worn-out Reeboks and your new \$600 Gucci loafers?]
- Do give him some acceptable chew toys. His chew toys should not look a lot like other items found in your home that are on the non-chewable list. For example, if there are children in your home, it might be hard for little three-month-old MWR to distinguish a plastic chew toy from a quite similar child's toy. [A Rawhide bone is usually a safe chew toy for a puppy, since most children don't have one.]
- Do not give him too many toys at one time. Remember, MWR doesn't have much gray matter on board at two months of age, and you want him to learn to distinguish between what is his (chewable) and yours (not chewable). If you litter the house with his stuff, he will have a hard time deciding which few things are yours. Better that he have a few chew toys at first. Once you are sure that he has them well identified, you can add some more.
- When you catch MWR chewing one of your possessions, take it away, give him a firm 'no' and replace it with one of his toys. When he takes it into his mouth, give him a lot of positive reinforcement ('goood boy').
- Never go away and leave MWR alone in a room where he is likely to get into trouble. If you go out for dinner and come back to find your brief case, two pairs of shoes, and the coffee table reduced to items for the junk hauler, what do you do? You certainly can't punish the poor little critter because by then he will have completely forgotten what he did. All you have accomplished is to give MWR a lot of practice in chewing up things that belong to you, and since you weren't there to correct him, he naturally assumes it was ok.

Most dogs will get through the chewing routine by the time they are 15 months old. Although we had our share of disasters in the past, we are now able to give our five adult Ridgebacks (ages 10, 8, 8, 5 and 1.5) the complete run of our house while we are gone to work for nine hours every day.

## **Exercise (Ridgebacks are natural couch potatoes, but they do need a place to unwind)**

Ridgeback puppies have an enormous amount of energy and you will have to provide a way for them to burn off some of this enthusiasm every day from the time they are four- or five-months old. If you have a large fenced yard, you will likely find MWR racing about in circles or figure-eights at least once a day. If you are not graced with your own exercise yard, you should plan to take him every day to some safe environment where he can spend some of his youthful fervor. The off-leash dog park (discussed earlier) is a good place to let your Ridgeback burn off some of this energy.

As your dog ages, you will find that he doesn't require vigorous exercise quite as frequently. In fact, the favorite activity of all adult Rhodesian Ridgebacks is lounging on the sofa or bed watching television. However, for brief periods every day they still like to have the opportunity to race around and kick up their heels like deer. Our adults spend most of every day curled up on something soft. However, there is a time every afternoon, usually

when the sun sinks low and the day begins to cool, when they become banshees. We live in a home with what from a dog's perspective appears to be a long irregular oval racetrack. And when the mood strikes, they course.

In our previous home, in the wet season, our five-year-old bitch would often 'course' our carpeted stairway. Her technique was to race from the bottom to the top, execute a 180-degree-in-the-air turn, then race back down. After leaping onto the landing, she would pull off another 180 and be back on her way up the stairs. She would normally do about 10 or 12 laps before stopping. Afterwards, she would approach one of us for grand applause.

We often take our 'pack' to a nearby park and let them exercise each other early in the morning, and we road-work the dogs that are regularly showing. Since we are not joggers, we do the road work with a bicycle (the dog runs, of course). We go out early in the morning (around daybreak) and use the parking lot of a nearby shopping center. Our course, once around the entire parking lot, taking all of the ins and outs, is exactly one mile. We start a dog out with one-mile runs for the first few outings, then gradually extend the distance to about three miles, which takes 15-20 minutes. We try to give each dog two or three such workouts each week. It is important to work the dog on a loose lead, and bike at such a speed that the dog trots. Don't encourage him to break into a full-out run, and don't let him pull you and the bike. Wear a helmet and keep a firm grip on the lead in case MWR sees a squirrel or cat! If you use the city streets for your bicycle road work, be careful to slow down and look both ways at every intersection, even if it is 6 am!

Caution! Neither jogging nor roadwork should be started until the dog is at least 15-18 months old, because activity of this sort can cause problems for developing bones.

Other Ridgeback owners enjoy jogging, skating, or hiking with their dogs. Again, you shouldn't jog with a puppy. Even long hikes are not a good idea. A dog's bones continue to fill out until he is about two years old, and you don't want to put undue stress on them too soon. Finally, if you jog or hike in the woods, and you let your dog accompany you off leash, be sure you have taught him a strong voice recall. Ridgebacks are hounds and have an instinct to chase small animals. If MWR sees a rabbit or squirrel, he is likely to chase it far enough and fast enough to actually get lost.

## **Maintenance (dogears and toenails and teeth, oh my!)**

One of the nice things about Rhodesian Ridgebacks is that they are low-maintenance pets! They have short coats that don't need grooming or trimming. Although they do shed once or twice a year, their hair is so short that you don't see it piling up all over the house (it is also the same color as most wooden floors, which affords further camouflage). About all we do with regard to coat maintenance is to brush them (we use a hard rubber horse curry brush) when they are shedding and give them occasional baths. The dogs who are showing get baths before every show weekend (we think the coat looks nicest if the bath is two days before the first show of the weekend, since there is time for some of the natural oils to return). The ones who are not showing get baths every two months, unless they have been out in the mud. If the weather is nice, your dog can be washed in warm water in a big washtub in the back yard. In inclement weather, just take your dog into your shower (in this case, you might as well just get naked and climb into the shower with MWR, because you are going to get all wet anyway). We use Johnson's Baby Shampoo, because it doesn't hurt if it gets in their eyes.

The second item of maintenance is toe nails. If MWR plays outdoors and is on gravel

or a cement patio quite a lot, his nails may stay pretty much under control. However, most Ridgebacks need regular nail trims. For a little puppy this is best done with sharp nail clippers, which can be purchased from pet supply stores, through the pet supply catalogs, or at dog shows. The nail clippers come in several sizes, and what is appropriate for a three-month old pup will not be large enough for an adult dog. Get in the habit of taking a small snip (1 millimeter) off of each nail weekly, and reward MWR with little treats after every few toes. In this way, he will grow up with nail-jobs being a normal part of life. However, he will never really like it—when Morganna sees Cheri coming with the nail clippers and the bag of treats, she usually remembers all of a sudden that she has business way out in the back yard behind one of the shrubs.

A better way to do adult nails is with an electric grinder (we use an Oster Pet Nail Groomer). The grinder is much faster and you can use it to round off the nails so you aren't left with sharp edges. It is also more difficult to 'quick' a nail with a grinder. However, if you are going to use a grinder, start at a fairly young age—six to nine months, and start gently. Most dogs aren't fond of the buzzing sound. Just take off a little the first few times and give frequent 'bravery rewards', and he will soon get used to it.

A dog nail consists of a living inner part called the 'quick' and a dead outer part. The thickness of the dead outer layer is on the order of 2-3 millimeters (only about 1/10 of an inch) on an adult nail. In trimming nails, you want to cut or grind away the dead outer part of the nail without cutting into the quick. If you get into the quick, MWR will yell (because it hurts!) and he will bleed like a stuck pig. If you happen to quick a nail, don't panic—it isn't uncommon for a dog to do it to himself by playing too hard on gravel or concrete surfaces. However, you should have on hand a tube of Kwik-Stop®, which is a powder that you dab on the end of the nail to stop the bleeding.

As with any flop-eared dog, MWR's ears will need to be cleaned occasionally. The problem is that wax builds up and this can lead to infections. There are various products that can be used for regular ear cleaning. Ask your vet for a recommendation, establish a regular schedule of cleaning, and you shouldn't have any trouble. We swab out dog ears with Pet-Otic on a cotton pad every couple of weeks.

The final item of regular maintenance with any dog is teeth. Buy a doggy toothbrush and toothpaste and get in the habit of polishing MWR's chompers daily. This little routine (which they generally love) will minimize the risk of periodontal disease and also helps in socialization. However, even if you are really responsible about brushing, you may need to scrape off the tartar every few months or so. This is another activity most Ridgebacks don't really groove on, but if you are regular about it, they will get used to the routine. The primary cause of doggy halitosis is tartar buildup, usually on the molars. Since most Ridgebacks like to show their affection by giving you big licks on the face, it is in your best interest to keep their teeth clean.

## **Dog shows (or, showing off your dog)**

One of the pleasures of owning a quality purebred dog is showing him off to other people. Conformation shows offer a good opportunity to do this. In a conformation show, your dog will be judged for how close he or she matches the official standard of the breed. You must remember that the opinion you get is that of one judge on one day. Although every judge has the same written standard to work from, the process is obviously somewhat subjective because different judges have differing amounts of expertise with the breed, and different judges value different features. Therefore, a dog that is placed first by Judge A on Saturday might not be placed at all by Judge B on Sunday. This is actually good, because if

the same dog won every day, there wouldn't be any incentive for other owners to even enter after their first few shows.

Here is how a conformation show works. The object of every show is to select the 'best' dog entered, who receives the award Best in Show. This selection is done by a process of elimination, something like the NCAA basketball tournament. First, all of the dogs entered in the show compete within their breed (Ridgebacks against other Ridgebacks, Afghans against other Afghans, etc.). Within each breed, there are two basic kinds of entries—those animals who are working on their 'championship' and those who have already obtained the title of Champion. The dogs and bitches who are not yet champions first compete in the 'classes', dogs against dogs and bitches against bitches. You may enter one of the following classes (there is one of each of these classes for dogs and for bitches):

6-9 Month Puppy

9-12 Month Puppy

12-18 Month Junior

Novice Dog (This is for animals who haven't previously won a blue ribbon; this class is almost never used.)

Bred by Exhibitor (The animal must be shown in the ring by an owner or coowner, who also must be the breeder.)

American Bred (This class is a throw-back to a much earlier time when many purebred dogs were imported; the class is not used very often.)

Open (Any dog or bitch may be entered in this class, even puppies and Champions. However, it virtually never happens that a Champion is entered in this class.)

At a normal show, there will be entries in two to four classes, with most of the entries being in the Open class. The Bred by Exhibitor class usually has only a few entries, but it is not uncommon for the eventual winner to come from this class, as breeders are showing their best stock—the dog or bitch that they liked enough to keep. The order of judging is dogs first, with the classes being judged in the foregoing order. When judging of dogs is complete, the bitches are then judged.

During the class judging, the entries in each class are evaluated and ranked by the judge. The judge will examine each dog and have you trot him back and forth across the ring, and then around the ring. Ribbons are then awarded for first (blue), second (red), third (yellow), and fourth (white). The winner of the blue ribbon gets to advance to the next level of competition; the other entrants are through for the day.

When each of the dog classes has been ranked, the winners of each class are called back into the ring so that the judge can select the 'Winners Dog.' Since the judge has already 'gone over' the dogs in awarding class ribbons, the detailed examination is usually not repeated. However, you will probably be asked to put MWR through his paces by trotting across and back and around the ring. The judge will then select one dog for the purple ribbon that denotes 'Winners Dog' for the day. This is the first really important ribbon, because with it MWR also earns some points toward his championship (more on this later). After awarding the Winners Dog purple ribbon, the other blue ribbon winners remain in the ring and the dog that was second to Winners Dog in his class goes back in the ring to be judged for the Reserve (blue and white) ribbon. That is, suppose that the judge picked the winner of the Open Dog class for Winners Dog. The blue-ribbon winners for the other classes would stay in the ring and the dog who got the second place (red) ribbon in Open Dogs would join them. The judge will then decide which dog he likes 'second best' of all the class dogs for that day and give that dog the Reserve ribbon. This award is like a 'consolation prize'; it carries no championship points.

After judging of the dogs has been completed, the whole routine is completed with the bitches and the judge selects 'Winners Bitch' and awards a Reserve ribbon. Again, Winners Bitch also earns points toward her championship.

The number of points awarded in a given show is related to how many entries there are. The point schedule is established by the American Kennel Club and is related to the popularity of a breed in given parts of the country. The schedule is updated annually on the basis of entry statistics for the foregoing year. For example, the 1998 point schedule for Rhodesian Ridgebacks in Region 8 (California) is as follows"

|         | 1 point | 2 points | 3 points | 4 points | 5 points |
|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Dogs    | 2       | 6        | 11       | 14       | 20       |
| Bitches | 2       | 10       | 17       | 21       | 29       |

This means that if there were only two class dogs entered in a given show, MWR and some other nice fellow, that the one selected as 'Winners Dog' gets 1 point toward his AKC championship. To earn two points, MWR must beat 5 other dogs, and to earn three points, he must beat 10 other dogs, etc. When the entry is large enough that the winner gets 3 or more points, that show is called a 'major'. To become an American Kennel Club 'Champion', a dog must earn a total of 15 points, with at least six of these points being majors. The two majors must be under different judges, and at least one additional point must be awarded by a third judge.

Now, back to the show. After the judge has completed the class judging and selected the Winners Dog and Winners Bitch for the day, the judging for Best of Breed is conducted. All dogs and bitches who have already earned the title Champion are eligible for this competition. They are joined by the Winners Dog and Winners Bitch for the day. The judge eventually makes three awards to this group. First, he or she decides which one dog and one bitch who most nearly epitomize the breed standard. One of these two entries is then named Best of Breed and the other is given the award Best of Opposite Sex. In addition, the judge selects either the Winners Dog or the Winners Bitch for the award Best of Winners. It is possible for two of the three awards to go to the same animal. For example, the judge might think that his Winners Dog is also the very best specimen of the breed and give him both the Best of Breed and Best of Winners ribbons.

Being chosen Best of Winners can have important consequences with regard to championship points, because Best of Winners gets as many championship points as the dog or bitch who is defeated in this round. For example, suppose there were four class dogs and 14 class bitches. Winners Dog gets one championship point and Winners Bitch gets three championship points—a major! Now, if the dog is selected for Best of Winners, he also gets three points and is credited with one of his required majors.

The dog or bitch chosen as Best of Breed for the day gets to go on to the next round of competition—the Group judging. The 170-odd AKC-recognized breeds are organized into seven variety groups:

Group 1: Sporting  
Group 2: Hounds  
Group 3: Working

Group 4: Terrier  
Group 5: Toy  
Group 6: Non-Sporting

Group 7: Herding

After all of the breed competition is complete, the Best of Breed winners compete for awards

in these seven groups. Each group judge awards first-, second-, third-, and fourth-place rosettes. Finally, the seven Group winners compete for the Best in Show award.

How do you know when and where the dog shows are being held and how do you enter? If you subscribe to *Purebred Dogs/American Kennel Gazette*, you will also receive *Events*, the supplement that lists upcoming shows (more on this magazine in the next section). There is also a periodical called *The Campaign Trail* that lists upcoming events in our local area. Contact Brad Vanders; P.O. Box 61689, 858 Wolfe Road, Sunnyvale, CA 94086 (the subscription rate is \$26 for one year). Also, once you have entered a few shows, you will get on the mailing lists of the Show Superintendents, who organize the details of various shows.

Shows are run by various local clubs (for example, the Golden Gate Kennel Club, the Del Valle Kennel Club of Livermore, etc). Entries are accepted and other details organized by Show Superintendents. There are a number of these, including:

Ace Matthews Dog Shows, Inc.; P.O. Box 86130; Portland, Oregon 97286-0130

William G. Antypas, Superintendent; P.O. Box 7131; Pasadena, CA 91109

Jack Bradshaw, Superintendent; P.O. Box 7303; Los Angeles, CA 90022

Norman E. Brown, Superintendent; P. O. Box 2566; Spokane, WA 99220-2566

Jack Onofrio, Superintendent; P.O. Box 25764; Oklahoma City, OK 73125

Tom Crowe, Superintendent; P.O. Box 22107; Greensboro, NC 27420

The first step in entering a conformation show is to obtain the 'premium list' for the show. You get this from the Superintendent by writing to ask for it. After you have entered a show, you will be on the Superintendent's mailing list, and will get premium lists automatically. However, superintendents do purge their mailing lists periodically and remove the names of exhibitors who have not entered for some time. The premium list gives all the details about when and where the show will be held, which breeds are judged indoors and which are judged outdoors, and includes a complete list of judges with their assignments. It also contains two entry forms for the show, which specify the entry fee for various classes. Some Superintendents offer reduced entry fees for Puppy classes and also for the Bred by Exhibitor Class. Each show has a 'closing date', which will be published on the premium list (and in *Events*). Entries must be received by the Superintendent by the closing date (usually noon on Wednesday about two-and-one-half weeks before the date of the show. If your entry gets there late, it will be returned to you and you are just out in the cold for that show. For an additional fee, you can send entries by FAX or even by telephone, right up to the closing date (and hour).

After you enter a show you will receive a 'judging program'. This will be mailed to you so that it arrives about one week before the date of the show. The judging program tells you what time of day and in which ring your competition will be held. It also tells you how many entries there are, for example:

Ring No 3 — Judge Mr. Raymond McGinnis, Jr.; 1200 Scenic View Street,  
Upland, CA 91786

11:15 AM — 18 Rhodesian Ridgeback 4-9-(4-1)

This means that Mr. McGinnis will judge Ridgebacks starting at 11:15 am in ring 3. There are a total of 18 entries, four class dogs, nine class bitches, four Champion dogs, and one



Champion bitch. If all the entries show up, this will be one point for Winners Dog and two points for Winners Bitch (and also for Winners Dog if he is selected as Best of Winners).

How do you learn how to present your dog to the judge? One way is by visiting dog shows and observing how others do it. Also, there are lots of handling conformation classes available for novice exhibitors (and even experienced ones). These are usually held in the evening, often at a Community Center. Friends and acquaintances can direct you to their favorite handling class. Don't forget that handling class is not only for you—MWR also needs to be shown how to behave in the ring and must learn what is expected of him. Actually, it isn't much. He will need to learn to 'hold a stack' for a minute or two (this means keep his feet where you put him and to stand there looking alert, proud, and handsome while the judge looks him over. He will also need to be taught to let a stranger approach, examine his teeth, feel his bones and muscles and (for boy dogs, handle his privates to be sure everything that is supposed to be there really is there). Finally, he needs to know how to run across the ring and around the ring (majestically, we assume). That's really about it. Of course, it doesn't come naturally, and some training and lots of practice will be necessary before MWR will be routinely bringing home the purple ribbons. However, it really isn't difficult and thousands of dogs learn how to do it every year. A very good primer for the novice (and experienced) dog show enthusiast is "Show Me! A Dog-Showing Primer", by D. Caroline Coile, Baron's Educational Series, Hauppauge, New York, 1997.

Finally, you want to remember that dog shows are fun and, for most of us, an opportunity to show off our pets and socialize with other Ridgefolk. Each person can compete at their own level and derive pleasure from seeing their dog strut his stuff. It is possible to derive a great deal of pleasure from winning a blue ribbon in the 6-9 Month Puppy class while one of your friends may be trying for Best of Breed or even a Group 1st.

## **Books and magazines about Ridgebacks**

Anyone who is seriously interested in purebred dogs probably should subscribe to *Purebred Dogs/American Kennel Gazette*, a monthly magazine. The *Gazette* contains interesting and useful articles about such diverse subjects as nutrition, behavior, medical problems, etc. It also contains the minutes of the regular American Kennel Club meetings, breed registration statistics, and proposed changes in breed standards. Mailed with the *Gazette*, at no additional cost, is *Events*, a supplement that lists upcoming conformation and obedience shows, along with the name of the Superintendent, entry fee, closing date, and judging slate. This is a very useful guide to upcoming shows in your area. To subscribe to the *Gazette*, write to:

Purebred Dogs/American Kennel Gazette  
51 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10100

The subscription rate is \$28 for one year or \$52 for two years.

*The Rhodesian Ridgeback Quarterly* contains articles of interest about the breed, conformation and obedience standings, and full-page 'advertisements' for dogs and bitches that are being shown. Most serious Ridgefolk subscribe to this magazine, especially if they participate in conformation or obedience shows. It is published four times a year by:

Hoflin Publishing Ltd.  
4401 Zephyr Street  
Wheat Ridge, CO 80033-3299

The subscription rate is \$36 for one year.

*The Ridgeback* is the official magazine of the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of the United States. This magazine is very much oriented toward conformation and obedience shows, and contains many advertisements. It also reports the minutes of the meetings of the RRCUS Board of Directors and alerts members to such matters as suggested changes in the breed standard, deliberations about the site of the National Specialty shows, and membership votes on the judges slate for the Specialties. To become a member of the RRCUS, you must obtain an application form, which must be signed by two 'sponsors', individuals who are already members of RRCUS. You can download an application form from the RRCUS web site: <http://rrcus.org>.

There are also a number of books about Rhodesian Ridgebacks. The best place to buy these is from book dealers at dog shows. There is always a good selection at the Golden Gate Kennel Club show that is held at the Cow Palace in San Francisco the first weekend in February. Following are some examples:

T. C. Hawley, "The Rhodesian Ridgeback. The Origin, History, and Standard of the Breed," Published by the Author, 7 Kings Drive, 5530 Aliwal North, Republic of South Africa, 1957. This book has important historical value for the breed. It's 4th printing was in 1984, and it can often be obtained from book dealers at dog shows.

David Helgesen, "The Definitive Rhodesian Ridgeback," Anglo-American Communication Consultants, 1982. This is an informative book that is worth having. Helgesen has been a Ridgeback breeder for more than 25 years and is a breed judge in Canada. He tends to be rather opinionated about his pet peeves. The book can be found in some pet stores and is often available at dog shows.

Ann Woodrow, "Rhodesian Ridgebacks," published by the author, Crookwood Stud Farm, 1986. This is an informative book that is available at some dog shows.

Peter Nicholson and Janet Parker, "Book of the Breed: The Complete Rhodesian Ridgeback," Howell, 1991. This is an attractive, coffee-table style book, with a log of pictures. It is available at some dog shows.

There are a number of books available about training dogs. One that we like and have used is:

Carol Lea Benjamin, "Mother Knows Best: The Natural Way to Train your Dog," Howell, 1987. This entertaining book explains how mom dog does it, and suggests ways that you can imitate her successful approach to keeping the little critters in line. This book can usually be found in book stores.

A different approach is found in the following book:

C. W. Meisterfeld, "Psychological Dog Training: Behavior Conditioning with Respect and Trust," M R K Publishing, 448 Seavey, Petaluma, CA 94952, 1991.

Finally, Ian Dunbar, DVM, writes a regular monthly column on dog behavior and training methods in the *Gazette*. Dunbar is one of the top animal behaviorists in the United States and operates the Sirius puppy training classes, which are offered in many communities in the Bay Area.