

Essential Tips Prepared Especially For Cane Corso Puppy Owners

- Beware Of The Cane Corso 'Puppy Cuteness' Trap
- Beware of the Cane Corso 'Puppy Behavior Governor' Trap
- Beware Of Common Cane Corso Puppy Socialization Errors
- Cane Corso Puppy Training Do and Don'ts
- Equipment & Reading Resources



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Recommended Reading For:

1. Any companion dog owner with a Cane Corso under 18 months of age.
2. People Interested in owning a Cane Corso.
3. Breeders of the Cane Corso (as a resource for puppy inquiries and buyers).
4. Companion dog trainers that work with Cane Corso companion puppy owners.
5. Veterinarians with Cane Corso puppy owning clients that may not be aware of the differences between the puppy and adult characteristics of the breed.

Part I - The Cuteness Trap (a)

Babies are cute - right? But have you ever wondered why babies look so cute? Why not just miniature adults?

The distinguished ethologist Konrad Lorenz theorized that the universal appeal of the facial and body features of infants and children is an evolutionary biological program that exists to trigger a desire in us to care for the infant or child. As you are no doubt aware this is triggered even when that child is not our own. He referred to this "cuteness" period in our physical development as 'baby schema' (Kindchenschema).¹

These same offspring physical triggers occur in other animals for the same reasons and produce similar results.

The incredible power and influence of the 'baby schema' is illustrated in its interspecies crossover.² The cuteness that triggers the need to nurture in a tiger looking at her cub will also trigger an "Aw, isn't that cute!", from a human being. Considering, that tigers are predators known to prey on humans, you get a sense as to just how powerful an evolutionary tool is 'baby schema'.

The irony for the Cane Corso and many similar breeds is that when the baby schema (cuteness trap) is triggered in their mothers, she structures her parenting approach not by the cuteness but on the skills that cute puppy will require to survive and thrive as an adult. One of those lessons is, cute will only get you so far in life. Another, is cute or not, sometimes, I'm not asking you, I'm telling you and get used to it now because there others coming after me that won't care how cute you are - or were.

The Cane Corso mother does not forget what her cute puppy will grow into and she parents with not just the present in mind but the future. Whereas humans often let the cuteness lull them into a false sense of security and fritter away the timeline in which their dog will be the most malleable. The dog grows up without learning how to exercise their "suck it up" muscle and acquires an inflated sense of its place in the home, neighbourhood and the world in general. This parenting style byproduct may sound familiar to anyone that has spent time with children raised with the "everyone gets a trophy" mindset. It sounds good on the surface, but

¹ Glocker, M. L., Langleben, D. D., Ruparel, K., Loughhead, J. W., Gur, R. C., & Sachser, N. (2009). Baby Schema in Infant Faces Induces Cuteness Perception and Motivation for Caretaking in Adults. *Ethology: Formerly Zeitschrift Fur Tierpsychologie*, 115(3), 257-263. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1439-0310.2008.01603.x>

² Borgi, M., & Cirulli, F. (2016). Pet Face: Mechanisms Underlying Human-Animal Relationships. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 298. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00298>

it is what happens when young minds are at their most flexible and resilient that prepares them for later life's realities.

Raising a stable and responsive Cane Corso requires much more than nurturing. Proper ownership must be accompanied by frequent daily reminders as to who is the teacher and who is the student. Also, as they mature, the expectations as to obedience need to be more in keeping with what they (or any dog) is capable rather than the dismal treat based trick levels required to earn a pass in many 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' dog training classes.

Perhaps the best metaphor to distinguish between how a mother dog and a human respond either to or in spite of the 'baby schema' is that with a mother dog it is traditional parent/child, whereas with many people it is more grandparent/grandchild. As one might expect, over the long term the differences in these two approaches to relationship are bound to produce very different results from the perspective of shaping a child or a dog regarding fulfilling potential and maximizing the odds of future success.

This emphasizing of relationship and having high-level obedience goals by no means is intended to suggest that Cane Corso owners should not cuddle and love their dogs. It is to say, that fulfilling the nurturing component is not enough to protect your dog and prepare it for lifelong success.

Sometimes we forget that for many, if not most humans, love for a puppy or irrespective of 'Baby Schema' for a dog or dogs, in general, is effortless. Building a longterm relationship that is also founded on respect is another matter. It requires work.³ More so with some breeds than others and the Cane Corso is one of those breeds. As a result, nurturing must be paired with the ongoing reinforcing of clarity regarding the relationship and the pursuit of high-level obedience compliance.

Part II - The Cuteness Trap - (b)

All too often the relationship and training decisions made for puppies with guarding genetics and other well preserved working lines/breeds, are made not only by how their puppies look but by how they behave during from birth to the first year to eighteen months of their lives.

To the untrained eye there often doesn't appear to be that much difference in the way an immature Golden or Labrador puppy behaves and that of a breed like a Cane Corso. As a result, they proceed with a "how bad can it get" attitude about relationship and obedience. Concerning the aforementioned retrievers, they may be entirely correct. At worst guests will

³ <http://www.askthedogguy.com/loving-your-dog-is-the-easy-bit-training-your-dog-tangibly-shows-that-love/>

be joyously jumped and slobbered on, and the dogs won't be as welcome at as many family events as they otherwise might. With a breed like a Cane Corso, however, the results are often entirely different. Starting at about eighteen months of age as they enter adulthood their owners find that the previous unbridled joyous retriever like greeting is gradually replaced with behaviour more in keeping with their guarding genetics which is fine except without the correct foundation in place - it too will be unbridled.

Governor

A governor is a mechanical device used by some employers on company vehicles that prevent a vehicle from going beyond a certain speed. Many people are unaware that it is a biological reality that puppies have what amounts to a built-in 'governor' that temporarily tamps down many of the breed's stronger characteristics. This 'governor' remains in place until they reach young adulthood.

The signs of what they will become are more often than not there to observe by the very experienced. However, much of the genetic potential and personality characteristics are sufficiently diluted that people that might be less experienced with the breed type often miss the cues that signal that the dog they own is exceptional and as such requires special handling during its formative period.

Stronger signs related to their genetics become more potent as their bodies become more powerful.

Some companion dog owners of the Cane Corso may get signs their breed's genetics between 6 - 9 months. However, many unwisely still give the behaviour less weight than they should.

On average it isn't until a Cane Corso arrives between young adulthood (18 months) and full maturity (3 years of age) where an event occurs, and it becomes evident that their cute puppy has grown up and become a guard dog.

Nature never intended deliberate parenting to wait until the cuteness period expires. With some breeds, this leads to comparatively minor problems with obedience and unruliness. It can be quite another story with a guarding breed like the Cane Corso.

Failure to lay an early rock-solid foundation with a maturing Cane Corso is one of the primary contributing factors to incidents. To make matters worse without the aforementioned foundation, many owners find this late in the game, it very difficult to change the behaviour of their now very large, capable in body, mind and willpower, confident, Cane Corso.

Not beginning relationship clarity and genuine obedience training from the very beginning with a Cane Corso are problematic from practical perspectives that are less influential in less businesslike breeds when the piper requires payment.

Changing the behaviour of a delinquent 60 pound Golden Retriever bred for maximum compliance and malleability is one thing. It is quite another in a breed like the Cane Corso with its formidable genetic predisposition for guarding which at the same age will often be in the 100 pound plus range and has compliance standards for their owners based on respect earned as opposed to treats in pocket. This significantly ups the ante in the arenas of required owner handling skills and time commitment and as a result success rates for these two scenarios are significantly different. As such, it is imperative that Cane Corso owners begin formally working with their dogs at a higher standard from the very beginnings of their relationship. They will be learning, whether you are teaching or not.

When a Cane Corso standard level of training is left until mid-range or serious problems rear their head, many Cane Corso owners will find that they do not have what it takes to reverse the things once there has been an occurrence of an incident that cannot be ignored. If so, they will find that their options will have dwindled to three.

The first option is a highly restricted lifestyle which may include, frequent confinement in crates and higher fencing, muzzles etc. The second assuming the dog has not yet bitten or made serious attempts to do so, is rehoming. This may mean being returned to the breeder or sold to a more experienced home. More often it means to surrender to a rescue. Something that is becoming exceedingly more difficult to accomplish due to the combination of the breed's popularity, poor breeding and the number of well meaning companion dog owners purchasing a Cane Corso Ferrari when their driving skills or life style is more suited to a mini van.

The fourth option is one that the Cane Corso because of its unique characteristics and as a result difficulty in rehoming all too often is subjected to, is euthanasia.

These limited options are not speculation or scaremongering. It is a Cane Corso reality that is occurring now with increasing frequency. It is a pattern we have seen in the past with other guard-oriented breeds such as the Doberman, the German Shepherd, the Pit Bull the Rottweiler.

The Cuteness Trap - Conclusion

There is no more the matter with owning a well bred, well socialized (3 - 12 weeks of age), appropriately supervised, highly obedient and skillfully handled Cane Corso than owning a finely tuned, well maintained, ably driven aforementioned Ferrari.

However, what in one set of hands can be a beautiful once in a lifetime canine companion - can in another set of hands - if not taken seriously and handled appropriately - become a gun with a brain.

If you love your Cane Corso. If you love the breed. Protect them by taking Cane Corso ownership seriously.

Part III Socializing Vs Socialization Errors

One of the most misunderstood areas of canine behavior is that of socialization, and it causes considerable grief for many Cane Corso owners.

Ironically the most grievous dispensers of these errors are well meaning but ill-informed dog breeders, dog trainers, veterinarians and veterinary technicians and rescues.

A further irony is that the impact of social imprinting during a dog's critical socialization period on its temperament is one of the very few areas in canine behavior that has received considerable scientific research attention. I say irony because almost every puppy socialization class offered in North America not only ignores the science but potentially, directly and indirectly, cause considerable harm because they ignore the science.

Here is some of what we absolutely know about a dog's critical socialization period.

- It begins at 3 weeks of age and ends at 12 weeks of age. (There is the potential for a +/- 1 week variance.)
- Dog to dog socialization runs from 3 - 6 weeks of age. (Again with a slight +/- variance.)
- There is a fear imprint stage that runs from 8 - 10 weeks of age (Again with the potential for a slight +/- variance.)

- The more full the range of sights, sounds, smells and textures a pup is exposed to during its critical imprinting period the more stable its temperament will be around those things and the more resilient it will be later in life if it encounters something outside of that range of experience.
- When the critical socialization period is over - it is over. No amount of training or "socialization" will impact the dog in the same way as positive exposure during its critical socialization period. (That is not to say that training can't help by providing an alternate focus but that is not the same thing as being relaxed and accepting.)

Compare the absolutes mentioned above with the typical take on socialization as is offered in puppy socialization classes.

- Most dogs do not attend these classes until after the window has closed due as typically veterinarians advise that puppies access to public venues and other dogs are restricted until they have completed all immunizations. As a result, they are not "socializing" in a positive imprinting manner.
- Usually, the nature of these classes is only exposure to other puppies. However, since the dog to dog social skills imprinting phase is already completed at six weeks of age, there isn't the potential for useful social skill development. However, there is an enormous potential for adverse social skill development.
- If for some reason the puppy is accepted into the class between the 8 - 10 week period (fear imprint period) and they encounter another pup disparate in size, enthusiasm and/or temperament and they have one or more negative experiences they will be imprinted for life with regard to their perspective regarding unfamiliar dogs. *It is important to remember that a puppy socialization class is very far removed from what nature intended for this critical period of their lives. First, they are supervised typically by a mother much more skilled at heading off trouble than those often found overseeing these classes. Second, they wake up, play, eat, sleep with each other day after day. This provides perspective when there's a negative experience with each other. The classes are separated typically by one-week intervals with only an hour together.*
- While some dogs leave these classes imprinted into believing that unfamiliar dogs they meet in the future will be bullies to them. Others - equipped with the comparatively large in size and attitude possessed by any well-bred Cane Corso

leave imprinted into believing that other unfamiliar dogs they meet in the future will be as subordinate as was their smaller socialization class counterparts. Things can unravel quite rapidly when such an ill-informed adult Cane Corso meet a dog expecting more restraint from them.

- As these classes are typically advertised as puppy socialization classes, they end up leading companion dog owners astray. Well-meaning companion dog owners are led to believe they are fulfilling their socialization obligations to their puppy's temperament. When rather than exposure to other dogs what they should be imprinting their puppies on is, infants, crawling children, toddlers, eight-year-old males, senior citizens, simulate thunder and much much more right up until the end of the critical imprint period (12 weeks of age). This is a dangerous error for any dog but particularly one with the genetics of a Cane Corso.

As such, if you want the best for your Cane Corso, it would typically be best to avoid anything advertised as a puppy socialization class. Not only may you miss the actual socialization boat, but you may also end up doing more harm than good.

Instead, read up on what it actually is as this was just a brief overview. [I have an ebook](#) that I wrote on the topic in the resource section that contains more of the information you need to help form a bomb proof confident temperament in your Cane Corso.

Also, I always advise that when looking for a Cane Corso breeder, look for one that understands critical socialization and has it well under way before the pups are ready to leave. It will impact the futures of the puppies they breed so while the pups are still in their care, they should be rigorously implementing the sort of strategies found in the ebook. Also, they will have related recommendations for you when you take over. It's an excellent sign of a better than average breeder.

Part IV - Training Do and Don't Tips

While relationship is in part defined by the training time you spend with any dog it is much more than that. A dog is learning 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from its first breath to its last and whether companion dog owners realize it or not, they are teaching.

One of the primary reasons that 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' and 'Might Is Right' trainers go to the extremes they do to get and keep a dog's attention (and one of the many

reasons I recommend working with Balanced Companion Dog Trainers) is due to a failure to factor in the relationship between companion dog and owner outside of training time.

For example, if a young impressionable Cane Corso is left unattended in a yard, or permitted to look out windows, even for short periods of time they will learn, just as will any child left in a mall unattended or in front a television or a game console without care given to the content and how it might be interpreted.

The chances are significant that considering their guarding genetics, what a Cane Corso learns when left unattended in a yard or at a window for the first 3 years of their lives will not be beneficial over the long run.

It requires no training ability whatsoever to fan the flames of aggression in a Cane Corso. It does however require training to be able to contain and focus those traits. This is a polite way of rewording an old working dog saying, "Any fool can get a dog (let alone a high-drive guarding breed like the Cane Corso) to be aggressive enough to bite whereas it takes some planning and intelligence to get a dog to know when to bite and when to stop biting.

When one looks at what little is required of a companion dog inside a home and how often what is required is not complied with it is no wonder that most dogs think "Come!" means, "If you have a minute" or that the sound of a doorbell translates as "Lose you mind!". These are not good messages to send to any dog but especially not a Cane Corso.

These along with countless other interactions determine which account, (the owner or the dog's) accrues the most credibility and when actual obedience is required many companion dog owners find their account empty and then fall prey to training methods that resort to extremes.

I've mentioned training a few times in the contexts of 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free', 'Might Is Right' and Balanced Companion Dog Training. It is wise for any Cane Corso puppy owner to understand how these three very different approaches to companion dog training translate when applied to any companion dog and especially a Cane Corso companion dog.

Definitely Avoid - 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' Training

'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' typically treat driven training has in recent years become one of the more common offerings. It is often promoted as the most humane and only science-based method available. It has some rather extreme ideas regarding behaviour, other methods, and what in these trainers view as permissible dog training tools. On the surface, to those without a familiarity with what constitutes actual science some of their claims seem reasonable enough but are actually based on a rather loose grip with regard to what constitutes science, not to mention the day to day environments in which companion dog owners must work with their dog. As the names imply there is no room in the approach for physical or emotional chastisement. The concept of "No" is not only considered as "unscientific" but as cruel and amongst some of the disciples likely to magnify undesirable behaviour.

There is also the assumption amongst many 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' disciples that any other approach to companion dog training by default falls into the 'Might Is Right' category. This is untrue as it ignores the third option of Balanced Companion Dog Training.

It should be noted that with regard to the literal meaning of 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' and its application in real life context learning environments (home and neighbourhood), searches of the dominant science journal data bases such as PubMed, ScienceDirect, and Elsevier, which can be used for verification of "science-based" claims, result in absolutely no supportive research.

In essence, claims that an approach is entirely 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' are more about using the words humane and scientific as marketing buzz words than real science and often these classes are accordingly more about the sizzle than the steak.

The science that is pointed to when 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' companion dog owners are pressed is supposed to be based on all 4 quadrants of BF Skinner's operant conditioning model, where behaviour is modified with reward and punishment. I say supposed to, because that model by no means supports the idea of 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free'.

Where 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' companion dog trainers have become scientifically disoriented is in that they mistakenly confuse research pertaining to behaviour modification tested in tightly controlled settings as applicable to real life settings. This in spite of a tsunami of evolutionary biology and other scientific evidence to the contrary.

Highly controlled environments such as a maze or other experiment environs set up in a scientist's laboratory, the aquarium containing the Orca or the paddock containing the Grizzly Bear or Rhinoceros are not comparable to even the goings on of a companion dog owner's home let alone the distractions encountered outside the home.

Given enough control of all sensory output, enough food motivation, a highly observant and trainer and often team of trainers experienced in the use of operant conditioning, and in many cases social deprivation much can be shaped.

Obviously, this is not the training environment and advantages enjoyed by the average companion dog owner. As a result, real world 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' results are very poor and for a variety of reasons, subject to collapse around both low and high level distractions or low and high level distractions in contexts not previously highly rehearsed.

As distasteful as saying, "No!", to a dog may be to an 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' companion dog trainer, the reality is that evolution has selected a method for higher order social species and that method occasionally includes something every Cane Corso needs to learn from a young age and that is, "I'm not asking you, I'm telling you."

As a result, I suggest you avoid 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' companion dog training.

In addition, if you have in the past had difficulty with a puppy's mouthing, nipping or biting this article will perfectly illustrate how problematic and contrary to natural behaviour the typical redirect, ignore/reward etc. advice being given to companion dog owners by 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' dog trainers. <http://www.askthedogguy.com/puppy-mouthing-nipping-and-biting/>

Definitely Avoid - 'Might Is Right' Training

'Might Is Right', ironically, is actually supported by science not to mention our own anecdotal life events, in that painful experiences absolutely powerfully influences learning. A hand on a hot stove is extremely memorable and motivating. It is however a ghastly way to have to learn and one of the reasons that parents of every higher order social species do not use 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' as what the parents fail to appropriately clearly discourage will rear its head later in life.

Just as 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' was never intended for the rearing of young in natural real world environments, nor has 'Might Is Right' ever been found as foundational in nature as a means of teaching life skills in the context of parenting.

As a result, trainers using such methods should be also be avoided.The Correct Way -
Balanced Companion Dog Relationship Training

When done correctly, Balanced Companion Dog Relationship Training might be best described as 'All Positive/Purely Positive/Force-Free' ALMOST all the time.

Balanced Companion Dog Trainers believe that when a companion dog owner says "No!", to their dog it will not wreck their self esteem, but when combined with approval from someone perceived as a respected teacher the moment the behaviour moves even incrementally in the desired direction removes the need for dependence on treats or the threat of 'Might Is Right'. Balanced Companion Dog Training provides clarity and more reliable results without the treat fixation and dependency, confusion, considerable stress that accompanies the aforementioned methods..

While, "No!", is incorporated it is done so in a manner described as, Least Intrusive Minimally Invasive (LIMA). The response is in keeping with the dog rather than the mood or philosophy of the trainer.

The use of tools or the balance between, and intensity of you're "warm and cold" tone and body language messages, is not dictated by a philosophy of one size fits all either. Instead, a 'Balanced Companion Dog Trainer' picks the tools and the approach best suited to the companion dog owner and companion dog in front of them.

With regard to training tools; leashes and collars serve two primary purposes. They are to provide enough leverage to keep a dog from achieving (or thinking) it has a physical advantage thereby impacting both dog and handler safety and as a means of getting a distracted dog's attention. They are not used as a means to punish the dog.

With 'Balanced Companion Dog Training' the combination of . . .

- A teacher/student relationship (based on respect, not treats or fear)
- An even physical playing field (leash and training collar or harness.)
- A reasonable means to achieve and maintain attention (also leash and training collar or harness.)

... companion dog owners find that they can far more effectively use their tone to both correct and reward as opposed to offering treats or physical threats.

What the aforementioned essentially describes admittedly a highly condensed version is the template used by every higher order social species, dogs, wolves, apes and human beings as their foundation for teaching real world life skills. As a result, companion dog owners typically adapt to it very quickly. It is a method that works wonderfully on the Cane Corso whether young or old.

For details that include how to apply Balanced Companion Dog Training in day to day life I recommend reading my currently very inexpensive e-book, *The Beautiful Balance, Dog Training With Nature's Template*.

Part V Equipment and Reading Resources

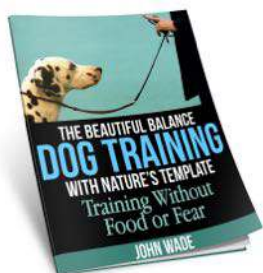


Wade Collar's Power Steering Dog Training Collar

The Wade Collar's Power Steering Dog Training Collar is a very simple, easy to put on and take off, dog-friendly, owner friendly training tool that allows increased safety and more nuanced handling and training.

It works very well because it's designed to stay up with relatively infrequent adjustment comfortably behind a dog's ears and under the jaw. (continued)

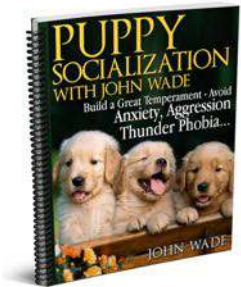
This positioning provides the dog's owner with subtle control of the dog's head which translates into better control of the dog's center of balance and in effect, their body, resulting in far greater receptiveness in the dog to the tone and body language guidance directed from the dog owner to the dog. www.wadecollars.com



eBook - The Beautiful Balance - Dog Training with Nature's Template

If you are a do it yourself person or a search amongst local trainers only turns up trainers using 'Might Is Right' or 'All Positive/Purely Positive/'

Force-Free' treat, treat treat training this is e-book is a very good guide for anyone with a Molosser breed. You can learn more about its contents on the Ask The Dog Guy website www.askthedogguy.com



eBook - Puppy Socialization with John Wade

If you don't yet have a Cane Corso - read this first. Beyond learning how to properly socialize your Cane Corso it will help you with breeder selection. If you have a Cane Corso under 12 weeks of age, read and implement if you want your Cane Corso to be fear and bomb proof in modern society. www.askthedogguy.com



eBook - Healing the Heel

If only family members with the upper body strength of the Incredible Hulk can walk your Cane Corso and even that person is starting to look like one of their arms is longer than the other - read this book. You will learn how to walk your Cane Corso, anywhere, regardless of distraction. There is more in this book then you will learn in any dog training class.

www.askthedogguy.com



Consultation

Telephone/Skype/Facetime Consultations

Telephone/Skype consultations are very thorough and followup notes/ instructions are forwarded after each consultation. While not absolutely necessary it's best to have everyone that normally interacts with the dog on a day to day basis involved in the consultation. Phone/Skype consults on average last between 90 - 120 minutes. If you wish further details email john@askthedogguy.com