

Handling the Puppy Crazies (blog post)

Our discussion at puppy class this week was all about the puppy crazies. You know, that time when that switch flips and your normally sweet and wonderful turns into a wild, jumping, biting, running, over-the-top tornado. I totally understood why my students were both frustrated and worried. Is there something wrong with the pup? How do you stop it? How long will my puppy do this? Fortunately, there is nothing wrong with these pups.

Not only are the puppy crazies normal, but you are not alone—most puppies get the puppy crazies--often several times a day. Puppy crazies seem to be worse in the morning and evening, and sometimes when pups are left alone for long periods. Of course that doesn't make them any easier to live with, and handling the puppy crazies in an appropriate manner now will make a difference later on. So what do you do?

First, know that prevention is the best cure. Puppies often go through the crazies at a particular time of day or during certain activities. Figure out your puppy's crazy time—after dinner, after a big play session, when she needs to go potty. Then make a plan. For example if you puppy gets crazy after dinner...

- Give your pup part of her dinner.
- Then take her outside to run around and potty.
- Bring her back in, plopping her in her crate or confinement area. (Make sure her crate is near where you are so she is not isolated.)
- Give her the remainder of her dinner in a Kong, roller ball or other food-dispensing toy while she is in the crate. Make it yummy (add a little peanut butter or cheese to the kibble).
- As she chews, she will likely settle down and then fall asleep.

When you prevent the puppy crazies this way, you are teaching your pup how to handle the normal stresses of life. Your pup will learn how to settle herself and will begin developing that all-important "off switch."

But what if you can't or don't prevent the crazies? What can you do when your pup is in the puppy crazies? Hold on to your hat—you can weather this tornado! Seriously though, when your pup is already in midst of the crazies, you will have to ride out the storm (fortunately, it generally only lasts about five minutes). Here are some things you can try:

- Open the back door (assuming you have a backyard) and let your pup zoom around the yard and run it out. Or, put your pup on the other side of a baby gate or X-pen.
- Try to focus your pup on a toy or chew.
- Wait it out. The crazies are usually over in 5 minutes or less.

Here's what not to do:

- Yell at or chase your pup around. This may actually make them more hyped up.
- Try to restrain your pup. The pup may direct the puppy crazies towards you.

Most of the time, prevention, and management are the best bet with the puppy crazies. And don't worry. As with many puppy challenges, this too shall pass.