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**Songbird Ranch Rhodesian Ridgebacks**

***Take home information***

**Congratulations on your new family addition!** This is an exciting time and we know you may have many questions. We hope this will answer most of the most common ones. Remember…we are always here for you if you have any questions not addressed here!

**Your new Puppy.** We have done our best to socialize these babies and give them new experiences so they will easily adapt to their new lives. They should arrive at your home and do unusually well, but please remember that, even though they take it in stride, the change is very stressful on their little systems. As a result, we suggest you continue to introduce new things, ***but slowly***. A stressed puppy is more susceptible to things like digestive upsets and even viruses.

**Digestive issues.** Puppies can exhibit stress by experiencing gastrointestinal distress. Canned pumpkin is great to add to their meals to help digestion: it can help either diarrhea or constipation because of its high fiber and moisture content. I also recommend a good probiotic daily. Apple cider vinegar added to their food can soothe a puppy’s overly alkalized digestive tract. A good immune booster is raw, local honey from your own area.

**Feeding.** The first thing most people ask me is how much do they eat? Their needs change rapidly as young puppies. They are growing fast, so they will need to be fed three times a day until the age of 6 months, at which time you can then just drop out lunch.

At 8 to 10 weeks they're usually getting around ½ cup to 3/4 cup of good quality kibble three times a day. This quickly increases to 1 cup, 3 times a day. Their metabolism will slow down quite a bit and most adults eat around one cup twice a day of a good quality kibble. Of course each individual is different and it is not unusual for especially the big males to eat more than 5 cups a day total. Please do not feed them puppy food. Large dog breeds can experience major orthopedic problems such as Panosteitis because of excessive calories, protein, and incorrect calcium /phosphorus levels. Look for **All Life Stage** food such as Canidae.

I just need to add that raw food is absolutely the best and most nutritious food you can feed your pet. There are a lot of great articles on feeding raw whether it be something you want to purchase pre-made, or make yourself. Also, there are a lot of good freeze dried raw foods, which is the next best thing.

I also recommend a good daily vitamin. I prefer Nu-Vet--they are a trusted and easy to order supplement. You should find a sample in your puppy package along with ordering information and an order code so they know I sent you.

**Chew bones and chew sticks:** Make sure your baby has lots of textures to chew on—big, raw knuckle bones are best. NEVER feed cooked bones of any kind! Cooking takes the temper and digestibility away and can cause major blockages and digestive damage. I also like a good quality bully stick. Read your labels and buy from trusted sources.

**Crate Training.** I believe in crate training even if they're not going to spend the rest of their lives sleeping in a crate. The fact is, is that it is a safe, secure place for a puppy.

There are times when you have to leave them alone, or get some sleep at night. I buy one crate that is big enough for them when they're an adult as well: usually around a size 38 or 42 inch. Give them lots of blankets and stuffed animals and a treat when they have to go to bed at night, along with possibly something to chew on. Another good reason for crate training is if they ever have to go to the vet or a groomer or anything similar, they are used to it and it will not stress them. Sometimes it takes a little tough love to get them used to it at first, but they will learn to love their crate and it is natural for dogs to have their own den. If you have a wire crate, be sure to cover it. A pup will feel insecure and vulnerable in an open cage.

**Small children and your Ridgeback puppy.** Our puppies are strong and healthy and have great dispositions! They are game for anything. However, if you have small children please do not allow them to pick the puppy up! They should be restricted to holding the puppies while sitting on the floor. Too many pups have been injured by trying to jump down out of their arms.

**Puppies and physical activity.** By no means let a puppy jump off a couch or out of your arms. Puppies’ growth plates are extremely delicate and can be permanently damaged very easily when they are young.

You may be a runner, and someday your grown Ridgeback will LOVE to run with you! But for now, do not allow your puppy to run on hard surfaces for at least a year to year-and-a-half, and even then you must start out extremely slowly. Please wait till he is 2 years old before actually taking him on significant runs.

That is not to say they can't go out and play! My 1 year old dogs go on 1-mile horseback rides with me through the trails, which are, notably, on soft ground.

**Puppy Vaccinations.** Your puppy has received his first distemper/parvo shot before he goes home, and will need another one at about 12 weeks old. The third shot will be given about 16 weeks old. Rabies will be needed later, butI recommend not vaccinating for rabies until your puppy is at least 6 months old, no matter what a veterinarian says.

***Important:*** Never let the vet give the rabies shot with any other shots: make sure there's a good month between rabies and anything else given, as it can cause autoimmune issues later! Also ask for **Mercury-free vaccine**!

Not all veterinarians know this, but Rhodesian Ridgebacks and most sighthounds are sensitive to autoimmune problems, so we don't want to be stressing the immune system

any more than we have to. They will need one-year boosters for each of the vaccinations listed above, and then I use the protocol set forth by Dr. Jean Dodds who is our country's foremost immunologist for animals. <https://www.hemopet.org/dodds-vaccination-protocol-dogs-2016/>

**House breaking.** Potty training, I believe, is more people training than anything. When your puppy wakes up, take it out. When it eats, take it out. When it plays hard, take it out. When it does any different behavior, take it out. If you do not ever let it have a chance to have an accident, potty training will be a breeze. And let them poop twice if they need to, it's not uncommon for them to go and then go again a minute later so give them a chance and lots of praise when they come in.

I don't mind giving a treat after potty but your Rhodesian Ridgeback is very smart and sometimes they will ask to go out just so they can get the treat! Some people hang a bell on their door and teach the puppy to ring the bell when it has to go out and that is a great tool.

**Socializing your puppy.** Socialization is a very important thing for a puppy. He needs to be subjected to other people, car rides, stores that allow them in, and any other thing or place you can think of that will help to develop a well-rounded, well-adjusted puppy.

***Classes.*** Puppy classes are a must, and they are more for training the people than for the puppy! I like classes that allow puppies to play together before or after class so that they get used to other dogs and other breeds. Breeds are prejudiced sometimes. They know others of their kind and tend to prefer them. I recommend visiting a couple different puppy classes before you sign up to make sure you're on the same page with their Training Method.

***Equipment.*** For classes, walks and other outings you will need good gear. I am a bit old-fashioned and prefer a collar and leash. There is nothing cruel about a slip collar or Martingale if used right. I am not a fan of harnesses and especially do not leave them on all the time as they can create growth plate problems if your puppy pulls against them or if they are not fitted correctly. Also, they are not trustworthy--a dog can back right out of them and get away which they cannot do with a slip or Martingale style collar.

***Training.*** Nothing is better than good training and your puppy needs a firm but gentle hand. I also recommend letting your puppy adjust to its new home for a couple of weeks before you go into class. It will just help the stress level stay low.

***Fear Periods in your puppy’s youth.*** Unfortunately, puppies go through a fear period right around the time you will be taking them home, so you need to be careful not to overwhelm them with too much, while still getting them out socializing. Another fear

period will sometimes pop up around 10 or 12 months of age, and things that scare them at this point in life could have lifelong effects on them. There are a lot of great

articles about fear periods with puppies and I encourage doing some research on the subject.

***Your Puppy and “social distancing.”*** Having talked about socialization, we are going to have some challenges socializing in this social distancing time. We can still get the puppies out in stores, and teaching them to walk by strangers without paying attention to them. You do not always have to let people touch and pet your puppy. Puppies are an attention magnet! But just be polite and say that you are teaching your puppy about social distancing also. Just being out and seeing different things and places is going to help make a well-adjusted puppy. The American Kennel Club also has some great literature on the subjects.

**Misbehaving ears!** One more thing… Ears! A puppy’s ear leather can do some strange things! We call this “ Misbehaving Ears.”

**Misbehaving Ears! Perfect Puppy Ears!**

A dog looking at the camera

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Especially around teething time, your puppy’s ears can start to stick out like the flying nun. Along with their good daily vitamin I like to add Vitamin C. This helps build cartridge. If you see their ears start to do funny things, they should be taped. It's very easy, and they usually don't mind it at all. See me for instructions if this starts to happen. ***If you don’t correct it during this stage, they will stay that way!*** A Ridgebacks ears are one of his great glories.

**Songbird Ranch Welcomes You!** When you purchase your puppy from Songbird Rhodesian Ridgebacks, you have just become part of our family! We are here to answer any questions or concerns you have for the life of this baby. I encourage you to keep in touch. Let me know how things are going, if there are any health problems along the way, and even what ultimately ends their life--hopefully a long, long time from now. It's important for a breeder to know all these things in order to keep on producing healthy puppies with great temperaments, and even though we cannot guarantee that stuff doesn't pop up sometimes, we want to take every single measure possible to make sure that your puppy is healthy, stays healthy, and lives a long and happy life.

Robin Nicholson, Owner

Songbird Ranch Rhodesian Ridgebacks

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