



## Your Labrador Retriever Puppy Month by Month

By Terry Albert

Released in December 2012, my latest book takes you month by month through your puppy's first year. It includes everything you need to know about health, development, training, nutrition, socialization, and just how to have fun with your new Lab. It's the longest book I've ever written—330 pages packed with information—so I had the opportunity to go into great detail.

Numerous experts helped me with this book, and I hope you will find something new and interesting on every page! Many thanks to my friends Barb and Don Ironside, Deb Eldredge DVM, Susan Eberhardt, Nina Mann, Heather Luis, Liz Palika, Pat Hastings, Pat Schaap, Sarbit Singh DVM, Florence Scarinci, Christine Rinaldi, Cary Saunders, Melanie Montiero, Lorna O'Connor and Nancy Shahan-Wall. So many generous people gave their time and expertise. Thank you!

Here's an overview of the chapters:

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### Months 1 & 2: The Littermate

During Months 1 & 2, your newborn puppy grows rapidly. She can see, hear, taste and smell by week 3. Mother provides most of her care, while her fellow littermates and mother teach her skills she will need to know.

### Month 3: Your lab Puppy Comes Home

During month 3, from 8-12 weeks, you get to choose your puppy and then go home and prepare for his arrival. When you bring him home, you introduce social skills, and work with his fear imprint period. You also get him his vaccines and start crate and house training.

### Month 4: Finding Her Way

Teeth begins during month 4, 12-16 weeks. It's also important during this time to socialize her to other dogs and people. Beginning obedience skills, including puppy class, start in month 4, and you two have fun playing with toys.

### Month 5: The Rebel

Puppy becomes more independent during month 5, 16-20 weeks. You finish his vaccines and begin to socialize more in public. His obedience training and following of the household rules are reinforced now too.

### Month 6: Full Speed Ahead

During month 6, your pup begins to look less like a puppy and more like a growing dog. Injuries become a risk as she romps and runs. You also have to deal with dog hair during this time, along with some behavior challenges. Thank goodness for obedience class!

### Month 7: The Silly Tweenager

At 7 months, your pup is getting closer to sexual maturity and can be spayed or neutered. During this time, exercise is more important to burn off some of that puppy energy. Training continues, too, further cementing the bond between you two.



Photo by Cera Reusser

### Month 8: Adolescence

Teenagers are a challenge, as you'll learn by month 8. Labs eat everything, so that's something to look forward to. You'll also need to watch out for and treat coat problems if they develop. This is the month to work on teaching your pup self-control and concentration, because believe me, he doesn't have any!

### Month 9: In Search of a Leader

Your Lab begins to develop mature male and female characteristics this month. He will test your authority and needs a kind and fair leader to show him the way. Your pup also begins some advanced training to combat the "bull in a china shop" thing he has going on now.

### Month 10: Transition

In month 10, you can begin comparing your puppy's appearance to the breed standard. You can also expect to deal with some teenage regression in behavior and prepare for off-leash control. Learn how to create some fun activities for your kids and pooch.

### Month 11: Putting Your Lab to Work

At 11 months, your puppy is almost an adult. During this time, you can more easily travel with your Lab and get him involved in dog sports. You'll also work on polishing obedience skills- and teach him some tricks!

### Month 12 and Beyond: Your Lab Grows Up

More physical changes happen around month 12, and your pup goes in for her annual checkup. During this time, her nutritional needs change. As with previous months, you continue her training and exercise. And from here on out, enjoy your best friend!