

## [Below is an article I wrote years ago. Enjoy!](#)

### **Foofie Dog Syndrome; *Why small dogs needs training too!***

By

Jeffrey H Coltenback, 2006

About 6 years ago, I experienced a miracle. I guess I've always believed in miracles. But, this experience was one of a kind. I met a small dog breed owner who actually let the dog walk on the ground. I couldn't believe it. No stroller, no fancy doggie carry-bag, just a good old fashioned leash and collar. Ok, I'm kidding. But, in all seriousness, one of my biggest challenges is educating small dog owners that a 5lb dog doesn't think in terms of how big or small he or his pack are. Innately and fundamentally, dogs are dogs, regardless of size or breed. Sure, different breeds of dog have certain behaviors or instincts that are inherent to a particular breed. But, at their core dogs have the same basic needs. They need good nutrition. They need exercise. They need rest. And, they need to be part of a balanced social structure, a pack. I'm sure you hear it all the time. You need to be Alpha, you need to show leadership. I can't stress enough how important leadership is. Asserting and maintaining leadership is essential. I can talk for hours upon hours and give many examples of how we relinquish leadership. But, for the purpose of this article, I will keep things brief and site a few common issues we may experience, particularly with small dog breeds.

So, you brought your new small breed puppy home. Congratulations. Little "Buddy" is curious and scared at the same time. He's not sure what's going on. You can see the concern and anxiety in his eyes. Even a novice dog owner may even be aware of some body language. As is only human nature, you pick up buddy and cuddle him and stroke him and tell him it's ok. We as human pet owners are nurturing. And, we see how we "settled down" little buddy. Of course, we love holding little buddy, he's so cute. And, he looks to us for guidance during this critical stage of life. There is only one problem. Buddy will grow up real fast. And, chances are, you will be holding him and cuddling him as he matures. All of a sudden, one day, out of nowhere, buddy starts barking and growling at someone or something. He may even nip. Being that we are the nurturing type, what do we do? We pet and stroke him and tell him in a soft voice "It's ok sweetheart". Or, another sweet and soft assurance of "Shhhh, calm down". The once "effective" approach to calming our scared pup now becomes the reward for dominant and/or aggressive behavior. On top of the fact that for the past "X" number of months you have been carrying him around and treating him like a king. In the dog world, being treated like a king automatically tells the dog they are the King, or the Alpha.

It doesn't matter how physically big or small the dog is. You have been submitting to him and promoting him as Alpha. You see he doesn't listen. Or only

listens when he wants to. You justify it by saying that he's just a little stubborn. Well, I hate to break the news to you. He's not stubborn. He's not listening to you because he doesn't have to. He's the leader. He doesn't have to. You need to listen to him (at least in his mind). You've been listening to him for how long now? Just think back over the course of time since you brought home. How many times did he come over to you and look at you with that look. You know the look – big eyes, furry face. How did you respond? You looked at him and with your soft, reassuring, nurturing voice said “What do you want buddy”. Or, “I know what he wants. And, you pet and coddled him. Or, got up and got him some treats. Or, even moved out of his way so he can get up on the couch and sit where you were sitting. Any of these things ring a bell? Well, again, I hate to be the bearer of bad news. But, Buddy wasn't being cute. And, he certainly wasn't asking you for anything. He was telling you to work for him. It's that simple. You see, you're either working for him or, he's working for you. This applies to any dog/human relationship. And, you've been working for him all along.

What about is feeding schedule? Do you free feed (leave food out all day)? Well, stop IMMEDIATELY!! Food is the number one resource of a dog pack. And, leaders control hunting and eating. If you leave food out all day, Buddy controls the packs' number 1 resource. So, in his mind, he must be of some level of importance in the pack. Put him on a schedule. Put his food down for 10 minutes. If he doesn't eat, pick it up and don't feed him again until his next scheduled feeding; even if it's the next day. Don't worry. If he is healthy he can go a day or two without eating. But, always have fresh water available at all times. Water need not be restricted. I feel so strongly about food control that I will not work with anyone who free-feeds. It is the number one cause to relinquishing leadership over your dog. And, one more thing, don't listen to anyone if they tell you keep your pup's food out all the time (unless, there is a medical reason). It's just another way of nurturing your pup to become a leader.

How about toys? Boy, Buddy loves his toys. He even brings them over to you so *he can play with you*. Sorry, wrong again. **You're playing with him!** That's right. Again, Buddy isn't being cute. He's telling you to play with him. When he brings the toy over to you and you play with him, you just submitted to him. You may deny Buddy is running the show. He can't possibly be your superior. He even comes over to you and plops on his back for a belly rub, surely a submissive gesture/posture. Guess what? Yup, wrong again. In this instance, Buddy is telling you to groom him. And, once again, you submitted. I know you maybe asking or even outright disagreeing with me. So, to put it in very simple terms; leaders initiate! It doesn't matter what the scenario, if your dog initiates anything and you acknowledge it, you have just submitted.

These examples may not apply to all dog owners. Some dogs are just Omega dogs (lower ranking pack member personality). And, they will rarely be leaders. Or, rarely be effective leaders. But, if you have absolutely no leadership over your dog, even an Omega dog will challenge for pack status. Now, if you have a young, emotionally immature Omega dog that is thrust into a leadership position prematurely, you will have a dog with behavioral problems. So, I'll bet you want to know how to fix this. Well, it's challenging to give you all the tools you may need to address these issues

in just this article. But, you can start by asserting your dominance over your dog. This is done humanely and without force!! When he initiates something, just simply ignore him, including NO EYE CONTACT. That's right. It's sometimes that simple. Do not respond to his demands. Instead, make him work for the privilege of interacting with you. This is where obedience commands come in handy and apply positive reinforcement, of course. If you need to hire a trainer, do so. You can make Buddy work for things by giving him commands. Before you put his food down, make him sit. Before you let him out in the yard, make him lay down. If he brings you a toy, take the toy and put it away. If you want to play with him, wait about a minute and then take the toy out and introduce it to him. I know, you're saying how is that going to enforce pack status. Simple; Dogs live here and now. What happened a minute ago is over. He's likely on to something else already anyway. And, you then initiated the play. And, you also need to end the play session too. Leaders control everything that goes on in a pack. So, get control of your pack and start being a leader! End Foofie Dog Syndrome Now!!

Jeffrey H Coltenback

[www.JeffColtenback.com](http://www.JeffColtenback.com)