



## Body Handling

We at Dogsmartz highly encourage new puppy owners to prepare their puppies to LOVE being handled!

Puppies are squirmy, little love bugs that we love to hold close to us. But, for some puppies, touching different areas of their body can be a scary thing and cause them to panic or even bite! So, as new puppy owners, it's important to work with your puppies early on to ensure they love being touched and handled everywhere!

So, every night when they are calmest, do a handling exercise with your puppy. A handling exercise should last 3-5 minutes maximum. Make it part of your "snuggle" time! Handle the following areas:

- Ears - Put your finger just inside their ear to get them used to that so you can easily clean them.
- Mouth – Using a stuffed Kong, let them lick it while you lift each side of their mouth up to expose their gums, just like your veterinarian will need to do.
- Tail – Be sure you can gently stroke your puppy's tail.
- Rump Area – Rub and touch their rump area (near the base of their tail)
- Paws – Using a stuffed, frozen Kong for them to lick, handle their paws, gently touching each toe and putting your finger under the pads of their feet. Also practice wiping their paws. Using the Kong allows them to have something yummy for a potentially scary experience! This can help create a more pleasurable experience.
- If your puppy has hair that will need trimmed on their face, try getting them used to having a comb placed on their face. By using a frozen, stuffed Kong, let them lick while you gently touch their face with the comb. Don't pull thru, just place it on or near their face. Let them lick the Kong while you do this and remove the Kong when completed with each attempt.

If your puppy shows resistance (pulls away) or even mouths your hand, you may have a handling sensitivity so this work becomes very important! Pair each handling experience with a yummy treat or stuffed Kong (a little peanut butter mixed with some dry food for example) to create a more positive experience.

Also, play a "Gotcha" game 2-3x a day to work on collar sensitivity. Walk up to your puppy, gently grab their collar or harness and say "gotcha" as you feed a treat! This is a highly sensitive area for many puppies. If your puppy gets away from you, what's the first thing a good samaritan does to help? Grab your puppy by the collar or harness! So, we need to be sure they are ok with it!

Leash – Get your puppy used to a leash by attaching a light weight leash and let it drag while supervised. If using a harness (which we highly recommend), place the harness on and play a game with a toy or feed some yummy treats to get them used to it. Puppies can become frightened of leashes so getting them ready early on is wise!

If you have a puppy that will be going to a groomer, be sure to find a groomer that practices, gentle, low stress handling techniques and will allow you to stay for your puppy's first visit. Grooming visits can be very scary and being away from their Mom or Dad can add extra stress! In addition, find a groomer that encourages "happy" visits to the groomer BEFORE an actual grooming appointment to help get your puppy acclimated to the facility and the groomer. Stop in, have the staff / groomer pet and give a treat and leave! Stop in and allow the puppy to hear the sounds of the grooming facility too! This makes for much happier visits in the future. You can prevent stress early on for your young puppy!