

# Your Puppy and Gentle Handling

You will do yourself and your new pet a favor by teaching your new puppy to allow you to handle its body. Throughout the life of your dog, there will be times that you need to handle various parts of your dog's body. You may need to wipe feet, clean ears, give medication or bandage a paw. Yet if you have never handled your dog, these simple tasks could become impossible. Handling also serves to simulate the physical communication that is exhibited by a mother controlling her puppies, or a leader dog over a subordinate group member. You should gently handle your puppy daily. Pick a time when your puppy is calm, like just after a nap. Do not try to start a body handling exercise when your puppy is excited, rambunctious, or in the mood for play.



Place the puppy in your lap and touch the feet, open the mouth, look in the ears and under the tail. All the while, praise your puppy for being good, even offer a few tasty food treats. Be sure to keep initial sessions very short, since you want your puppy to succeed and not struggle. If the session is too long, you run the risk of the puppy struggling and getting free. This could send a message to your puppy that it can "win". Always set the puppy up to succeed, but on your terms. Gradually increase the amount of time you control your puppy so that no struggle ensues. Soon the puppy will allow and perhaps anticipate these handling sessions. All family members should participate in this exercise. An adult should supervise young children. If you see any hesitation or reluctance on the part of the puppy, you will want to repeat the exercise, until you can accomplish the handling without resistance. If you encounter resistance, do the same exercise a little more gently or in a slightly different location, give some tasty treats for compliance, and progress gradually to more difficult situations. Never force the puppy to the point that it exhibits fear or attempts escape. On the other hand, if you do not gradually overcome resistance the puppy may never allow handling as an adult. Over time your puppy should allow you to place pressure on the back of its neck while it is in a down position, to roll it onto its side, and to grasp its muzzle. These forms of handling should never be used for punishment.