Lake Pine
Animal Hospital

Puppy Handling & Body Part Desensitization Guide

Teaching your puppy to comfortably tolerate handling is one of the most important things you can do to prevent fear at the veterinary clinic, groomer, and at home. The goal is to create calm, positive associations with routine care.

How to Practice

- Practice brief sessions daily. Pair gentle handling with praise and small treats. Keep sessions short (30-60 seconds per body part) and stop before your puppy becomes restless.
- Say the name of the body part or procedure out loud as you handle it. This builds familiarity and predictability.

Nails

- Say: “Nails.”
- Gently touch one paw at a time.
- Press lightly on each toe as if extending the nail.
- Reward calm behavior.
- Gradually introduce nail trimmers or a nail grinder without trimming at first.

Ears

- Say: “Ears.”
- Gently lift each ear flap.
- Look inside briefly.
- Touch around the base of the ear.
- Progress to wiping with a cotton pad before introducing cleaner.

Teeth

- Say: “Teeth.”
- Lift the lips briefly.
- Touch the teeth and gums gently.
- Gradually introduce a finger brush, then a toothbrush.
- Keep early sessions short and positive.

Eyes

- Do not yell or punish. Clean thoroughly with an enzymatic cleaner, increase supervision, and shorten time between potty breaks.

Nighttime Tips

- Keep the crate near your bedroom at first. Keep potty breaks calm and brief. Some whining is normal initially; prolonged crying may signal a need to eliminate.
- Crate training works best when it is positive, consistent, and predictable. If you need assistance, contact Lake Pine Animal Hospital – we are happy to help.

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