



## CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL PET DOG TRAINERS

### A GUIDE TO HANDLING & GROOMING FOR PUPPY OWNERS

**Handling** – Quite often puppies get over excited and become wriggly little monsters when people try to pat them. The purpose of these exercises is to teach those wriggle monsters to kindly accept human handling. When handling your puppy try to keep your hands gentle and move slowly. Start these exercises when your puppy is sleepy. You won't get far if you try restraining your pup when he is in "Turbo Mode". Eventually your puppy/dog will stand while you give a "body massage". Great precursor to grooming!

- Massage around the base of the ears and gently pull the ears through your fingers. Ear massage has a calming effect on dogs.
- Stroke gently starting at the head and running your hand all the way to the tip of the tail.
- Massage the shoulders and run your hands down each front leg. Take care to touch each toe and gently manipulate each nail.
- Massage the back and run your hands down each rear leg. Again, make sure you touch each toe and manipulate each nail.
- Run your hands over the puppy's face and muzzle. Gently stroke the muzzle and lift the lips to look at teeth. After examining the teeth, reward your pup with a food treat. Puppies that are just beginning teething may be very reluctant to have their mouths examined. Do this quickly and gently. Tell them what nice teeth they have and give a big reward. Don't over do it, but don't ignore it.

**Grooming** – Even if you plan to have a professional groomer groom your dog, it is wise to get the puppy used to nail clippers around the feet, brushes and combs on the body and bathing. Take your puppy to the groomer a few times to get used to the facility. Most groomers are happy to put a puppy up on a table and run a brush over him a couple of time to get the puppy used to the idea.

Many puppies think that brushes are chew toys and this makes grooming a wrestling match. Keep your pup occupied with a yummy chew toy while you gently brush or comb. Keep sessions short and pleasant, gradually working up to longer periods. Get out the nail clippers and just touch the puppy's toes with them. Give a treat and then snip a teeny little bit and give a treat. Nail clipping is very easy to do if your dog is not frightened. Nail clipping is nearly impossible if your dog doesn't want you to do it.

Bathing can be a traumatic experience for both dog and owner. Food treats are invaluable in this situation. Toss some treats into the bathtub and allow your dog to eat them. Turn on the water, making very sure that the temperature is room temperature or cool for longhaired dogs and lukewarm for those with short or no hair. If you find that your dog is panting a lot, try turning the water temperature down. Keep feeding treats as you get your puppy used to the water and the sensation of being soaked to the skin. Do not remove the pup from the tub until you are ready. Try to make bath time pleasant, but remember that it is one of those chores which must be done on occasion and your pup must behave. Be gentle but firm. Again, even if you plan on using a professional groomer you may find there will be times when your dogs *needs* a bath and the groomer is not available. Make bath time as positive an experience as possible when your dog is a puppy and you'll avoid problems later.