

Pawsitive Results Critter Academy

Where people learn to lead...and pets love to follow!

www.pawsitiveresults.net (707) 292-5862

Teaching Dogs to Accept Handling and Medicating

During your dog's lifetime, you will need to groom him, clip his nails, check his ears, clean his feet, and give him medications. Your veterinarian will also need to examine your dog, give him shots, and perform various tests. It is easier for everyone- including your dog- if you take the time to teach him to readily accept all these types of handling. If you have added a new puppy or adult dog to your home, working through these exercises can prevent problems from developing. If your dog is uncomfortable with certain types of handling, these exercises may allow you to work through the problem yourself. However, if your dog has a long-standing problem, isn't responding to the exercises, or has bitten you during handling, I recommend that you call me for a consultation so that we can create a program to safely address your dog's specific issues.

- ◆ Begin these exercises when your dog is relaxed and well-exercised. Do not skip steps even if your dog does not have handling issues- moving too fast may uncover problems you were not aware of.
- ◆ If your dog has a problem with a specific body part being handled, skip that area until you have worked on all non-problem areas successfully.
- ◆ Keep your sessions short- about 5 minutes- and always end on a positive note.
- ◆ Do not offer the treat up front as a diversion or bribe- the treat appears as a reward after your dog accepts the handling.
- ◆ Work slowly and watch your dog for signs of stress. Freezing, pulling away, averting his face, looking "glassy eyed", lifting his lip, growling, and mouthing your hand are all signs that your dog is uncomfortable with the handling. Back off and try an easier step. If you cannot work through the problem, call me for professional help.

Handling Exercises

- ◆ Gently stroke your dog from the top of his head down his back. Immediately praise your dog and give him a tasty treat.
- ◆ Add your dog's tail into the above exercise.
- ◆ One at a time, add each leg into the exercise.
- ◆ One at a time, add each paw into the exercise, making each touch 1 second or less.
- ◆ Gently stroke your dog's ears one at a time, praising and rewarding for each one.
- ◆ Touch your dog's muzzle for 1 second. Immediately praise and give him a tasty treat.

- ◆ When you can successfully handle all body parts gently and briefly, start at the beginning and increase the time you handle each body part before praising and rewarding. Increase the time requirement slowly, one second at a time, until you can gently handle each body part for 10 seconds before giving a reward.
- ◆ When you can handle each body part for 10 seconds, then go back to brief touches and gradually make your touches more invasive. For example:
 - 1) Move from a gentle stroke down the back to a gradually firmer stroke, to a pat, until you are eventually thumping your dog's side and rewarding with a treat.
 - 2) Begin with a gentle stroke down the tail, then add more pressure until you are stroking firmly, then add a gentle pull at the end, until you can give your dog's tail a tug and he will accept it happily for a treat.
 - 3) Graduate from gently stroking your dog's ears to doing pretend examinations by manipulating the earflap.
 - 4) Build up from gentle touches of your dog's muzzle to gentle grabs to firmer grabs until you can firmly hold your dog's muzzle for 10 seconds in exchange for a treat.

Medicating Exercises- Pills

- ◆ A few times a day, "pill" your dog with a small piece of freeze dried liver, cheese or another special treat. To do this, grasp your dog's muzzle and push your fingers gently against the gums right behind the canine teeth until he opens his mouth. When he opens his mouth, place the goodie on his tongue. Do this for at least 3 days.
- ◆ When your dog is readily and happily accepting the above step, then go through the pilling motions (including your hand in his mouth as if inserting a pill), let his mouth close, and then present his tasty treat. Do this several times a day for at least 4 days.
- ◆ Now you can actually pill your dog with a small, easily swallowed vitamin or supplement (ask your vet for a recommendation). Immediately follow the pilling with a special treat. Continue to occasionally "pill" your dog to keep the positive association.

Medicating Exercises- Liquids

- ◆ Ask your vet for a 1 to 3 cc syringe (no needle!). Fill the syringe with beef or chicken broth or another liquid treat your dog will love.
- ◆ Grasp your dog's muzzle and open his mouth as you already learned in the pilling exercise. Insert the syringe into the corner of your dog's mouth and slowly depress the plunger to release the broth onto your dog's tongue. Do this several times a day for at least 4 days.
- ◆ Now fill the syringe with water and repeat the above procedure, popping a special treat into your dog's mouth at the end. Do this several times a day for at least 4 days.
- ◆ Repeat the above, releasing the water on the back of your dog's tongue as you would with an actual medication.
- ◆ Add a little lemon juice to the water to add a slightly unpleasant flavor. Be sure to follow this with a really, really good treat! Continue to occasionally perform this exercise to maintain the positive association.