



LUNE VALLEY DOG TRAINING CLUB

Most people need no encouragement to cuddle and stroke their puppy. Getting a dog used to your touch is very important. It builds up a bond of affection but it also enables you to handle him safely in situations such as check-ups at the vets or if you are concerned there is a problem.

HANDLING YOUR DOG

1. Ears – lift each ear flap and tilt the head so you can look right into the ear canal. If it is dirty smelly or inflamed seek veterinary advice.
2. Eyes – both eyes should be clear and bright. If there is a mucky discharge or the third eyelid is coming across the eye then seek veterinary attention.
3. Mouth – lift each lip in turn. Their gums should be pink and healthy and their teeth clean and white.
4. Feet – with the puppy sitting or in the down position lift each foot in turn and examine the toes, pads and nails. If the nails appear long seek veterinary advice on clipping them.
5. The body – with the puppy standing, run your hands all over the body, including underneath feeling for any lumps, wounds that require attention or matted fur which you can then groom out.
6. Tail – with the puppy standing run your hand along the length of the tail and hold it briefly, seek veterinary advice if you find anything unusual.

HABITUATION TO NEW SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

Hopefully if your puppy has come from a conscientious breeder then this process will already have started. Your puppy should not be unduly startled or excited by normal day to day sounds and every care should be taken to introduce your puppy to new sights and sounds as part of their early learning.

With the puppy on a lead and rewards at the ready start introducing him to everyday sights and sounds such as the Hoover, washing machine or hairdryer.

1. Do not try to pressure a puppy into approaching the item as you will highlight its fear by drawing its attention to it.
2. Expose the puppy to the type of stimulus that worried it as often as possible, but initially from a distance (i.e. reduce the size of the stimulus) so that the puppy can become desensitised to it. As the puppy's reaction improves you can gradually increase the amount of stimuli.
3. Reward the puppy every time it does not react to the stimuli, or as soon as it recovers from its fright if it does react.
4. Do not overreact. If you try to reassure a puppy it may reinforce the behaviours it uses as a means of coping when it is frightened.

TEACHING THE DOWN COMMAND

1. Ask the puppy to sit in front of you.
2. Show the puppy you have a food treat in your hand.
3. Lower your hand slowly down to the floor, palm down, directly between the puppy's front paws.
4. On reaching the floor, drag the treat towards you. The puppy's head should follow the reward and he will slide into the down position.
5. As soon as his belly touches the floor give him the 'down' command and reward.
6. Make sure you keep your hand on the floor when giving the treat to prevent the dog following your hand back up again.
7. Repeat this several times. Once your dog will lie down by following your hand to the floor you can ask your dog to go 'down' using a verbal command and a hand signal such as pointing to the floor.