

Handling exercises for puppies and kittens

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A pet needs to learn to accept, and look forward to, all types of handling it will encounter throughout its life. Family members should introduce the pet to brushing, bathing, nail trims, and other types of procedure in a calm way, without causing any anxiety or resistance. The goal is to show your pet that handling is a good thing and should not cause excitement, fear or anxiety.

- Pick a time when your pet is relaxed, and already quiet and calm; not after play or before meals when he/she is aroused.
- Handling exercises should be practised without using any type of force or strong restraint.
 - If your pet resists, stop for a few seconds and then proceed more slowly so that you can reward good behaviour.
- Gently handle and 'check' various body parts.
 - Check the ears, inspect the eyes, open the mouth and handle the pet in all ways that the veterinary surgeon will need to do during a formal examination.
 - Add in elements of normal grooming and healthcare, such as handling the feet for drying and opening the mouth to administer medication.
- Always reward your pet with praise, or a small piece of kibble or food treat, for allowing examination and being relaxed.
- Avoid the temptation to do everything at once.
 - Keep practice sessions short: you may handle only one or two body parts before you stop.
 - The goal is to keep the handling a pleasant experience.
 - Practice sessions should occur regularly so that your pet learns to enjoy being handled.
 - As the pet begins to understand and look forward to the exercises, they can be longer and involve the entire body.