

# Adult Dog Body Handling

## Quick Tips for Success

Getting dogs used to handling helps ensure their comfort and minimizes fear.

To help dogs accept handling:

- Gradually expose them to a potentially scary object, person, animal, or experience.
- Pair the exposure with something that the dog likes, such as food.
- Begin exposure at a very low intensity that does not elicit fear.

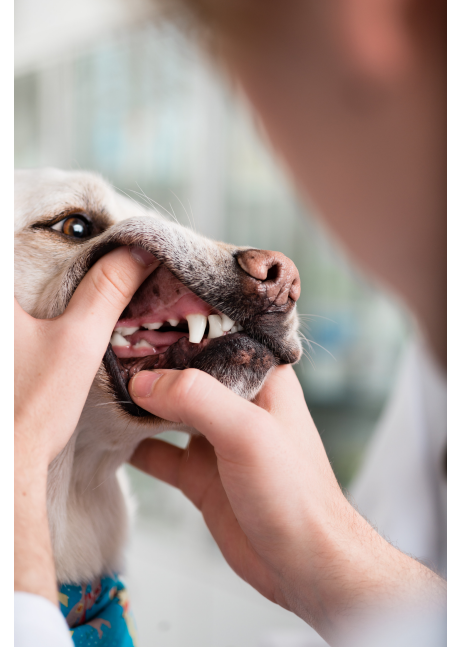
Work with your dogs so they are comfortable with handling from both caretakers and unfamiliar people. This might include people known to the caretaker who the dogs have not met.

When the dog is comfortable with their primary caretaker handling them, complete the steps above with a less familiar caretaker and finally, a person that is new to the dog.

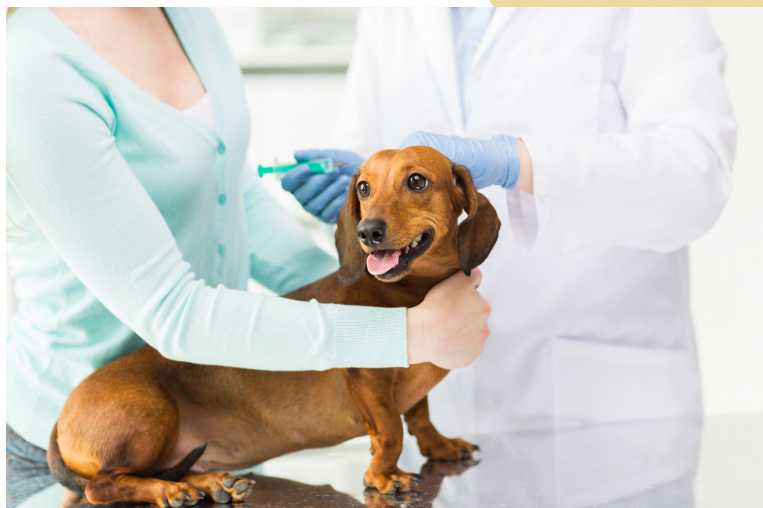
Pay attention to the dog's body language and give highly valued treats. The goal is that the handling experiences are positive, not neutral or bad.

(Learn more: [Canine Body Language](#))

Start body handling exercises when puppies are young (between 3 and 14 weeks). Ideally, they have positive experiences before any negative ones. Progress with adults and fearful individuals often takes longer and requires slower exposure.



**Remember to practice good biosecurity to prevent the spread of disease. This includes sanitizing examination areas and surfaces, hand washing or wearing gloves, clean clothes, and foot covers.**



# Steps for Getting Dogs Used to Handling

1) Identify and gather treats the dog will readily eat.

2) Plan the sequence of body parts to handle from least sensitive to most sensitive.

3) Choose a space where the dog is relaxed and comfortable

4) Let the dog explore and check that they will take treats.

5) Begin the handling protocol. Start with a non-invasive touch on a body part where the puppy is comfortable. For example, gently stroke the dog's side or chest.

6) Offer the dog high-value treats during handling, building the association that handling is good.

When the handling stops, the food goes away.

7) Check the dog's behavior and body language for comfort. If the dog is comfortable, slightly increase the duration or invasiveness of handling. If you notice that the dog is uncomfortable, go back to where they were comfortable.

Keep the handling sessions short and end on a positive note: leave the dog wanting more!

Begin your next session one step behind where the dog was last successful.

During experiences that may be scary or painful feed throughout the entire event to prevent setbacks. Try canned dog food, spray cheese, or Braunschweiger (sausage) on the kennel or tub wall, or exam table. There are hands-free products that slow down feeding such as a Lickimat or Bath Buddy.



It is important to always feed the dog treats throughout the duration of each type of handling. If the dog is not interested in treats, they may be uncomfortable, or the treat is not valuable enough.

**Note: If the dog is becoming more fearful or uncomfortable, consult your veterinarian or a behavior professional.**