



Social Interactions: Handling

Croney Research Group

Dog handling is needed in a variety of situations

- Husbandry and kennel routines
- Provision of preventive care and medical treatments
- Veterinary exams
- Grooming



Why is Low Stress Handling Important for Dog Welfare?

- Physical restraint and handling can be stressful
- Highly stimulating scenarios may increase stress and anxiety



Low Stress Handling Improves Dog Welfare

Practicing handling in a positive way with puppies can help prevent stress responses to handling later in life

A person wearing blue jeans is sitting on a straw mat, holding several puppies. The puppies are of various breeds, including white, brown, and black and white. The person's hands are gently cradling the puppies. The background is a green wall.

Low Stress Handling Basics

1) Utilize low-stress handling for all dogs and puppies

Low Stress Handling Basics

2) Handling experiences must be positive, not neutral or bad


Low Stress Handling Basics

3) Always offer high-value treats throughout handling
– the goal is to build positive associations; the dog doesn't need to earn the treats

Low Stress Handling Basics

4) Keep handling sessions short and end on a positive note

Low Stress Handling Basics



5) Stop handling and re-evaluate if the dog displays fearful body language or is disinterested in the treats, as this may indicate discomfort

Low Stress Handling Basics

A photograph showing a person in a white lab coat and blue jeans kneeling on the left, reaching through the metal bars of a cage to feed a light brown dog. The dog is looking up at the person's hand. The background is dark and out of focus.

6) Begin with the least invasive interaction and work your way up: proximity, touch, stroke, hold, examine

Low Stress Handling Basics

7) Begin with the least sensitive part of the body and work your way up: chest, back, head, ears, paws, face

Low Stress Handling Basics

8) Include exercises to build comfort with handling in specific situations such as grooming and veterinary care

Low Stress Handling Basics

9) If the dog's comfort during handling sessions is not improving or is becoming more fearful, stop and consult your veterinarian or a behavioral professional

Petting Can Positively Impact Dog Welfare

- Reduces stress in dogs
- Supports dog-human relationship
- Different types of petting have different effects

The background of the slide is a photograph of two dogs playing on a grassy field. One dog is white and fluffy, and the other is black and white. They are both running and playing. The image is slightly blurred to give a sense of motion.

Learn More:

- [At-a-Glance Social Interactions – Application](#)
- [At-a-Glance Social Interactions – Dogs](#)
- [At-a-Glance Social Interactions – People](#)
- [At-a-Glance Social Interactions – Skills](#)
- [Quick Tips for Success: Adult Dog Body Handling](#)
- [Adult Dog Body Handling Checklist](#)
- [Body Language Handout](#)
- [The role of caretaker interactions in environmental enrichment for kennelled dogs](#)



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