



Guide Dogs for the Blind

Grooming

Grooming is important not only for the puppy's health and hygiene, but also to teach it to accept handling. Grooming should be started within a day or two after the puppy arrives. The necessary supplies are detailed in "Equipment".

Brush Daily

- Groom for short periods, working up to 10-15 minutes a day
- Use the floor or a sturdy table. Use a non-slip surface for a table and do not leave puppy unattended, keep a hand through its collar to prevent falling
- Brush while the puppy is sitting or lying on its side
- Include all parts of the body: ears, neck, chest, belly, legs and tail
- Brush with the lay of the hair
- Talk to the puppy quietly, use gentle strokes and calm handling
- While brushing the puppy, watch for external parasites, areas of the coat that have been chewed or licked, hot spots, other sores or cuts, hair loss, mats or ear tip irritation. Ears should be pale pink and free of odor or discharge
- Check unspayed females for abnormal vaginal discharge (a little mucous is normal) or signs of heat (a drop of bright blood will be the first sign, followed by a darker discharge and swelling).

Regular Paw Care is Important

- Check pads and in between toes daily for cuts, abrasions or irritations. When checking pads and between toes, gently but firmly touch each toe and nail with one hand, while steadying the paw with the other hand. This will help the puppy to accept having its toenails trimmed.
- Trim toenails as needed, usually weekly. See document: "Nail Trimming" for information on how to teach the puppy to accept nail trimming. Long nails may cause the toes to spread, putting unnecessary stress on the feet and pasterns (wrist joints).

Ear Cleaning

Ear care is one of the most commonly overlooked areas in dog grooming. Because of this, many ear conditions requiring veterinary treatment could have been avoided by using proper preventative ear cleaning methods. The most common conditions of the ear that require veterinary treatment are infections (otitis). Overgrowths of bacteria or yeast in the ears are common causes of infections. Each of these problems requires different treatments. Ear mites, which are parasites, are not as commonly found in dogs as they are in pet cats.

Shaking or tilting of the head, frequent or prolonged scratching of the ears or back of

the head, or rubbing the side of the head along the floor are usually indicative of an ear infection or a foreign object in the ear canal such as a tick or a foxtail. Sometimes the only symptom is a bad odor or dark wax.

To avoid unnecessary veterinary treatment and discomfort to GDB puppies, clean the puppy's ears once weekly with the ear cleansing/drying solution provided in the puppy packet. It is also important to check the puppy's ears daily when grooming for any signs of redness, odor, or an increase in wax. If any of these signs are present, contact the leader for further instructions. .

To clean the puppy's ears:

- Once a week squirt a small amount of a GDB approved ear cleaning solution onto a cotton ball so that it becomes "drippy" with the solution.
- Using the cotton ball, massage the base and inside of the ear gently for approximately 10 seconds to clean and loosen debris from the ear canal. Be careful not to "plug" the ear canal with cotton or apply pressure into the ear.
- Use a dry cotton ball or gauze strip to remove any excess liquid and debris from the ear canal.
- Please DO NOT use a cotton swab as it may only push wax further down the ear canal.

Cleaning Eyes

- Wipe the face, dabbing at the corners of the eyes, with a water moistened cotton ball.
- Some discharge is normal, but watch for excessive discharge.
- Do not touch the eye itself.

Oral Care

Dogs can accumulate plaque on their teeth. Plaque is made of proteins (from saliva) and bacteria. If the plaque is not removed every day, the bacteria will multiply rapidly and invade the gums around the teeth. Gingivitis, or inflammation of the gums, will result. If the plaque is still not removed, the inflammation of the gums will spread to the bone around the teeth and cause bone loss or periodontal disease. Ultimately, the teeth have no bony support and may become loose, or even fall out.

Fortunately, gingivitis is reversible and periodontal disease is preventable. When plaque is removed by tooth brushing, the gums and bone around the teeth will stay healthy. If plaque is not removed, calculus or "tartar" will form when minerals from saliva cause the plaque to harden. Once calculus is present, a professional cleaning is needed to remove it. Calculus can be prevented from forming by removing plaque every day with tooth brushing.

Start by spending a few minutes each day gently handling puppy's mouth. As part of daily puppy handling exercises, lift up its lips and touch the outside of the puppy's teeth and gums to get it used to this new experience.

Never use human toothpaste – it can be harmful and upset the puppy’s stomach.

Instructions

- Put a small amount of canine toothpaste on the soft-bristled toothbrush or finger brush provided in the puppy’s packet. The paste should be pressed down into the bristles so the puppy doesn’t lick it off the brush
- Start by brushing just a few teeth at a time
- Holding the brush head at a 45-degree angle to the gum line, gently brush in circular strokes from the gum line to the tip of each tooth
- Only clean the outside surfaces of the puppy’s teeth and gums. Day-by-day, slowly work towards the back of the mouth, until the puppy is comfortable and will allow its lips to be lifted and hold its head steady for several minutes
- It is recommended that the puppy’s teeth be cleaned at least once weekly (and as frequently as once daily) to acclimate your puppy to being handled and to be more accepting later in life.

Bathing

- Bathing too frequently can harm the puppy’s coat and skin. Pups should be bathed when the coat becomes smelly or greasy – every two to six weeks depending on the individual puppy. A damp towel can remove dirt and debris between baths.
- Introduce bathing slowly to avoid frightening the puppy.
- Put a towel or rubber mat in the bottom of the tub to prevent slipping and negative associations with the tub.
- The temperature of the water should be warm not hot.
- Cotton balls can be used to keep water out of ears, remember to remove promptly.
- Use a pH balanced shampoo made for dogs. A wet wash cloth may be used to wash the face to avoid shampoo from getting in the puppy’s eyes.
- Rinse thoroughly to avoid skin irritation from residual shampoo.
- Water can be “squeezed” out of the puppy’s coat. While it is still in the tub, let the puppy shake off most of the water and then towel dry
- A blow dryer may be used if introduced carefully:
 - Turn the dryer on and off a few times away from the puppy before bringing it closer
 - When it is turned on near the puppy, keep the airflow directed away from it until it appears comfortable with the noise
 - Start the airflow at a distance and gradually work it up its body
 - NEVER aim a blow dryer at the puppy’s face. It is very uncomfortable and may cause anxiety about blow dryers
 - Hold the hair dryer no closer to the dog than 12-18 inches