

ACE Shelter Solutions™

Constructive Mauling

What:

Constructive mauling is an important desensitization technique for puppies.

Why:

If a puppy gets his eye scratched by a cat and needs eye drops, we don't want a battle. We want to be able to examine and treat ear problems and get things out of the mouth easily. And, we want to be able to trim nails with ease, and groom a relaxed dog – one that doesn't want to bite and one that isn't fearful of being handled.

How:

Always chose a calm moment and environment when using desensitization handling techniques (constructive mauling). And, always remain happy and work in a non-threatening/non-forceful manner to introduce this concept to your puppy.

Start by rubbing the ears, both above and under the flap. Handle the eyelids and part them as if you are looking at the eye itself or putting in drops. Lift the lip and rub the gums. Put your fingers inside the mouth and play with the tongue and rub the palate.

Handle each toe and toenail so that your puppy accepts foot restraint. Touch everywhere else on the body, especially under the belly and towards the back legs. Handle the testicles in male dogs.

Introduce nail clippers using your puppy's eyes and nose first, do not surprise them or hide the clippers. This leads to mistrust of the tool or you. Handle the toes, leaving the clippers in your other hand or just set on the floor.

Many people make the nail clipping ritual too intense. Make it a "small deal" and just clip one nail to begin with. Do this the same way that you have done the mauling – this is meant to be fun for the puppy. If you show nervousness, your puppy will get upset as well. Once you have the confidence, move to another nail.

Release your puppy in a calm state of mind. Don't forget, this is a relaxation technique. You want your puppy to stay and not anticipate leaving.

Tips:

Don't maul a puppy to the point of stressing him. If you see stress, back off a little. Make the entire experience positive with lots of praise and lots of treats.

Access to the ACE courses that describe methods to deal with behavioral issues is at www.dogtraining.academy.