

Social Handling / Health Exam

This exercise has multiple purposes. It is designed not only to enhance your control and to teach the puppy/adult dog that you are Alpha, as well as building trust between you and your dog. We also use this exercise as a health exam to keep you up to date with your dog, so that you will notice any unusual bumps etc. This exercise is for any age dog. Some dogs that are older or more dominant in nature may require more patience; they will need to be worked slowly. You should never do this with a dog that is unfamiliar to you, or an adult dog that you are not strong enough to control.

Do very short exams, maybe 1/4 of the dog or less at a time and let him up when he is relaxed. Try to make this enjoyable to the dog (do not lose your temper). Start by putting the dog on his side, lying with his legs away from you (do not tell the dog to lie down, do not use treats). Talk to the dog in a normal tone (maybe explaining each process, so that you keep your voice monotone). This helps comfort the dog. Gently pull the dogs head up until you can look down one nostril (we will do one side of the dog at a time) you are looking for any discharge, foxtails etc. Go from there to the dog's eye (closest to you) manipulate the eyelid so that you can see the whole eye area. Feel the head area in a small circular motion (similar to a self-exam) until you get to the dogs ear. Move the ear around until you can see down the ear canal (again you are looking for unusual discharge, foxtails or a bad odor bad odor may be an ear infection). Use the small circular motion with your fingers pressed flat against the dog; go down the neck, to the shoulders, feeling down the leg to the pads of the feet. Spread the pads apart so that you can see between each pad feel for anything unusual. If the pads are dry and cracked you can use hand lotion on them. You will then feel down the dog's side using the same motion as before, feeling for any bumps etc. When you get to the rear leg, examine in the same way as you did the front leg. Examine the belly and tail; examine the anus (one of the first places you may find fleas), and look for foxtails, fleas, & ticks. Also examine the genitals - look for any unusual discharge. Roll the dog over and repeat the process on the other side. This exercise may also help you spot a minor problem, before it becomes something more serious.

This exercise should be done once a day for a week or so, make sure the dog is comfortable and relaxed. Then pick one day a week to do the exam on a regular basis. Also this exam should be done anytime the dogs have been running in a field or after hiking.

