

HANDLING SENSITIVITIES

A.D.O.P.T. PET SHELTER

Dogs with handling sensitivities may have issues with having certain parts of their body touched due to old injury, bad experiences, or lack of handling as a puppy. The adoption counselor or trainer will let you know if dog you are interested in has a specific body issue with that we are aware of, or handling in general. Dogs with handling sensitivities can still be affectionate and loving dogs, they just need a little more care in handling and touching than others. Handling sensitivities really need the most attention when dogs are at the vet, being groomed, and interacting around children.

Most Common Handling Sensitivities:

- Paws: Front, Rear, or both (may struggle with nail trims or having paws wiped)
- Tail and rear area
- Ears (may struggle with ear cleaning)
- Shoulders
- Hugs (dogs associate hugs with restraint, not affection)
- Teeth/ Snout
- Brushing (especially long-haired dogs)

Canine Body Language Seen with Handling Sensitivities

Dogs will let you know when they are uncomfortable through their body language. Some signals may be very subtle, but if you can learn to identify them, you can help your pup to become more comfortable with vetting, grooming, and touch.

- Mouth closed tightly
- Tongue consistently darts out or licks their mouth (like they just ate food)
- Shaking or trembling
- Trying to move paw or body away
- Squirming and rolling onto their back to avoid (also known as "tap-outs")
- Body rigid and stiff*
- Head whips towards hand*
- Dog's mouth opens on hand (with light pressure- their way of asking you to stop)*
- Dog mouths hand with hard pressure*
- Lip lift/ Snarl*
- Growl*

*Indicates warning signs that could lead to a bite and require extra caution

How You Can Help a Dog with Handling Sensitivities in the Home

- Go slow with grooming and vetting, and give your dog lots of breaks
- Play fun training games to help desensitize the dog to touch, brushing, or nail trims (see back of sheet for illustrated ideas)
- Avoid hugging the dog
- Do not force your dog to help them "get over it"- this often makes problems worse
- Work with a trainer or vet behaviorist to help counter condition and desensitize your dog to the things that stress him out. We highly recommend trainers associated with the A Sound Beginning Program (www.asoundbeginningprogram.com)
- Find vets or trainers that practice "Fear Free" or "Low Stress" vet visits. Great online references include: Steve Dale (stevedalepetworld.com), Dr. Sophia Yin (drsophiayin.com), or Laura Monaco Torelli's "Ready... Set... For Groomer and Vet" program