



Body Handling

Your puppy will need to be comfortable being touched, manipulated, restrained, and grabbed as a service dog. Although we do our best to ensure the dog is always handled appropriately, we want to make sure that any possible body handling will still be met with a calm, accepting emotional response. We don't want to see flailing, escape behaviors, cowering, flattening, or other stress signals during body handling.

Preparation

You will need:

- A pouch of treats/kibble

Process

1. Layovers – practice manipulating your puppy into a layover, which is a calm position laying on the ground on their side.
 - a. Do this by gently applying pressure between the shoulder blades and luring the puppy into a “down” using food.
 - b. Reinforce the puppy when they lay down.
 - c. Then, grab a second treat and lure the puppy onto his side by offering the treat next to and slightly behind the puppy’s head. As he turns to take the treat, he should tip over onto his side.
 - d. He may not stay in that position very long initially. That’s okay! You can build duration by requiring him to remain in the position for several seconds before giving the treat.
 - e. Gentle petting while the puppy is on his side can help create a relaxed emotional response to this position.
2. Cradle - practice manipulating your puppy into a cradle, which is a calm position where the puppy is laying on his back between your legs.
 - a. Do this by gently applying pressure between the shoulder blades and luring the puppy into a “down” using food.
 - b. Reinforce the puppy when they lay down.
 - c. Then, grab a second treat and lure the puppy onto his side by offering the treat next to and slightly behind the puppy’s head. As he turns to take the treat, he should tip over onto his side.
 - d. Position your legs around the puppy’s sides and gently roll him onto his back. Once he is in the position, feed several treats and release with the “all done!” cue.
 - e. He may not stay in that position very long initially. That’s okay! You can build duration by requiring him to remain in the position for several seconds before giving the treat.
 - f. Gentle petting while the puppy is on his back can help create a relaxed emotional response to this position.



3. Vet Hug – Practice holding your puppy steady using both hands on an elevated surface, as if he was getting an exam at the veterinarian.
 - a. Do this by acclimating your puppy to an elevated surface – a table, two chairs facing each other, or a bench. Feeding the puppy meals on an elevated surface, giving treats, or simply providing verbal and physical praise are all good ways to acclimate a puppy to an elevated surface.
 - b. Once the puppy is comfortable on a surface, begin by wrapping one arm around under his belly and one arm around his chest. In the beginning, do this gently but as he becomes more and more comfortable and accepting, begin putting more and more pressure with your wrap.
 - c. It can help to have a partner feed the dog treats during this exercise, but it is possible to do alone.
 - d. If your puppy only accepts one arm at a time, that’s okay! Build up to the two arm vet hug by reinforcing the single arm for several sessions.
 - e. Your goal is for your puppy to remain comfortable while being restrained in this way for several minutes.

4. When your puppy is comfortable in all three of these body handling positions for 2-3 minutes each, begin adding other body handling exercises while the puppy is in that position.
 - a. Touch their paws, and manipulate their toes
 - b. Gently lift their lips to see their teeth and touch their gums
 - c. Flip their ears up to look inside and gently put a finger in their ear
 - d. “Examine” their eyes by gently opening them
 - e. Feel all over their body as if you were checking for lumps or wounds.

5. Once your puppy is comfortable with all body handling in all of these positions, it is time to practice with new people. Repeat the beginnings of each step with a new handler and reinforce the puppy for a calm and accepting response.

6. When your puppy is comfortable with a variety of people doing body handling, it is time to bring her to new locations for body handling practice. The vet, FSD’s campus, outdoor settings, and stores are all good places to practice body handling and calm responses to strangers touching them.