



## Dealing with Touch Sensitivity

Courtesy of the ASPCA

As your Adoption Counselor discussed with you, your new dog does not always understand that touch feels good. What does this mean? He has shown some uneasiness and anxiety when certain parts of his body are handled or touched. The most common places dogs do not like to be touched include feet, hind end, tail, and mouth. Your dog's touch sensitivity may show up all the time, or only when you are brushing him or wiping off his feet. Dogs that do not like to be handled in certain ways may show their teeth, growl, or even snap or bite.

Learning to be comfortable with touching all over their body is an important skill for all dogs to have. Luckily, this is a skill you can help your dog to learn. It will be important to work on this issue in your home. Follow the guidelines below from the moment the dog enters your home. It is possible to move a dog past this behavior issue with time, patience, and practice.

### The Plan

Make a list of the necessary things that you must do for your dog's health that he may find uncomfortable. These could be things like brushing, wiping dirt and mud from his feet, cleaning ears, or trimming toenails. Start with the activity that your dog is the most comfortable with and begin to work on counter conditioning your dog to that activity. For example, if your dog was kind of okay with having his feet wiped, you would start there.

1. Start by just touching his foot with a towel followed immediately by a tasty treat. Touch each foot with the towel and follow it up with a treat. Touch each foot three times with the towel before you reward him with the treat.
2. Once he is comfortable with that, move on to lifting each foot and setting it right back down. Then treat. Continue working with longer times holding each foot and then advance to wiping each foot once and placing foot on the ground. Remember to treat after every interaction.
3. If at any time your dog becomes uncomfortable, anxious, stiffens, or growls, SLOW DOWN and go back a few steps. If you push your dog too fast then he may associate you with negative situations. Remember to keep your sessions short and always end on a positive note.
4. Once your dog is completely comfortable with wiping his feet, or whatever you started working with him on, advance to the next area he is uncomfortable with.

### Extra Tips

- Be aware of touches your dog does not enjoy and make sure the rest of the family and all visitors are also aware.
- Always reward your dog for accepting touch. Refrain from rough play or wrestling.