



Providing Leadership for your Puppy

Having your puppy in a quiet, controlled position is one of the most effective ways for you to reinforce your leadership. Puppies that have learned to properly hold still with their owners learn better, bite less, and are in general better pets. The “Controlled Hold” is an exercise designed to teach exactly that skill.

“Controlled Hold” is a very simple exercise, but must be done correctly to be effective. In fact, if it is performed incorrectly, you can actually teach your puppy how to struggle when it is being held and how to get away from restraint. For these reasons, the “Controlled Hold” is best done by confident adults and closely supervised by these adults when children or less confident individuals are involved.

Here are the guidelines for a proper “Controlled Hold”: You may be more comfortable if you sit down with your puppy to practice this exercise.

- 1) Gently, but securely cradle the puppy’s head and neck just above your bent elbow.
- 2) Don’t let the puppy place its paws over your elbow and under its chin. This is a sign of dominance and is inappropriate for this exercise.
- 3) Cradle the puppy’s rump with the other arm as if you were going to pick up the puppy.
- 4) Be prepared for the puppy to struggle and do not let the puppy break out of this gentle hold.
- 5) Be prepared for the puppy to vocalize and have a tantrum. Do not let the puppy break out of this gentle hold.
- 6) To end this exercise (puppy is calm and quiet and you are holding the puppy in place), reward the puppy with quiet praise and sometimes food. The exercise is completed by releasing the puppy. Make sure that the puppy has completely relaxed before releasing.

“Controlled Hold” should be practiced every day under many circumstances; when the puppy is sleepy, when the puppy is wild, when you are watching TV, when the puppy is being good, and when the puppy is being bad. You can hold the puppy still for just a few seconds if the puppy is being good or for 30 minutes if you choose. It is also a good idea to handle the puppy’s mouth, ears, and toes during the controlled hold. As your confidence improves with this exercise then everyone in the household can get involved. Be careful to closely supervise so the positive effects of this exercise are not destroyed by the puppy learning how to “get loose”. Remember, this is a very simple exercise that every dog should know. It will help make your dog a wonderful pet that you are proud to own!