

Caring for Your Maltese Puppy

Your puppy has had its first of a series of immunization. He/she has been examined by our veterinarian and is in good health. An immunization record will be provided to you. Please have your personal veterinarian examine your puppy within 72 hours to verify there are no health concerns, and to schedule the puppy's remaining vaccinations.

Feeding

We have been feeding your puppy. Science Diet Puppy Small Bites. This, along with water has been available to him/her at all times.

Housebreaking

We keep a puppy training pad in the puppy playpens and in the play area. By eight weeks the puppies are ready to start learning to use the pad. They will be more likely to use the pad if they are confined to a small area. This area can become larger as the puppy gets older. As the puppy matures, you can begin training him to go outdoors. Using treats as a reward is something you may try. Through trial and error you can determine when your puppy understands the idea of eliminating outside. Puppies usually want to eliminate after they wake up, after eating or shortly after they have been let out of their pen to play.

Crate Training

Your puppy has been raised in a puppy playpen and has been taken out several times a day for playtime and socialization. I used to think keeping a dog in a kennel or crate was unkind, but I now have a different point of view. Considering that in the wild, dogs are den animals, it only makes sense that even domesticated dogs would feel secure in a small space that is familiar to them. There are other advantages to using a crate or kennel aside from the dog's comfort. Using a crate can make housebreaking easier, since it is a dog's instinct not soil the place where they sleep. Of course it will take some growing time for your puppy to gain the control necessary to keep his/her crate clean. A crate will also give you control over when and where your puppy has access to your house. The crate can be used at night, when you are away from your home, or when you have company or are otherwise unable to keep a close eye on your baby. It brings peace of mind to know your puppy is in a safe place. The crate can continue to be used right through adulthood if desired.

Handling

The Maltese puppy only weighs between 2-4 ounces at birth and about 2 lbs. at eight weeks. Having had only medium to large dogs in the past, it didn't take long to see how much more delicate the Maltese puppy is. They are big dogs in a small package and have a lot of heart, but if they were dropped or stepped on, it could be fatal. Care should be given when allowing people, especially children, to handle your puppy. I have a policy of

having small children hold puppies while sitting on the floor. We have had many instances of puppies chasing our feet and almost getting stepped on, or trying to jump out of our arms without warning. I had a puppy injured because it was following me into a room and I pushed the door closed without looking.

Introduce your new baby gradually and carefully to any other dogs in your home, or dogs your puppy may be in contact with. The Maltese typically are fearless, which could lead to harm if confronted by a dog that is much larger.

Just like human babies, puppies like to eat the tiniest thing they may find on the floor. Some houseplants can be poisonous to animals. Chewing on electric cords is another favorite plaything that can be dangerous to puppies. 'Puppy proofing' your home can prevent many accidents.

Because the Maltese has such a gentle nature and small size, correction should not be too harsh. A firm tone of voice is usually all that is needed.

Grooming

Being born a Maltese has destined your puppy to a lifetime of hours of grooming. Getting your baby used to being brushed at a young age will be a big advantage to both of you. At around 6 months of age or sooner, you will notice that grooming is becoming more time consuming, since the coat is getting longer. Because of the texture of the Maltese coat, it tends to mat very easily. Mats most commonly form on the backs of the legs, on the tummy, on the back in front of the tail, and behind the ears. Brushing on a regular basis with a small pin brush will help to prevent matting. (I advise using a grooming spray before brushing.) Check the coat for mats that were undetected by using a metal greyhound comb after brushing. If the coat is neglected, matting can become so severe that only shaving or cutting the hair will eliminate the problem. Small mats can be sprayed with a grooming spray and worked out carefully using the end of the metal comb. Brushing your dog before bathing and using a good conditioner after shampooing will also help prevent mats. Some Maltese owners prefer to visit a professional groomer and have their dog clipped in a 'puppy cut.' This will greatly lessen the amount of time you spend grooming your dog in between salon visits.

Maltese can be bathed as needed, usually once every week or two. I usually dry my dogs, especially puppies, with a hair dryer to prevent them from getting too cold.

Check your puppies' bottom regularly to make sure feces has not collected in the hair, which could lead to blockage. Keeping the hair on the bottom clipped is helpful.

Clip nails as needed. If you are unsure how to do this, have your veterinarian or a professional dog groomer instruct you.

Tear staining is a problem with small breed dogs. Some puppies outgrow this annoyance after they have finished teething. Every dog is different, but most Maltese will have

tearing to some degree or another. Some causes of tearing are, teething, eye and ear infections, allergies, red dyes in dog food, minerals in drinking water and hair getting into the eyes and causing constant irritation. Keeping hair clipped around the inside corner of the eyes and the face clean (baby wipes can be used) can help. I have found a small flea comb is helpful to comb the hair in between the eyes and for removing debris. There are several products on the market that claim to help tearing, but the only one I have had success with is called Angel's Glow. It can be ordered at www.angelsglow.com. Angel Eyes is a similar product. If it becomes excessive, consult with your veterinarian about running your Maltese on a course of antibiotics such as Tetracycline.

The Maltese has no undercoat, which means there is very little shedding. This is a plus for people with allergies, however this also means the Maltese cannot withstand the cold like other dogs. They will begin to shiver very quickly if they get too cold or wet. Maltese should NEVER be kept outside during cold weather. I always thought it was silly to put a coat on a dog but now I know that for some breeds, it is for their protection.

Hypoglycemia

This is a condition that is usually seen in small breed puppies under 12 weeks of age. Hypoglycemia is a sudden drop in blood sugar. Some signs of an attack can be weakness, shaking, confusion, wobbly gait, or even seizure. The dog can go into shock and die if not treated. Stress, cold, sickness, exercise, or too long of a period in between meals are some of the things which can trigger an attack.

Feeding small amounts of food frequently and keeping stress levels to a minimum are some ways to avoid hypoglycemia in a young dog. Hypoglycemia can be treated with Nutrical (purchase in the pet store) or by putting a small amount of Karo Syrup on your finger and rubbing the inside of the puppies mouth. The puppy should start to respond within 15 minutes or so. Any time your dog or puppy is not eating, listless or not wanting to play, a call to your veterinarian is in order.

Toy breeds, specifically the Maltese have some maintenance requirements that other breeds do not have. But the positive far outweighs the negative. They are small little dynamos that don't realize just how small they really are. They are little clowns in a dog suit and will entertain you with their silliness. They are a breed that was originally bred solely for companionship, nothing more, and nothing less. They are very loving companions that will be your trusted friend for life. Their size almost dictates that you have more than one. I am confident you will thoroughly enjoy this new little addition to your family.

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please feel free to contact me.

Best of luck, and God's blessings to you,

Karen Conti