Here’s to an easy transition for your new pup and you…

By: Theresa Meyer

When your puppy is ready to leave their birth place, mother and siblings, it will be a stressful time for them. Even the most socialized puppy needs the time to become accustomed to their new environment and look to you as their new master. Let them have the time to relax for a few days before beginning new, exciting adventures and to socialize them to the outside world. This bonding time is important for them to know where to turn to when they feel threatened or insecure for the new experiences to come. There will be plenty of time to show them off and for friends to visit. You and the immediate family will have this time to comfort and bond in a nurturing environment. Do not let small children carry a puppy. They are very wiggly and can be dropped and injured quite easily. Have them sit on the floor and hold the pup in their lap. Adults have to remember to hold them carefully as they sometimes just want to leap out of your arms. When placing your pup on the ground, make sure you bend enough to let their feet touch the floor before you let them go.

Brush and comb through their hair every day, making sure to gently get the hard to reach areas of the coat, such as back hocks and under belly. I have found using a tear free detangling spray works wonderfully keeping matting to a minimum. Spray before brushing every time, so you are not using your pin brush on a dry coat. A small face comb is another essential item to use. Be gentle and slowly detangle with your fingers any knots that form, which are called mats. They will get to enjoy these times together. Always leave the grooming on a happy note, with them doing the right thing. Have a very tiny treat ready and standing by for positive reinforcement and then end the session. When holding them, touch a paw and gently rub it. By doing this it is desensitizing them and in time they will begin to let you touch their paws without pulling away.

There is nothing more breathtaking than a Maltese with a beautiful, flowing coat. But, if your Maltese does not have the correct coat texture or plays very hard with other dogs or runs outdoors in grass and dirt, matting may become too much of an issue. There is nothing cuter than a Maltese groomed into a puppy cut, for ease for both the owner and the dog. It is the personality of this breed that is the cornerstone of why they are so popular. There are easier breeds to groom, but none as loving and devoted and smart as the Maltese. Their sole reason for being is to be a companion to man.

A few important tasks that have to be done continuously are as follows:

Check the butt area to make sure no stool is caught on the anus. Looking does not always work as sometimes the smallest particle can dodge and cause severe irritation.

Check the pads of the feet to make sure nothing is caught in the hairs or between the pads after walks. Keep the hair trimmed so each pad is exposed. This is their grip on the different surfaces they walk on each day.

Every evening remember to wipe their eyes with a wet wash cloth or moistened cotton ball to clean the dirt and debris away to avoid tear staining. Being low to the ground, your Maltese does pick up all the dust and pollen off the floor and ground.

If you are unable to supervise your puppy, put them in their crate with a few safe toys. I recommend leaving a radio or the TV playing when you are going to be away for any length of time. This will alleviate some of the loneliness during confinement. Because of their small size, leave one hanging cup full of food and one for water, if you will be away for a few hours.

I feel this toy breed needs to be fed two times a day for their entire lives as they burn more energy than their larger cousins.

Do not correct your puppy for chewing during teething. Instead, supply him with a safe chew toy, something as simple as a heavy sock, knotted will do. Adding an empty water bottle after the top removed into the sock will give them a crunching sound that they enjoy. If they begin to use your hand as a chew toy, push inward to remove your hand and then give them what is acceptable to bite on. If you pull instinctively outward, you will get scratched. Pushing inward they will have to open their mouth and you can remove your hand with ease. In a higher pitch than normal, say “NO” as you push inward. They will know that this is an unacceptable behavior. The clearer and quicker a response is to their behavior, the easier it is for them to understand and retain.

It is not unusual for these tiny toys to retain their baby teeth, especially the canines. They have very long roots and many times need to be extracted if they do not fall out by themselves. The larger the Maltese, the more likelihood they will fall out. The smaller the size of the Maltese and the shorter the muzzle, the more these deciduous teeth seem to get stuck in place. At the time designated by your veterinarian they will remove them and this can be done at the same time as neutering or spay, so they only have to go under anesthesia one time. You may decide at this time to have them micro chipped, a good nail trim, hair pulled from the ears, anything you or your Maltese find unpleasant. Isoflorine or Sevofloraine are the usual anesthesias of choice for the toy breeds.

Make sure to keep a strict regimen when potty training them. As a small pup they will have to go more frequently until their bladders develop, but once they are 5 to 6 months old, the first thing in the morning, soon after eating, late afternoon and before bed time will become the routine. When they eliminate where you want them to go, praise them after they complete the task. Do not talk to them while they are going. It will make them stop, but as soon as the deed is done, praise them as if they have won a best in show ribbon! When a mistake happens, the only way corrections will work is when you catch your puppy in the act or can direct them while they are appearing to be looking for a place to go. Bring them to the area where they are supposed to go and say the command word you have chosen to use, such as “outside”. Say the chosen word, in this case “outside”, whether they are going inside on a peed pad or an outside area designated for them. You can train them in either area, and they can be proficient in either area which helps in case of bad weather. Remember, we are teaching, so if mistakes happen, be patient. The effort you put in now will last your dog’s lifetime. Be consistent. All accidents should be cleaned as quickly as possible using a mild solution of water and vinegar, or one of the many on the market, such as Equilizer. This masks the odor and prevents your puppy from smelling the residue and repeating the action. I always complete the cleaning process by then washing with soap and water and drying, so the pup can’t lick any leftover residue.

If you cannot be watching over your pup, put them in their crate which is a safe haven for them. Never use the crate as a place when being punished. If introduced correctly, this will become their den. It will protect them from harm when you cannot be watching them. You are protecting them from chewing electrical cords or other harmful items. You do not want them to relieve themselves any place they wish, as it will make the early days of training much harder. If you find them making a mistake in the house, roll up a newspaper and hit yourself in the head. Never put their nose in stool if they make a mistake, it does not help to teach them.

When driving in the car, make sure they are confined in a crate or car seat made for dogs and keep them away from wind blowing in their eyes and ears.

To get your Maltese use to being alone in the house, start off with frequently coming and going. Even if you never have an intention to leave them alone, the time may come with a circumstance or emergency beyond your control that you will have to leave them. You do not want them to experience separation anxiety. Do not make a fuss when you leave and don’t make a fuss when you return. Just play it cool. Take a short walk, come back in, and put away your coat or packages calmly. Then go and take your Maltese to relieve themselves, using that chosen work, “outside”. This exercise will prepare them for the times you have to leave them. You can leave the radio or television on for them which will help in your dog becoming a well balanced adult.

There is no better breed, they make our life complete.