Welcome home, puppy!

After all the effort to research and acquire your Maltese, you now take your puppy home. Hopefully, it is presented well groomed, along with a list of do’s and don’ts.

In order not to put more stress on your puppy, we suggest that it not be bathed for a few days after it is brought to your home. Keep their first few days a time of bonding quietly to you and their new home.

First priority is to make sure your puppy continues to eat well. Hypoglycemia, simply known as low blood sugar level, is very common with all small breed puppies including Maltese and is caused by a sudden drop of blood sugar. The most common case of hypoglycemia in puppies occur at the age of birth to 4 months and is called "transient juvenile" because it can be cured by feeding and it occurs at such a young age. All toy breed owners should be made aware and recognize the symptoms and know how to treat it. Hypoglycemia can be easily treated at the earlier stages, but left untreated can become fatal. Some causes are by the puppy reacting to stress and not eating enough. Cold weather, change in environment, over-handling, teething are just a few more examples of causes for hypoglycemia. At the earlier stages of hypoglycemia, which can be that the puppy becomes slower and non-active, it will start to tremble or shiver. If untreated it may go on to confusion, wobbly gait or drooling from the mouth and even worse, seizure. Gums will turn from their healthy bright pink color to looking white. If this goes on, the puppy can become lifeless and motionless and can go into shock and even die.

Having honey or Karo syrup on hand to put a small amount under the tongue will turn the puppy around or Nutri-Cal to put on the puppy's gums, under the tongue and on the roof of the mouth can cure the puppy. Call your veterinarian immediately to report that you have a hypoglycemic puppy if this does not work within 5 to 10 minutes. Another suggestion is to feed it high-quality canned foods containing large amounts of carbohydrates and protein. If your pup is eating dry kibble, adding a small amount of canned food will promote them to eat. At night, leaving food and water in their pen or crate will help to promote eating.

To begin keeping this coat is now the challenge you will face. If you begin grooming and general maintenance every day, you and your Maltese will grow to love these times together.

When in need of a bath, check to see if there are any mats or tangles anywhere on the body of your Maltese before getting the hair wet. You will need to take them apart before bathing. If you feel a mat, you slowly from the outside edge pull it apart in very small amounts. If it is just before a bath, you can add a dab of conditioner on the mat and let sit for a few minutes to help pull it apart. The key is to lose as little coat as possible and never use a scissor to cut out a mat. Bath and rinse completely then wrap them up in a towel. Check to see if you need to trim the tips of the nails then dry your pup completely with a hair blower on a low, warm setting. The dog is not completely dry until the ears are no longer damp.

To get your pup use to nail trimming, you can begin by using nail clippers for dogs or cat scissors and just take off the tips of the nails. If the pup is not use to this and dislikes handling of their paws, just do one paw a day, and praise. If they are very skittish, do one or two nails and then praise and stop for the day. Never begin nail trimming without have Kwik-Stop Styptic Powder in case of cutting the nail too close to immediately stop bleeding. It is important that the hair must be trimmed to expose the pads on the bottom of each paw. This is their protection from slipping on slippery surfaces.

Daily brushing and combing will have to start immediately. Never brush a dry coat. Get a small spray bottle and add a little leave in conditioner to the water, or you can purchase a spray to use for this daily maintenance. We use Naturals Leave-In conditioner pet spray. Get a pin brush and a small comb and you are ready to begin. You can use a grooming table, or place a rubber mat at the side of your sink and place a towel over it, or while relaxing and watching television. Always have one hand on that puppy to keep control and avoid the pup jumping off and injuring itself. Spray a light spray, brush through the coat and then use your small comb to gently get those hard to reach places between legs and on the feet and on the rear. Once this is done, you are ready to praise your pup and tell him what a good pup they have been. If your patience is thin that day, put off to another time this daily chore. If combing and brushing faithfully, you will get to realize when they start forming mats, it is time for another bath. Your Maltese will look beautiful in long cut or groomed in a puppy cut; their beautiful temperament will shine through.

At night before bed, take a wet face cloth or cotton ball or facial wipe and wash around the baby’s eyes to clean them from the debris of the day. Dry and add corn starch under the eyes to pick up any moisture, making sure not to get it in the eye. They are low to the ground and pick up all the dirt. If you do this religiously it will help keep tear staining to a minimum. There are many products on the market to help with tear staining and we will have detailed articles on this issue in the future.

Keep an eye on the pup’s mouth. Have your veterinarian check each time you go for puppy vaccinations and when the time comes, approximately 6 months of age, they will remove any baby teeth that remain. The roots of the baby canines are very long and sometimes will not come out on their own. If memory recollects, the most deciduous (baby) teeth that were removed on a Maltese pup we owned was 14! Of course, most of them would have fallen out in time. The proper alignment of the teeth for a Maltese for the show ring is in a scissor bite or even edge-to-edge bite. Their teeth may go undershot or have an overbite but this will generally not affect eating and many times is not noticeable without looking into their mouths.

When going under anesthesia for this or any procedure, remember at that time to make a list for your veterinarian with things such as toe nail trim, check hair in ears and micro chipping while they are sedated. If they are tear staining, your veterinarian will flush out the tear ducts if they are clogged and give you an antibiotic ointment or drops to put in their eyes. Only Isoflorin or sevoflurane are the anesthesia for your toy breed dog.

Housebreaking can begin as soon as your pup gets home, but you must realize that a small pup cannot control bladder and bowel movements fully. I have successfully trained my pups to go outside, whether on a leash or in their designated spot, also inside on their pads so that if there is nasty weather, no problem. In the kitchen, I put a cotton pad down with a treated puppy pad on top. I bring the pup to it and say “on the paper”. I stay with the pup and when they begin to smell around, I bring them to the paper and say same words, “on the paper”. When they go, praise them and give them a treat such as a Cheerio. I do the same outside. I have a ring set up so they do not fall in my pool. I put the pad down, and let them run and play and the words “on the paper -outside” are used. As soon as you get up in the morning, take your pup to either area. Approximately 20 minutes after eating, what goes in must come out. Do not give any attention or treat until your pup goes. Once they go, praise and treat. Watch your pup. If they start to circle and are not in the correct place, clap your hands, pick them up immediately and bring them to the appropriate place. They do want to please, and will try to do so. Do not let them loose in a large area to roam freely. I have puppy gates in the kitchen and they can play in this area and be watched. Once they are completely housebroken, they can go freely throughout the house. When you begin leash training, use that same word, “outside”. As they grow, they will go on command. Crate training tips next. Theresa Meyer