

Puppy Care Notes



I have written these notes to help you get started and guide you on your way to becoming a great Labradoodle owner. I hope they will assist you in making your doodle a healthy, happy, well balanced member of your family. There is lots of information out

there in books and on the internet - so please spend some time doing your own research. I have put together these notes from my personal experience and years of owning, training, breeding and working in animal care. I hope you find them helpful.

Warm Regards

Jenny



Before your pup comes home

- ✓ Make sure your yard is secure, check the fence for holes or places a pup could fit through. Secure gaps on deck railings and pool fences with some cheap wire from Bunnings and plastic zip ties (quick to put up and easy to take down once puppy grows).
- ✓ Book into puppy preschool or K9 kindy – pups can attend these classes from 8 weeks.
- ✓ Buy a bed and food bowl, some food and toys. Please refer to our 'What To Buy' list.

Getting your Pup Home and The First Night

When your pup arrives home it will probably seem a little lost and unsure at first – it may be unsettled, even whine for an hour or two, or on and off for a day. This is completely normal and while they will usually settle in the first hour or so this could take longer for some pups.

Our pups have been sleeping outside in a puppy kennel with a yard attached prior to going to their new families and are so often quite settled outside on their first night. If your puppy is going to sleep outside, make sure their bed is in a draught free area with lots of blankets. Your puppy at the very least should have a raised bed under cover, but a doghouse of their own is also good to have if they are sleeping outside.

If your pup is going to sleep inside my first suggestion is to consider a dog crate (there are several different types on the market, usually much cheaper to purchase online than at a pet shop - so do your research). If you want to continue to use the crate once the dog is an adult remember to purchase one that will fit the adult size of you pup.

Place the crate on the floor beside your bed for at least the first night or two until the pup gets use to its new environment. This means your pup is in a confined space which means that it will quickly learn to 'hold on' to go the toilet as they don't tend to wee in their bed (also a big help for toilet training). The pup will settle much faster being near you where you can reassure it with gentle words. Over the next few days when the pup learns that being in its crate means bed time and is becoming more adjusted to its new home, you can relocate the crate to a laundry or room that you would like it to sleep in future - assuming you don't want it in your bedroom. In this way you will ensure a gentle settling in period and avoid the sleepless nights of a crying pup alone in the laundry or other room. At 8 weeks pups can hold on for 8 hours before needing to go to the toilet. Our pups have access to a yard but go to bed when it's dark and get up at first light so expect the pup to want to go to the toilet early for the first day or two. I suggest when it wakes and wants to go out to take it out wait for it to go to the toilet then put it straight back in to the crate to bed again. In a few days once it adjusts to a different bed time/get up time you will find you shouldn't need to take it outside till morning.

A really good play session before bedtime should also help keep the pup settled for a longer time. Remember to take it out to the toilet before bed. It is natural for the puppy to cry and be a bit lost the first night. It will not be unusual for some pups to cry for 20 minutes or more particularly if left alone in a laundry or other room. It is better to be strong and not give in as the pup, like a child, will learn that if it just keeps crying it will eventually get what it wants. If you know that the puppy has been to the toilet and is not hungry then it is better to just ignore it and eventually the puppy should settle.

Toilet Training

If you are vigilant and consistent you shouldn't have any trouble with toilet training. Be prepared to spend a lot of time watching and taking your puppy outside. When he starts walking in circles, sniffing or looking unsettled, these are the warning signs!

I believe that if you are not able to watch your puppy then you should put them outside (assuming that your fences are secure). If these options aren't possible then try to confine your pup to an area that is easy to clean, such as the kitchen. If you can get those first few pees and poos done outside then your job will be so much easier. While outside, give puppy a good meaty bone to chew to entertain itself, or a kong stuffed with treats. This also prepares them to be separated from you for short periods of time.

If they start having accidents inside too frequently then it's much harder to get the message across. You really need to make your mission in life for those first few days to watch your puppy for the signs.

It's also a good idea to put your puppy in the same area in the garden each time to try to encourage it to go to the toilet in the same place. It will usually take a good two weeks before your puppy is fully house trained so be patient. Once again like children becoming potty trained, each pup will be different some are very fast learners and others take a bit longer.

Feeding your Puppy

All our pups leave with a small portion of dry food that they have been eating. If you plan to change the diet you should do so gradually so as not to upset their stomach. Do this by adding in a small amount of the new food each day.

If you are going to start a different type of dry food, please note that the pup's poos may soften for a couple of days till their tummy gets accustomed to the new food.

Please refer to your sheet on important dates included in your puppy pack as this will detail the diet your puppy has been fed before leaving us.

The best diet to feed your dog has been a heated debate for many years. There are many different diets available and it really depends on what suits your lifestyle. For example feeding primarily a dry kibble diet is easy and readily available. Whereas as feeding a natural or Barf diet is more time-consuming as there is some time needed prepare the food as well as risks to human health associated with keeping raw meat. There are a lot of different opinions out there. We feed our dogs primarily on dry food (Advance) with chicken wing/frames and raw meaty bones once to twice a week. We have never had any problems with our dogs and are very happy with this diet.

My advice is –



to

- Try to feed a good quality food. We feed our dogs on Advance. We also recommend Purina Pro Plan, Black Hawk and Royal Canin. These brands have special formula for Large Breed Puppies (if your pup is going to mature to over 25 kgs).
- Some people are getting into 'raw' diets for their dogs. This involves feeding only fresh raw meat, bones and fruits/veges. The Barf diet is the most well known of these specially formulated diets. Originally it involved purchasing raw meat and mixing in the correct veges/fruits and other supplements and feeding this mixture in conjunction with raw bones.
There are many recipe's and You Tube tutorials on making your own raw food diet now available.
Comercially prepared Barf diet frozen patties (which are ready made and make this option a lot more viable). If you decided you want to learn more about this diet please visit the web site I have listed below.
Visit <http://www.barfworld.com/> for information on the Barf diet. A general internet search will give you many many other sites.
Another raw food diet is 'Vets all Natural' which is similar to the Barf diet and you can purchase ready make packs of fresh food.
Visit <http://www.vetsallnatural.com.au/> for information on the Vets all natural diet.
- Try to feed your dog a diet that is consistent. i.e. don't feed dry food one night, table scraps another, a can of supermarket dog food the next. After speaking to friends in the veterinary field they suggested that dogs fed a consistently high quality diet had the least health problems. You will probably find that if you change your dog's diet too frequently they will suffer from loose stools or diarrhoea.
- Make an informed choice. Educate yourself before making your decision. There is an immense amount of information available on the internet. It's easier to make a decision on what is best for you if you do your research.
- Remember you usually get what you pay for. No brands sold at the supermarket should be considered a premium quality food even when promoted by celebrity vets. Optimum (promoted by Dr Chris Brown) and Supercoat (promoted by Dr Harry) are both cheap, low grade versions of premium dry dog foods.
- NEVER EVER feed COOKED bones. Dogs digestive systems have been designed to breakdown raw bones but cooked bones don't digest properly. We like to give our adult dogs a large split or whole marrow bone once a week. I start giving these when the puppy starts chewing. We have found that this is the most effective way to help reduce the amount of destructive chewing they do during their 'adolescent' years. It is so much nicer to chew on a tasty big bone than on shoes, pot plants, rugs (much nicer for you too). Some people don't recommend feeding these large hard bones as they can wear down the dogs teeth, but I believe that they will wear down their teeth chewing on inappropriate objects as well! And you get the benefit of your dog having nice clean teeth.
- Always have a good sized supply of fresh water. Try to change your dog's water at least once a day.
- Remember puppies are like toddlers they will put anything in their mouth. Safely store plastic bags, chemicals, rat and snail bait etc. Make sure your rubbish bin is not accessible.

List of Foods that should not be fed to your pup/dog

- **Chocolate** is very palatable to dogs, they often like it almost as much as we do but while it just stacks the kilos on owners, it can be fatal to dogs.
Chocolate and cocoa contain theobromide, a chemical that adversely affects the heart, lungs, kidney and central nervous system and urgent veterinary attention is required if your dog eats chocolate. As little as 50 grams can poison a small dog.
There are chocolate flavoured dog treats and 'dog chocs' available but these do not contain theobromide and are quite safe. Best to buy these for your pet and keep all the 'human' chocolates for yourself.
- **Caffeine** can also damage the heart, lungs, kidneys and central nervous system of dogs and restlessness, hyperactivity and vomiting are the first signs of toxicity, followed by panting, weakness, staggering gait, increased heart rate, muscle tremors and convulsions.
Common sources of caffeine include soft drinks, coffee beans, coffee grounds and coffee drinks as well as large amounts of tea. Sharing your cappuccino or 'cuppa' with your dog is not advisable.
- **Onions and garlic** are also very poisonous to dogs although it is not known what quantity needs to be eaten. Onions, in all their forms of raw, cooked, dry and powdered are toxic even when they are simply an ingredient combined with other foods, such as in soups and casseroles. While some people use garlic as a 'natural' wormer it can have a cumulative affect. Onions and garlic cause hemolytic anemia which is a destruction of the red blood cells. Pale gums, vomiting, diarrhea, blood in the urine, rapid heartbeat, weakness and lethargy are signs that urgent veterinary treatment is required.
- Most dogs love **grapes** and owners are often tempted to share on a 'one for you, one for me' basis but just a few grapes can be toxic to small dogs. Dried grapes (raisins and sultanas) are also poisonous and symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, decreased urine production, weakness and a staggering gait usually appear about 24 hours after consumption.
- Although not usually fatal, **Macadamia nuts** may cause vomiting, weakness, depression, drunken gait, joint or muscle pain and joint swelling within 6 to 24 hours of consumption.
- **Xylitol** is a sugar-free sweetener made from fruit and vegetable products and is promoted as a natural sweetener having 40% less calories than sugar and being without side-effects. It is commonly found in confectionary and 'sugar-free' foods but also available as a sugar replacement for domestic use. Although approved for human consumption it can cause serious side effects in dogs. It stimulates the pancreas to secrete insulin, resulting in hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and can also cause severe liver damage. Weakness, a staggering gait, collapse and seizures can occur within 30 minutes of consumption, Urgent veterinary treatment is imperative
- **Apple seeds, cherry pips, peach, apricot and plum stones** contain the toxin cyanide. Symptoms of cyanide poisoning include vomiting, heavy breathing, fast heart rate, cardiac arrhythmias and coma.
- **Potato peelings, green potatoes and rhubarb leaves** contain oxalates, which can affect the digestive, nervous, and urinary systems.
- **Tobacco** contains nicotine, which affects the digestive and nervous systems. Symptoms include a rapid heart beat, collapse, coma, and death. Keep your dog away from ashtrays and cigarette butts.
- **Alcohol**, in all its forms, is toxic to dogs. Drunkenness with symptoms of staggering, excitement, or decreased reflexes, depression, and a slow respiratory rate occur, and the dog may go into cardiac arrest. If your pet imbibes seek veterinary advice.
- **Avocados** contain Persin, which can cause vomiting and diarrhea in dogs although it is not usually fatal.
- Giving dogs **human vitamins** can cause health problems, especially with iron supplements. Dogs have different vitamin requirements to humans and supplements should only be given with advice from a veterinarian.
- **Spoiled or moldy food** should not be fed to dogs as it can cause digestive problems, or in the worse cases botulism or salmonella with fatal results. If it is not good enough for you to eat, throw it out.



Training/Turning your dog into a member of your family

Dogs are pack animals and your family has become its pack. A pack has a structure from the dominant leader to the most subordinate member in a

pecking order. It is important that your pup learns its place in the pack - and that is at the bottom. There are several ways to re-enforce your puppy's position in the family

When feeding take the pup's food bowl away from it while it is eating. This should also be done with bones and toys. Never allow your pup to growl or resist.

At play – if the play gets too rough roll the puppy onto its back and hold it there till it relaxes. If a child is playing too roughly don't comfort the pup, as it will think that you as pack leader are supporting it and will re-enforce any feeling of dominance it has toward the child. If you need to reprimand your child do it away from the pup.

Teach your children to pick up and carry the puppy properly while it is young, this will help re-enforce that the puppy is lower in the pecking order.

Never allow your pup to act aggressively towards you or anyone else in the family. If it does hold it firmly by the skin on the back of the neck facing you and growl 'NO' don't release the puppy till it relaxes.

Introducing your new pup to your old dog

I am assuming your current adult dog is not 'dog aggressive' in that it does not want to fight with any or most other dog it meets – if this is the case please refer to an expert on dog behaviour in regards to introducing your new pup to your current adult dog. If your dog is normal in regards to getting along with other dogs then please use the information below as a guide.

Normally this is best done with the least amount of interference from people. My suggestion is to put the pup down with the adult dog and ignore them. Stay close and watch but try not to interfere. Make sure you aren't anxious or worried as your adult dog will sense your anxiety and wonder what is wrong. Dogs are very good at communicating – your adult dog may growl or warn the pup and don't correct this he/she is just letting the puppy know its place in the pack. You need to affirm your adult dogs place as higher in the pack so correcting this behaviour will only confuse your adult dog. You will find after this initial getting to know you session your pup and adult dog will have a wonderful time together.

Meal times may need to be supervised for a while till both dogs learn to eat their own food. If this is a problem it may be easier to separate them at meal times till the puppy matures a bit.

Behavioural Training – Teaching your pup manners

I would like to start by saying that there are a huge differences of opinions on the best way of teaching your pup/dog. I am sharing the methods I prefer to use and have found to be successful.

A very important thing to understand is that dogs mostly learn by trial and error – **if the outcome is rewarding (they get pleasure from a behaviour) they will most likely do it again, if it is unpleasant they are not likely to do it again.**

Behavioural training or teaching manners is the type of training that must occur everyday to ensure your dog becomes a good family companion. It is something you need to discuss and make decisions on before you get your puppy home. Your puppy is only a couple of kilograms in weight now and having it jump up on you is cute and not offensive. When the puppy is mature and weighs 20-30 kgs and jumps up to greet granny when she comes to visit after playing in the mud – well I'm sure you get the picture.

You need to ask questions such as do you want your dog to get on your bed or on the couch? Once again as a small fluffy puppy it can be tempting to let this habit start. It's much better for you to decide which areas in the house are off limits from the start. If you are consistent you will have fewer problems.

When reprimanding your dog use a low growly voice different from the one you use to praise him. If you allow these behaviours sometimes and not others then the dog will get confused so BE CONSISTANT. Sounds like **Uutt** and words like **Leave It** are good for correction. This needs to be very distinct from you praising 'good puppy' voice, which should be soft and in the higher part of your voical register. I also suggest adding a prod (like poking someone in the shoulder) when using the correction sound on your new pup. You can change the firmness of the prod easily to suit the level of correction your pup responds to. When someone pokes you it doesn't really hurt but is annoying and unpleasant and certainly gets your attention. By using this on your pup this unpleasant but not painful touch will get their



attention and teach them that your correction word/sound means to stop the behaviour. Once they learn what your correction sound means you will probably most times be able to use the sound without the touch.

You also need to learn how firm you need to be with your pup. Like children different pups need different levels of correction. Some are super soft others need firmer correction. If you correct a behaviour and the pup continues to misbehave your correction was too soft or not understood. A pup will not continue a bad behaviour if it is not getting a reward or enjoyment from the behaviour.

There are **3** main areas of teaching pups manners that dog owners struggle with. These are ...

1. No teeth on people.

When pups play with their siblings in their litter they play bite and wrestle each other constantly – this is not aggression but a way for them to learn their place in the pack through play. When you get your pup home they will go through mouthy stages which some people call teething but is more about play for them. Your pup needs to learn from the day you bring it home – no teeth on people. Do not allow or encourage this behaviour. Your pup needs to learn that people do not like play with teeth. Families often struggle with this rule because they allow the behaviour 'because the pup is a baby' or 'feel mean' for correcting. To correct this hold the pups mouth closed – dogs don't like this sensation. A soft natured pup might respond to the correction with light pressure, but a tougher pup might need a slight squeeze. Hold for a few seconds and give your growly correction sound/words. If a pup continues the mouthy behaviour once you release it, increase the pressure and the length of time you hold the mouth to make sure the pup understands you are giving a negative response.

2. No Paws on People.

There is nothing more annoying than a dog (particularly a friend's dog) that jumps up on you. It is very frustrating to get a set of muddy paws on your clothes as you are arriving or leaving the house. NEVER pat your pup when it is jumping up on you. If you pat your pup when it is jumping up on you, you are saying '**when you want love and affection jump on me!**' While cute in a pup this quickly gets annoying in a large pup or adult. You and other people start to think your dog is a crazy, annoying, bad dog but in reality you have trained it to do this behaviour with positive reinforcement. Correct your pup by **not** patting it, giving the correction sound and a prod if necessary. Only pat your pup when it has its feet on the ground. Be consistent, correct every time your pup exhibits this behaviour and you will have this fixed in a few days. Remember if your pup or dog is jumping on you or others it's because it is getting pleasure from doing it – so don't reward the behaviour!

If when the pup is older you want it to jump up on you only allow it to do it when invited with a command or signal – but it needs to learn NOT to do this first.

3. Calm behaviour and good manners when meeting strangers or when visitors arrive.

Have you ever been to a friend's house and their dog goes crazy and jumps all over you? Or have friends that have to put their dog outside when guests arrive? It is much more pleasant to have a dog calmly greet you with a wagging tail and maybe a sniff to see who you are.

When you get a new pup it is very exciting for you and your friends and your children's friends. Everyone wants to come over and play with the new family member and of course you want to show it off! So the friends arrive and they immediately go into a high pitched excited voice to express their excitement when meeting the new pup. The pup responds to this excited energy from the visitors (and its excited owner) with high energy excitement and jumping etc etc. The pup is rewarded for this crazy energy with lots of attention, affection and praise.

So you have started training your dog that anytime visitors come to the house it needs to go in crazy excited behaviour where all manners go out the window. Of course the visitors when they return to the house a few months later to see a much less cute and larger dog that has crazy high energy. They may request you to lock it up or put it outside when they arrive.

The solution to preventing this behaviour is simple but does require some commitment from you.

Always put your pup on a lead before any visitors enter the house or yard – this gives you control over the pup and the visitors. Ask your visitors to please ignore the pup as you are training it to be calm when visitors arrive. (If you can

explain what you are doing before they arrive it will help.) Ignoring the pup it means no eye contact as well – tell them to pretend it does not exist. The pup will at first be excited and pull at the lead etc. I suggest ignoring the behaviour or doing a correction but keep your excitement/energy level normal as well. After a few minutes (at most 5) you will notice the pup calm down and even lie at your feet. Tell your friends that you are going to let the pup off the lead and please continue to ignore it (make sure no eye contact again) even if it comes over to them. At this point it would be normal for the pup to approach the stranger to sniff them and it is equally important for the person to not look at or acknowledge the pup at this point. After sniffing the stranger the pup should wander off to do something else. Once this stage is reached wait a few minutes then allow the visitors to interact and play with the pup. Supervise to make sure the visitor isn't encouraging the pup to jump up etc. If you can repeat this every time a stranger enters your home you will get to a point where your dog will sniff the visitor in a calm but friendly manner then move away.

Once visitors can arrive and your pup is calm on the lead then you can start not using the lead, but make sure you ask the visitors to continue ignoring the pup when they first arrive till you are sure the pup has learnt to greet strangers/visitors in a calm manner.

Remember if you forget or can't be bothered and your pup makes contact with the visitor and gets made a fuss over with a lot of excitable energy it is a step backwards - so you need to have the lead on before anyone enters the property which will give you complete control of the situation. This can be a challenging thing to do in the excitement of getting a new pup but is really important key to having a well behaved and well balanced family member. While friends may find this training hard to accept at first they will benefit in the long run.

These training tips I have developed after discovering Caesar Milan (The Dog Whisperer) who is a dog trainer and helps dog owners become good pack leaders. He has several TV shows over the years on the Biography Channel on Foxtel and I think at times it also appears on free to air as well. He also has several great books and DVD's available and I would strongly recommend getting hold of one if you are able. His web site is <http://www.cesarmillaninc.com/>

Obedience

Obedience training will get your dog to do what you want it to do when you want it to do it.

I STRONGLY recommend that you take your puppy to K9 Kindergarden or Puppy Preschool. Most vets offer courses as do the RSPCA and dog training schools. This is a great way for people who haven't owned a dog before (or for a while) to get familiar with the basics in puppy care and obedience. Here your puppy will get the opportunity to socialise with other pups and people and you will too. The course brings you up to date with new products available, educates you about basics such as worming and vaccinations, as well as giving you a basic understanding in how to train your dog.

Labradoodles are extremely easy to train and both you and your dog will get a lot of enjoyment if you decide to continue with obedience classes to any level. There is nothing nicer than a well-trained dog! As Labradoodles are an active intelligent breed, they perform well in competitive obedience and agility competitions.

Training Tip

It's a good idea to make sure that your puppy is used to having you take things from him. Particularly when they pick up something and you are not sure what it is. After giving your puppy a bone make sure you take it off them after 30 seconds or so and give the command "GIVE" as you take it off the puppy. Say "GOOD BOY/GIRL" and give lots of attention and then return the bone to him. You can use the same command to get balls or toys etc. from your puppy. It is important that your puppy understands that you will take things off it and not develop a protective guarding behavior over bones and toys etc. This can be a dangerous - particularly when there are young children in the family.



Large size Labradoodles tend to stay puppy like in behaviour for at least 2-3 years, which I am sure at times will try your patience. With training and love however you will have a wonderful companion for the next 13-15 years. So hang in there.

Puppies and children

Young puppies, like children, need rest. So make sure that the puppy gets some time out. Always supervise play with your children to prevent both the puppy and the child from developing bad habits that may turn into something more serious when the puppy matures. Children tend to encourage the pup to play bite and wrestle and jump up. Pups most often see kids as siblings rather than pack leaders so tend to play rough (like they do with their litter mates). These behaviours are fun for the first couple of weeks but become less so as the pup grows. It is the parents job to correct mouthy behaviour and jumping up etc so you need to **supervise play at all times** with your children until the pups (and kids) learn these behaviours are not acceptable.

Exercise

It is not recommended for pups to have prolonged or forced exercise (such as jogging or jumping) till the growth plates in their legs close (which is usually close to 12 months). They should also not begin serious agility classes until they mature to 12 months or older. After they are fully vaccinated at 12-14 weeks a 20 minute walk on the lead is fine. This can be gradually increased up to an hour by the time they reach 6-8 months. If you want your dog to be a jogging partner please don't start this till they are approaching 10-12 months and train them like you would yourself or any athlete— a gradual build up rather than trying to take the pup out for a hour long run first up.

Stairs and slippery floors are fine for pups as long as it isn't repetitive to the extreme – ie constant repetition up and down stairs or playing for long periods of time on polished floors.

Worming

Your puppy has been wormed every 2 weeks since birth for intestinal worms. This will need to be continued until the puppy is 12 weeks old, then again every 3 months for the rest of its life.

Heartworm

Heartworm is a very serious disease that affects dogs. It is a parasite that is transmitted by mosquitoes. Your puppy will need to commence heartworm prevention before 3 months of age and continue prevention medication for the rest of its life.

Treatment can be given monthly or yearly and there are many products on the market. Make sure you discuss which type of treatment is best for you and your dog at your first vet visit.

Fleas & Ticks

Queensland particularly is plagued by both fleas and ticks. The greatest threat to your puppy (for people living in Qld) is from the paralysis tick *Ixodes holocyclus*. If the area you live in is prone to ticks then you will need to find a good preventative measure. (There are many great products now available). You should discuss the options available with your vet. As the Labradoodle has a thick long coat it is very difficult to check the animal thoroughly each day, which increases the risk.

Vaccinations

Your puppy received its first vaccination while still with us. However, until they are fully vaccinated at the age of 12-14 weeks, they should not be allowed in public places. When visiting your vet make sure you carry your puppy in and sit it on your lap. Try to use common sense when taking your pup out before it has been fully vaccinated and keep it away from places that have lots of k9 traffic.

Grooming

It's a good idea to start getting your puppy comfortable with being groomed as early as possible. Concentrate particularly on the tail and back legs, as these areas seem to be the bits they find most sensitive to have groomed. Keep a few treats in your pocket and give lots of praise if they hold still to help make the experience enjoyable for the puppy.

The amount of time you need to devote to grooming will depend on the type of coat your puppy has and how long you want to keep it. The most important tool is a slicker brush followed by a pair of small sharp scissors. If you wish to clip your dog, and you want to do it yourself, a pair of good quality clippers will be helpful. If you decide to use a professional groomer make sure you take some photos of how a Labradoodle should look (not like a poodle!).

Bath your dog as often as you feel it needs it. If the dog spends a lot of time outside it will need bathing more regularly than a dog that spends a lot of time inside. Labradoodles don't smell 'doggy' often but if left for long enough or if they like to swim they will begin to smell.

When bathing choose a good quality dog shampoo. It's best if possible, to groom your dog before bathing. A dog that is badly matted won't dry properly as the matted fur traps the water and washing matts sets them and makes them harder to groom out.

Labradoodles tend to go through a coat change at 9-15 months. This is when the puppy coat is replaced by the adult coat. At this time the coat tends to matt rather badly. It is often easier to clip the coat and start again.

As the Labradoodle coat matures and the adult coat grows you should expect the texture and feel of the coat to change. Puppy coats are very soft and silky and the adult coats tend to be coarser. They often develop kemp fibres (a poodle trait) which are thicker hairs (often in Chocolate and Black dogs the kemp can be white or gray and in Gold dogs often is a darker shade). Most coats will usually lighten in colour to some degree. Pups that start out as chocolate can fade to café which happens over the course of a couple of years, black can also lighten to charcoal and reds fade to a more golden tone. Usually colours stabilise at 3 years of age but it is almost impossible to predict if a coat will fade as a pup.

Ears

It is really important that you keep a close eye on your Labradoodle's ears. Labradoodles are very susceptible to ear infections due to floppy ears and hairy ear canals (which has come from their poodle parent breed).

The first step is to try to keep the hair as short as possible on the underside of the ear and directly beneath the ear canal to help air flow to the ear canal (when the ear is sitting normally it will hide this shorter hair).

I have recently changed my ear care regime after learning about a product used by poodle breeders and I am happy with the results. The product is called Essential Pet - Dry Ear Powder, (this product is pictured in my 'What To Buy' notes), which I have only found available online.

Dry Ear Powder allows the excess hair in the ear canal to be easily stripped or plucked using the fingers and it keeps the ear canal dry and has some antibacterial properties. The following is the ear maintenance regime I currently use on my Labradoodles.

During a bath wash around your dogs ears and face well. Try not to pour water directly into the ear canal, but don't worry about getting it a bit wet. After the bath use tissues to wipe away any moisture/dirt or wax as best you can, a cotton bud can be used to clean and nooks and crannies if you can see dirt or wax trapped, but don't go too far down ear canal. Next, puff a small amount of ear powder into the ear canal and allow the dog to shake to clear the excess. Then strip or pluck any hair you can with your fingers. Some Labradoodles have very hairy ear canals others not very much – you should be able to see down your dogs ear canal. Most dogs don't mind having this done and some almost seem to enjoy it. This will allow air to keep the canal dry which prevents yeast infections from developing. Repeat this process after every bath. If you don't wash your dog very often I would recommend checking your dogs ears each week to fortnight and puffing some dry ear powder into the canal to maintain good ear health.

I am now avoiding using the traditional liquid ear cleaners such as epiotic and am finding this dry method of ear cleaning to be much more successful in the prevention of ear infections.

If your dog does develop a yeast infection it is usually signalled by a dark waxy muck that smells terrible. The dog will shake its head and scratch at its ears. If you sniff the dogs ear the odour is quite unpleasant and distinct. If this happens you will need to visit the vet to get some antibiotic treatment. Once you have finished the course of antibiotics start using the dry ear powder again.

If you are using a liquid cleaning preparation such as Paws ear cleaner or Epiotic (this is the cleaner most often recommended by vets) squeeze some solution into the ear canal massage the ear for 30 seconds then use tissues to wipe the ear clean and as dry as possible.

Trim the hair close as close to the skin as you can with scissors or clippers in the region under the ear opening to help air get into the canal.

Pet Insurance

There are a lot of great options available these days in regards to pet insurance. Unfortunately accidents can happen and the cost of veterinary bills if your pet is involved can run upwards of \$5000 dollars. A search of the internet for Pet Insurance will give you a list of providers if you wish to explore this further. We endeavour to sign up all Rusty Amber puppies with a 6 week free Puppy Insurance Plan with Pet Plan Insurance which covers the pup for \$3000. I encourage our puppy families to take out pet insurance as soon as they get their pup. The reason for this is that during research into insurance companies I found that the main complaint from people taking out the insurance was in relation to what the insurance company believes to be a 'pre-existing' condition.

For example a family insured their pup at 14 weeks of age. On that pup's last visit to the vet for his 12 week vaccination the vet noted on the file that the pup had a bit of wax in its ears and to check them on the next visit. This pup had no infection or problem at the time. A few months later it developed an allergy to a plant in the yard and the family investigated this problem using a dermatologist thinking they would be covered by their pet insurance policy. When they submitted their claim the insurance company refused to pay as the report of a wax build-up in the ears allowed them to use the pre-existing condition clause, as ear problems can be considered related to skin problems!

Always feel free to give me a call or email if you have any problems or questions.