

Transcript:

Giving Your Dog a Bath

Hi, this is Dr. Karen Becker, and I'm at my hospital. Today I'm going to show you how to bathe a dog. It sounds kind of silly, but a lot of first-time dog owners have written me, emailed me, or contacted my hospital, saying, "Hey, could you do a video on how to bathe a dog? Because I have puppy and I don't know what I'm doing." "I just rescued an adult dog and I don't know what I'm doing." So I'm just going to go over how to bathe a dog.

I have the luxury at my animal hospital of having a raised tub; most people don't have a raised tub. You can bathe your dog in the kitchen sink; you can bathe your dog in a walk-in shower. You can plop your dog in a regular bathtub. There's not a right or wrong way to do it. You can actually bathe your dog with an outdoor garden hose as long as the temperature is warm enough that your dog doesn't catch a chill. In my animal hospital, we have the luxury of being able to have a hose, which is actually really nice. You can also do it the old-fashioned way if you don't have a hose, and this is by filling up a container and simply rinsing the dog that way.

I will tell you this: the bottoms of tubs are slippery. So I'm going to be role modeling my bath today with my 11-year-old Boston terrier and I recommend that if you have older dogs, throw an old towel in the bottom of the tub to help your dogs get a grip. Obviously, don't block the drain. That's going to help Rosco feel a little bit more secure when I plunk him down in the tub. Okay, I'm going to go get my patient.

Getting Started – With or Without a Tub

So I have my patient in the tub. There's not a right or wrong way for you to bathe your dog when it comes to how you keep your dog in the tub. If your dog is nervous and afraid, absolutely have a helper that will hold the dog. I just took Rosco's collar off, but you can absolutely leave the collar on, so you have a handle system. You can also bathe him in a harness and just wash your dog right along with the collar. As much as possible, if your dog is not used to bathing, I really recommend that you have a helper that can help create a positive experience – someone who can soothe or feed the dog.

In Rosco's situation, he doesn't like to get his head wet at all, and I know that about him. If you want to bathe your dog's head, I recommend that you pat the dog's ears and put a cotton ball right down in the dog's ear just to help prevent water from getting in the ears. I'm not going to

bathe Rosco's head; I'm just going to bathe him from the neck back, and I'll use a washcloth to bathe his facial folds. No matter what shampoo you use, even if it says it's safe around the eyes – I don't recommend that you lather the head. If you do, for some reason, need to lather the head, it's important that you hold the chin up and rinse the water back so that no shampoo gets in his eyes.

I'm not a big fan of getting water over the dog's head, because a lot of dogs can have secondary ear infections from moisture in the ear canal. So I'm a big believer in washing the face, if at all possible, with a washcloth versus getting the whole head wet.

I'm going to make sure that the (water) temperature is comfortable for him. I have my towel down in the bottom of the tub, so he feels a little bit more secure. Rosco's 11, and I think he looks fabulous for 11. However, I don't want him to slip and inadvertently hurt himself. Right now, I'm just going to get him wet everywhere – don't forget down the legs, the paws, and the undercarriage. Now if you don't have a hose hooked up to your tub (like I mentioned), you can just fill up a bucket or container that will help you rinse your dog.

Shampooing

Once he's adequately wet, you're going to apply your shampoo. I have some favorite shampoos that are all-natural. I use tea tree shampoos when animals have skin infections. I don't across-the-board recommend oatmeal shampoos, unless you have a dog that has no skin infection, no allergies, and incredibly dry skin. I have a whole lineup of shampoos that I use here at Natural Pets. For Rosco, I'm going to use a shampoo that I have made for me by a master soap maker, and she just makes it out of her home. It's called Detest a Pest, and I'm just going to use it because it's summertime here in Chicago and I'm doing all I can to help Rosco avoid fleas and ticks.

This is called a body bar, and if you're going to use shampoo, you'll just pour a strip of shampoo down the back. If you have a really dense coat or a double-coated breed, it's important that you consider mixing some shampoo with water before you pour it on your dog. Because if you have a big Husky, oftentimes you'll have a wad of shampoo here that doesn't get adequately distributed to the whole body. Rosco, of course, has very, very short hair, so it's fine to just lather him up with the bar that I have.

Dealing with Skin Infections

Rosco has a little skin infection – we have a pond in our front yard. All summer long my dogs play in the pond, and about this time of year, the pond turns into a disgusting cesspool. We call it the swamp; Rosco obsesses about swimming in the swamp. He comes out green and furry

from all the stuff that's floating on our swamp, and he ends up with a little secondary skin infection on the belly (which I'll show you in a minute).

About all of my dogs have this secondary skin infection on the belly – these black spots here are a little bit of a skin infection. You can see he has a little bit down here, too. I want you to think of these small eruptions that you will occasionally find on dogs, especially during hot, humid months, as acne. If I were to culture that lesion (which I'm not going to), it would probably be his own natural bacteria. What happens is when he gets out of the cesspool pond every single day when he swims, he comes up to the house, and we rinse him off. We bathe him, but we don't bathe him every day. What happens is that that disgusting water stays on his skin even though we rinse him, and he develops a little secondary skin infection.

Notice I'm not panicked about his skin infection? I'm going to disinfect it, I'm going to watch it, and I'm going to treat it. I know that this happens to my dogs every year. I'm not nervous about it, but I do want to stay on top of it to make him comfortable and make sure it doesn't spread.

The premise of treating any skin infection, including staff or acne (as I like to think of it in dogs), is to keep the skin clean and dry. Right now what we're doing is we're disinfecting his skin. I'm going to also wash right down to Rosco's paws, because Rosco has a little obsessive-compulsive issue with his feet. As you can see, my daughter did a nice job of painting his toenails; we're very thankful that dogs can only see in black and white, because he would be appalled if he knew that his toenails are pink.

Rosco likes to lick his nail beds, so I like to disinfect his paws when he's in the tub because he'll lick to the point that he'll induce a little yeast infection around his toenail beds. So I wash his paws, wash his armpits, wash up his neck like this, make sure I hit that belly where those staff lesions are, do a little bit of exfoliating to get the dead skin off, and wash his bottom, groin, and back feet.

Expressing Anal Glands

Groomers – professional bathers and groomers – are taught in grooming school to automatically express the dog's anal gland. I'm not a big fan of expressing anal glands. I was taught in vet school to absolutely express the anal glands, because oftentimes you can have a client for life. Dogs become unable to express their glands on their own; it's a service. For groomers, you automatically right now while you have the dog in the tub, express the anal glands, brush the teeth, trim the nails, all parts of natural grooming experiences. But I'm not a big fan of automatically expressing anal glands, unless you have some anal gland problem. So I don't recommend, in the tub, that you consider expressing your dog's glands, unless your dog is having an anal gland problem, in which case I will tell you to work with your veterinarian on

reestablishing anal gland tone and finding the reasons as to why your dog has anal gland problems in the first place. So I'm going to leave Rosco's anal glands alone.

Rinsing is important. If I wanted to lather him up between the ears without touching them, I would tilt his head back like this and make sure that the shampoo is not going to go anywhere near his eyes. As I mentioned, I'm not going to wash his... (*pet shakes water off*) face. That's the benefit of having a tub in a veterinary practice, so when they shake, it's not a problem. I'm rinsing all the soap off, and then I'm going to get my washcloth.

In Rosco's situation, he does not have any issues with his chin. Many, many dogs have furunculosis, which is basically a low-grade skin infection on their chin. You'll notice it looks like little pimples; the hair follicles are inflamed, and they get red bumps. If your dog has furunculosis on the chin, you do need to use a disinfectant or shampoo and lather up the chin right here. Rosco doesn't have that, so I'm just going to use a washcloth with water to remove any debris that could be found on his facial folds. In a minute, I'm going to show you how I clean his ears and how I do a little bit of a facial disinfecting routine with some colloidal silver. But right now, I'm just removing any allergens, ragweeds, grasses, pollens, and molds with my damp washcloth.

I'm going to wring him out, I'm going to grab a towel, and we're going to move him to the grooming table. Do come along!

Should You Blow-Dry After Bathing?

So we have Rosco out of the tub; I'm going to dry him off. If you have a dog that's brand new to baths, I don't recommend that you introduce them to bathing and blow-drying at the same time. I recommend that you towel your dog dry, keep him warm and inside in the winter – make sure that your dog stays inside and warm nestled on a blanket until completely dry. If you have a dog that's easygoing and you decide to try out the blow dryer, you're welcome to blow-dry your dog. You have to blow-dry your dog on low heat. And if you think that your dog is developing some nervousness, stop, because we want to create a positive experience.

Probably what you just saw with Rosco in the tub is that he doesn't look overwhelmed about his experience. I would say he's probably calling this a neutral to strange experience. But he's not having a terrible time, and it's important that we keep him feeling good about baths, because dogs need them pretty regularly.

So how often do you bathe your dog? When your dog is stinky or dirty, or requires it because of a skin infection.

Cleaning the Facial Folds

So Rosco is a brachycephalic breed, which means he has a smashed nose, bulgy eyes. Those bulgy eyes mean that he has to tear more than the average dog. He tears to lubricate his corneas, but then, of course, the tears can spill over and create some brown stains in his creases.

Anything that you put on or around a dog's face you have to make sure is eye-friendly. So I'm going to clean up Rosco's facial folds is using some colloidal silver. You can buy colloidal silver at any health food store. I have it in spray form, but you can absolutely get it in liquid dropper form. I'm going to apply a little bit of colloidal silver to a cotton ball. Colloidal silver's completely safe for the eyes, so I'm not nervous about getting it around his eyes. You're just going to see me disinfect down those facial folds to remove salt, tears, and eye crud, and that's completely safe. That's a really great way to disinfect his facial folds without chemicals or any medications or solutions that I would be nervous about contacting the eye. Some people say, "Oh, you can use hydrogen peroxide there." You don't want to get hydrogen peroxide in and around a dog's eye, whereas colloidal silver is really safe. So I disinfect facial folds with colloidal silver.

Cleaning the Ears

Now I'm going to remove the cotton I put in Rosco's ears for his bath. We do that primarily if you're interested in getting the whole dog's head wet to try to keep the canals dry. I clean Rosco's ears when they're dirty, which means I check them about every other day. Rosco's not a dog that normally produces a ton of earwax. If you have a dog that produces a lot of earwax, you've got to clean your dog's ear as often as it produces wax. What I mean by that is that some people can get out of the shower and never Q-tip out their ears, while some produce a party in their ear canals every day. You need to clean your dog's ears as often as they produce wax, because if you leave wax or debris in your dog's ear canal, that's the foundation for infection.

In Rosco's situation, he's not a waxy guy – he doesn't produce a tremendous amount of wax. So I clean his ears about once a month in the winter and about once a week in the summer.

You can clean dogs' ears one of two ways. You could put cleaner directly down the ear canal, as long as it's approved for doing that, or you can apply your ear-cleaning solution to cotton balls and use those moist cotton balls to swab out the wax and debris in the canal. Rosco prefers that I apply the solution to the cotton balls. When I have tried to put solution directly down Rosco's ears, he shakes, paws, and doesn't like it. So I'm going to apply my cleaner to cotton balls. We're just going to sprinkle it on, and the key is you're going to swab out your dog's ear canals as many cotton balls as it takes for the cotton ball to come out clean.

If you have dogs that have a lot of wax buildup, you may do four cotton balls one day in the left ear, nine cotton balls in the right. Tomorrow, six cotton balls, four cotton balls. The next day, two and two. In Rosco's situation, he doesn't have an ear that produces more wax than the other, so I'm just going to swab until they come out clean.

You can't put cotton ball down in a dog's ear too far, which means when I tuck this down into his ear, that's as far down as it will go. I'm not in any danger of rupturing his eardrum; I'm not in any danger of creating pain or irritation. I'm going to swab that cotton ball around. I got some debris up, so I'm going to continue the process. I'm going to shove my cotton ball in there. This is not the only way to clean a dog's ears, but this is the way that I have found that is least stressful for dogs.

You can also use gauze. If you prefer gauze, you'll apply your ear cleaner to a piece of gauze. For dogs that have bigger ear canals, this works really well, because you can get your finger right in there again. You can't put your finger down in your dog's ear too far. You can swab around. This is the flappy part of the dog's ear called the pinna. Don't forget after cleaning out the inside of the canal that you're just going to swab the pinna to just disinfect it. And then, repeat the process to the other ear.