

EAR CROP AFTERCARE

To have your puppy's ears stand properly, you will need to "post" them regularly. This entails inserting something rigid in the ear, stretching the ear against this post, and applying tape around the posted ear to hold it in position. There are several methods used but the one described below is probably one of the most common and very effective. The materials needed are readily obtainable from Wal-Mart, Thrifty, Longs, Costco or similar stores.

1. You will need Tampax tampons – use only the ones with the cardboard applicator. The size will depend upon the size of your puppy. Younger puppies will need the "Slims" at least for a while and then you can graduate to the larger ones. Tampax comes in a Multi-pack, which contains all three sizes and might be the most economical purchase. Or you can use a product called Backer Rod which is a grey foam "rod" that comes in 30' rolls and is about 1/2" in diameter. You cut off the length needed to post the ear, tape a popsicle stick to it for stability and proceed with the rest of the instructions listed below.

2. You will need tape. The only tape to use is Johnson and Johnson's Coach Sports Tape. This tape is not so sticky as to rip out the hair when being removed, and also has tiny air holes so that it will allow the ear to "breathe". I've also had success with Johnson and Johnson's Zonas tape which can be obtained from your vet. Do not use waterproof tape; do not use regular adhesive tape; do not use paper tape, Do not use Duct Tape. None work properly and can actually harm your puppy!

3. You will need powder. Any medicated powder will do with the exception of Baby Powder. Use whatever you happen to have around – Desinex, Gold Bond, Mexana, generic, whatever you've got. You will need a small plastic bottle for the powder. The best is a small one used for hair dye and can be obtained from a beauty supply house. Or you may find something appropriate at a craft supply store. The bottle needs to have a screw off top. The top should be tapered with a small hole in the end. You may wish to snip off the tip of the cap to make the hole a little larger – about 1/8th inch opening. To get the powder into the bottle, unscrew the top, place a funnel in the bottle and squeeze the powder out of it's original container into the small bottle - a tad messy but necessary. You can't just shake the powder from it's original container onto the ear as too much of the ear will be covered with powder. What you are looking for here is to be able to lay a line of powder into the natural crease that runs up the edge of the ear on the non-cut side. You will also need to put powder down into the ear.

4. You will need scissors. A small pair works best - preferably the ones with the blunt ends.

Unwrap the tampon and adjust the cardboard slide to match the length of the ear. Place a band of tape around the tube to hold it at the length selected. Pull the cotton tampon out of the end of the tube about 1/2 ". Fasten tape to the end of the tube with the tampon sticking out (cover the exposed portion of the tampon as well) and wrap around the tube one time. Then make a twist in the tape so that the sticky side is now out. Wind the tape up the tube, sticky side out, to the end and cut. Take a small square of tape and cover the end of the tube. Make a second post in the same manner.

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To successfully wrap the ears it is best to have two people – the holder and the wrapper. The best position for wrapping is for the puppy to be sitting between the feet of the holder facing the wrapper. The holder should be seated against a couch or solid chair so that the puppy cannot back away. The wrapper can sit on a small stool directly in front of the puppy and can help keep the pup in position by bracing with the knees. The holder will use one hand to steady the pup's head by lightly holding the head by the muzzle. The other hand will be used to pull/lift the ear and tube up from the head while the wrapper is running the tape up the ear. When the first ear is done, reverse the hold.

First, put a small amount of powder in the ear and run a line of powder along the natural crease up the inside edge of the ear where it rolls to the back of the head. Try not to get powder on any other part of the ear – otherwise the tape will not stick to the ear.

Next, insert the tube deep into the ear with the tampon end firmly seated in the ear. Stretch the ear upright against the tube and gently press against the tube and the sticky tape. Go as deep as possible into the ear with the tube. You cannot hurt anything down in there, as you would have to make a right angle turn to reach the eardrum.

If your puppy has "pockets" in the ear near the base causing the ear to have a large dent, then take ½ cotton ball and place it between the tube and the ear in such a position as to pop out the pocket. Generally the cotton ball will only need to be used for a few wraps.

Start winding the tape at the base. Attach the tape to the front where it will stick to the exposed, sticky tape on the tube. Wind around the ear twice down low, covering the hard cartilage at the back base of the ear. Then wind the tape up the ear to the top of the tube. On the pup's right ear you will wind counter-clockwise, and on the left you will go clockwise. You will want to lay the natural fold over. The reason there is a line of powder in that crease is to absorb moisture buildup. Gently squeeze and press the wrap to be sure it is stuck.

DO NOT WRAP TOO TIGHTLY AS YOU COULD CUT OFF THE CIRCULATION IN THE EAR CAUSING PERMANENT DAMAGE. As you are wrapping, just lay the tape in position. When unrolling more tape, pull against your fingers to avoid tightening the tape too much against the ear. The wrap should be snug - NEVER TIGHT! ! Repeat the process on the other ear.

When both ears are wrapped make the bridge between the ears. The holder should lift up on one ear, the wrapper should attach the tape to the backside of that wrap as low as possible and be drawn over to the backside of the other ear. The wrapper can lift that ear into position. Then continue the loop loosely around in front across to the first ear. The loop should be straight across the back and loose in the front. Then the holder can grasp both ears and lift - at the same time pressing the front part of the loop to the back part. This bridge will be set low enough to prevent the ears from sagging down the sides of the head. The ears should be positioned in a slight "V" position. If you set them too close and too straight, the dog will tend later to overcorrect and the ears will cross. After several wraps you will know what position

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is working best and can make the loop larger or smaller as necessary. You can adjust like rabbit ears on a TV antenna. Allow the puppy to rub and shake. After a few minutes, they get used to having the wraps on and go about their business. If they are going to be able to get an ear out, it's better now than later. Always give verbal praise and a treat when done. This also is a good time to practice opening the pup's mouth and looking around in there. Good training for later vet exams. All dogs should allow even a stranger to handle and open their mouths.

Later you may see the tape at the base rolled up a bit. This is OK. As long as you can see that the post is still down in the ear, you're fine. However if the post has come out at the base, you will need to remove at least that one wrap and re-set that ear. Just cut the bridge, rewrap that ear, and re-bridge. Even though the ear may still be wrapped you will need to re-do to get the tube back inside the ear. If the post is not seated down into the ear, the weight of it will pull the ear down and possibly cause a crease at the base or a pocket.

To remove the wraps, cut the bridge, then going up the backside of the ear, gently snip and spread the tape starting at the bottom and working to the top. Generally you can see the bulge of the ear under the tape. Do not snip too close to the cut edge of the ear, nor too close to the other side where the natural fold is. Just work your way up the middle of the back of the ear. Remember there is a curve to the ear; follow that. Be very careful at the tip. That is most likely where you could cut the ear tip if not keeping the scissors centered. You cannot unwind the tape – it has to be cut.

Wraps should be left on for 5-6 days and then removed. Allow the ears to dry out and clean them with a soft cloth and water or alcohol. If there is no excess moisture, angry skin, or foul odor, then you can re-wrap in a few hours. If there is a persistent foul odor to the ear, have the vet check for a yeast infection. This is quite common particularly in warm weather. Panalog and more airtime is the solution to the yeast infection.

Gradually increase the time the wraps are off until they are standing on their own. You can work up to being wrapped 3 days, off 2 or 3 days, and so on. Eventually you will only find it necessary to wrap occasionally for a few days if the ears appear to be wilting.

About the time you think you're about done, the ears will crash. Don't panic. In all probability, the puppy is teething. Examine the mouth and you'll find most teeth are missing. All the calcium in the diet is going to teeth – not ear cartilage. Sometimes adding a blob of cottage cheese or plain yogurt to the dog's food will give extra calcium.

At some point you will conclude you are "finished" with the wraps. If the ears are in good position and standing but maybe one ear is weak at the end, use a breath right strip or a piece of Dr. Scholl's molefoam in the ear at the weak point. The adhesive on either of these is not sufficient enough to last. You can glue the strip into the ear using a product called Skin Bond. It is a bit pricey and you would never use up the entire can. You could try some liquid bandage to see if you can have a lasting attachment. Or go to the vet and ask them to use their surgery glue to affix the strip in place.

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Basically the whole process is an engineering project – much like shaping a bonsai tree or shrub. After a few wraps you won't feel all thumbs, and the pup will be content to sit quietly. Then is when you can feel confident enough to make adjustments. Sometimes you have to get a bit inventive to achieve the desired result. Anything that will work – use it. As long as the tape is the Sports Tape and the ear can breath, any other methods can be incorporated.

I once was wrapping a Great Dane who was overcorrecting and crossing his ears no matter how wide we made the bridge loop. I ended up taking a piece of Styrofoam about an inch thick, shaped it to fit the curve of his topskull, made grooves in the ends for the wrapped ears to fit into, and taped this solid brace in place. It worked – it looked silly – but it worked and that's what counts.

It is important not to let the wraps get wet. If your pup has a wading pool for fun, only let him/her use it during times the ears are not wrapped. If the puppy needs to go out to potty and it's pouring rain, put plastic wrap over the ears to keep them dry.

If you have any questions – call me at 530-529-6590 or email me at danjodobies@snowcrest.net. Trying to fix an ear that has been left unsupported for weeks or months is almost a lost cause. Nearly constant support is needed for success. There is always a 2% to 3% chance that an ear will not stand. This has nothing to do with the ear cropper or the wrapper. Some dogs have a naturally weak ear and nothing can fix that. Sometimes the ears do not seem even in width. Generally this is not a glaring difference. When the vet crops the dog he/she takes off exactly the same amount of ear leather from each ear. If the dog itself has one ear wider than the other, then of course, one may be a bit wider. If there is a glaring error, this can be fixed at a later date, say, when the dog is being spayed/neutered.

MOST IMPORTANT
DON'T GIVE UP



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