

# Familiarising your dog to the clippers

## How will this leaflet help?

As part of your dog's pre-donation health check, our vet will shave two small areas of their neck in preparation for collecting a blood sample and their full blood donation. This training sheet will help you train your dog to become comfortable with the sound and sensation of clippers.

At Pet Blood Bank, we like our donors to be as relaxed as possible during their donation appointment. Some dogs may be nervous on their first visit, which is understandable as this is a new experience. The noise and vibration of clippers can be unfamiliar for many dogs. Doing this training with your dog will help to familiarise them with this process so they create a positive and relaxed association with these actions.

## Building confidence in your dog

One of the most helpful things you can do to build your dog's confidence for attending the donation session is to visit your vets regularly with them. Give your dog treats in the waiting room and ask one of the staff to do the same. It may also be useful to walk them onto the weighing scales and ask them to sit down. This will benefit your dog both for coming to give blood but also for attending the vets more generally.

## What is the best way to carry out the training?

It is most effective to carry out this training with your dog daily. We recommend building it up in stages and only moving to the next stage when your dog is comfortable with the current stage. If you progress to the next stage and your dog seems less relaxed, go back to the previous stage for a while longer and then try to progress again. Treats can be used to help your dog create a positive association with the positions. These can be gradually reduced as your dog progresses if you wish, but we do use treats frequently during the donation session for this same reason.

It may be worthwhile using a command such as 'stay' that your dog will associate with the training and the desired action. This means when we repeat this command, they will know what is expected of them. Stay calm and be patient during the training and reward good behaviour. Never force your dog into the position or get cross with them.



## Clipping ready for donation

Clipping some of your dog's fur helps us gain easy access to the jugular veins on their neck. To produce a similar noise and vibration to that of the clippers we use, you can use a set of human hair clippers (with the guard left in place), an electric toothbrush (with the cover on), or you can download one of the free hair clipper/shaver joke apps to your mobile phone.

## Stage 1

Start by switching on the clipper noise for 10 seconds while your dog is in the same room, rewarding your dog with a treat and praise whilst the noise is ongoing. Keep the noise at a distance from your dog at first. If they react or run away, turn off the noise and start again the following day with the clippers at a greater distance away. You can stay quiet, just play the noise. Our aim is to create a positive association for them with the noise and a treat.

## Stage 2

Once your dog appears completely at ease with stage 1, casually try to move the clippers closer to them, perhaps sitting on a chair near them with the noise playing. Whilst the noise is ongoing reward your dog if they are calm and relaxed. If they react to the noise, stay quiet, turn off the clippers, and try again later. Build this up gradually until you can place the clippers on the floor by your dog with them remaining relaxed and calm. This may take days or several weeks depending on your dog, but please be patient and work at a pace your dog is comfortable with. Always give the treat whilst the noise is ongoing.

Once your dog appears comfortable at this stage, try holding the clippers close to them, but without touching them.

## Stage 3

Ask your dog to sit. Stand behind them or at their side and gently tilt their nose towards the ceiling, as shown in the picture. Rub the clippers against their neck without turning them on. Provide a treat and fuss whilst the noise is ongoing and when your dog is calm and relaxed.

## Stage 4

Holding your dog as in stage 3, place the clippers against their neck lightly and turn them on for a couple of seconds. Reward your dog whilst doing this if there is no reaction. If your dog does react or appears nervous, go back to Stage 3 for a while. Gradually increase the time you turn the clippers on while rubbing the device gently on your dog's neck. Provide a reward and fuss whilst the noise is ongoing if they allow this without reacting. The actual clipping of your dog's neck at a donation will take around 30 seconds.



Thank you for taking the time to familiarise your dog with the sound and sensation of clippers. Your commitment means your dog will be more comfortable at the donation session and so more likely to donate a unit of blood. We appreciate your time and are grateful for your support.