

Caring For Your Dachshund

The following is a general description of how to train and care for your Dachshund.

Is A Dachshund Right For You?

Dachshunds are wonderful animals, but they are definitely not "right" for everyone! They are among the hardest breed to housebreak, and need patient, gentle, but firm reinforcement of the rules. They are loving and dedicated to their families, but they are also strong-willed and STUBBORN!!! It is very important, from the moment a dachshund arrives in your home, that you let it know that the humans living in the house are at the top of the totem pole, otherwise most dachshunds will soon take over the top spot. That is generally the most common reason that people give them up.

Crate Training

Many Dachshund breeders encourage the use of a kennel or "crate" when training puppies. The dog eats and sleeps in the crate, and soon learn that it is their "den", and will become quite comfortable sleeping in it, even when the crate door is wide open. If you are going to be traveling with your dog, crate training is a bonus. You are carrying his/her "bed" right along with you, and the dog will feel right at home, no matter where you are!

Housebreaking

Crates can also be a boon when housebreaking a puppy. First thing in the morning, the puppy comes out of the crate and is taken directly out doors, with the owner watching. If the puppy pees and poops, he/she gets free time loose in the house without much worry about an accident. If the puppy does not go potty outdoors, he/she is put back into the crate, and twenty minutes later, the process is repeated. Once the goal is accomplished, not only does the pup get free time in the house, but also lots of praise, and perhaps a treat. This process is also repeated every time the puppy is fed. As the old adage says..."What goes in must come out", and it seems that with puppies, new food in pushes old food out IMMEDIATELY!

Scent Hounds

Dachshunds are "scent" hounds, which means they follow their noses, even to places that they don't belong! If you have a yard with grass, be prepared to have your dachshund dig holes in it. If you have a sprinkler system, understand that your dachshund will unearth the sprinkler lines and chew up the heads as often as possible. Dachshunds also love to chew up those plastic outside "lights"...and anything else they can get their mouths around. They will eat most anything, including rocks, dead birds, crickets or frogs, poop, children's toys, plastic bags, nylon hosiery, underwear, and particularly, ANYTHING THAT REMOTELY SMELLS LIKE FOOD!

Weight Control

Dachshunds are usually greedy, voracious eaters, and often have weight problems. The worst thing about a fat dachshund is that it is one of the leading causes of back problems. Understand, you have a dog whose legs are proportionately VERY SHORT for the length of its body, and therefore, the spine takes a terrible beating every time that dog goes down stairs, jumps off a couch, jumps into a swimming pool, etc. Therefore, it is ABSOLUTELY IMPERATIVE that you keep your dachshund's weight under control. They do not require much food at all to keep them fit...a miniature only needs about 3/4 of a measuring cup of dry food a day to remain healthy; a standard needs between 1 and 1-1/2 cups per day. This does not seem like much, but they do not have high metabolism rates, so do not burn up the calories like some breeds do. Anything beyond that, with the exception of vegetables and a bit of fresh fruit, is adding calories that they do not need to their diet.

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Training Your Dachshund

Basic obedience training is always recommended for Dachshunds. They are very intelligent animals, and can be taught IF they choose to learn. Simple commands will help keep the dog under control most of the time. Many Dachshunds compete in Obedience events, and it is amazing to see for anyone who knows how willful and stubborn they can be!

Dachshund Hierarchy, Pack Mentality and Fighting

Dachshunds generally get along with other dogs, but they are thought to have a very strong "pack mentality", which means that when there are more than one residing in a household, they will arrange a hierarchy amongst themselves. There isn't much that can be done about this, so it is best to let them sort it out for themselves, as long as they don't hurt each other in the meantime. Generally, a female, usually the oldest, will become the "Alpha" or head of the pack. The other dogs will arrange themselves accordingly. When socializing your new dog into the "pack" be sure to introduce the new one to the Alpha first. Let her push the puppy around a little, to establish her dominance. Generally, adult dogs will not hurt puppies, but you should always exercise caution. Once the new one realizes that it is at the bottom of the pack, there should be no real problems. Sometimes there are two dogs, usually females, that BOTH want to be the Alpha. They may be littermates, mother and daughter, or completely unrelated. They will continually struggle for dominance, and there can be some nasty fights. Once this pattern is established, it will probably never change, and these two dogs can never be completely trusted with each other. Two males will occasionally fight, but it is rarely as serious as when two females fight. In Dachshunds, "pack mentality" can show its ugly head at just about any time. Two females can be fighting over the Alpha spot, there could be a rawhide or a toy that two dogs want at the same time, or just about anything. If you have more dogs, they will generally join in the fray, and have been known to seriously injure, or even kill, one of the fighters (usually NOT the Alpha). A broom is a good tool to use to break up one of these fights. Use the bristle end of the broom and start jabbing the dogs with it. It will divert their attention from the fight and onto this thing that is hurting them, and the fight will usually break up. NEVER get in the middle of any dogfight. Serious injury can result.

General Care of Your Dachshund

Dachshunds, especially the smooth coated variety, are easy to maintain. As with any "flop-eared" dog, their ears need to be cleaned regularly to prevent ear infections. There are several good products available. Again, any breed of dog needs attention taken to its teeth. Dachshunds in particular tend to have bad breath and to develop plaque on their teeth. The easiest way to prevent this is with regular brushing. Another alternative is to use "PLAX", a pre-brushing product made for humans. It is simple, just squirt some on a cotton ball and rub it all over the dog's teeth. It will freshen the breath as well as prevent the development of plaque. If the teeth become scaly or yellow, it may be necessary to have them professionally cleaned to prevent tooth decay and the possible loss of teeth. Dachshunds also need to have their nails trimmed regularly. This is necessary because of their structure. When a dachshund walks, because of its short legs, more pressure is put on its feet than with other breeds. Nails that are too long can cause the foot to "splay", which means that the toes spread out, and can cause injury to the dog's feet or legs. You should not be able to hear the nails click on a hard surface. If you can, they are too long. The best way to keep nails short is to trim a little bit off on a weekly basis. In the longhaired variety, it is also necessary to trim the hair between the pads of the feet and between the toes. This will also prevent splaying and possible injury.

Bathing Your Dachshund

As a rule, Dachshunds do not have as much "doggie odor" as some other breeds. Generally, a good brushing once a week will help remove any dead hair and tangles on the long and wire coats and will keep them clean and fresh smelling. Bathing once a month with a good quality shampoo made for dogs is MORE than adequate for most dachshunds. If your Dachshund goes into the swimming pool, it is a good idea to rinse the chlorine out of the coat to prevent it from drying out or becoming damaged.