

Housetraining Your Lhasa Apso ©

Whether a new pup or an older addition to the family, one of the most important aspects of pet ownership is housetraining (notice I use the term house “training” as opposed to house “breaking”). I’ll start out with suggestions for a pup which can also be used on an adult Apso new to the home. Adopting an older Apso (be it 10 months or 5 years) gives you an edge in that it has a larger bladder to start with and has more focus on matters at hand. Apso puppies are silly little things ... flitting here, flying there ... peeing before you even know what happened because their legs are so short you didn’t even realize they were squatting ...

For clarification ~ unless specifically noted, “Apso” is used when referring to a puppy **or an older dog.

- # First and foremost, you have a puppy, a baby (an infant, if you will) living with you now. It has a very small bladder and **no** control over its bladder or bowels. As the pup matures, it will gain more control over these bodily functions. Also, please bear in mind it is not uncommon for an older Apso to have some training issues until it learns (1) what is and what isn’t appropriate, (2) what the normal household routine is, and (3) where its place is in the pack order. Until such time, I suggest utilizing the crate/tether/gate method as a training tool for **all** ages. If your Apso isn’t in its crate, it is tethered to you by means of a 4-6 foot leash (called “tether training”). If it’s not crated or tethered, it is gated (or penned) in a small area with its toys, food and bedding for short **supervised** periods of time. With Apsos older than 8 months, I suggest using a crate/tether at all times. By keeping your Apso in close proximity, you will learn its “I gotta go potty” body language and can move to get it outside. Apsos generally will not soil a crate unless: (1) the crate is too large, (2) if they are left for unreasonable periods of time, or (3) have a gastrointestinal “bug.”
- # Puppies should be taken out every 30-45 minutes to the **same** area; dogs over a year can go out every 1-2 hours. Pick a cue word or phrase and use it every time, i.e., “Get with it! “Hurry up!” etc., etc. For every appropriate potty behavior, lavish praise and a special treat are in order. You want to make a **big** production of it so he/she knows you are extremely pleased with its behavior. I suggest a special, irresistible treat reserved just for potty training along a happy, high-pitched voice just oozing praises ... and never mind what the neighbors think. Puppies should also be taken out: (1) first thing out of the crate, (2) right after every meal, (3) in the middle of a long play session, and (4) just before bedtime [**in addition to** the every 30-45 minutes ... oh yes, puppies are lots of work!!]. As the pup matures, you can extend the time between potty breaks.
- # Please bear in mind that when you get your new pup outside, it is going to want to jump, play, explore, run, and mouth everything it can find (an older, new dog will want to sniff and check everything out) ... anything **but** go potty. In other words, you’ll have to spend some time with it for **every** potty run to begin with. You want to give it plenty of time to go (but don’t play with him/her) and then be on hand when it does so you can treat/praise lavishly. If, after a reasonable amount of time, your Apso still hasn’t gone potty, put him/her in its crate. Wait 10-15 minutes and take outside again. You may have to do this several times before getting the desired results ... elimination outside! I guarantee the minute you decide your Apso doesn’t have to go and is allowed access to the carpet, it will unload the nanosecond your back is turned or it gets out of your line-of-sight behind the leg of the coffee table.
- # If your Apso has an accident, **do not scold unless you catch it in the act!!** Clean up the accident quickly, quietly and out of his/her sight, if at all possible. Apsos do **not** take kindly to

physical punishment or yelling. A simple “bad boy/girl” in a low voice accompanied by a frown is sufficient ... and **only** if you catch your Apso in the act. Immediately take it outside ... if it manages to eliminate outside ~ even a drop ~ after having an accident inside, you want to praise heartily and treat immediately. A rolled-up newspaper should **only** be used to hit **yourself** in the head because you were not watching your Apso close enough. Scolding a Apso after the fact only teaches it is “bad to go potty” at any time ... then you’ll have a Apso sneaking off and eliminating somewhere else in the house where you can’t see it (another good reason for tethering training). **BOTTOM LINE:** if your Apso is having accidents in the house, it’s **your** fault for not watching him/her close enough and anticipating its elimination needs.

- # Buy an enzymatic cleaner **and use it correctly**. Both canines and felines are drawn back to the same elimination area by smell (and they **will** return to the same area again and again, if allowed). These cleaners have enzymes in them that “eat” stains and odors. Nature’s Miracle and Simple Solution are two of the most popular and can be purchased at Petsmart, Petco, or the local pet supply place. Don’t bother with the quart ... the gallon size is much more economical and I guarantee you will be using it. Works on urine, feces, vomit and blood. I’m finding that some folks buy Nature’s Miracle (wonderful product) and then use it incorrectly. Once the initial feces/urine is cleaned/wiped up, the cleaner should be used to **soak** the whole area **and then left to dry**. No blotting up allowed!! The enzymes can’t work if they’re being drawn back out of the carpet and pad. When steam cleaning carpets, I use the enzymatic cleaner in a 50/50 mixture in my big Hoover steam cleaner (50% water, 50% enzymatic cleaner). Also works great on ceramic kitchen tile and grout as it penetrates the grout and eliminates stains/odors. For tough or old stains, you may have to apply and let dry several times over several days. Can also be used to muck out crates. Like I said ... buy the gallon size (and if the store is across town, buy 2 gallons!).
- # If you’re lucky enough to be installing new carpet before a new pet arrives, invest in “PetPad” carpet padding. It is special carpet padding that has a waterproof layer bonded directly to the top of the pad. If there are any accidents or spills, it keeps the liquid from soaking completely through the padding to the sub flooring ... which makes it much easier to clean and remove stains/odors from the carpet. The additional cost is nominal and well worth the investment.
- # The most serious training blunders an owner can make are (1) allowing the Apso access to other areas of the house before he/she has earned it by displaying appropriate potty habits and (2) by not monitoring his/her every move. Granted, there will be accidents ... doo-doo happens. However, if you are watching your Apso carefully (**tethering**), confining it to a specific area (**crate/gate**), and giving it ample opportunity to eliminate outside accompanied by lavish praise/treats, it **will** all come together ... but not overnight and it varies with each Apso. Some will “get it” at six months ... others won’t until they are older and possibly close to being 12 months old. Until they **do** get it, consistency and communicating to them what is expected are priorities. I find with older Apsos it generally takes anywhere from 1-4 months after arriving in the home to be deemed totally reliable (some less, some more ... depends on the dog). And remember, each dog is an individual and what works for one, may not work on another. You have to take into consideration the Apso, background, temperament, and what other problems need to be dealt with first.
- # I use a 60-day “rule of thumb” when house training. Each day that goes by without an accident is counted, i.e., Day 1, Day 2, etc., etc. An accident bumps us back to “Day 1” again. When a Apso has gone a full consecutive 60 days with no accidents, I deem it as being “reliable.” In the event of a relapse, we revert to the crate/tether/gate method to whatever degree I feel is necessary ... it may be a full tether, or just a baby gate placed across the door to the room that I

am in with the Apso, or crating when unsupervised ... or all three methods and counting from Day 1 again.

- # Finally!!!! ... Your Apso has figured out that going potty outdoors has its own rewards and will “Get with it!” on command. How do you go from annoying the neighbors with your incessant chant at all hours to getting your Apso to “tell” you it needs to go?? There are two generally-recognized methods you can utilize for this. The first is the “bell” method: Hang a small string of bells (saved from Christmas or purchased at a craft store) by the back door at the Apso’s level. Each time you take your Apso outside, physically take its nose or paw and “ring” the bells (accompanied by praise, of course). One day, your Apso will run to the door and ring the bells!! (And you’d better hope you’re not at the other end of the house where you can’t hear them.) Only problem with bells ... (1) they can’t be heard all over the house, (2) if you’re visiting other homes, you’ll need to bring your bells along, and (3) some Apsos don’t like bells and won’t go near them. I prefer teaching them to “speak” on command using treats. Once your Apso has mastered “speaking,” start cuing it at the door during a normal potty run ... “Frankie, you need to go **outside**?? What do you say?? Can you **speak**?” When he/she “speaks,” the door is opened and access to the yard is allowed. Same cue to open the door to get back inside. “Telling” you they have to go outside (or want back inside) works anywhere, anytime and is easily transferable to any outside door. Don’t be surprised if you find yourself designated “doorperson” for a Apso that enjoys the yard. If you know the pooch in question really doesn’t have to go, i.e., was **just** outside and **just** went potty (which means you are **still** monitoring his/her toilet habits), you can deny access, should you choose. Many smart little Apsos will play the “I go outside, I get a cookie/treat” game if allowed ... and then you end up with a smart, fat little Apso. As a side note, some Apsos will refuse to “tell” you they have to go outside. You are expected to read their minds and know that “I’m sitting here staring at the door,” means, “I gotta go potty.” These are the dogs that I run out of the house every 1-2 hours or so ... just in case.
- # Having your Apso on a set feeding and toileting routine is extremely beneficial when house training. You learn his/her schedule and can anticipate its needs for elimination as most dogs will eliminate within 30-45 minutes of a meal. I generally feed twice a day – morning and evening – with several “potty” treats during the day. The twice-daily feedings and treats help stave off the dreaded “yellow foamies.” **However**, should the smaller, more frequent meals or additional treats throughout the day not take care of the “foamy” problem, please have your Apso evaluated by a vet!! The “yellow foam” is actually bile being thrown up and can be a sign of a much more serious problem, i.e., an upper GI tract inflammation that can be come very serious ... even life threatening ... if ignored.
- # Learn to use “cues,” like a having one outside spot designated as a potty area ... even if it means picking up a poop in the house and carrying it outside to the potty area for that newly-arrived Apso. If you have another houstrained dog, enlist its aid to help train your new arrival (once you’ve determined the two are compatible). Every time the older or established dog goes outside for potty, send the little buddy out too. (On the other hand, if you have a dog that isn’t fully houstrained, it will also be teaching its little buddy where to toilet in the house ...).
- # Some Apsos will engage in “coprophagia” ... in other words, they eat their own poop. There are many theories why this happens, none of which makes it any more palatable to us humans. If your Apso starts this unpleasant snacking activity, you can do the “swoop and scoop,” getting it out of their reach as soon as possible. Some owners have good results mixing green beans or pineapple in with their regular food. Others employ commercial products such as “Deter” or “Forbid” which are sprinkled on regular food. Still others swear by Tabasco sauce dashed on the “delicacy.” You’ll just have to experiment and see what works best for you and your dog.

Some Apsos will also raid the cat's litter box given half a chance ... a medical disaster waiting to happen if you use clay-based litter. Keep litter boxes out of reach or inaccessible.

- # ***If you have a Apso (or any pet, canine or feline) suddenly "lose" its house training when it has been reliable for a long time, please have it thoroughly evaluated by your vet.*** It may have an underlying medical condition causing it to lose its training, i.e., bladder/kidney stones, urinary tract infection, diabetes, Cushing's or Addison's disease, cognitive difficulties, epileptic seizures, liver disease or kidney failure. Neutered males or spayed females may also develop incontinence, which can easily be controlled with medication. ***Any deviation from established habits is good reason for going to the vet ... and not just assuming your Apso is being "stubborn" or "vengeful" or "getting old."***

- # Apsos recovering from bladder or kidney stones have their own set of problems, especially if surgery was involved. Until the bladder/kidney heals, they may have some leakage or little control. Please be patient with your Apso and consult with your vet if it doesn't appear to be improving.

- # **Males & Marking:** Some male dogs will engage in "marking" behaviors. By urinating a little on whatever they pass by, they are telling other dogs that "this is mine and I'm willing to defend it." ***One of the best ways to prevent this is to have your male neutered at an early age (4-6 months old), and the sooner the better.*** Many early-neutered males never lift their legs and they'll ***never*** come up with testicular cancer or one of the other related problems. If you've an older male with marking problems, you can purchase "belly bands" which work well in conjunction with ***tether*** training (here's that word again!). A belly band is a strip of cloth that is wrapped around the dog's middle which fastens with Velcro. Inside the belly band is an owner-supplied incontinence pad (Depends, Serenity, etc.). As the dog goes along "marking," the urine is contained within the pad. At the same time, you can issue a correction, i.e., a short, sharp pull on the leash and the command "no mark!" Until such time as the dog learns marking is not acceptable behavior, the furnishings are protected. Obviously, when running the dog outside, the belly band needs to be removed. If you can't find belly bands in your area, you can make your own or go online with one of the search engines and locate an outlet for them (Google.com is ***the*** premium search engine with well over 8 billion websites referenced). Occasionally, females will also engage in this marking of territory. Again, tether training is your best bet to teach her this is unacceptable behavior in a home setting. Early spaying of a female will decrease the likelihood of this behavior, in addition to greatly reducing her risk of getting mammary cancer. And a spayed female will ***never*** have an unplanned pregnancy or the often fatal pyometria (infection of the uterus).

If you've found this article to be helpful, please consider making a donation to Lhasa Apso Rescue (... or, better yet, becoming a volunteer!). Information regarding donations and/or volunteer opportunities may be found at ... www.LhasaApsoRescue.org ... under the "How You Can Help" button.

Congrats on your new Apso!!

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