

BowWOW!

Facts, observations and musings about Our Best Friends

### **“Honey? Eisenhower rolled in ... something!”**

Three scenarios come to mind upon hearing this call. First, Honey vanishes over the back hedge not to be seen until suppertime. Second, you grab Eisenhower by the collar and drag his stiffened body in the direction of the bathroom while screaming “Don’t touch me, don’t touch me!” and praying he doesn’t accidentally smear liquid squirrel on the arm of the couch. Or third, you say “Bathtime, Eisenhower!” and he trots into the bathroom, hops into the tub, tail wagging.

Most of us experience variations of the second scenario. But it IS possible to turn bath time into a pleasant experience for both of you.

Introduce the idea of a trauma-free bath weeks before you plan to bathe by familiarizing Eisenhower, your generic short-haired dog, with how it’s going to feel. Spread a towel on the living room floor. Get down with him and pretend you are giving him a bath. Massage him gently, go slowly, be present and watch how he appreciates the attention. Now would also be the time to familiarize him with the feel of cotton balls in his ears. You’ll place those in his ears during the actual bath to prevent water from getting deep into his ears. Praise him often and lavishly, say the word “bathtime!” occasionally and make it sound like something enjoyable. Repeat this every day, and your dog will know what’s coming and look forward to it.

Most dogs refuse to casually hang out in the bathroom because of the association with Bad Bath. During the same time you are conducting mock-baths in the living room, make the bathroom a less scary place. Sporadically leave treats on the edge of the tub and eventually *in* the tub, encouraging him to check regularly and reinforcing that the bathroom can be fun.

Consider what your dog experiences when he is facing a grooming session. Think about and prepare for comfortable water temperatures, unfamiliar noises, vibrations, smells and your attitude. If you are calm and kind, chances are bath time will be a breeze. If you are rushed, agitated, unprepared or anxious, Eisenhower is going to react just the same way you feel. Dogs are funny that way.

As bath day approaches gather all your essential tools in a convenient plastic caddy: shampoo, towels, a non-slip mat and treats. A waterproof apron is a bonus. Shampoos should be products designed for dogs, with easily recognizable, pure ingredients. It is smart to keep a small bottle of regular Dawn dish detergent in your caddy in case of another “rolled in” incident. Nothing cuts vintage organic matter quite like Dawn. When wet, towels also work well to

provide a non-skid surface on the bottom of the tub. Real short cuts to drying off are chamois or sports towels.

On bath day, center yourself, remain calm and summon Eisenhower for a pre-bath brush-out. Using brushes with rounded tips, gently whisk out all foreign debris and loose hair. Trim mats or tangles with rounded scissors. Praise lavishly and sincerely. Be gentle. Make it fun.

Take a break for a few minutes, have a walk around the yard. Then lead Eisenhower into the bathroom with a parade of treats. By this time he should willingly hop into the tub. Distract his attention from running water while you are adjusting the temperature with a gob of peanut butter on the end wall. Don't worry, he will clean it all off.

Hose him down; soap him up using the same motions you used in the mock-bath training sessions. Rinse and repeat. And then rinse, rinse, rinse. Add a little neutral oil to the cotton balls you've placed in his ears and swab out the external ear. Do a preliminary fur squeeze out and dry-off while he's still in the tub then encourage him to hop out onto another towel and shake, shake, shake.

He will, most likely, be ramped at this point, especially if you are cheering him on with exclamations of his beauty, and will rocket out of the bathroom at full speed. He will tear around the house rubbing on anything to dry off so it's a good idea to close bedroom doors and cover the couch with a sheet. Blow-drying is optional.

Now that bathtime is no longer a misery, remember that too frequent bathing can strip natural oils from your dog's coat. Once a month should be sufficient unless he rolls in ... something.

BowWOW! Is a production of Tracie Korol and wholeDog.  
Want more information? Have a question? Send a note to Tracie at [letstalk@wholedog.biz](mailto:letstalk@wholedog.biz) or visit [www.wholedog.biz](http://www.wholedog.biz).