



Folded Ears

Your beautiful baby Toller has suddenly started chewing on everything in the house and is not eating their food! You realise that he/she is growing up and has now started to lose teeth!

It is such an exciting time that you may not even notice right away that his/her ears are different too! What the heck just happened?

What Are Folded Ears??

“Folded ears” describe retriever ears that, for the purposes of conformation, are laying improperly against the dogs head.

Is My Dog Sick?

No! Absolutely not! Folded ears are actually kind of cute! Whether your dog’s ears lay normally or folded, it is a personal preference and not a medical condition requiring any intervention from a veterinarian.

What Causes Folded Ears?

There are 3 things that affect ear structure and placement on dogs.

1. Ear Cartilage- thickness and shape
2. Ear “Leather”- Thickness and shape of the skin
3. Muscle attachment – How the muscles that control ear movement attach

Properly set ears have a balance of all of these attributes.

Red Shadow is mindful of each of these attributes and looks for breeding stock that has this balance. However, the magic of heredity means that sometimes characteristics not seen in several generations can appear later. Folded ears usually appear between 4 and 5 months of age when the puppy starts teething.



Can Folded Ears Be “Fixed”?

Not completely. Much like braces can improve a smile, folded ears can be improved with the help of temporary supports.

However, you must ask yourself if they really need to be “fixed”. Most folded ears are adorable and most owners never notice when their dog develops them. The process of rehabilitation costs very little, but it is time consuming for the owner and uncomfortable for the dog.

About 30 years ago, my Mom was a Shetland Sheep Dog breeder. The Sheltie breed standard required a 1/3rd tip of the dog’s ear and some of the puppies she was producing did not have the proper tip. It was her experience working with Sheltie ears that helped us develop a way to rehabilitate wayward Toller ears.

Let’s Do This!!

The process of rehabilitating the ears involves building a series of soft, flexible braces to stabilize them while the puppy finishes most of it’s growing.

Step 1. Gather your supplies

- You will need to take a quick visit to your local pharmacy for some moleskin. Look for it in the aisle that has foot care supplies. Moleskin is used to protect against blisters or ease the pain of corns. It is available in preformed doughnuts, pads or sheets, with or without extra padding. We recommend getting the sheets without padding.





Owner: Shauna Canjar-Dainton
(905) 925-6278

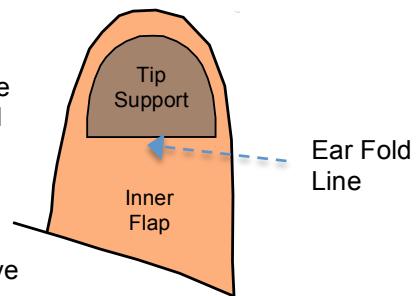
- Your next stop will be at a medical supply store to get liquid prosthetic glue and the prosthetic glue remover. These products are used to secure breast prosthetics. You can also find these products at theatrical makeup suppliers or on the Internet.
- Finally, find a pencil and a piece of blank paper from which to outline your braces

Step 2. Exercise your puppy

Putting these supports on is best done on a dog that is tired. See if you can find an extra set of hands as well because the first few times are the hardest.

Step 3. Create your Templates

With a friend, have one person hold the dog, the other working with the paper and a pencil. Slip the paper under the ear and outline the part of the ear that you want to tip forward. Pay careful attention to where the natural fold should be. You want your drawing to stop just before that fold line. This will be your template from which to cut out your first shape. The shape will be an irregularly shaped triangle. We rounded the 3 corners of the triangle. The finished shape looked somewhat like a Dorito. The triangle shape will probably not be symmetrical. On occasion, we have elongated one side to support the outer part of the ear fold.



Step 4. Trim the Hair

Using some good quality, sharp scissors, carefully trim the hair covering the underside flap of the ear.

Step 5. Create and Glue Your Supports

Using the template, cut a piece of the moleskin. Size the moleskin against the ear and trim if necessary. Remove the wax paper that is protecting the sticky side. As it is right now, this sticky side is not strong enough adhere to the puppy's ear without quickly falling off. This is why you have the prosthetic adhesive. Paint the sticky side lightly with the prosthetic adhesive. Sit the moleskin sticky side up on a flat surface and let it dry a little.

The next part is the toughest part..puppy wrestling!

Step 6. Attach the Supports

Holding the dog firmly, fold the ear backwards (inside out) and paint the upper part of the inner ear with the prosthetic adhesive. Continue to hold and allow the glue to get tacky. Affix the moleskin.

Now hold on for dear life to the ear and dog.

You will find that if the dog gets away from you, they are going to roll, scratch and shake to get the moleskin off. The moleskin will hold once the glue is dry enough, you just have to hold on until that happens. The dog's attempts to remove the moleskin will stop in about a half hour once they are used to the weight.



Step 7. Repeat if Necessary

Repeat for the second ear if necessary. We typically didn't let the dog go until both ears were done.

If the single piece of moleskin isn't pulling the ear over enough, glue a second piece to the first. If that is still not enough, you can add a quarter in between the 2 supports to add weight.

If friends asked why, we would say it was so the dog could call home if he/she got lost. Be mindful of using a quarter in the winter. The quarter could cause frostbite and damage the ear.



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The supports will pull away from the ears near the fold after a week or so. You can glue these edges, which will last a few more days. After that time, you will have to start with new ones supports.

When it is time to reapply the supports, you may have to trim the hair again and, because the dog is growing, you will have to create a new set based on new templates.

It is at this point that the prosthetic glue remover becomes so useful. It works so well compared to any other removal method and there is no point making this process too painful for the dog.

How long do I have to do this for?

Typically, ears will start to fold when the puppy starts teething.

When we have used this method to stabilize, we found that the left ear stayed properly folded, at 8 months of age but the right one needed another 6 weeks.

We also found that the ear looked great for the first 24 hours after the supports were removed, then folded for another 48, then went back to looking great.

Are you sure this will work?

There is no 100% guarantee, but if you get to it early enough, using some kind of support is your best chance. On average, you should see an improvement. The likelihood of improvement decreases as a dog gets older.

That is a lot of work! Do I have to do this?

No, absolutely not. This really is a case of beauty being in the eye of the beholder. There is no health or medical reason to use the supports.

However, once a dog gets folded ears, they don't typically outgrow them on their own.

Is there something wrong with my dog?

No. Folded ears are only important to dogs that may enter the show ring at some point in the future. There are no medical issues associated to having folded ears.

Whether you choose to rehabilitate your dog's folded ears or not, your dog will remain healthy, mischievous and absolutely adorable!

