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PUPPY EARS

Hopefully I can give some advice to those of you who purchase German shepherd puppies from breeders and end up worrying about whether or not the ears will ever stand.

Over 99% of the time they will eventually stand. The German shepherd ear is natural ear and should stand on its' own AFTER a puppy completes the teething stage.

The time to start being concerned with the ear is after the puppy is around 4.5-5 months, and is finished teething, not ill or suffering from infection and on a premium food. Certain medications may constrain the formation of the calcium in the ear while they administered.

So, assuming that you are at that age and all of the other issues no longer apply, it is time to consider aiding the ear in standing. But first also make sure the dog is not being kept in a crate without adequate room for the ears to stand upright while standing. Also make certain that the dog is getting adequate stimulation in terms of sound and situations so that it is exercising the muscle around the ears. If you are isolating this puppy for long periods of time and it is not being exposed to stimuli, the ear may not develop to stand as quickly. Remember, the cartilage of an ear that has been down for a while gets a crease in it. You may need to aid it to have it "heal" out the crease in an erect position. How to treat the ear:

1. Make certain the dog is getting adequate water and a proper high quality food
2. Be very careful with calcium supplements. If the calcium is not in proper combination with other minerals, or if the pup gets too much calcium, this can lead to problems such as joint laxity where the legs seem to not be stable, but wobbly. Also, it can lead to temporary bowing of the bones in the leg.
3. Gently massage the ears from the base up to stimulate blood flow and calcification of the cartilage.

Next, it is time to artificially aid the ears. But first, no matter what technique you use, carefully clean the ears with an ear cleaner of a mixture 6/2/1 of alcohol, white vinegar and betadine solution. Some people add a little boric acid powder (but I do not nor do I recommend it). There are a number of ways to aid the ear including:

1. getting your vet to tape them with a surgical tape, hopefully one that doesn't stick well to hair.
2. Some people tape foam hair rollers to the inside.
3. Purchase foam GSD ear forms from a friend in Germany (around \$20 per set)
4. Moleskin glued to the inside of the ears

But here are a couple of solutions that have worked for me. This one is a real help. First of all you can buy "Tear Menders" glue on amazon. It is actually sold as dog ear glue. I found this glue to be the best glue by far for artificial ear support solutions. Here are two solutions:

1. If the ears are not too large yet and or they only need a little aiding, maybe only the tips, buy Breath-rite strips, the large and stiffest ones. Place them on the inside of the ear to support standing. They may last in the ear without any Tear Menders. But if they keep coming out, you can use the glue. If they stay in for a few days, that is successful.
2. If you need more help, you can use any of the ideas above and glue them in using the glue. You can then wrap tape around the ear at the bottom and top to secure it, although you may not have to.
3. Another idea: I make my own forms out of a piece of leather or gray pipe foam insulation.

You can get a nice sized piece at a leather store for a reasonable cost considering how many forms you can make out of it. Wet it, roll into shape, and let it dry. It shouldn't be too thick to put weight on the ear but just a natural support. You can experiment with different shapes. I got a form from Germany and then used them to make my pattern. But larger ears need larger forms, smaller, smaller forms. Foam insulation also works well.

Make certain to check the ears for infection often. If you smell something foul, it is probably bacteria setting in. Keep them up for a week or two and then see if they stand and stay there. If they begin to drop again, start the process over.

The oldest I have heard of remediating floppy ears was around 10 months old. But this is unusual.

Good luck, and I hope this helps my German shepherd puppy buyers to deal with this issue.