Transcript:

Giving Your Dog a Foot Bath

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zb3bi-FQL2o

I'm going to demo for you a foot soak. Many of you know I'm a big believer in removing pesticides, herbicides, ragweed, grasses, pollens, molds, and dust mites from your dog's feet on a pretty regular basis. Keep in mind that dogs are naked; they are not wearing shoes and socks, and they don't shower once or sometimes twice a day, or sometimes twice a week, like people do to remove allergens and chemicals that are environmentally collected on their bodies. Dogs don't have the opportunity to do that.

Their feet build up a pretty heavy toxin load, and certainly can collect a tremendous number of allergens, which can become really, really irritating for their paws. Common sense would tell you to remove them, and yet in veterinary medicine, we typically don't recommend these things. I didn't learn in vet school about foot soaks; I learned after vet school that 50 percent of foot licking and chewing can be reduced by mechanically removing allergens or irritants on the paws. That mechanical removing means literally rinsing them off.

Believe it or not, a washcloth is not nearly as successful as dunking the feet. When I say foot soaks or rinses, I mean foot soaks or rinses. You don't have to do it in a big tub like I'm going to demo for you. If you have a big dog, you can use a bucket and plunk each foot down in one at a time. If you have a tiny dog, you can do it in your kitchen sink. Think of this drop sink like a bathtub; you can fit all dogs in a bathtub. The key is to, as often as your dog is contacting allergens or chemicals (lawn pesticides, herbicides, anything in the environment that could be irritating to your dog's paws), give them the opportunity at the end of the day to have those things removed not only to reduce irritation, but to reduce chemical burden as well.

The only place dogs sweat from is the bottom of their feet and their nose. The pads of the feet are collecting really heavy loads of some of these things.

I filled my tub with a couple of inches of water. The key is you have to have enough water that cover the pads of your dog's feet. In Rosco's situation, he's a little man, so he's going to be able to do a couple of inches of water.

My favorite solution to do a foot soak with is povidone iodine. Sidney has a few comments about povidone iodine as well. Povidone iodine is an organic iodine solution. It's safe, non-toxic, antifungal, antibacterial, and anti-yeast. Obviously, at an animal hospital, we like povidone iodine in gallon jugs. You can buy it at any pharmacy in smaller quantities. You need to dilute
your povidone iodine down to iced-tea color. This looks really scientific; you’re going to pour until you get an iced-tea color, and swish it around. If it’s too light, you’re going to add more. If it’s too dark, you’re going to add more water. I’m just swishing this around, and I think we need a little bit more, Rosco.

I recommend you let your dog stand in this foot soak solution for anywhere from two to five minutes. You don’t have to physically do anything with the toes; you don’t have to wash or rinse them. You can just stand there and sing to your dog, or tell him how handsome he is. If your dog is nervous about being in water, you can, of course, offer treats – food always helps pass the time for Rosco. So having snacks is a good idea.

If your dog is super petrified of water, if you don’t have access to a bathtub, or if you have a shower and your dog doesn’t want to get in it, you can also use a tub. I’ve put a little bit of povidone iodine here in this blue tub, and I’m going to create a mini-foot soak by adding water to the solution. This is also a fine way to do a foot soak: plunk the foot right down in there. The key is you want the entire pad surface to be covered with the solution.

There’s not a right or wrong way to do foot soaks – the key is to get those feet down in that solution, which is going to remove any type of yeast that’s growing, mild bacterial infections, contaminants, as well as allergens that are stuck on the feet.

Now after your dog has been in the foot soak for two to five minutes, you don’t have to rinse the foot soak water off. It’s fabulous because all you have to do is lift your dog out and pat dry. It hasn’t been five minutes, but we’re just demoing this. I’m just going to lift him out, and dry the feet off. If you are short on space and time, a lot of people will use a container like this for two or three days, just continue to plunk their dog’s feet in, and pat dry. Some people use a pail on their deck; some people will use a garden hose outside and fill up any type of coffee can or any type of container that will hold water that you can just recycle.

After a couple of days of using the same foot soak water, I would encourage you to dump it and make new, but you don’t have to use this amount of water unless you have a really big dog. You can get by with a much smaller amount and save the amount of solution you’re using. Dogs don’t like to have their feet touched, so it’s a better way to do it in terms of less water. Pat the dog’s feet dry, and go.