Casey Kerry Blue Terriers

A Guide to Ear Setting
Kerry Ear Setting

- Learn what good ears look like and how to work with what your puppy has.

- Ears vary in size, shape, thickness of leather and placement on the head.
- Ear setting is usually begun at 10 – 12 weeks. Earlier setting is possible but unnecessary.
- Ears will probably be glued until the permanent teeth are in or possibly until the pup is nine months of age.
• Practice is the best teacher.
• A partner and lots of Kleenex are very helpful.
• More rather than less hair left on ears is better.
• Use as sterile a glue as possible.
• Most bad ear sets are caused by allowing too much of the back of the ear flap to be loose and become too stiff.
• If ears become infected it will usually occur within three days of the setting.
Examples of Low Ear Placement
Examples of Well Placed Ears
Views of the Perfect Ear Set

- No matter what your puppy starts out with you can come close to the ideal.
- Skill, patience and experience are what you need.
Adhesive Used to Set Ears

• The adhesive, referred to here as glue, you use is an individual decision. Your breeder can advise you, based on her experience, which product you should try.

• A common product used is Duo Surgical Adhesive. Tincture of Benzoin is swabbed onto the ears before the glue is applied as a disinfectant and to make the glue tacky. Duo requires holding the ear in place for five to seven minutes to achieve the set. However, it is a sterile product and infection due to allergic reaction is thought to be less common.

• Val-A-Tear Mender sets ears almost instantly and holds extremely well. This is a fabric mender and can be purchased at most fabric stores.

• Jiffy Sew is a similar product, but can only be purchased in Canada.

• Fabric menders aren’t sterile products.
The puppy should be bathed and the ears thoroughly dried.
With clippers, remove the hair from the top and underside of ear flaps and around ear openings as well as from the top of the skull using a #10 or #15 blade. Clipper in the direction of hair growth.
Pay particular attention to the small indentation just above the eyes. Leave ¼” of hair on the top of the skull.
Have an assistant hold the pup’s head while you clean the ear flap and ear canal with an antiseptic liquid and cotton ball.
Pull hair from inside the ears with your fingers or a hemostat. Some medicated powder put inside the ear canal prior to this will help the hair come out more easily.
Final Prep for Setting

• Face the pup and call his name to see where the ears naturally fall.
• Determine if the ears have normal, low, or problematic placement. The pup pictured has a “rosed” left ear. The other is good.
• Move the puppy’s ears into the ideal position with your hands to see where they should be set.
• Feel for a small indentation above the eyes.
• If more hair needs to be removed do it now.
• Gather glue, timer, assistant, and Kleenex.
Mechanics of Ear Setting

- Have your assistant hold the pup’s muzzle firmly and apply Tincture of Benzoin, with a cotton ball, to the areas where the glue will be applied. This includes the top of the skull.
- Turn the first ear straight up and put a small amount of glue in the little well between the ear and the skull on the outside of the ear.
- On the inside of the ear, run a narrow line of glue from point A along the inner edge of the ear to point C. (see diagram)
- Cover the inside tip of the ear at point C with enough glue to coat the tip of the ear from edge to edge.
Setting Well Placed Ears

- Place your thumbs at points A and B. Let the ear drop over naturally toward the center of the skull. Press the ear at point A down onto the skull.
- Press the edge of the ear, from point A to point C flat onto the skull. Make sure the ear is smooth, not wrinkled, and the fold in the ear is above the top of the skull. (see diagram)
- Do not pinch the fold of the ear together from point A to point B. The ear should fold over easily with a very slight roll so that it will look natural.
- Make sure the fold is not much more than a quarter inch above the skull.
Setting Well Placed Ears

- The inner edges of the ears from point A to point C should be parallel to each other. (see diagram)
- It is helpful to make sure there is no glue clinging to the hair on the underside of the ear at point B. This can be irritating to the puppy and cause him to scratch at his ears. Run your little finger inside the ear at point B and clear out any remaining glue.
- Point C should be just above the outer corner of the eye, but do not pull the ear forward to the point of hyperextension. Point C may be pressed down into the indentation above the eye.
- Hold the puppy’s muzzle and check the ears for symmetry.
Final Ear Setting Tips

• The side of the ear from point B to point C must be left open for ventilation.
• The ear should not be too high above the skull before folding forward, and the tip should point to the outside corner of the eye, not down on the lower part of the cheek, or toward the inside corner of the eye.
• Nothing should be put into the ear in the fold from A to B, and do not put glue inside from A to B.
• After sticking down the glued ear, hold the puppy’s head still to prevent him from shaking his ears free.
• If using Duo, set the minute timer for five to seven minutes and have your assistant apply light pressure to the ear until the time is up. Timing is not necessary if using a fabric adhesive since it sticks almost immediately.
• Wipe the excess glue off your hands, clothes, and hair with the Kleenex.
• Repeat the entire procedure for the other ear.
Puppies with Set Ears

- The ears should be separated from a half inch to an inch in the middle of the skull, depending on the width of the skull and the size of the ears.
- When the tip of the ear is glued just above or back from the outer corner of the eye, the tip will touch the cheek as called for in the Standard.
- The line across the fold of the ear will be level.
- Ears should remained glued for 4 weeks. Left up any longer and the hair will be so long that the ears will rise with the hair and be set too high.
Profile Examples
Correct Ears From Behind

- Notice the symmetry in the ears when viewed from behind.
- The line of the ears across the top of the fold should be level.
Troubleshooting

- Figure 1 illustrates ears set too high.
- Figure 2 shows ears well set.
- Figure 3 illustrates an ear set that curves the fold into a crescent when viewed from above at A-B, lowering the fold at B making the ear appear smaller in width.
- Figure 3 may encourage infection in the ears since there is less ventilation during the gluing process.
The picture on the left illustrates flying ears. The ears stand straight up or seem to look like bird wings placed on the side of the dog’s head.

The picture on the right shows the results of setting the ears too high above the skull, or pulling the ears back from the indentation over the eye.

Both these dogs have ears well placed on their heads.

A temporary correction for either of these problems is to weight the ears on the underside. You can use tungsten powder readily available in dog supply catalogs, mixed in a horse salve. This only needs to be done if you are planning on showing your puppy. No amount of resetting will affect any change after the dog is nine months of age.
Another View

• The dog pictured in the upper photo has somewhat “hound like” ears. This can be caused by a large heavy ear with softer cartilage.

• The lower photo illustrates that even with too high or “fancy” ears, a lovely side profile can be achieved if the dog has good expression.
Setting Large, Heavy Ears

- Both these dogs have well placed ears, but they are larger than desired and heavy.
- The ears can be held in close to ideal position by the dog when alert, but they will tend to droop when he relaxes.
- To mitigate these problems you can try to form a roll at the top of the fold and pull the ear back and away from the eye. The tip of the ear should fall toward the outside corner of the eye.
- These types of ears usually require setting for a longer time, possibly nine or ten months.
Setting Small, Thin Ears

- This dog has an excellent ear set despite her ears being very small and thin.
- Position the ears with your hands so they fall naturally and set where the tips fall.
- Do not try to pull the ear tips lower than they fall on their own as this will make them “fly” later.
This puppy’s ears are of moderate size and weight, but are set low on the sides of his head.

To achieve a good ear set, hold the ears with your hands in the desired position.

Glue them as if they were well placed, but keep them in line with where they fall naturally.

Do not pull the edges of the ears toward each other. Do not meet or cross the tips in the middle of the skull. This will cause them to “fly” or stand straight up later.
Setbacks to Success

- Do not allow the ears to become wet while glued. This weakens the glue and can cause the ears to come down sooner than desired.
- When puppies play with litter mates, or other dogs, the ears may be pulled down, or in some cases licked down by playmates. This can cause sore spots that must be monitored for signs of infection. If infection occurs for any reason, apply medicated powder to keep the infected area dry, or in extreme cases take the ear down and consult your veterinarian.
- Never glue sore or infected ears. They will not set well and you will guarantee an unpleasant experience for the puppy. Leave them down until they are completely healed.
- After the ears have been set once or twice, evaluate their set and make corrections. Ask for assistance from someone more experienced to check your set and make suggestions.
- Never hurry the ear setting process.
No one setting method suits every type of ear.

Take the time to honestly evaluate the ear placement, size, and shape of your puppy’s ears.

Make sure you start with clean, dry ears and allow lots of time for each setting session.

Do not cut corners or “make due” with inferior glue.

Everyone must start somewhere, but an experienced breeder is your most valuable resource. Use her.

Don’t give up.
Where to Get More Information

- Your Breeder
- Kerry Blue Terrier Handbook
- The Kerry Blue Terrier, by Edith Izant
- USKBTC web site
- www.KerryBlues.org