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There are few, if any, mammals out in nature whose ears hang down. All the wild dogs, dingoes, foxes, coyotes and cats have erect ears. The chances are, even your ears are erect. Mutations have occurred that produced “down ears” and man has propagated them for “stylish” reasons.

Ear cropping was originally done to avoid ear problems such as getting torn in hunting. The Egyptians were doing it about three thousand years ago with their hunting dogs for these very reasons. Additionally an ear that hangs down serves as a trap to hold in moisture to provide an ideal climate for ear infection. The ear is sometimes called a “mobile Petrie dish” because of the potential for infections.

With modern day techniques in anesthesia, it is uncomfortable for the dog but need not be painful. Most often the owner suffers far more than the animal. We facetiously suggest that the owner either drink heavily, take tranquilizers or smoke “grass” to get them through this stressful period. It should be pointed out that spaying and neutering are invasive techniques and more of a risk while ear cropping is not invasive and essentially a cosmetic procedure nowadays.

I have been cropping ears for 42 years and enjoy seeing the results of the “finished” product whether on pets or Best in Show winners. I learned from Dr. Homer Tully who was my mentor for many years. Many veterinarians do not like to do ear cropping as it is more of an art than a science and if the result is not good the vet can have an irate client for as many years as the dog lives.

Ear cropping is only half of it - the after care is just as important and sometimes even more so. A good ear crop can be ruined by poor or no after care and the best after care in the world will not make a poor ear crop a good one.

To learn the art of ear cropping you really need a mentor and much experience. The process of learning can be terribly frustrating until you get the “knack”.

Working with the clients is an important aspect in an effort to achieve the desired end. The client’s input and comments on their desires aid in the attempt at “perfection”. In the show ring the cropped ear can enhance or distract from the beauty of the animal.

For reasons of health and beauty ear cropping is a desirable procedure