

## Incessant Hand Licking

**Hand licking can be annoying, but it's harmless.**

*Jon Geller, DVM*

Posted: Tue May 3 00:00:00 PDT 2005

Q. We recently rescued a 2-year-old spayed Chihuahua/Yorkie mix. One behavior has stumped us: her licking. It's incessant, especially at bedtime. She will do anything to get at our hands, much like a cat to catnip. Her eyes look crazed and she seems obsessed. The only way we can get her to stop is to sit on our hands or cover them up. Any ideas about why she does this and if there's anything we can do about it? She particularly likes when I put on hand lotion, which I worry might harm her-is there cause for my concern?

A. So you have a crazed, obsessed, hand-licking Chihuahua/Yorkie mix. Sounds typical to me. Some dogs are just nutty (like some people), and this hand-licking behavior is probably harmless. It's interesting to picture your whole family sitting on their hands, like prisoners in your own home, while your little devil-dog circulates around happily. "Sit on your hands or I will lick them!" she might be thinking.

If you make a big deal about her trying to lick your hands, and give her more attention, even if you are reprimanding her, she may see it as a reward. Dogs love attention of any kind, so if you really want her to stop, try to ignore her or distract her.

Hand lotion in excess might be irritating to her stomach, but is probably not toxic.

In the meantime, enjoy your new addition to the family, and take it easy with the lotion.

Best, Jon Geller, DVM

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