



Caring for Your New Puppy



PETVET clinics are well-equipped, full-service, small animal veterinary practices providing comprehensive diagnostic, medical, surgical and dental care. We aim to offer quality service, giving your pet the maximum opportunity to lead a long and happy life.

ALL THE CARE YOUR PET NEEDS!



We would like to congratulate you on the acquisition of your new puppy. Owning a dog can be an extremely rewarding experience, but it also carries with it some responsibility. We hope these notes will give you some help. If you have questions concerning any subject related to your puppy's health, please do not hesitate to telephone us.

What type of play should I expect from a puppy?

Stimulating play is important during the first week. Stalking and pouncing are important play behaviour in puppies and are necessary for proper muscular development. If given a sufficient outlet for these behaviour with toys, your puppy will be less likely to use family members for these activities. The best toys are lightweight and movable. These include wads of paper and rubber balls. Any toy that is small enough to be swallowed should be avoided.

Can I discipline a puppy?

Disciplining a young puppy may be necessary if its behaviour threatens people or property, but harsh punishment should be avoided. Hand clapping and using shaker cans or horns can be intimidating enough to inhibit undesirable behaviour. However, remote punishment is preferred. Remote punishment consists of using something that appears unconnected to the punisher to stop the problem. Examples include using spray bottles, throwing objects in the direction of the puppy to startle (but not hit) it, and making loud noises. Remote punishment is preferred because the puppy associates punishment with the undesirable act and not with you.

When should my puppy be vaccinated?

There are many diseases that are fatal to dogs. Fortunately, we have the ability to prevent many of these by the use of very effective vaccines. In order to be effective, these vaccines must be given as a series of injections. Ideally, they are given at between 6 and 16 weeks of age and cover Distemper, Hepatitis, Parvovirus, Kennel Cough and Leptospirosis.

Why does my puppy need more than one vaccination?

When the puppy is suckling from its mother, it receives a temporary form of immunity through the mother's milk. This immunity is in the form of proteins called antibodies. For about 24-48 hours after birth, the puppy's intestine allows absorption of many of these antibodies directly into the blood stream. Later during suckling further antibodies are transferred via the milk although not in such great quantities. This immunity is of benefit during the first few weeks of the puppy's life, but, at some point, this immunity falls and the puppy must organise its own long-lasting protection. Vaccinations are used for this purpose. As long as the mother's antibodies are present, vaccinations do not have such a good chance to stimulate the puppy's immune system. The mother's antibodies interfere by neutralising the vaccine.

Many factors determine when the puppy will be able to respond to the vaccinations. These include the level of immunity in the bitch, how much antibody has been absorbed, and the number of vaccines given to the puppy. Since we do not know when an individual puppy will lose the short-term immunity, we give a series of vaccinations. We hope that at least two of these will fall in the window of time when the puppy has lost immunity from its mother but has not yet been exposed to disease. A single vaccination, even if effective, is not likely to stimulate sufficient long-term immunity which is so important for the puppy's protection.

Modern vaccines have the ability to overcome maternal immunity thus conferring protection on the puppy while at the same time not causing disease even though maternal antibodies are still present.

Do all puppies have worms?

Intestinal parasites are common in puppies. Puppies can become infected with parasites before they are born or later through their mother's milk. Modern de-worming preparations are safe and effective and we recommend their use at two week intervals, from two weeks of age. It is important that the medication is repeated since it is usually only the adult worms that are killed. Within 3-4 weeks, the larval stages will have matured and will need to be treated.



We recommend that all adult dogs are wormed at least twice a year and more frequently if in contact with young children.

Tapeworms are the most common intestinal parasite of dogs. Puppies become infected with them when they swallow fleas; the eggs of the tapeworm live inside the flea. When the puppy chews or licks its skin as a flea bites, the flea may be swallowed. The flea is digested within the dog's intestine; the tapeworm hatches and then anchors itself to the intestinal lining. Therefore, exposure to fleas may result in a new infection; this can occur in as little as two weeks.

Dogs infected with tapeworms will pass small segments of the worms in their faeces. The segments are white in colour and look like grains of rice. They are about 3 mm long and may be seen crawling on the surface of the faeces. They may also stick to the hair under the tail. If that occurs, they will dry out, shrink to about half their size, and become golden in colour. If you find them at any time, please let us know and we will provide the appropriate treatment.

There are lots of choices of dog foods. What should I feed my puppy?

Diet is extremely important in the growing months of a dog's life, and there are three important criteria that should be met in selecting food for your puppy.

-  The diet should be nutritionally adequate for puppies.
-  The diet should be complete, balanced and AAFCO tested
-  The diet should have physical qualities (texture, abrasiveness) that will help control plaque and maintain oral health.

Feeding a dry, canned, or semi-moist form of dog food is acceptable. Each has advantages and disadvantages. Dry food is definitely the most inexpensive form. It can be left in the dog's bowl without drying out. The good brands of dry food are just as nutritious as the other forms. However, remember canned food contains about 75% water compared with only 10% in dry food. Hence dry food, price for price, usually works out less expensive. Obviously with only a 10% moisture content in a dry food, compared with 70-80% in a canned food, your puppy will appear to drink very much more if fed a dry food.

Semi-moist and canned foods are also acceptable. Both are considerably more expensive than dry food. However, diets consisting largely of soft foods, be they commercial or home prepared, even if nutritionally complete, may be physically inadequate and favour development of periodontal disease. If you choose to give your puppy table food, be sure that at least 90% of its diet is good quality commercial puppy food.

When soft foods form the basis of your pup's ration, additional methods are advisable to remove plaque. These could include combinations of the following:

-  Supplementing the diet with raw bones together with attached meat and connective tissue
-  Replacing part of the diet by large biscuits of appropriate size, shape and texture to encourage chewing
-  Adding large pieces of raw fibrous vegetables to further encourage chewing
-  Providing rawhide chew toys
-  Additional home dental care such as daily rubbing or brushing of teeth and gums

What can be done about fleas on my puppy?

Many effective flea control preparations for use on adult dogs are not suitable for use on puppies, therefore it is worthwhile consulting us regarding flea control in the young animal. Today there are new, safe, innovative products which are eminently suitable for use on even very tiny puppies. It must be emphasised that flea control in the puppy is equally as important as with the older dog and must be coupled with the control of fleas in the environment.



How do I ensure that my puppy is well socialised?

The socialisation period for dogs is between 4 and 12 weeks of age. During that time, the puppy is very impressionable to social influences. If it has good experiences with men, women, children, cats, other dogs, etc., it is likely to accept them throughout life. If the experiences are absent or unpleasant, it may become apprehensive or adverse to any of them. Therefore, during the period of socialisation, we encourage you to expose your dog to as many types of social events and influences as possible. However, since the puppy will not have built up a complete immunity from the vaccination programme until approximately 14 weeks of age you have the dilemma of endeavouring to socialise him on the one hand and trying to isolate him from exposure to potentially harmful diseases on the other. The aim is to strike a balance and obviously not expose him to the risk of disease but at the same time ensure that as much socialisation as possible, both with people and other animals takes place.

Can I trim my puppy's sharp toe nails?

Puppies have very sharp toe nails. They can be blunted and shortened using an emery board or a piece of carpenter's fine sandpaper. They can also be trimmed with nail scissors or with clippers made for dogs and cats. However, if you remove too much nail, you will cut the quick and cause bleeding and pain. If the puppy has clear or light coloured nails it is possible to see the quick as a pink line running through the nail. With black nails this is more difficult and therefore these should be trimmed at only about 1 mm a time until the puppy is beginning to resent it when it is likely you are getting very near to the quick. It is useful to have a men's shaving styptic pencil available so that if you inadvertently cut the quick you can stop the bleeding without causing pain or discomfort to the puppy. If in doubt, please consult us and we will show you exactly how to trim the nails.

Why should I have my female dog spayed?

Spaying (desexing) offers several advantages. The female's heat periods result in about 2-3 weeks of vulval bleeding. This can be quite annoying if your dog is kept indoors. During this period she is attractive to any neighbourhood male dogs and these can sometimes cause considerable nuisance. Your bitch will have a heat period about every 6 months. In some cases, despite your best efforts, the bitch will become pregnant. Spaying is the removal of uterus and ovaries. Heat periods no longer occur and thus unplanned litters of puppies are prevented.

It has been proven that as the bitch gets older, there is a significant incidence of breast cancer and uterine infections if she has not been spayed. Spaying before she has any heat periods will prevent these problems. If you do not plan to breed from your dog, we strongly recommend that she be spayed either just before her first oestrus or midway between oestrus periods. It is important not to neuter the bitch if she is not physically mature.

Why should I have my male dog desexed?

Desexing offers several advantages. Male dogs are attracted to a female dog in heat and will climb over or go through fences to find her. Male dogs are more aggressive and more likely to fight, especially with other male dogs. As dogs age, the prostate gland frequently enlarges and causes difficulty urinating and defecating. Desexing will solve, or greatly help, the problems that come with owning a male dog. The surgery can be performed any time after the dog is 6 months old. It is worth remembering that all service dogs, Guide Dogs, Hearing Dogs and Dogs for the Disabled, both male and female, are routinely desexed.

If I choose to mate my female dog, when should that be done?

If you plan to mate your dog, she should have at least one or two heat periods first. This will allow her to physically mature, allowing her to be a better mother without such a physical drain on her. We do not recommend breeding after 5 years of age unless she has been bred from prior to that. Having her first litter after 5 years of age increases the risk of problems during the pregnancy and/or delivery. Once your dog has had her last litter, it is worth considering spaying in order to prevent uterine infections and other reproductive problems.



Training your puppy

Responsible ownership involves having a well-trained dog and this training should be commenced as soon as the puppy is acquired. Puppies are continuously learning from the moment their eyes are open and responsible breeders will ensure that the elements of training have commenced long before you acquire the puppy at 6-8 weeks of age. Remember training is not a formal process but should occur all the time we are together with a dog.

Training and socialisation are intermixed, a well socialised dog is invariably a well trained dog and vice versa. Thus puppies should be socialised. They should be handled by family members and strangers as soon as possible and then be introduced to other dogs, preferably to puppies, as soon as their inoculation programme allows. PETVET as well as many dog training clubs run puppy classes in order to initiate training and ensure adequate socialisation. Check with our Client Services staff about Puppy Pre-school.

Basic training of a puppy is straightforward provided certain simple rules are followed:-

-  Keep the tasks simple and only go one step at a time.
-  Teach sounds and words as commands and not sentences
-  When trying to programme the puppy to respond to your command, avoid distractions and competing activities, for example you will never get your puppy to learn to walk round the garden on a collar and lead if children are playing noisily in another part of the garden.
-  Be effusive with your praise and use food rewards regularly when you start training.
-  Ignore failures and certainly do not punish the puppy.
-  Be consistent and this applies to all members of the family.

Local training clubs or puppy pre-schools are an ideal way of ensuring socialisation and dog and owner participation in basic training methods. Other means of training available involve one to one methods, ideally involving both owner and dog with a trainer or sometimes sending the dog away to be trained. However, these are certainly less fun and sometimes not as successful as owner/pet participation and are often reserved for problem animals who have to undergo behavioural therapy.

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