

Recommendations for Puppies

We would like to congratulate you on bringing a new puppy into your family. Owning a dog can be an extremely rewarding experience, but it is also a large responsibility. We hope this handout will give you the information needed to make some good decisions regarding your puppy.

First, let us say that we are grateful that you have chosen us to help you with your puppy's health care. If you have questions concerning any subject related to your puppy's health, please feel free to call our hospital. Our entire professional staff is willing and happy to help you.

What type of play behavior should I expect from a healthy puppy?

It is very important that you provide stimulating play for your puppy, especially during the first weeks in its new home. Stalking and pouncing are important play behaviors in puppies and are necessary for proper muscular development. Your puppy will be less likely to use family members for these activities if you provide adequate puppy-safe toys. The best toys are lightweight and movable. These include Kongs and rubber balls. Any toy that is small enough to be swallowed should be **avoided**. We can help you choose the safest toys for your loved one.



When should my puppy be vaccinated?

There are many fatal diseases of dogs. Fortunately, we have the ability to prevent several of these by vaccinating your pet. In order to be effective, these vaccines must be given as a series of injections. Ideally, they are given at 6, 9, and 12 weeks of age, but this schedule may vary depending on your pet's individual needs.

The core vaccination schedule will protect your puppy from several common diseases: distemper, hepatitis, parainfluenza virus, parvovirus, coronavirus, and rabies. Rabies vaccine is given at 12 weeks of age. There are three other optional vaccinations that are appropriate in certain situations. Your puppy should receive a kennel cough and flu vaccine if a trip to a boarding kennel, groomer, and/or pet stores is likely or if it will be placed in a puppy training class. Leptospirosis should also be given if your dog lives in the country, goes swimming, and/or goes to doggie parks.



Do all puppies have worms?

Intestinal parasites are very common in puppies. Puppies can become infected with parasites before they are born or later through their mother's milk. Not all parasites are seen with the naked eye. The microscopic examination of a stool sample will usually help us to determine the presence of intestinal parasites. We recommend this exam for all puppies.

Tapeworms are one of the most common intestinal parasites of dogs. Puppies become infected with them when they swallow fleas; the eggs of the tapeworm live inside the flea. When the dog 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.

How important is heartworm prevention?

Heartworms are prevalent parasites, especially in our climate. They live in the dog's heart and cause major damage to the dog's vital organs. Heartworms are transmitted by the bite of mosquitoes. Fortunately, we have drugs that will protect your dog from heartworms. These drugs are very safe and effective if given monthly. We can help you choose the best product for your pet's needs and lifestyle.

Heartworm preventatives are dosed according to your dog's weight. As the weight increases, the dosage should also increase. Please note the dosing instructions on the package.

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

Diet is extremely important during the growing months of a dog's life. We recommend a VETERINARY RECOMMENDED NAME-BRAND FOOD made by a national dog food company (not a generic or local brand) and a diet MADE FOR PUPPIES. This should be fed until your puppy is about twelve months of age, depending on its breed and size.

What can be done about fleas on my puppy?

Fleas do not stay on your puppy all of the time; occasionally, they jump off and seek another host. Therefore, it is important to kill fleas on your new puppy before they can become established in your house. Many of the flea control products that are safe on adult dogs are not safe for puppies less than four months of age. Be sure that any flea product you use is labeled safe for puppies.

We will provide you with age and weight-specific flea control products that are safe for your pet and highly effective at keeping your pet flea-free. There are newer products available that prevent heartworm disease as well as preventing fleas.



Why should I have my female dog spayed?

Spaying offers several advantages. A female heat cycle can result in about two to three weeks of vaginal bleeding. This can be quite annoying if your dog is kept indoors. Male dogs are attracted from blocks away and, in fact, seem to come out of the woodwork. Your dog will have a heat cycle about every six months. Spaying is the removal of the uterus and the ovaries. As a result, heat cycles no longer occur. In many cases, despite your best efforts, the female will become pregnant; spaying prevents unplanned litters of puppies.

It has been proven that as a female dog gets older there is a higher incidence of breast cancer and uterine infections if she has not been spayed. Spaying before she has any heat periods will virtually eliminate the chance of either. If you do not plan to breed your dog, we strongly recommend that she be spayed before her first heat period. This can be done anytime between four and six months of age.

Why should I have my male dog neutered?

Neutering 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. Male dogs that are intact are also prone to cancers. Neutering will solve, or greatly help, all of these problems that come with owning a male dog. The surgery can be performed any time after the dog is six months of age.

Can you recommend something for pet identification?

The most widely recommended pet identification device is the microchip. This tiny device is implanted with a needle much like administering an injection. A special scanner can detect these chips; veterinary hospitals, humane societies, and animal shelters across the country have these scanners. A national registry assists in the identification and return of microchipped pets throughout the United States and Canada. We strongly recommend microchipping all pets. We use the Home Again Microchip.