



CONGRATULATIONS on the arrival of a new puppy to your home. All of us here at The George Veterinary Group hope that have many happy and healthy years together.

Vaccination

We routinely vaccinate puppies at 8 and 10 weeks of age. Up until this time they acquire protection from infectious diseases through the colostrum (first milk) from their mother. This vital protection begins to wane from 2 months of age.

Puppies are vaccinated against a range of potentially fatal diseases including: Distemper, Parvovirus, Infectious Canine Hepatitis, Parainfluenza virus and Leptospirosis. They are fully immune 1 week after their second vaccination and then they are safe to explore outside.

A booster vaccination is then needed every year, which also provides a good opportunity for us to give your dog a general health check.

Worming

All puppies have worms regardless of the conditions into which they are born. This is because the main roundworm that affects puppies, *Toxocara canis*, passes to the puppy while still in the uterus, and also after birth in the milk.

Therefore, we advise that all puppies are wormed every 2 weeks until they are 12 weeks old; then every month until they are 6 months old. Adult dogs should be routinely wormed every three months unless there are very young children or people with poor immune systems in the household, in which case we recommend worming more frequently. These worms cause damage to the intestines of dogs and can even cause blockages. Moreover the eggs, which are passed in the faeces of infected dogs, are a **public health concern**. Ingested worm eggs hatch and can cause blindness in children; if you have a puppy and a young family it's especially important that your puppy is wormed meticulously.

We stock a range of good quality wormers. Please ask a vet, nurse or a receptionist if you require help with choosing a wormer and dosing.

Fleas

Fleas are a potentially troublesome and expensive problem, which can easily be prevented. Regular flea treatment is advised to avoid an infestation in your home, which can be very difficult to get rid of. Remember the majority of the life cycle of a flea is spent in the home environment and *not on your pet*. There are a variety of flea products available, and we are happy to advise you about which would best suit your needs.

Note that fleas can also be a problem at any time of the year, not just the spring and summer months, hence why year round treatment is advised.



Feeding

Appropriate feeding of the growing puppy is extremely important. Feeding too little, or too much can both cause problems. We advise that you aim for an average growth rate for the breed of puppy, with a quality brand puppy food. Fat puppies, become fat dogs and the excess fatty tissue laid down in the first year is much more difficult to lose than any fat put down in adulthood.

To ensure a correct growth rate and weight gain we advise that you feed strict portion-controlled meals of a high energy density complete puppy diet until adult body size is reached. Supplementation of a complete diet is **not necessary**: a well made puppy diet will provide everything a puppy needs. The food should be advertised as '*Puppy*' or '*Junior*' and large breed puppies (reaching more than 25kg in adulthood) should be fed a '*Large Breed Puppy/Junior*'. We recommend HILLS Puppy or ROYAL CANIN Junior as both as these diets are scientifically formulated to provide the best start in life for your pet.

Socialisation and Exercise

The key time for a puppy to meet others and learn about the world (socialisation) is before 16 weeks of age. It's really important to take your puppy out and about as soon as possible. You cannot let your puppy run around in a public place until he/she is fully vaccinated (that's 1 week after the 2nd vaccination) but they can be *carried* around outside and introduced to fully vaccinated and healthy dogs before this time.

Most behavioural problems, particularly in relation to aggression and phobias are caused by poor socialisation early in life. Puppies should ideally be getting used to anything they are likely to encounter throughout their life including different people, children, animals, traffic and noises. A lot of adult dogs have a phobia of loud noises. This can be prevented by getting puppies used to these noises from a young age. It is important to either ignore the puppy or ensure they have a positive association to the noise, for example playing a noise-related C.D in the background when they are playing. For more information speak to reception or one of the nursing team.



Your puppy is also invited to a 'Puppy Party' at the hospital in Malmesbury where there will be other puppies to play with and a nurse on hand to supervise and answer any questions you have. Please ask at reception to get your puppy booked in



Regular exercise is also important for young dogs to ensure muscular development as well as preventing early onset obesity. There are no hard and fast rules as to the amounts of exercise required but generally it is said around 5 minutes per month of life would be

enough and to vary the type of exercise; for example lead walks around the streets, running off lead in field and chasing toys. It is important to be aware that over-exercising when young can cause joint damage and lead to arthritis later in life.

Identification

It is currently a **legal requirement** for any dog in a public place to wear a collar with a tag showing the **name** and **address** for the owner. It is also sensible to have a contact number on the tag.

There is now a means of identifying pets that is invisible, permanent, safe, reasonable priced and tamper-proof. It is call 'microchipping'. A microchip is approximately the size of a grain of rice and is inserted under the skin on the scuff of the neck in a similar fashion to a vaccination injection. All lost animals that are bought into the vets, police and animal shelters are routinely scanned for the presence of a microchip. Each chip has an individual barcode that corresponds to your details which are registered and held on the national database so that you can be contacted when your animal has been found. Several cases have been recorded of pets being re-united with their worried owners after having been missing for six months. **You must remember to update your contact details** with the chip company if you move house.

Microchipping is an essential part of the Pet Travel Scheme. In addition, a recent change in rules means that *after 6th April 2016 it will be compulsory for all dogs in the U.K. to be microchipped.*

Insurance

We are proud to say that the standard of veterinary care available to animals these days is extremely high, even to the extent of surpassing the care we receive ourselves. However, there is no NHS available for animals and good veterinary care is not cheap. When you consider that every one in three animals requires treatment as a result of an accident or illness, **we strongly recommend taking out pet insurance**. There are a lot of different companies that offer a range of policies, the best things is to shop around and try to get a lifelong policy. It is always distressing when a situation arises where the treatment required is not possible due to financial constraints: with insurance, you do not need to worry about the financial aspect of the treatment.

Ask at reception for helpful hints and tips on insuring your puppy.

Neutering

This is always a contentious issue if you do not intend to breed from your dog. We feel that neutering is particularly important for bitches because early neutering dramatically reduces

the incidence of several types of cancer later in life. Neutering before the second season greatly reduces the risk of mammary cancer and almost eliminates the risk of cancers of the ovaries and uterus. It is also important to be aware that bitches that come into season approximately every six months, with each season lasting an average of three weeks. During this time you will need to be very vigilant to prevent unwanted mating. This requires a month and half of close scrutiny for the bitch and worry for the owner every year.

Phantom pregnancies are common in un-neutered bitches. During this time, her behaviour can change and she may become aggressive. She may also start to produce milk.

Pyometra is a uterine infection and is a common condition in older bitches that haven't been neutered. If severe, it can be life threatening and emergency surgery is needed.

The main reason that we castrate males is to make them more socially acceptable and biddable pets. Castration prevents some forms of cancer later in life. It can also prevent and treat aggression, reduce wandering behaviours and will stop signs of hypersexuality.

Ideally, we spay females at 6 months of age or 3 months after their first season. Males can be castrated when they reach maturity at around 9 months of age.

Dental Care

Puppies have two sets of teeth in their life time: deciduous (baby teeth) and adult. The Deciduous teeth fall out at around 4-6 months to make way for the adult teeth coming through.



Even though the deciduous teeth fall out it is always best to start brushing your dog's teeth when they are young in order to get them used to having it done. Dogs that have their teeth brushed regularly will have less problems and will require less work done during adult life. It is important to introduce teeth brushing slowly and to use a specific dog tooth paste. If you would like more information, please ask at reception or speak to one of our nursing team.

Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns on 01666 823165.

You can also join in the fun on Facebook at

www.facebook.com/georgevethospital

We look forward to watching your puppy grow into a happy and healthy dog.

