

Congratulations on the arrival of your new puppy! Below is some useful information on how to care for your new puppy to keep them healthy and happy.



Vaccinations

Keeping your new puppy safe against infectious diseases is so important and fortunately we can protect them throughout their life. These diseases include **distemper, infectious canine hepatitis, parainfluenza, parvovirus and leptospirosis.**

The puppy vaccination course begins from 8 weeks of age with a second injection 4 weeks later. Thereafter, annual booster vaccinations are required, which also provides us with a good opportunity for a thorough health check. Your pup should be kept away from other dogs, and dog walking areas, until one week after their second vaccination. However, early socialisation is very important, so pups should try to socialise with other dogs, if you know that are fully vaccinated, in a secure area such as the garden at home. We also advise that any puppy should not be walked near water sources until 4 weeks after their 2nd vaccination.

Kennel cough vaccinations can be given from 6 weeks of age, administered via the dog's nose. This is not a core vaccine as it is rare that a dog becomes very unwell with it; and the risk of catching it is low if your dog doesn't socialise with large groups of dogs or visit kennels. However, because of it being highly contagious, many places such as kennels and doggy day-cares require it.

Worming

All puppies are likely to get worms regardless of the conditions into which they are born. This is because the main roundworm that affects puppies, *Toxocara canis*, passes to the puppies while they are still in the womb, and even 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. There are many types of worms that affect dogs in the UK: the most common ones are tapeworm, roundworm and lungworm.

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 more frequent worming often monthly. Besides causing damage to the intestine and potentially lungs, the eggs, which are passed in the faeces, are a public health concern. The migrating egg larvae that hatch can cause blindness in children; therefore, if children play with your puppy, it's especially important that your puppy is wormed meticulously. We have several veterinary approved wormers available.

Please enquire at our welcome desk when it is necessary to worm your dog or speak to one of our veterinary surgeons about the most appropriate type of wormer to use in your puppy or dog.

Fleas and ticks

Fleas are stubborn parasites that can cause irritation to your pet's skin and are a potentially frustrating and expensive problem should your pet become infested. Regular flea treatment is advised as most of the flea's life cycle is spent in the home and not on your pet. There are a variety of flea products available, and we are happy to advise you on the most appropriate flea and tick treatment for your puppy. They continue to flourish during the winter months owing to the heating, so treatment is required all year round and not just in the spring and summer months.

Ticks are spider-like parasites that suck blood from other animals. They do not jump but instead climb or drop on your pet's coat and are common in woodland and grassland. It is important to keep up to date with treatment as ticks can cause local inflammation/infection where they bite and can also spread certain diseases.

Feeding

Sensible feeding of the young animal is extremely important. Both feeding too little or too much can cause problems. It is important to feed a complete diet and not to make any sudden changes, and any changes made must be done gradually to avoid upsetting their stomach. 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' food. Meals should be split into 3-4 meals fed throughout the day.

Feeding frequency for puppies:

- 8-12 weeks: Feed 4 meals a day
- 12-16 weeks: Feed 3 meals a day
- 16-24 weeks+: Feed 2 meals a day.

This is a rough guide only. Please follow the food packet to weigh out your puppy's food for its weight. Gradually transition your puppy to adult food at around 12-18 months of age- this does depend on their breed and growth rate.



Socialisation and exercise

Socialisation is crucial during the first few months of a puppy's life. Between the ages of 4 weeks and 12 weeks, your puppy will have a 'socialisation period'. Around this time, it is important to introduce them to various people, dogs, environments, and experiences to help them develop confidence.

Care must be taken as puppies are not fully covered by their vaccinations until a week after the final vaccination of their puppy course, but they can be carried around outside and introduced to fully vaccinated and healthy dogs before.

Here are some tips to help you get started:

- Make sure they have good experiences. It needs to be positive and you could do this by using treats, toys and praise
- Allow your puppy to meet a wide variety of people, sounds, smells and places
- Don't introduce too many experiences in one day as this can be overwhelming
- Consider puppy classes or socialisation groups
- Get your puppy used to being in the car
- Socialisation playlists can be a great way to get your puppy used to different noises

Regular exercise is also important for young dogs to ensure muscular development as well as preventing early onset obesity, but it is important not to over-exercise them. Your puppy's bones need time to mature before they have long walks and high impact activities and over-doing it whilst they are young can pre-dispose them to joint damage and arthritis later in life. This can be dependent on your puppy's age, size breed.

A general guide is to allow them one to two sessions of five minutes for each month of age, e.g., a five-month-old puppy could have walks of 25 minutes at a time, once or twice a day, and vary the type of exercise.

Identification

It is a legal requirement to microchip and register all dogs by the age of 8 weeks old. A microchip is about the size of a grain of rice, implanted under the skin and contains a number that links to the owner's contact details on a national database. You must remember to update your contact details with the chip company if you move house.

It is also 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 in case your dog gets lost.

Insurance

Pet insurance helps cover the cost of veterinary treatment. There is no NHS available for animals, so we strongly recommend taking out pet insurance. There are a lot of different companies offering a wide range of policies so please read the small print carefully and take notice of the terms and conditions.

We strongly advise that you choose a Lifetime or 'Covered for Life' policy. This means that your pet will be covered for its entire life providing that you renew your policy each year without any break in cover.

Neutering

Recent studies have shown that taking a case-based approach on when to neuter dogs is best, this helps to reduce certain risks later in life, and will vary depending on breed, sex and size of dog. Generally, we recommend female dogs have at least one season, and neutering should be carried out 3 months after their last season finished.

We feel that neutering is particularly important for bitches because it can greatly reduce the risk of mammary cancer and almost eliminate the risk of cancer of the ovaries and uterus. Neutering also stops seasons, phantom pregnancies and eliminates the risk of pyometras. Entire bitches 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. 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.

Castration

We don't take a blanket approach with castration. Some entire or un-castrated dogs can have sexually motivated behavioural issues during their adult life. Castrating your dog will reduce these behaviours, if performed at a young age. Castration also eliminates the risk of testicular cancer and benign prostate enlargement but does slightly increase the risk of prostate cancer. If your dog is already aggressive or nervous, it is important to discuss this with the vet before booking your dog in for a castration as this can be exacerbated by castration.

We encourage you to discuss neutering and timing of neutering for your pet with one of our vets or book in for a pre-neuter check with one of our RVNs.

Dental Care

Dogs have two sets of teeth in their lifetime: deciduous (baby teeth) and adult. The deciduous teeth fall out at around 4-6 months to make way for the adult teeth. Even though the deciduous teeth fall out it is always best to start brushing your dog's teeth when they are young 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 and advice, please feel free to book a dental care appointment with one of our nurses.

Teething tips

- Offer a mix of rubber, soft or edible teething toys
- Stay away from toys that are too hard, as they can damage your puppy's teeth.
- Consider frozen toys. Puppies find relief from teething pain by chewing on cold or frozen toys. Frozen carrots are also great to offer your puppy as well as a frozen KONG stuffed with food.

If your puppy is mouthing on your hands or unwanted objects, redirect them to a chew toy and praise them for using it.

Common poisons

Many common household items are poisonous to our dogs, it is important to be aware of these so you can prevent your dog from ingesting them.

- Chocolate
- Grapes/raisins
- Xylitol
- Antifreeze
- Garlic & onions
- Slug/snail pellets
- Alcohol
- Human vitamin, supplements and medications

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

