



# PUPPY CARE

## ~ GUIDELINES ~



Congratulations on your new puppy! The information presented here is meant as an outline of the most important health care topics to be covered during your first few visits to our hospital. The key to being a good pet owner and helping your puppy live a long and healthy life is to be well informed. Remember, we are always here to help you or answer any questions you may have.

### VACCINES

Puppies should receive their first DISTEMPER/PARVO “5 in 1” vaccine at 6-8 weeks of age and then receive boosters at 3-4 week intervals until 16 weeks of age. Included in this combination vaccine is protection against DISTEMPER, HEPATITIS, LEPTOSPIROSIS, PARVOVIRUS and PARAINFLUENZA. Puppies are not considered fully protected against these diseases until they have received their final vaccine at 16 weeks of age. Additional vaccines include RABIES at 12 weeks of age, LYME DISEASE at 12 and 16 weeks, and KENNEL COUGH at 16 weeks of age. LYME DISEASE vaccines are recommended for all dogs due to the high incidence of the tick borne organism in our area.

### DEWORMING

Most puppies are born with round worms, which cross the placenta from the mother during fetal development. For this reason, we routinely treat all puppies for round worms at their vaccine visits. You should bring a stool sample at each visit to check for intestinal parasites.

### SPAYING/NEUTERING

Unless you are planning to breed your dog, we recommend spaying or neutering your puppy at 6 months of age. Female dogs that are spayed before their heat cycles start are far less likely to develop mammary cancer and never have the risk of uterine infection, which is common in unspayed females. Males who are neutered have a decreased incidence of prostate infections, perianal and testicular tumors, and tend not to roam and fight as much as other dogs.

### WELLNESS TESTING

Although pets are well adapted to provide affection and companionship, they are not designed to communicate well about health issues they may have. The first sign you may notice of a problem often reflects a disease process that has been ongoing for some time. We

therefore recommend periodic laboratory testing of all pets to screen for sub-clinical illness and to establish normal baseline lab values. This will begin prior to spaying/neutering with a PRE-ANESTHETIC PROFILE and continue at 3-4 year intervals until the senior years (over 7) when annual wellness testing is suggested.

### HEARTWORM DISEASE

Heartworm disease is caused by a parasite that is transmitted through mosquito bites. Although the disease can usually be cured, it is an expensive and sometimes dangerous treatment. For this reason, your puppy should be on the once a month chewable heartworm preventative “INTERCEPTOR”. In addition to heartworm control, “INTERCEPTOR” ALSO PREVENTS INTESTINAL PARASITES. WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND INTERCEPTOR BE GIVEN YEAR ROUND.

### VITAMINS

Vitamins such as “Pet Tabs,” can be given as training aids, a treat or to correct for unbalanced diets. Vitamin supplements are not absolutely necessary if your puppy is being fed a well-balanced, quality puppy food.

### FEEDING

You can feed your puppy any of the major commercial puppy food formulas. Puppies should be fed as much as they will eat within 20 minutes, three times a day. If your puppy does not eat, you should pick up the food and try again 4-6 hours later. At 4 months, you can decrease feedings to twice a day and begin to regulate quantities based on activity, size and weight gain. For adult dogs, a rule of thumb is 1 cup of dry food per 20 pounds of ideal weight. In general, reduce the package suggested amount to feed by 30% and you will be feeding the proper amount.

### HOUSETRAINING

Puppies learn best through positive reinforcement, so you should take steps to maximize the number of opportunities to praise your puppy for using the outdoors. Whenever you are home, you should walk your puppy on a leash every 2 hours and praise him lavishly for proper behavior. Other times to walk your puppy include: after all meals, after waking up and whenever they appear “restless.” In between walks or while you are away from home you should confine your puppy to a crate or small room to prevent accidents and encourage your puppy to wait to go outside.

## BEHAVIORAL TRAINING

Many behavioral problems seen in older dogs can be prevented through the proper training of your puppy. It is important to train your puppy from the beginning not to bite on people, chew furniture, fight with other dogs, etc. There are many good training guides available to help you do this. In addition, Puppy Kindergarten classes can help you with training techniques and allow your puppy to socialize with other dogs and puppies in neutral surroundings.

## DENTAL CARE

In order to prevent gum disease and other dental problems, we recommend brushing your dog's teeth daily. If you start when your puppy is young, they will be more likely to cooperate. Rubber finger brushes and special flavored pet toothpastes are available for this purpose. Ask us to demonstrate this for you. Do not use human toothpaste, which can cause stomach upset. If you are unable to brush, there are special dental diets available for adult dogs like Hill's T/D, which can decrease the rate of tartar buildup on the teeth.

## TICKS AND FLEAS AND LYME DISEASE

Ticks have emerged in our area over the last ten years as the most bothersome disease causing external parasite. This is because of the increased incidence of tick borne Lyme disease infection in our dog population. Lyme disease infection occurs in up to 30% of unprotected dogs in our area. Fortunately, the illness associated with the infection characterized by fever, lethargy, and lameness, is only seen in about 5% of infected dogs. Ticks that carry Lyme disease are found from early spring through late fall, but are most prevalent in the spring and fall. These parasites wait on shrubs and tall grasses and grab onto your dog's fur as they walk by. The best method of preventing ticks and Lyme disease is through vaccination, avoidance of tick infested areas, inspection and removal of ticks promptly and the monthly application of tick repellent topical solutions or collars. (Ticks can be removed by firmly grasping them at skin level and twisting until detachment occurs.) We suggest you begin **FRONTLINE** or **ADVANTIX** topical solutions at 12 weeks of age or older. Until then you should minimize the exposure to tick infested areas. Fleas are an extremely common external parasite that can be found year round in our area. Fleas spend their entire adult life on the pet but lay thousands of eggs, which fall off and subsequently cause infestations of the home. Topical tick products will also prevent flea infestation and will work well for most pets. For those who prefer not to apply any topical agents to their pets, oral flea growth inhibitors can be administered monthly in the form of Sentinel or Program.

## TOYS/CHEWING/SAFETY

Puppies require chew-toys during teething months and will enjoy them even as they get older. Toys made of hard rubber and Nylabones are safest. Some puppies enjoy rawhide bones or chips, pig's ears or cow hooves. Be careful with those that the puppy can break into pieces and swallow whole. Some puppies may be sensitive to these, or swallow small chunks, which may lead to diarrhea or vomiting. Discontinue their use if this occurs! **FOR OBVIOUS SAFETY REASONS, GREAT CARE SHOULD BE TAKEN TO PREVENT YOUR PUPPY FROM CHEWING ON ELECTRICAL CORDS.**

You should never give meat bones to your puppy.

Bones can break into sharp pieces, which are harmful if swallowed. Even larger bones can be swallowed and may become lodged in the intestines, causing an obstruction. Also, chewing on hard bones is the most common cause of painful fractured teeth. You should also avoid soft rubber squeaky toys that can be shredded and swallowed.

## BATHING/GROOMING

You should not need to bathe your puppy more than every 2-3 weeks unless there is a flea problem or a skin condition that requires a medicated shampoo. Bathing frequently can dry the skin, so if this is necessary always use a moisturizing, hypoallergenic dog shampoo, followed by a crème rinse. Human shampoos contain perfumes that can cause allergic reactions in some dogs. Some breeds will require grooming or clipping by a professional groomer. Usually this is done at least three times a year and maybe more frequently in certain breeds. Ears should be checked periodically for excess wax accumulation. If this occurs, we can demonstrate proper ear cleaning techniques and provide cleansers for the ear. Nails should be checked monthly and trimmed as needed. We will be happy to show you the proper technique.

## MEDICATIONS

Remember – You should never give your puppy any medication unless your veterinarian has prescribed it, or after you have called and checked with your veterinarian. In particular, **TYLENOL** and **ADVIL** (Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen) **SHOULD NEVER BE GIVEN TO PETS.** **BUFFERED ASPIRIN** is tolerated by dogs but you should always check with a veterinarian for the proper dose. If your puppy accidentally eats one or more of any other medication, **CALL YOUR VETERINARIAN IMMEDIATELY.**