

Getting to know your puppy

Teeth – your puppy will have sharp temporary teeth by 8 weeks of age – these are gradually shed at about 6 months to allow the adult teeth to come through. **Nose** – your puppy's sense of smell is about one million times better than a human's. **Neutering** – female pups have their first season at about six months of age - we advise all bitches that are not wanted for breeding be neutered (spayed) at between 6 and 12 months of age. This may be before or after the first season depending on the breed of dog and individual circumstances. The spay operation protects against womb infection (pyometra) mammary and ovarian cancer, prevents pregnancy and ends seasons.

Play and Training – how to have a happy puppy

Teaching your puppy to play is crucial to development and the earlier you start the more successful you are likely to be. As dogs have very sensitive noses hide and seek games involving food treats are a good starting point. At first, hide the treat where the pup can see it and give a command like “find”. Once the pup has the hang of this game you can move on to hiding toys in the home and garden. Make sure these are returned to your hand by initially rewarding the pup with a titbit for correct return of the toy. These games should not develop into a tug of war for the toy as it is important that you maintain dominance over the puppy – however it is equally important that the dog “wins” games some of the time or boredom will soon set in. Because puppies are sometimes left on their own it is important that they learn to play alone – this can be done by providing interesting and challenging toys which reward the puppy (e.g. with a snack) for effort. Being alone is unnatural for a dog – so start training your puppy to accept being left as soon as he is settled in - start with short periods of solitude gradually increasing and rewarding good behaviour. Please also see our puppy training pet care sheet

Dental toys are useful as they will reduce chewing (e.g. of the carpet) and help to keep the teeth clean. Ideal toys include frisbees, squeaky toys (a favourite – but make sure they are sturdy so that the puppy doesn't swallow the squeak), and kongs – these are made of hard rubber for chewing and can be filled with treats.

Socialising with other animals, especially other dogs, adults and children is vital if your puppy is going to react properly in all situations. Our puppy parties are a good starting point – these are also useful as they make going to the vets an exciting and fun activity for the puppy and also an opportunity for owners to learn about health and training matters. Most puppies that have attended puppy parties look forward to coming back to the surgery.

Obedience training is best achieved through leadership and positive reinforcement (rewarding good behaviour with affection or food rewards). Physical punishments are rarely helpful – a loud noise or a sharp word usually suffices to correct misbehaviour. Training classes are highly recommended.

After feeding excitement or exercise and when your puppy wakes up take him to the garden and give lots of praise when he goes to the toilet. Do not tell him off if an accident occurs in the house.

Insurance

There are 2 kinds of insurance on offer:

Health insurance – in return for a regular monthly premium your pet will be covered for veterinary fees subject usually to a small excess. There are a huge number of policies on offer and it is very important to read the small print so that you select the right policy for your particular circumstances.

Third party cover - provides protection for any damages to people or their property arising out of your dog's actions – this may be provided with health insurance and on some household policies.

Grooming and bathing

Grooming and bathing are vital to keep your puppy's coat healthy and should be regarded as fun. Dogs vary in their requirement for brushing and bathing – some short coated dogs need only very occasional baths. It is always wise to use a soft brush or mitt to groom as this will not irritate the skin. Done carefully brushing can be like stroking which dogs love. At bath time be careful to use a shampoo designed for

dogs and avoid getting the shampoo or water in the puppy's eyes or ears. It is only necessary to bath frequently if the pup is dirty or smelly or has a skin condition – in this case consider a shampoo with conditioner. After the shampoo rinse thoroughly and remember your pup will shake vigorously, so be prepared to get wet, and then follow with a brisk towel. In the warm months long coated dogs are best trimmed.

Protecting your puppy against disease

It is vital that puppies are properly protected against several potentially fatal diseases i.e. Parvovirus, Distemper, Leptospirosis and Infectious hepatitis. The only way to do this is through vaccination. We recommend that puppies commence their primary vaccination course at 9 weeks of age (a second injection is given at 12 weeks of age). At the time of the first vaccination, your puppy will receive a medical examination of eyes, ears, coat, teeth heart and genitalia – we will give advice on worm treatment and feeding. You will be sent a postal reminder after one year for your puppy's booster vaccination and health check. Regular annual vaccination is required to maintain vaccine protection – the health check carried out at the same time allows the early detection of disease and is an opportunity to discuss any health or behaviour problems. Please also see our information sheet on flea control.

Microchips

Collar tags can be lost or removed From April 2016 it is the law that all dogs have a small microchip between the shoulder blades – ensuring when a dog is lost or injured the owners are quickly found.

Worms

Puppies become infected with worms before birth and soon after can pass eggs in their faeces. The eggs pose a potential risk to human health however worming as a puppy with a veterinary product will eliminate the worms, this should be repeated regularly puppies should also have lungworm treatment – see our Intestinal and lung worms pet care sheet

Feeding

Puppies should be fed a diet specially formulated to meet the demands of growth. We recommend and supply Hills puppy food though other diets produced by the major manufacturers are also suitable. Dry diets are both convenient and economical requiring the owner only to supply a fresh bowl of water Try to keep feeding consistent do not use a different flavour of food every day and make changes slowly over a few days. Do not overfeed on scraps or treats as this will upset your puppy's tummy

5 point health check

- Eyes should be clear with no discharge
- Ears should be free of wax or odour
- Coat should be sleek and free of white scurf or black flea droppings
- Bottom should be clean

Body contour should be smooth and free of lumps and bumps

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