

PUPPIES: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW OWNERS

We would like to congratulate you on the acquisition of your new puppy. 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 week 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 wads of paper 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 pet loved one.



How do I discipline a puppy?

Disciplining a young puppy may be necessary if its behavior threatens people or property, but harsh punishment should be avoided. Hand clapping and using shaker cans or horns can be intimidating enough to inhibit undesirable behavior. However, remote punishment is preferred. Remote punishment consists of using something that appears unconnected to the punisher to stop the problem behavior. Examples include using spray bottles, throwing objects in the direction of the puppy to startle (but not hit) it, and making loud noises. Remote punishment is preferred because the puppy associates punishment with the undesirable act and not with you.

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 about 8, 12, and 16 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, parvovirus, and rabies. The first three are included in one injection that is given at 8, 12, and 16 weeks old. Rabies vaccine is given at 12 to 16 weeks of age. There are three other optional vaccinations that are appropriate in certain situations. Your puppy should receive a kennel cough vaccine if a trip to a boarding kennel or groomer is likely or if it will be placed in a puppy training class. Lyme vaccine is given to dogs that are likely to be exposed to ticks because Lyme disease is transmitted by ticks. Please note that Lyme disease is not on Guam, therefore, we do not vaccinate against this disease, on island. Leptospirosis vaccine is given to dogs that may be exposed to this deadly bacteria (depending on region). Leptospirosis is a bacteria found in certain regions more than others (typically wet environments). This

disease is very prevalent on Guam and is considered a core vaccine here. It is usually given at 12 weeks, and boosted at 16 weeks old, to new puppies. Please advise us of these needs on your next visit.

Why does my puppy need more than one vaccination?

When the puppy nurses its mother, it receives a temporary form of immunity through its mother's milk. This immunity is in the form of proteins called maternal antibodies. For about twenty-four to forty-eight hours after birth, the puppy's intestine allows absorption of these antibodies directly into the blood stream. This immunity is of benefit during the first few weeks of the puppy's life, but at some point, this immunity fails and the puppy must be able to make its own long-lasting immunity. Vaccinations are used for this purpose. As long as the mother's antibodies are present, vaccinations do not have a chance to stimulate the puppy's immune system. The mother's antibodies interfere by neutralizing the vaccine.

Many factors determine when the puppy will be able to respond to the vaccinations. These include the level of immunity in the mother dog, how much antibody has been absorbed, and the number of vaccines given to the puppy. Since we do not know when an individual puppy will lose the short-term immunity, we give a series of vaccinations. We hope that at least two of these will fall in the window of time when the puppy has lost immunity from its mother but has not yet been exposed to disease. A single vaccination, even if effective, is not likely to stimulate the long-term immunity, which is so important.

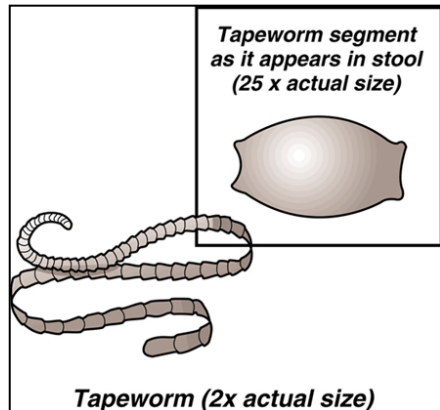


Rabies vaccine is an exception to this, since one injection given at the proper time is enough to produce long-term immunity.

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. 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. Even if we do not get a stool sample, we recommend the use of a deworming product that is safe and effective against several of the common worms of the dog. We do this because our deworming medication has no side-effects and because your puppy does not pass worm eggs every day so the stool sample may not detect worms that are present. Additionally, some of these internal parasites can be transmitted to humans. If your puppy is dewormed, it may be dewormed again at your next appointment, as many dewormers only kill adult worms. Therefore, after a few weeks, larval stages will become adults and need to be treated again. Dogs remain susceptible to re-infection with hookworms and roundworms. Periodic deworming throughout the dog's life may be recommended for outdoor dogs.

Tapeworms are one of the most common intestinal parasite 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. Tapeworm infections can occur in as little as two weeks.



Dogs infected with tapeworms will pass small segments of the worms in their stool. The segments are white in color and look like grains of rice. They are about 1/8 inch (3 mm) long and may be seen crawling on the surface of the stool. They may also stick to the hair under the tail. If that occurs, they will dry out, shrink to about half their size, and become golden in color.

Tapeworm segments do not pass every day or in every stool sample; therefore, inspection of several consecutive bowel movements may be needed to find them. We may examine a stool sample in our office and not find them, and then you may find them the next day. If you find them at any time,

please notify us so we may provide the appropriate drug for treatment.

How important are heartworms?

Heartworms are important parasites, especially in certain climates (very high risk on Guam). They live in the dog's bloodstream and cause major damage to the heart and lungs. 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 regularly. We can help you choose the best product for your pet's needs and lifestyle. We carry Heartgard Plus (monthly oral treat with heartworm preventative and general intestinal dewormer).

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 to eighteen months of age, depending on its breed and size. We recommend that you only buy food that has been certified by an independent organization as complete and balanced. In the United States, you should look for food that has been certified by AAFCO, an independent organization that oversees the entire pet food industry. It does not endorse any particular food, but it will certify that the food has met the minimum requirements for nutrition.

Feeding a dry, canned, or semi-moist form of dog food is acceptable. Any of the formulations is acceptable as long as the label states that the food is intended for growth (or is a puppy food), and is “complete and balanced”. This means that the food is nutritionally complete and meets the needs of growth and development. Each of the types of food has advantages and disadvantages. Dry food is definitely the most inexpensive. It can be left in the dog's bowl without drying.

Semi-moist foods may be acceptable, depending on their quality. The texture may be more appealing to some dogs, and they often have a stronger odor and flavor. However, semi-moist foods are often high in sugar.

Canned foods are a good choice to feed your puppy, but are considerably more expensive than either of the other forms of food. Canned foods contain a high percentage of water, and their texture, odor, and taste are very appealing. However, canned food will dry out or spoil if left out for prolonged periods of time; it is therefore more suitable for meal feeding rather than free choice feeding. .

Table foods are not usually recommended. Because they are generally very tasty, dogs will often begin to hold out for these and not eat their well-balanced dog food. If you choose to give your puppy table food, be sure that at least 90% of its diet is good quality commercial puppy food.

We enjoy a variety of things to eat in our diet. However, most dogs actually prefer not to change from one food to another unless they are trained to do so by the way you feed them. Do not feel guilty if your dog is happy eating the same food day after day, week after week.

Commercials for dog food can be very misleading. If you watch carefully you will notice that commercials often promote dog food on the basis of TASTE. Nutrition is rarely mentioned. Most of the "gourmet" foods are marketed to appeal to owners who want the best for their dogs; however, they do not offer the dog any nutritional advantage over a good quality dry food, and they are far more expensive. If you read the labels of many of the gourmet foods, you will notice that they do not claim to be “complete and balanced”. If your dog eats a gourmet food very long, it will probably not be happy with other foods. If it needs a special diet due to a health problem later in life, it is very unlikely to accept it.

How often should I feed my puppy?

There are several “right” ways to feed puppies. The most popular method is commonly called “meal feeding.” This means that the puppy is fed at specific times of the day. A measured amount of food should be offered four times per day for five to twelve week old puppies. What is not eaten within thirty minutes is taken up. If the food is eaten within three to four minutes, the quantity is probably not sufficient. Puppies fed in this manner generally begin to cut back on one of those meals by three to four months of age and perhaps another one later. If a certain feeding is ignored for several days, it should be discontinued.



“Free choice feeding,” means that food is available at all times. This works well with dry foods and for some dogs. However, other dogs tend to overeat and become obese. If there is weight gain after the optimal size is reached, this method of feeding should be discontinued.

How do I housebreak my new puppy?

Housebreaking should begin as soon as your puppy enters his new home. How long the training must continue depends on both the puppy and you. Some pups learn sooner than others. Your dog wants to please you. But a puppy's memory is short, so your patience is important. A home with a poorly trained puppy is not a happy home for you or the puppy.

The puppy's bed may be a box, open at one end and slightly larger than the puppy. If the bed is too large, the puppy may defecate or urinate in a corner rather than go outside. If the bed is smaller, the puppy will do its "business" outside rather than soil its bed.

Enclose the bed in a small area, such as a laundry room. Cover this area with newspapers to be used at night, or when your pup is left unsupervised.

A common housebreaking technique is creating a “scent post”. A scent post is created when your puppy has an "accident." The problem becomes one of locating the scent post in the place you want it.

To create a scent post, leave a smear of stool from the last "accident" or wet paper on the clean paper in the place you want it, and coax or scoot the puppy to that area. The same is true of an outside scent post, but without the paper, in an out-of-the-way place in the yard. This will solve the "mine-field" problem.

The first thing in the morning, the puppy should be scooted to the scent post. This is so he can learn his way to the door and the scent post. Let him sniff about. The moment he has relieved himself, pat him on the head and immediately bring him into the house. Do not let him play about. The toilet period and play period should be definitely separate in the puppy's routine.

The puppy should then be fed. In a short while the puppy will become uneasy and walk in circles sniffing at the floor. The puppy should then be scooted and coaxed to the scent post as quickly as possible.

This routine should be repeated every hour or two throughout the day, especially after meals and naps.

When the puppy is taken out to play, it is wise to leave the house by another door and avoid taking him near his scent post. Never play with your pup until after he has been taken out and has eliminated.

There will of course be some "accidents" in the house. Never let one of these slip by unnoticed; punishment five minutes after the offense is too late. Scold (not whip) the puppy and rush him to the scent post. Then scrub the area of mishap thoroughly until all odor is gone. Your veterinarian will recommend cleaning products that will help neutralize any scent from urination or defecation.

Positive reinforcement of proper urine and bowel habits is just as important as properly applied discipline. When your puppy urinates or defecates in the correct place, spend several minutes stroking and praising him.

How do I insure that my puppy is well socialized?

The **socialization period** for dogs is between four and twelve weeks of age. During that time, the puppy is very impressionable to social influences. If it has good experiences with men, women, children, cats, other dogs, etc., it is likely to accept them throughout life. If the experiences are absent or unpleasant, it may become apprehensive or adverse to any of them. Therefore, during the period of socialization, we encourage you to expose your dog to as many types of social events and influences as possible. However, please only socialize with known adult dogs that have proper vaccinations, as your puppy will not have complete vaccines at this time. Please avoid play parks, pet shops, or other areas where your puppy would interact with pets of unknown history. We recommend setting up play dates at your house.

What can be done about fleas on my puppy?

Fleas do not stay on your puppy all of their 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.

My puppy seems to be constantly chewing. Why does this occur?

Chewing is a normal puppy behavior. Almost all of a puppy's 28 baby teeth are present by about four weeks of age. They begin to fall out at four months of age and are replaced by the 42 adult (permanent) teeth by about six months of age. Therefore, chewing is a puppy characteristic that you can expect until about six to seven months of age. It is important that you do what you can to direct your puppy's chewing toward acceptable objects. You should provide puppy-safe items such as nylon chew bones and other chew toys so other objects are spared.

My puppy has episodes of hiccuping and a strange odor to its breath. Are these normal?

Yes. Many puppies experience episodes of hiccuping that may last several minutes. This is normal and will not last but a few weeks or months. All puppies have a characteristic odor to their breath that is commonly called "puppy breath." It is also normal and will last only until the puppy matures.

Can I trim my puppy's sharp toe nails?

Puppies have very sharp toe nails. They can be trimmed with your regular finger nail clippers or with nail trimmers made for dogs and cats. If you take too much off the nail, you will cut into the "quick" and bleeding and pain will occur. If this happens, neither you nor your dog will want to do this again. Therefore, a few points are helpful:

If your dog has clear or white nails, you can see the pink of the quick through the nail. Avoid the pink area, and you should be out of the quick.

If your dog has black nails, you will not be able to see the quick so only cut 1/32" (1 mm) of the nail at a time until the dog begins to get sensitive. The sensitivity will usually occur before you are into the blood vessel. With black nails, it is likely that you will get too close on at least one nail.

If your dog has some clear and some black nails, use the average clear nail as a guide for cutting the black ones.

When cutting nails, use sharp trimmers. Dull trimmers tend to crush the nail and cause pain even if you are not in the quick.

You should always have styptic powder available. This is sold in pet stores under several trade names, but it will be labeled for use in trimming nails.

Why should I have my female dog spayed?

Spaying offers several advantages. The female's heat periods 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. They seem to go over, around, and through many doors or fences. Your dog will have a heat period about every six months.

Spaying is the removal of the uterus and the ovaries. Therefore, heat periods 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 the female dog gets older, there is a significant incidence of mammary tumors 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 is usually performed around six months of age. However, there are certain situations, based on breed/weight, that may require waiting until your puppy is older, to spay. Please discuss with your veterinarian.

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. 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 old (or later, depending on breed/weight recommendations).

Can you recommend something for pet identification?

The most widely recommend 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 world. We strongly recommend microchipping all pets.

Guam Specific Concerns?

Please see our handout discussing a variety of extra concerns, while living on Guam (toad poisoning, tick disease, heat stroke, etc).