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## **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 will give you the information you need to make good decisions regarding your puppy.

We are grateful that you have chosen us to help you with your puppy's health care. If you have questions related to your puppy's health, please feel free to call us. Our entire staff will be 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.



### ***How do I discipline a puppy?***

Disciplining a young puppy may be necessary if its behavior threatens people or property. Harsh punishment, however, should be avoided. Hand clapping and using shaker cans or horns can be intimidating enough to inhibit undesirable behavior. Remote punishment, however, 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 dog diseases. Fortunately, we have the ability to prevent several of these diseases by vaccinating your pet. To be effective, these vaccines must be given as a series of injections. Ideally, they are to be given at about 6, 9, 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, including distemper, hepatitis, parainfluenza virus, parvovirus, and rabies. The first four diseases are vaccinated against in one combined injection that is given in a series at 6, 9, 12, and 16 weeks

of age. The rabies vaccine is given at 12 to 16 weeks of age. There are two 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 disease vaccine should be given to dogs that are likely to be exposed to ticks, because ticks transmit Lyme disease. Please be sure to talk with us about these vaccinations on your next visit.

### ***Why does my puppy need more than one vaccination?***

When a puppy nurses it receives temporary immunity through its mother's milk. This immunity is delivered in the form of proteins called "maternal antibodies." For about twenty-four to forty-eight hours after birth, the puppy's intestine absorbs these antibodies directly into the blood stream. This immunity is beneficial 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. In fact, 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 by the puppy, and the number of vaccines given to the puppy. Because we do not know when an individual puppy will lose its short-term immunity, we give a series of vaccinations. We hope that at least two of these injections will fall within the window of time when the puppy has lost immunity from its mother but has not yet been exposed to disease. Additionally, a single vaccination, even if effective, is not likely to stimulate the puppy's long-term immunity, which is so important.



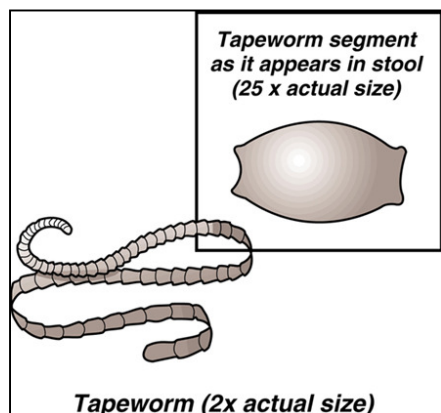
The rabies vaccine is an exception, because one injection given at the proper time is enough to produce long-term immunity.

### ***Do all puppies have worms?***

Intestinal parasites are very common in puppies. Puppies can become infected with parasites before they are born or thereafter through their mother's milk. A microscopic examination of a stool sample will usually help us determine the presence of intestinal parasites. We recommend a stool sample exam for all puppies. But whether or not we get a stool sample, we recommend the use of a deworming product because a puppy does not pass worm eggs every day so the stool sample may not detect worms that are actually present. Additionally, some internal parasites can be transmitted to humans. Our deworming medication is safe and effective against several common dog worms and has no side effects. Deworming is done once and then repeated in about three weeks. It is important that deworming be repeated because the medication kills only the adult worms. After three to four weeks the larval stage worms will become adults and will need to be treated. Dogs remain susceptible to reinfection with hookworms and roundworms throughout their lives. Periodic deworming throughout the dog's life is recommended for outdoor dogs.

Tapeworms are one of the most common intestinal parasites of dogs. Puppies become infected with these parasites when they swallow fleas. The eggs of the tapeworm live inside fleas.

When a flea bites and the dog chews or licks its skin, the flea may be swallowed. As the flea is digested within the dog's intestine the tapeworm hatches and then anchors itself to the dog's intestinal lining. Thus, exposure to fleas may continually result in new infections. Tapeworm infections can occur in as little as two weeks.



Dogs infected with tapeworms will pass small worm segments 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, the worms 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 at the clinic and not find them, and then you may see them at home 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. 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.

Heartworm preventatives are prescribed according to your dog's weight. As the dog's weight increases, the dosage should also increase. Please follow 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 dog food is acceptable. Any formulation 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 food types 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 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 the others. 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 long. 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.

TV commercials for dog food can be very misleading. You might notice that TV 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. These "gourmet" foods, however, 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 so-called gourmet foods, you will notice that they do not claim to be "complete and balanced". If your dog eats a gourmet food for 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. These are reasons why we do not recommend the "gourmet" foods for your dog.



### ***How often should I feed my puppy?***

There are several "right" ways to feed a puppy. 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. Whatever is not eaten within thirty minutes is to be 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 age three to four months and then perhaps cut back on another meal later. If the puppy ignores a certain feeding 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. Other dogs, however, tend to overeat and become obese. Therefore, 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 or her new home. The length of time training must continue depends on both the puppy and you. Some puppies learn faster than others. Of course, your puppy wants to please you. But a puppy's memory is short, so your patience is very important. A home with a poorly trained puppy is not a happy home for either 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 puppy 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 placing 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 done so the puppy can learn the way to the door and to the scent post. Let the puppy sniff about. The moment the puppy has done its business, pat him or her on the head and immediately bring the puppy into the house. Do not let the puppy 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 the puppy near the scent post. Never play with your puppy until after he or she has been taken outside 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 or her to the scent post. Then scrub the area of mishap thoroughly until all odors are gone. We can 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.

### ***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, 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.

### ***What can be done about fleas on my puppy?***

Fleas do not stay on your puppy all of the time. Occasionally, they jump off and seek another host. Therefore, it is important to kill any fleas on your new puppy before they can become established in your house. But beware! Many of the flea control products that are safe for adult dogs are not safe for puppies younger than four months. 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 products available that prevent heartworm disease as well as prevent 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 and are replaced by the 42 adult (permanent) teeth by about six months. Therefore, chewing is a puppy characteristic that you can expect until about age six to seven months. It is important that you 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." This is also normal, and will last only until the puppy matures.

### ***Can I trim my puppy's sharp toenails?***

Puppies have very sharp toenails. They may be trimmed with your regular fingernail clippers or with nail trimmers made for dogs and cats. Be very careful! 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 not cut into the quick.

If your dog has black nails, you will not be able to see the quick. Therefore, only cut 1/32" (1 mm) of the nail at a time until the dog begins to get sensitive. 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.

### ***What are ear mites?***

Ear mites are tiny parasites that live in the ear canal of dogs (and cats). The most common sign of ear mite infection is scratching of the ears. Sometimes the ears will appear dirty because of a

black material in the ear canal. This material is sometimes shaken out of the ear by the dog. The instrument we use for examining the ear canals, an otoscope, has the necessary magnification to allow us to see mites. Sometimes, we can find the mites by taking a small amount of the black material from the ear canal and examining it under a microscope. Although the mites may leave the ear canal for short periods of time, they spend the vast majority of their lives within the protection of the ear canal. Transmission of mites generally requires direct ear-to-ear contact. That is why ear mites are common in puppy litters if the mother has ear mites or if they the puppies are kept in a dirty environment.

Ear infections are the most common cause of the production of dark discharge from the ear canal. It is important that you bring your puppy for us to examine so we can be sure that the black material is due to ear mites and not due to infection. Please do not ask us to just dispense medication without having the opportunity to make an accurate diagnosis. Because any infection can be serious, your pet's health hangs in the balance.

### ***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. In many cases, despite your best efforts the female will become pregnant.

Spaying is the removal of the uterus and the ovaries. After these are removed, heat periods no longer occur. Spaying prevents unplanned or unwanted litters of puppies.

As female dogs gets older, there is a significant incidence of breast cancer and uterine infections. Spaying a dog 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 can be done at any time between four and six months of age.

### ***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, which causes difficulty in urinating and defecating. Neutering will solve, or greatly help, all of these male dog problems. The surgery can be performed any time after the dog is six months old.

### ***If I choose to breed my female dog, how old should she be?***

If you plan to breed your female, she should first have at least one or two heat periods. She will then be more physically mature, which will allow her to be a better mother. We do not recommend breeding after five years of age unless she has been bred prior to that. Having her first litter after five years of age increases the risk of complications during the pregnancy or delivery. Once your dog has had her last litter, she should be spayed to prevent the reproductive problems often experienced by older dogs.

### ***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 United States and Canada. We strongly recommend microchipping all pets.

### ***Are there any emergency tips that I should know?***

There are several emergency situations that are common. The following recommendations are important:

In any emergency situation, keep the pet as quiet as possible and try to conserve heat by covering it with bedding or newspapers. If necessary, apply the **A, B, C** of first aid:

- A**     Airway
- B**     Breathing
- C**     Cardiac function

**Airway** – Anything that obstructs the airway prevents oxygen entering the lungs. Do your best to clear the mouth and throat of any obstruction such as vomitus, saliva or foreign bodies such as grass, sticks or balls. Be careful; your pet may bite you in panic.

**Breathing** – If your dog is unconscious and does not appear to be breathing, try gently pumping the chest with the palm of your hand, at the same time feeling just behind the elbow to detect a heartbeat or pulse. Close the muzzle with your hand and blow into the nostrils. This is best accomplished by covering the pet's nose with your mouth. Be careful. Injured pets may bite you out of fear. If you are unsure about the health or vaccination status of the injured pet, avoid contact with bodily fluids and blood.

**Cardiac function** – If you are unable to detect a heartbeat or pulse or if it appears weak and slow, try pressing on the chest with your palm. Five (5) chest compressions followed by one to two (1-2) deep breaths is a simple form of animal cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

### **Specific First Aid:**

**Blood Loss** - Once you have checked A, B, C above and if the bleeding is severe, try to stop it. If bleeding is from a cut pad or paw, apply a dressing using a piece of bandage or clothing. If the bleeding persists and is soaking through the bandage, this is a medical emergency. Most bleeding wounds will require medical or surgical treatment. If the wounds are treated within four (4) hours, they can often be sutured. Deep cuts treated after four hours have increased risk of infection and complication.

**Burns and Scalds** - Cool the burned area with cold water as quickly as possible. Cover the burned area with damp towels. If the injury is due to a caustic substance, rinse with cold water for fifteen (15) minutes and contact us immediately.

**Eye Injuries** - Injuries to the eye are always very painful. If a foreign body (grass awn, stick, etc.) can be seen, it may be possible to remove it by gently rinsing the eye with eye wash or contact saline solution. We should examine the pet as soon as possible.

**Seizures** - Seizures can be due to many causes. These range from eclampsia (milk fever) to epilepsy. If due to eclampsia, remove the puppies from the mother immediately. All dogs that are seizing or have had a recent seizure should be kept in a dark, quiet, confined area until medical help can be obtained. Contact us immediately.

**Heat Stroke** - This most commonly occurs in hot weather when dogs are left in cars without adequate ventilation. In very hot environments, body temperature rises quickly and dramatically. Clinical signs of heat stroke are excessive panting and obvious distress quickly followed by coma and perhaps even death. Immediately reduce the pet's body temperature as quickly as possible by using cool water. Call us so we will know that the dog is on the way to the hospital. Transport the dog to the hospital while it is still wet. Keep the car windows open. Evaporation will help reduce body temperature. Avoid using ice or ice water, because this may drop the temperature too quickly and cause additional complications.

***Any other questions?***

If you have any other questions about the proper care of your puppy, just let us know. We love your pet just like you do and want to do everything we can to help ensure that it has a healthy, happy life.

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*This client information sheet is based on material written by Ernest Ward, DVM.  
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