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## **Your New Puppy**

Congratulations on getting your new puppy. It is such an exciting time for you and the family. There will certainly be times when you are being driven mad by this little creature who has very simple priorities – fun, fun, fun, food, fun. It will be worth it though, because your pup is going to be a wonderful character who will always make you smile and very soon you'll not be able to imagine life without him/her. Take stacks of photos, because before you know it he/she will be all grown up!

### ***Settling in:***

When your puppy first arrives at his/her new home it can be a very stressful experience. For the first week, try to feed the same food at the same times as he/she has been used to. Ensure that your puppy has a safe place where he/she can retreat. You may think a puppy crate looks like a cage, but to your pup his/her crate actually becomes their bed and safe haven for when the big outside world is a bit overwhelming.

### ***Feeding:***

Young puppies should be fed 4 meals, evenly spaced throughout the day. We recommend feeding a diet which is specially formulated for growth. These diets should have the words "complete" and "puppy" on the label. If your puppy is a large breed it is important to not let him/her grow too fast as this predisposes to joint disease. Some puppy foods are specially formulated for large breed dogs and have a different nutritional balance encouraging slower, steady growth which allows joints to form properly.

It is important to make any changes to your puppy's diet gradually. Slowly increase the proportion of new food and decrease the proportion of old food over 1-2 weeks to avoid diarrhoea.

How much food your puppy needs varies depending on the brand of food and your pup's own metabolic rate. It is very important not to let your puppy get overweight because fat laid down as a puppy is very hard to work off later in life. Obesity can cause and compound many health problems such as diabetes, heart disease and joint disease. If your puppy is the correct weight you should be able to feel but not see your puppy's ribs and spine and there should be an obvious waist. We can give nutrition information and are very happy to weigh your puppy regularly and give advice on feeding.

Your puppy should have fresh water available at all times, including overnight.

### ***Vaccination:***

Vaccination will protect your puppy against Distemper, Parvovirus, Parainfluenza, Hepatitis and Leptospirosis. In order to achieve good immunity your puppy needs to be vaccinated twice. The first vaccine can be given from 8 weeks old, the second vaccine is then given 2-4

weeks later. Adequate immunity is not achieved until 1 week after the 2<sup>nd</sup> vaccine, so you should keep your puppy out of public areas until then.

After the puppy vaccinations your dog will need a health check every year to make sure no problems develop unchecked. At this time we can give a booster to ensure that his/her immunity does not wane. Although it is essential to vaccinate, both to protect your own dog and to keep diseases at bay in the community at large, we use vaccines which have a long duration of action for distemper, hepatitis and parvovirus so once your pup is all grown up we don't need to boost the immunity to all the diseases every year.

There are other vaccines available but these are largely given on an 'at risk' basis. It is a good idea to vaccinate against kennel cough if your pup will be socialising with lots of other dogs in boarding kennels and at training classes. The vaccine should be given at least 1 week prior to your puppy being in close contact with large groups of dogs. Should you wish to take your puppy abroad one of the things you need to do is vaccinate against Rabies. We can take you through the process of getting a pet passport. Please ask if you need any further details.

### ***Worming:***

Puppies often are infected with roundworms. It is important to worm young puppies regularly. We can recommend a worming protocol tailored to you and your puppy's circumstances. Wormers supplied by pet shops are not always effective since the worms are often resistant to them, but not to worry, we can prescribe very effective wormers that are really easy to administer.

### ***Fleas:***

Unfortunately all dogs are susceptible to infestation with fleas. Fleas can bite people and cause skin irritation in many dogs. We can supply 'spot on' treatments which are effective, safe and easy to use. For full flea protection in your home we can also supply a spray for your carpets and furniture. Pet shop flea sprays, powders and collars are not always effective since they aren't very powerful and they don't last very long.

### ***Identification:***

Identification is important in case your puppy gets lost or is stolen. It is a legal requirement to have your name and address on a tag securely attached to your puppy's collar. Note that you don't have to have the dog's name on their tag and many people choose not to in order to make it harder for thieves to pass a dog off as their own. We also strongly recommend having your puppy microchipped. This is a tiny chip that is injected under the skin at the back of the neck. It contains a barcode that is unique and registered to your puppy. Should your puppy get lost or stolen, any vets, rescue centres or dog wardens can scan your puppy and find out whom he/she belongs to. Microchipping is quick and easy to do in a routine appointment. No sedation is required.

### ***Pet insurance:***

We highly recommend insuring your puppy. Pet insurance will pay your vet bills for any accident or disease. This means that if your puppy has a problem you can give him/her the best care possible without having to worry about cost. Please ensure that your insurance policy will pay out on problems for the whole life of your pet, not just for the first year in which they occur. Without this 'lifetime' cover, long term conditions may be excluded and not paid for. Pet insurance usually also covers 3<sup>rd</sup> party liability, which is important in case your pet causes any damage or injury.

### ***Training:***

You should start training your new puppy as soon as possible, both for your sake and your dog's. 'Training' may not sound like much fun but it will actually challenge your pup to use

his/her mind. Dogs need mental stimulation just like people do, and it will help build a relationship between you that will last a lifetime. Puppy classes are a good place to start. Here your pup will learn how to interact with others. Just like kids need to learn how to behave with other children and with adults, your puppy needs to learn how to behave with other dogs and people. He/she will also need to learn the signals that people and other dogs give and learn how to interpret and respond to them. Once your puppy knows how to behave in our world, he/she will make a much easier and happier pet. With this grounding you could even go on and have a go at other dog activities like dancing with dogs, agility, flyball, trialling, cani-X and much more.

### ***Exercise:***

The amount of exercise your puppy should have varies depending on the breed. Puppies tend to either be very active or flat out asleep, with not much in between. It is important not to over exercise puppies, particularly the larger breeds, as it is thought that this may accelerate signs of joint disease, should your pup be unfortunate enough to be predisposed to this. Puppies should have frequent short walks and we can advise you on how much your puppy will need. A good rule of thumb is to regard going out for a walk not as a distance but as an experience. Your walk should be made up of introducing your pup to new things, socialising him/her with other dogs and all sorts of people and doing very short and sweet bits of training.

### ***Teeth:***

One of the main health problems affecting older dogs is dental disease. In order to prevent this you should start training your pup to have his/her teeth brushed as early as possible. With the many yummy pet toothpaste flavours available they may well start to enjoy it! At the same time it is important that your pup gets used to having his/her mouth, eyes, ears, feet and nails examined and also being groomed.

### ***Health checks:***

It is important to have your puppy checked by a vet regularly. This allows us to pick up any problems early and to stop them progressing. It also allows you to discuss any worries or queries with us. We do a free health check for all puppies who have their vaccinations with us. This is usually done at 6 months old so please come armed with all your questions.

### ***Neutering:***

Girls: If you are not planning to breed from your puppy when she is older we recommend that you spay her. Quite apart from the inconvenience of messy seasons and over eager boys, there are serious problems that can plague entire bitches. They are at a much higher risk of mammary tumours than spayed bitches and this risk increases with each un-bred season that goes by. 50% of mammary tumours in bitches are malignant. Entire bitches can also get serious and life threatening womb infections.

Bitches are usually spayed at 6 months old before their 1<sup>st</sup> season. However there are pros and cons to the timing which we are happy to discuss with you.

Boys: The decision as to whether to castrate dogs is more dependant on their personality. Although entire dogs can suffer prostate problems, perineal hernias and testicular tumours these are generally more easily treated than the problems the poor entire gurlies experience. Some entire dogs wander, become aggressive and display socially unacceptable sexual behaviours. These traits will often completely resolve within a few months of castration, particularly if it is done earlier, before the behaviours become habit.

We can neuter your dog from 6 months old but prefer to wait until they are fully grown if there are no pressing behavioural issues.

Although any elective surgery is daunting the dogs usually recover amazingly fast and before you know it are back to their normal bouncy selves.

**Hope Vets:**

Should you have any worries or queries about your puppy's health or development we are very happy to chat with you. Give us a call on 01442 833 198.



**ENJOY YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND!**