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Puppy Care Guidelines

Congratulations on the newest addition to your family! Your puppy will bring joy and unconditional love to your lives. In return, you will need to provide love and care for him or her. Preventive health care is an important first step which includes vaccines, deworming, a nurturing environment, and a balanced diet.

Vaccinations

Many serious canine diseases have vaccines available to protect your pet. The protection your puppy received from its mother's milk gradually decreases over the first few months of life. As the puppy matures, he or she should receive a series of vaccines to stimulate its own immune system to produce the antibodies necessary to prevent disease.

<i>Core Vaccines</i>	<i>Recommended Vaccines</i>
<p><u>Distemper Combination</u></p> <p>This vaccine combines protection against four viruses including Distemper, Hepatitis, Parainfluenza, and Parvovirus. These are common and potentially fatal diseases so it is recommended that all dogs be vaccinated with this vaccine. Puppies can begin the series as early as 6 weeks of age and should receive boosters every 2-4 weeks until they are 16 weeks old in order to ensure their immune system is competent. Dogs older than 16 weeks old should still receive two injections 2-4 weeks apart to provide the best protection. The vaccine is boosted after 1 year then every 3 years throughout the dog's life.</p> <p><u>Rabies</u></p> <p>Rabies is a very serious disease with important public health considerations. Wisconsin state law requires that all dogs over 5 months of age be vaccinated; yet, puppies must be older than 12 weeks to receive the vaccine. The initial vaccine is boosted in 1 year then every 3 years; however, local requirements may vary so you should check with city laws if you relocate.</p>	<p><u>Leptospirosis</u></p> <p>Leptospirosis is caused by bacteria that can harm your dog's liver and kidneys. It is transmitted through urine from infected animals. All dogs are considered at risk for disease, particularly if they are exposed to swamps, ponds, and other bodies of water so we recommend that all dogs be vaccinated. We can provide protection against 4 types of Leptospirosis by combining the vaccine with the distemper vaccine all in one shot or as a separate vaccine for the necessary annual boosters.</p> <p><u>Lyme</u></p> <p>Lyme disease is spread through ticks and both are very prevalent in this area. Although not 100% protective, the Lyme vaccine lowers your dog's chances of getting Lyme disease. The Lyme vaccine is initially given to dogs over 9 weeks of age, boosted in 2-3 weeks, then given annually.</p> <p><u>Bordetella</u></p> <p>Kennel cough is a stubborn respiratory infection that can keep dogs coughing for months. Because the bacteria are easily spread through the air, dogs at high risk include those going to a boarding kennel, doggie daycare, groomer, obedience class, or dog park. The vaccine is simply squirted in the mouth and provides protection within just a few days. It is boosted annually for dogs at risk.</p>
	

Parasites

Intestinal Parasites

There are a variety of intestinal parasites that can infect dogs. Almost all puppies are born with parasites regardless of their upbringing, so we will be sending home a medication for the two most common parasites (roundworms and hookworms). However, we still recommend doing a fecal exam now and again around 6-8 months to be sure your puppy has not been reinfected and does not have other intestinal parasites. This way your puppy gets treatment for the most common worms and we can treat with the proper medication if he or she is infected with other intestinal parasites. Many intestinal parasites are zoonotic meaning that humans can become infected so treating your puppy early on will improve his or her health, reduce your risk, and help keep your yard sanitary.

Fleas and Ticks



Fleas and ticks can transmit such diseases as tapeworms, Lyme disease, and Anaplasmosis to your pet. We recommend monthly topical products such as Frontline Plus and Vectra 3D to protect your dog against these parasites. We usually see the first wave of ticks by mid-March when the snow starts to melt and a second wave in mid-September when it starts to cool off. The second wave will last until the snow stays on the ground, usually in December. Fleas are typically worst during the fall but can be found year-round, especially if a flea infestation has formed on one of your pets. If fleas or flea dirt are found on your puppy, at least 3 consecutive months of flea control are needed for all pets in the household to get the infestation under control. Environmental decontamination measures such as weekly vacuuming, sweeping, and washing of bedding are important considerations as well. Insecticides may also be applied throughout the pet's environment to get the infestation under control more quickly. Please ask us for more information if you are currently handling a flea infestation.

Heartworm Disease

Heartworm larvae are spread by mosquitoes during the spring, summer and fall in this area. The larvae migrate to the dog's heart and lungs where they grow into spaghetti-sized worms. Treatment of disease is often successful although prevention is much safer and cheaper. Puppies should be started on preventative medication immediately while dogs over 6 months of age with potential exposure to the disease need to be tested before medication is started. The American Heartworm Society recommends year-round preventative for better compliance and intestinal parasite control (Heartgard Plus controls roundworms and hookworms while Iverhart Max controls roundworms, hookworms, and tapeworms). For those of us living in northern climates, please give preventative at least from May through December if not year-round (although continue year-round treatment if you travel south with your pet during the winter). Heartworm testing is performed every other year to ensure the preventative was effective and your pet is heartworm-free.

Spaying and Neutering

Millions of dogs are destroyed every year simply due to lack of homes. Rather than bringing more puppies into the world, help the ones that are already here by spaying or neutering your dog between the ages of 4-6 months. Not only will this decrease overpopulation, it will also decrease the risks of certain types of cancer, territorial fighting, roaming, unwanted behaviors, and generally will help your dog be a better pet.

Microchipping

The microchip is the size of a grain of rice and can be placed under the skin of your dog similar to a vaccination. It can be scanned by veterinary clinics and animal shelters to give us a specific ID that is connected with your contact information in order to reunite you with your pet. We recommend microchipping all pets, regardless of their risk of straying, to help you prepare for unplanned emergencies and disasters such as house fires, floods, and tornadoes.

Nutrition

A smorgasbord of brands and marketing claims have made it difficult for owners to decide what type of dog food to purchase nowadays. And it's an important decision since buying a high-quality food from a reputable company will give your puppy a complete and balanced diet while also providing you with less waste in your yard as premium foods with less fillers are more digestible. The AAFCO statement is the first place you should look when buying a bag of pet food since all foods are required to be AAFCO certified. The second place you should look is whether or not the food's nutritional standards have been met through feeding trials or formulation tests. We typically prefer foods that have had feeding trials versus formulations because they have been proven to be digestible and nutritionally available to the animal. The third place to look on the bag is to ensure that the food is labeled for "growth" or "all life stages" so that your puppy won't suffer from nutrient deficiencies. Lastly, manufacturers have developed large and small breed formulas. Large breed (dogs over 50 pounds at maturity) formulas help to decrease the risk of hip dysplasia by reducing the calories and providing a slower growth rate. Your large breed puppy will still reach his or her full size and growth potential but at a slower and more steady rate. Small breed formulas have smaller kibbles for smaller mouths and more calories for the higher metabolism of small breeds.



Food should be provided at specified meal times 2-3 times a day for regularity of nutrients and house training. We recommend feeding your puppy a high-quality puppy food until he or she reaches about 85% of their adult size (typically 9-12 months old) before transitioning over to adult food. More importantly, though, is to avoid feeding excessive calories to your puppy, particularly after getting spayed or neutered, to avoid obesity and musculoskeletal problems. We are more than happy to teach you how to score your puppy's body condition in order to maintain an ideal weight throughout its life. Remember that when you reward good behaviors, treats and table scraps can unbalance a high quality diet; therefore, we suggest feeding their regular food as treats or providing low-calorie healthy options such as carrots, green beans, or apple slices. To avoid possible toxic side effects, please avoid giving your pets certain foods such as grapes, raisins, onions, coffee, chocolate, and xylitol (a common gum ingredient).

Oral Care

Your puppy's baby teeth are typically replaced by adult teeth between the ages of 3-6 months. This means that chewing behaviors are a completely normal process of development for your puppy for quite a long time. Please provide your puppy with an assortment of puppy-friendly chew toys with different textures to soothe their mouth and provide them with a distraction. As a puppy, it is important to get them used to handling their mouth so that as an adult you can more easily brush their teeth and provide adequate oral preventive care. Teeth are a very important organ for your pet to eat and play and can be a source of pain and infection when diseased, so getting a head-start with preventive care allows your dog to live a long and healthy life. We have many different flavors of pet toothpaste and different options of toothbrushes and would gladly show you how best to brush your dog's teeth once their permanent teeth are in.

Behavior and Training

Understanding your dog's behavior and practicing training techniques will dramatically improve the bond between you and your dog. Puppies as young as 6 weeks old can already learn simple commands such as "sit" and "shake". Teaching your dog these behaviors will provide him or her with mental stimulation which is equally as important as physical exercise. An important socialization period in dogs is between the ages of 4-12 weeks in which they can develop fears of unfamiliar people, pets, or objects so please expose your puppy to as many positive experiences as possible during this time. The Menomonie area has several dog trainers with puppy classes which we highly recommend not only for the training tips but also for the socialization aspect. Applying proper techniques for housetraining, crate training, and bite inhibition will help reduce future behavioral problems and make your home a happier place for everyone.



Recommended Websites

Our Clinic: www.brakkenveterinaryclinic.com

General Health Information: www.veterinarianpartner.com

Parasite Information: www.capcvet.org

Behavioral Information: <http://indoorpet.osu.edu/>

Poison and Pet Care Information: www.aspca.org