

# Dog Health Information

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## A Brief Summary

- ✓ Annual health assessment and vaccination against Leptospirosis, Distemper, Parvo, and Hepatitis.
- ✓ Feed either Hills Science Diet, Eukanuba, Proplan, Royal Canin or James Wellbeloved. Avoid supermarket foods like Iams, Bakers, Pal, Chudleys, and Pedigree Chum. Feed real food as a treat.
- ✓ Keep their teeth clean by brushing and encouraging chewing on rawhide chews.
- ✓ Deworm with Milbemax every 3 months especially if children are in their environment.
- ✓ Flea treatment for 12 months of the year with Frontline Combo every 8 weeks. Minimum treatment period should extend from Spring through to Winter until well after a few good frosts.
- ✓ Neuter from about 6 months of age.
- ✓ Microchip your dog to help find it when lost (an added bonus is our microchips have a built in thermometer so no more struggling with rectal thermometers).
- ✓ Insure your dog against accident, illness and 3rd party damages. Choose wisely, the more expensive policies are often better in the long run.
- ✓ Socialise your puppy properly between 7 and 17 weeks of age. This is a crucial time for learning and you can't go back.
- ✓ Most of the above is available at a 10% discount if you join our Pet Health Club.

## Health Assessments and Vaccination

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Unless properly vaccinated, your dog runs the risk of contracting one of several infectious diseases. We consider each individual's needs on an annual basis during their health assessment.

We recommend puppies have their first set of injections 2 weeks apart beginning at 8 weeks of age, and then follow these with annual health assessments and booster injections. The frequency at which we give boosters against specific diseases varies. Leptospirosis is given every year but Parvovirus, Distemper and Hepatitis are given every 3rd year as these hold immunity for much longer and we are cautious not to over-vaccinate. An option at the 3rd year is to blood test to see if the patient requires a booster (leptospirosis is required annually) but not all kennels accept this as proof of protection.

The following diseases are covered by vaccination:

### **Canine Parvovirus**

Canine Parvovirus is a small but extremely hardy virus that can survive in the environment

for long periods. The disease first emerged in the 1970's as an epidemic, killing many thousands of dogs before an effective vaccination became available. It causes a bloody diarrhoea and vomiting syndrome and can be fatal especially in younger or dogs with a lowered immune system. We see approximately 1 case a year.

### **Canine Distemper (Hard Pad)**

A virus spread mainly by close dog to dog contact. Signs may take up to three weeks to appear and include a discharge from the nose and eyes, a soft cough and neurological signs. Dogs less than one year of age are most commonly affected and it is frequently fatal. The disease is rare.

### **Infectious Canine Hepatitis (Adenovirus)**

Canine Adenovirus, which mainly attacks the liver, can rapidly be fatal. Transmission is by close dog to dog contact or contact with items that have been in contact with an infected dog. Dogs are most commonly affected in the first year of life, but all ages are susceptible. The main sign you will see is a poorly dog and you may notice their gums and whites of their eyes appear yellow (jaundice). The disease is rare.

### **Leptospirosis**

Leptospirosis is caused by a bacterium that spreads in the urine of infected animals and is associated with stagnant water. It can spread by skin contact with the affected water or urine, and can cause disease in humans. It can affect several body organs causing liver disease, kidney disease or sudden death. We see approximately 1 case every 2 years.

### **Kennel Cough Syndrome**

(Infectious Canine Tracheobronchitis)

'Kennel Cough' is a contagious upper respiratory disease usually occurring where dogs are in close contact - boarding kennels, rescue centres, shows, dog training etc. The main symptom you will be aware of is a hacking cough that may take weeks to go away. Some dogs can be quite ill with it. A variety of infectious agents may be involved. The vaccine is administered via the nasal passages and is therefore given separately from all of the above. We see about 1 case a month.

## **Puppy Socialisation**

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### **What is socialisation and why is it so important?**

Socialisation is the process by which your puppy learns to recognise and interact with the people and animals it lives with. By learning to interact with these other animals and humans, puppies develop important communication skills. These skills enable them to recognise whether or not they are being threatened and how to respond and react to the intentions of others.

Habituation is the process whereby your puppy becomes accustomed to non-threatening environmental stimuli such as vacuum cleaners, hairdryers, fireworks, traffic etc and learns to ignore it and is not threatened by it.

### **Why is it so important?**

Proper socialisation and habituation at an early age is vital if the puppy is to grow up being a sound and happy individual.

Puppies do most of their learning in the first few months of their lives. This is known as the 'critical period' in which the bulk of socialisation should take place. The time up to 16 weeks of age is crucial for learning. Although the puppy can still learn to be socialised after this age, learning takes place a lot slower. If your puppy is exposed to all sorts of sounds and sights in his early life, he is less likely to become fearful when presented with them later on.

### **How to socialise your puppy.**

Make sure your puppy meets as many different people in his early life as possible. This includes adults, teenagers, children, toddlers and babies. Make the sure the introductions are always positive and provide any new people with treats or a toy to give to the puppy. This way, your puppy will come to see strangers as something positive.

Introduce your puppy to lots of different dogs of different breeds and ages. Choose the dogs carefully, as you do not want him to have a bad experience at this stage. If you know other people with young dogs, try and get together as often as possible so that they can interact. This is vital if your puppy is to learn appropriate 'social' skills and will make him more comfortable around other dogs.

While your puppy is still young get him used to sounds like hairdryers, washing machines, lawnmowers etc. reward him with lots of praise and treats if he does not react fearfully. If he does seem afraid, do not reassure him, as this will only reinforce the fear. Switch the machine off, or reduce the distance from the puppy until he feels more confident, and then reward him. You will just have to go slower with a more nervous type of puppy.

Introduce your puppy to other animals such as cats, livestock, chickens, horses etc. Even if this is from a short distance, if he sees them as a young dog, he is less likely to react negatively when older.

### **What should you do if your puppy shows fear during socialisation?**

Don't overreact. If you panic or become over protective and make reassuring noises, the puppy will think there is something to be worried about. Appear unaffected and calm and your puppy should follow suit. Reward him with a pat or treat once he is feeling brave again.

Don't pressurise the puppy into approaching something new. Let him approach the object on his own. You need to stay as quiet as possible and pretend to do something else or appear disinterested. When the puppy approaches on his own and is comfortable, give him a treat.

If there is something that the puppy is very worried about, expose him to it as much as possible but only from a distance at first so that it appears less scary. As he gets used to it, you can gradually increase the exposure to it.

Remember to always reward good, calm, brave behaviour. If your puppy does react fearfully, be careful not to reinforce the behaviour with reassurance. Wait until he calms down and then reward him. But most of all enjoy your puppy and make the most of your time spent with him in this sensitive period.

## Nutrition

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Probably the most important part of caring for your dog will be making sure it eats healthy food. Nutrition has an important influence on long-term health and helps prevent disease.

### **Choosing a food**

The pet food manufacturers want you to feed their specific brand to your dog. They all market their brands in the same way claiming that they are healthy and wholesome on the bag but beware there are a wide range of foods available. A good analogy is the difference between healthy human food and junk food. The majority of pet food is junk food. Because owners select pet food based on whether their pets want to eat it, the food manufacturers sell more junk food than healthy food. Most of the major manufacturers make a healthy version of food and we can advise you on what different healthy diets are available. We recommend and sell Hills Science Diet because they only make healthy food. Other good brands include Proplan, Eukanuba, Royal Canin and James Wellbeloved. Avoid Pedigree, Chappie, Iams, Bakers, Pal and cheap foods.

- Avoid supermarkets when choosing a food, as most of the brands available are junk food versions of better diets. Buy your food from a good pet shop or from the surgery.
- Generally the more expensive a diet the better the ingredients that went into making the food, and the more vitamins and anti-oxidants are present.
- Healthy food is tasty but junk food is even tastier, given the choice your pet will choose junk food. It's up to you to say no!
- Beware the pet food manufacturers marketing. They know what to say to get you to buy their food.
- We would also advise that you avoid soft meaty foods or tinned foods in general as they contribute to dental disease.

We recommend that puppies be fed a diet designed for growth. These generally contain a slightly higher protein and calorie content than adult foods. Adult dogs should be fed on an adult maintenance diet and dogs over 7 years of age should be fed a senior diet. Senior diets generally contain less protein, less calories and fewer salts than adult dog food to enable your dog to cope better with the demands of a more senior lifestyle. For further information on feeding your dog throughout life please book an appointment to see a nurse.

# Controlling worms in dogs

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Worms have an amazing and crafty life cycle to ensure that they survive generations and worm their way into the lives of all animals!

When a bitch becomes pregnant the hormonal changes awaken long dormant larval stages of the round worm, these larvae then make their way across the placenta and into the puppies, all this while the puppies are in their mother's womb. It doesn't end there, the larvae also make their way to the bitch's teats and into her milk to ensure that the puppies get a dose of worm larvae while they drink!

The eggs are passed out in the puppy faeces and can persist and remain infective for a long time, even after the faeces themselves have disappeared.

The Toxacara worm that has this lifecycle is the one that is transmissible to people, especially children. The eggs are found on the dog's coat and in its environment. This is why it is important to worm pregnant bitches and all puppies from the age of 2 weeks.

The other types of worms are known as tapeworms. Again they have ingenious lifecycles, this time involving another species as an intermediate host. One example of this is the tapeworm that is transmitted with the help of fleas. The flea carries the worm and when the dog grooms itself and swallows the flea the tapeworm larvae develop into adult tapeworms inside the guts of the dog.

With many types of worms there is nothing you can see with the naked eye to tell you if your dog has any worms.

## **How to solve the problem**

### **Before 6 months of age:**

From 2 weeks of age puppies should be wormed every 2 weeks till 8 weeks of age with panacur or drontal puppy. From 8 weeks of age you should worm once a month with MILBEMAX until they reach 6 months old.

Before each worming weigh your puppy to ensure the correct dose is given, we are always very happy to do this for you at the surgery. It also means your puppy comes in to see us and does not have an injection or anything else it does not like which helps in its socialisation.

### **After 6 months of age:**

From now on your puppy should be wormed every 3 months, again using Milbemax, as this is one of the very few preparations that kill ALL the common worms. Drontal Plus is another. Again accurate dosing is essential so if you do not know your dogs weight then please arrange to bring them in for us to weigh for you.

If you are planning to breed from your bitch, a worming program is a very important part of the pregnancy. If in doubt please feel free to contact the surgery for advice.

## Fleas and how to control them

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Fleas will find and feed on even the best looked after pet. They start breeding in spring and continue until the frosts arrive although indoors they can be a year round problem. Pets will initially pick up adult fleas outside the home, whilst walking or in the garden, and bring them indoors. Here they lay hundreds of eggs, which fall off into the carpets and furniture, soon contaminating the household environment.

Fleas are difficult to detect. You will not see necessarily see fleas on your pet or in the bedding. Scratching does not occur in all individuals so is not a reliable way to tell if your pets are affected. However you should suspect their presence if your pet is scratching more than usual, losing fur or getting bald patches over the back and rump. You may also see flea droppings if you part your pet's coat and look at the base of the hairs. The droppings are tiny black specs, which will stain white paper reddish brown when moistened.

### **Life Cycle**

The adult flea jumps onto your pet and stays on if it can. Should they fall off they have to get back on soon or they die. The female lays 50 eggs a day and these fall from the coat into the home environment. The eggs hatch into tiny pre-adult fleas (larvae) and then develop into adults which spin a cocoon and wait for the right moment to get onto you or your pet. A single flea will within 2 months will be responsible for 20 000 adults and 160 000 pre-adult fleas. For every flea you see there are at least 9 eggs or pre-adults in the environment.

### **Health Problems**

The female has to have a bloodmeal to be able to make her eggs and these bites can cause discomfort and irritation to your pet or yourself. Some animals (and people) become allergic to fleabites and just one fleabite can then cause severe irritation sometimes for weeks. Once an allergy has developed it cannot be cured. Flea bite allergy is the most common allergy diagnosed in pets. Fleas also transmit tapeworms to cats and dogs.

### **How to solve the problem**

Treat the animal to clear fleas from the coat and prevent re-infestation from the environment. We recommend Frontline Combo spot-on or spray.

Treat the environment by regular vacuuming and using household insecticidal sprays (we recommend Indorex) throughout the house to control the pre-adults and eggs. It is especially important to vacuum dark places like under the settees since pre-adults do not like light. Any of your pets bedding will benefit from being washed on a hot wash.

There are a great number of flea treatments available (an indication of the size of the problem.) Not all flea products are equally effective. Therefore, please consult us about the best and most effective ones for your particular needs.

# Neutering

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We recommend that all dogs are neutered, unless you specifically wish to breed from them. Neutering is called spaying when it's a girl and castration in the boys.

## **Bitches**

Bitches will come into season, on average, twice a year i.e. once every 6 months. There is some variation with some bitches having one season per year and others as many as four. A season will last for about 3 weeks, during which time the bitch loses a light but bloody discharge from the vulva. She will be attractive to male dogs that will tend to loiter near the house and harass you on walks.

A bitch who is allowed to have seasons continuously runs the risk of developing a condition known as pyometra - a dangerous infection of the uterus (womb). Pyometra is a serious and potentially fatal disease, which usually needs to be treated by removing the uterus surgically. Typically a pyometra can develop at 7 or 8 years of age, although it can arise at any age. Entire bitches or those who are spayed later in life are also more prone to developing mammary cancer although the risk is small.

Spaying involves the removal of the ovaries and uterus (womb). It involves a general anaesthetic but is typically a day procedure so your pet will normally be back home with you by the evening.

## **Males**

Male dogs tend to 'mark territory' by urinating while on walks and occasionally take to doing it in the house. They may be more aggressive towards other dogs, or even to people. They may also try to escape or go 'roaming' after bitches on heat. If these behaviour problems arise then castration may help control the problem. Castration will not control aggressive behaviour if it is not due to sexual urges.

Castration will eliminate the risk of testicular cancer and will reduce the risk of prostate disease and hernias.

We recommend neutering your dog from around 6 months of age.

If a bitch comes into season we recommend a waiting period of 3 months before we neuter her. This allows for her hormone levels to return to normal 'resting' levels and reduces the risk of bleeding during surgery.

## **Alternatives to neutering**

There are alternative treatments available instead of surgery, which involves either hormone tablets or injections which have to be repeated at appropriate intervals. However as there are serious risks associated with these medications we do not recommend them.

### **Accidental Mating**

Bitches can be mated accidentally when they are in season. If this occurs, and you do not wish the bitch to become pregnant then there are drugs available to prevent pregnancy. Please contact the surgery as soon as possible during opening hours.

## **Microchipping**

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A good quality microchip is a simple way of identifying your pet for life.

A microchip about the size of a grain of rice is implanted under the skin near the shoulders this contains a unique registration number. The number stays with your pet for its life and can be read by special scanners which most veterinary surgeries, animal organisations and some police stations have. This is a little like having your shopping scanned in a supermarket.

This allows a positive identification to be made and for you to be contacted as soon as possible.

Microchips can be used in cats, dogs, ferrets, rabbits, even tortoises and larger birds.

Unlike collars and tags, microchips can't "slip off".

Quality microchips have an extremely low failure rate but we do advise having your pet scanned each year to check their chip is still working.

It's very important that if you move or change your telephone number you alert the chip company so you can still be contacted.