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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 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 6 to 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, parainfluenza virus, parvovirus (DAPP), and rabies. The first four are included in one injection that is given at 6 to 8, 12, and 16 weeks old. Rabies vaccine is given at 12 to 16 weeks of age. The other optional vaccination, Bordetella or 'Kennel Cough' is appropriate in certain situations. Your puppy should receive a Bordetella vaccine if a trip to a boarding kennel or groomer is likely or if it will be placed in a puppy training class. 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.

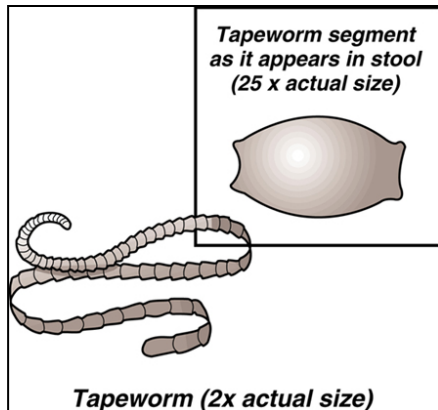


Rabies vaccine is an exception to this, since one injection given at the proper time is enough to produce long-term immunity.

### ***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. Deworming is done now and repeated in about three weeks. It is important that it be repeated because the deworming medication only kills the adult worms. Within three to four weeks, the larval stages will become adults and need to be treated. 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. 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 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 Purina Pro Plan or Purina ONE Puppy Diets. 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. d

Canned foods are another 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.

We recommend crate training for housebreaking puppies; ask us for a copy of our crate training guidelines. Another great resource is [www.getpawsitiveresults.com](http://www.getpawsitiveresults.com), a website by Teoti Anderson, a local Lexington, SC, dog trainer. Her books on housebreaking and training, available locally, are very effective and affordable.

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.

To help ‘bond’ your puppy to you and your family, veterinary behaviorists recommend temporarily putting away the food bowl and to hand feed meals to your puppy. This helps establish you and your family as ‘the great provider’ to you puppy. After week to 10 days, begin each meal by hand-feeding and then place the remainder of the ration in the puppy's bowl.

### ***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.

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

Ear infections are the most common cause for the production of a dark discharge in the ear canals. It is important that we examine your puppy to be sure the black material is due to ear

mites and not infection. Please do not ask us to just dispense medication without having the opportunity to make an accurate diagnosis.

### ***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 breast cancer 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 can be done anytime 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 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.

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

If you plan to breed your dog, she should have at least one or two heat periods first. She will then be more physically mature allowing 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 older dogs have.

### ***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 could be valuable for you to know.

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 heart beat 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 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 your veterinarian.

### **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. Seek veterinary advice 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 sought. Contact your veterinarian immediately.



**Heat stroke**

This most commonly occurs in hot weather when dogs are left in cars without adequate ventilation. Body temperature rises dramatically. Clinical signs are excessive panting and obvious distress quickly followed by coma and death. Reduce the pet's body temperature as quickly as possible using cool water and transport the dog to the veterinarian 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.

**After hours emergency care is available at the South Carolina Veterinary Specialists and Emergency Care at (803) 561-0015.**

\* See Also [www.growingupwithpets.com](http://www.growingupwithpets.com), a parent's guide to raising pets and kids together.