

Welcoming home your new puppy

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Congratulations on welcoming home your new furry family member! This is such an exciting time and we want to help make the transition into the home as smooth as possible. It is important to start proper training and routine veterinary care right away to lay the best foundation for your pet. We encourage you to read through this packet and ask us any questions you may have, or how we can help!

Exams:

A physical exam performed by a veterinarian at each of your puppy's appointments ensures your puppy is healthy enough for vaccination, identifies genetic issues, and evaluates development. As an adult, a physical exam should be performed annually since dogs age about 7 times faster than humans. Routine exams allow us to identify and treat diseases earlier, giving our pets longer lives with us.

Vaccinations:

Vaccines are an integral part of your puppy's health. When a puppy is born, the only antibodies they have are from their mother's milk. As they grow, their mother's antibodies decrease and the puppy starts to develop their own immune system. Therefore, we give a series of vaccinations to ensure they are stimulating the puppy's immune system properly, and not being blocked by maternal antibodies.

1. **Distemper combo:** This is a core vaccine and should be given every 3-4 weeks starting at 6-8 weeks old and ending at 16 weeks. It is boosted at one year, then once every 3 years. It protects against:
 - Distemper virus: damages the puppy's respiratory, gastrointestinal, and central nervous system and causes ocular and nasal infections, seizures, muscle twitches, and hard food pads. It is spread through respiratory secretions and infected animals like cats, fox, raccoons, etc.
 - Parvovirus: attacks rapidly dividing cells, including gastrointestinal, lymphoid, and bone marrow. It causes severe bloody diarrhea, lethargy, dehydration, and potential death. Puppies can contract it through contact with infected dogs, feces, soil or contaminants (shoes, toys, etc.)
 - Parainfluenza: a respiratory virus that can contribute to the signs of 'kennel cough', including difficulty breathing, coughing and conjunctivitis. It is spread through respiratory secretions.
 - Adenovirus: is also known as infectious hepatitis, and causes liver and ocular inflammation. It is spread through respiratory secretions, direct contact, and contaminated environments.
2. **Rabies** is a core vaccine because it is fatal and contagious to humans. It's spread through bite wounds by bats, skunks, and other infected animals. Rabies causes irreversible nerve damage and behavioral changes. Vaccination should be once at 16 weeks, boosted at 1 year, and then given every 3 years.
3. **Lyme** is very important in our area because of the high prevalence of ticks. Lyme disease is caused by a bacterium and is transmitted through tick bites. Infection leads to joint, heart, kidney, and cardiac disease. This should be given around 12 weeks, boosted 3-4 weeks later, and then given annually.
4. **Leptospirosis** is also important in our area due to its prevalence. It is a bacterium transmitted by wildlife urine through ponds and other water sources. It causes kidney failure in both dogs and people. Vaccination should occur around 12 weeks, boosted 3-4 weeks later, and then given yearly.
5. **Bordatella** is an optional vaccine based on your pet's lifestyle. It protects against the main causative agent of 'kennel cough'. This is frequently spread dog to dog through groomers, doggy day cares, training and boarding facilities, shows, and parks. It is given once annually, starting around 12 weeks.
6. **Canine influenza virus** is also an optional vaccine based on your pet's activities such as attending dog shows, grooming, boarding, or day care facilities, etc. This vaccine can be started around 10-12 weeks, boosted 3-4 weeks later, and then given yearly. Dog flu was reported in Minnesota in spring of 2018.

Vaccines are very safe, so side effects are usually minimal and could include lethargy, low appetite, or minor pain at the injection site. Signs of a more severe reaction are facial or injection site swelling, difficulty breathing, or repeated vomiting. Call us if you think your pet is experiencing any of these.

Parasites:

- **Intestinal:** Puppies contract intestinal parasites like roundworms, whipworms, hookworms, and tapeworms, through the soil or their mother's placenta. They cause diarrhea, weight loss, lethargy, and anemia. Some are contagious to people and can cause GI issues and blindness. Puppies should be de-wormed every 2 weeks, starting at 4 weeks and ending at 8-10 weeks old. Then a monthly heartworm prevention, like heartgard, should be started which has a de-wormer in it.
 - **Fleas:** Fleas are everywhere outdoors and cause itching, allergic reactions, anemia, and transmit other diseases like tapeworms and plague. Fleas have a very sturdy lifecycle and can survive through freezing for up to 1 year in their cocoon until conditions are right to hatch. Flea prevention is usually combined with tick prevention, and should be given year round, every 30 days.
 - **Ticks:** There are many varieties of ticks that transmit different diseases through biting and sucking blood. Most diseases cause anemia, lethargy, fever, painful joints, and more. Ticks start to come out of hibernation around 32-40°F, and we highly recommend year round prevention given every 30 days.
 - **Heartworm:** Spread by mosquitoes, heartworms live in an artery near the heart. They cause difficulty breathing, coughing, and can rupture the pulmonary artery causing death. Year round prevention given every 30 days is recommended, as well as yearly heartworm tests starting at 8-10 months old.
- While this is not an exhaustive list of potential parasites, these are the most common to which your dog will be exposed. If you have any questions, please ask us!

Types of Parasite Control:

There are numerous products on the market and it can be difficult to discern which is best for your dog. Key differences in product types are application, duration of action, and species of parasite targeted. It is important to discuss your dog's lifestyle, hunting activity, and travel history with your veterinarian in order to choose the most appropriate product. Flea and tick prevention are usually combined into one preventative, whereas heartworm and intestinal worm control are combined in a separate preventative. Below is a list of products we currently carry:

For fleas and ticks:

1. Nexgard: a chewable tablet that kills fleas and ticks for 30 days.
2. Frontline Gold: a topical product applied to the skin. Kills fleas, ticks, and chewing lice for 30 days.

For heartworms:

1. Heartgard Plus: a chewable tablet that protects against heartworms, roundworms, and hookworms for 30 days.
2. Proheart: an injectable, slow releasing formula that kills just heartworms for 6 months.

Grooming and desensitization

Begin playing with your puppy's feet, tail, mouth, and ears early so that toenail trims, grooming, and ear cleanings are easier later in life. Trim their toenails, a couple at a time, while giving lots of praise and treats when your puppy allows you to cut the nail. If they fight, hold onto the foot without cutting the nail until they stop pulling it away, then release their paw and give praise. Small steps in the right direction are better than potentially creating a negative association. Clean the ears once a week with a gentle ear solution and wipe the canal with cotton balls. Introduce brushing the coat with a soft comb once a week or as needed to keep the coat clean. Some haired breeds will need to have their hair cut at a groomer.

Feeding

While your puppy is less than 6 months old they should be fed three times a day because they don't have fat stores built up. Food should be measured, left out for about 20 minutes, then picked up. Water should be left out while you are home with the puppy. To prevent food aggressive behaviors, feed some directly from your hand, sit within arms reach of your puppy, and pet your puppy while they are eating. You can also take the food away and give a treat in its place briefly, then re-introduce the food right away. This

teaches your puppy that you aren't a threat to their food, and if you take it away, it will be ok. A high quality, AAFCO certified food labeled for puppies should be fed until 1 year of age for small to medium dogs, and until 18 months for large breed dogs since they take longer to reach maturity. Large breed dogs should also have a puppy food labeled specifically for giant breeds. These have lower amounts of calcium, phosphorus, and calories, which helps prevent excessive growth that causes bone abnormalities. Treats should not consist of more than 10% of the diet. There are thousands of types of food on the market so ask your veterinarian about any brand specific questions. We tend to recommend Hills, Purina, and Royal Canin varieties because of their extensive clinical research that backs up their product.

Current nutrition trends that can be risky:

- Raw meat diets are commonly contaminated with salmonella and other pathogens, which can cause diarrhea, dehydration, and sometimes death. Dogs have very similar GI systems as humans so if you wouldn't eat raw meat, don't feed it to your dog.
- Homemade diets can be wholesome and healthy, but only if they are formulated by a board certified veterinary nutritionist. The growth requirements of puppies are specific, and if a homemade diet is lacking or over-supplementing a vitamin or mineral, there could be long-term bone abnormalities that may not be treatable. If this is something you'd like to pursue, we can help you find a board certified nutritionist to create balanced recipes for your pup's life stage.
- Grain-free diets are unfortunately mostly a marketing ploy that has taken off with the higher awareness of human Celiac disease. Dogs are omnivores by nature (and have been for thousands of years), and digest grains with little issues. There can be a few dogs that are allergic to grains. However, majority of the time it's the protein that is allergenic. Beef is #1, then chicken, dairy, and finally wheat. What's more concerning is that new research has found dogs fed grain free diets have had higher incidences of dilated cardiomyopathy, a heart condition that is incurable.

If you have questions about any of these trends, ask us! If we cannot answer specific questions, we'd love to connect you with experts in the field who can help you.

Dental care:

Even though your puppy still has baby teeth, it's important to start daily teeth brushing now (8-12 wks) while your puppy is still in the socialization period and willing to learn. Daily brushing is the best way to prevent tartar and gingivitis from occurring, which leads to a longer life for your pet. Dental disease causes the barrier between the bloodstream and mouth to be broken down, and therefore any bacteria in the mouth can get into the rest of the body. This commonly leads to early heart, liver and kidney disease. Feeding dry food over canned will act as a mechanical scraper to reduce plaque. Rawhides and chews are also good treats, every so often. When choosing dental products, look for the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC) stamp of approval on the package. This certification means a team of board certified veterinary dentists approve of the product and its clinical research. Bones and antlers are not good chew toys because they can crack the tooth, which is extremely painful and requires surgical removal.

House training:

You always want to use positive reinforcement (rewarding the good behavior with praise, treats, toys, attention) when your puppy goes to the bathroom outside, rather than negative punishment (yelling, hitting, rubbing their nose in the mess) for going inside. Positive reinforcement has been clinically shown to work better with long-term training and decrease fear and reactive behaviors. The goal is to teach your dog what surfaces are acceptable to eliminate on, like grass and stones, and those that aren't, like rugs, tile, and bedding. A dog will continue to go back to what they find comfortable and familiar, so make sure you establish what the preferred surfaces are from the beginning. Always take your puppy outside on a leash to the bathroom area you'd like them to use first thing in the morning, right before bed, after all meals, and after exercise. These are the natural times a puppy has to go to the bathroom. This should work out to about every 2 hours. Sniffing the ground, circling, crying, or acting anxious are signs they

need to use the bathroom. As soon as they go, give lavish praise and/or a treat to reinforce the good behavior. If your puppy doesn't go right away, wait at least 10 minutes before returning inside. As your puppy grows, you can gradually increase the time between bathroom trips. Outside trips should only be for the bathroom and not playtime in the beginning so as to not confuse your puppy with what their job is when outside. Otherwise, they may wake you up in the middle of the night because they want to play outside. Always confine your puppy to a crate, pen, or puppy-proofed room when you cannot completely watch them or else they likely will go to the bathroom in the house. When your puppy does have an accident, be sure to clean it up quickly with an enzymatic cleaner to thoroughly remove the scent. Patience and consistency are the keys to success, your puppy will learn!

Crate training and sleeping

Crate training is a great way to give your puppy a safe place and 'den' for them to acknowledge as their own, as well as keeping them out of trouble. It greatly increases the success of house-training because most dogs will hold their bowels longer in order to not have to lay in their mess. The crate should be large enough that they can turn around and move, but small enough so they don't have room to mess in one end and lay at the other. For a large breed puppy, you will need a divider to decrease the size of a large crate for when they are small, and gradually move the divider back as they grow. Place the crate in a common area of the home like a family room, kitchen, or bedroom where the puppy will feel included. Keep the door open and let your puppy explore before confining them for an extended period of time. Putting treats in the crate will get your puppy to be more interested in going inside. Start confining them for small amounts of time, about 10 minutes, while you're home. This teaches the puppy that they are going to be let out soon, and reduces separation anxiety when they can see/hear you around the house. You can gradually increase the amount of time they spend in the crate as they become more comfortable with it. Pee-pads, towels or blankets can be placed in the crate to create a more welcoming environment, but toys should never be left in the crate. Inspect the crate daily for loose parts, chewed blankets, or damage from biting and replace anything needed. If your puppy isn't willing to go in their crate after giving them time and a gradual introduction, feed them breakfast and dinner in the crate with the door open while you are nearby. This helps to build a positive relationship with the crate by having human and food interaction while they are inside. If your puppy does mess in the crate, clean it up thoroughly with an enzymatic cleaner to help reduce the scent so they do not repeat the accident.

At night when your puppy cries to go out, take them out immediately. Carry them from the crate directly outside if you are able. Otherwise, they may go to the bathroom as you are trying to walk out the door. Praise the puppy for going outside, but do not give treats or reward with playtime as you would during the day. Place them back in their crate as soon as you get back in the house. Decreasing stimulation at night teaches your puppy that they are only awake to use the bathroom, and it is not time to play or eat.

Training

It is never too early to start basic training! It is important to remember to not let your puppy do anything you would not want them to do as an adult, even if it looks cute while they are young and small!

- Puppies have very short attention spans, so when they do something you asked of them, you need to reinforce that behavior within 3-5 seconds for them to associate their action with your praise or treat. It is easiest to sit or kneel on the ground with them so that you can reward them the moment they do what you ask of them. Alternatively, you can use a clicker to reinforce good behaviors and give you more time between your puppy's action and the reward.
- **Jumping** can turn into a lifelong habit if you don't teach your puppy manners while they are young. Practice the "four on the floor" rule: your puppy doesn't get any attention, treats, or praise until all four paws are on the floor. Turn your back, step away, or push your puppy off you to stop the action. As soon as they stand or sit, praise them extensively and/or give them a treat. You and all guests should greet the puppy kneeling on their level so they are not encouraged to jump to say hi.

- Chewing and biting are normal behaviors for pups; it's how they get to know their environment! Chewing is soothing for a sore mouth when permanent teeth are erupting, or it can be out of boredom. It's important to provide your puppy with plenty of strong chew toys of an appropriate size to ensure they don't use humans or furniture as an alternative. When your puppy bites you, immediately re-direct their attention to a toy to chew. Kong toys are especially durable and can be filled with food to provide longer playtime. If your puppy continually bites, remove all attention (turn or walk away) which signals to them that fun time is over when they bite. You can also yell "ouch!" loudly when your puppy bites. This mimics what dogs do when they are bitten during play (cry out). Startling your puppy with the noise usually stops them from biting for a moment, giving you a chance to re-direct their attention. If your puppy is chewing on something it should not, remove the object and say 'no' in a firm voice. Then quickly offer an appropriate alternative.
- Aggression typically results because your puppy was not introduced to something when they were young. The socialization period is when dogs learn what the world is, what's normal and what may be dangerous. This learning window ends at about 12-14 weeks. Introducing vaccinated, healthy dogs of all sizes and ages, as well as cats, car rides, children, etc. will help your pup to be comfortable with them, and not fearfully react in the future. Once a dog has aggressive tendencies, it can be very hard for them to unlearn these behaviors. A board certified behaviorist or pharmaceuticals may be needed to cope with those behaviors.
- Being restrained is important so that applying medications at home and veterinary visits are less stressful. One technique is essentially a big hug while your dog is standing. Place one arm under their belly, and your other arm around their chest/neck, holding their body close to yours. Another position is lying on their side, which we call 'lateral'. When lying, sit on the floor with their back against your knees/legs. Hold onto their 'down legs', the ones that are on the side touching the ground, close to their body. This way if they fight you, they won't be able to get their legs up underneath them to move away. Start with very small amounts of time holding them, 10 seconds max, with plenty of rewards if they are calm. If your puppy really fights you during restraint, try giving them a toy or treats to increase positive association. If they still fight/flail, speak calmly to them until they are quiet for at least 3-5 seconds, then let up. If you let them up while they are fighting restraint, they will learn they can wiggle to get out of the situation.

Spay and Neuter

Spaying (females) and neutering (males) are the common terms used for surgical sterilization. These procedures are very routine and safe. Overall, sterilized pets live longer than intact animals. For males, neutering decreases prostate disease, aggressive behaviors, roaming, marking, and eliminates testicular cancer. Females, when spayed before their first heat cycle, have a 0.5% chance of getting mammary cancer, which is common in older intact bitches. Spaying also eliminates the chance of ovarian cancer and pyometra, which is when the uterus gets infected and can be fatal. We recommend almost all animals be sterilized at 5-6 months of age. Some giant breed dogs may be sterilized later, to allow more time for growth. However, there is still ongoing research and debate at what age is best, so it's wise to discuss options with your veterinarian based on your pet's lifestyle, role, and breed. Thinking about breeding your animal? Let us know so we can advise you the best we can! Breeding takes extensive amounts of time, finances, and veterinary visits. Prior to breeding, both the stud and bitch must have genetic health checks to ensure they are not passing along potential diseases to their puppies. It is also imperative to have confirmed buyers, as sadly 10 million animals will wind up in shelters every year, and 4 million of those end up euthanized.

Insurance

Pet insurance is extremely helpful to have when emergencies hit. Most insurances allow you to choose your deductible, reimbursement, and maximum coverage so you can tailor it to your budget. The companies we have the most experience with and recommend are Trupanion, Embrace, and Pet Plan.