

Welcoming home your new puppy

Congratulations on welcoming your new family member to your home. This is an exciting time and we want to help make your puppy's transition into its new home as smooth as possible. In order to lay the best foundation for a happy, healthy pet, it is important to start proper training and routine veterinary care right away. We hope the information below will be helpful. If you have any questions or concerns, please call us.

Exams:

Your puppy will receive a thorough physical exam at each of their appointments. This will ensure that your puppy is healthy enough to receive vaccines, as well as evaluate development, and identify any genetic issues that may cause problems later in life. As an adult, your dog should have a physical exam annually so that we can identify and address health issues early. This will be the best way to give your dog a long, healthy, happy life.

Vaccinations:

Vaccines are a critical part of your puppy's health. When a puppy is born, its only immunity to illness comes from their mother's milk. This is known as passive immunity and it diminishes with time. By the time your puppy is 8 weeks old, this passive immunity is almost gone and their own immune system is still developing. Therefore, we give most vaccinations as a series in order to stimulate a strong response.

1. **Distemper combination:** This is a "core" vaccine that every dog should get. For puppies, it is given as a series of 3 shots, given 3-4 weeks apart. The 3rd of the series will be good for one year. After that, the vaccine is boosted every 3 years. The distemper combination protects against the following:
 - a. Distemper Virus: damages the respiratory, gastrointestinal, and nervous system. Causes eye and nose infections, muscle twitches, seizures, and hard foot pads. It is by respiratory secretions (cough, sneeze, bark, etc.) by an infected animal. Other animals that can contract distemper are foxes and raccoons.
 - b. Parvovirus: attacks rapidly dividing cells, such as those in the GI tract, lymph nodes, and bone marrow. The virus causes severe bloody diarrhea, lethargy, dehydration, and potentially death. Puppies are at highest risk for this virus. It is spread by contact with infected dogs, their feces, soil where infected feces has degraded, and by objects that have had contact with these infected items (shoes, toys, etc.)
 - c. Parainfluenza: can cause a number of respiratory issues, including coughing, difficulty breathing, and conjunctivitis. This is spread by the respiratory secretions (cough, sneeze, bark, etc.) of infected animals.
 - d. Adenovirus: this is also known as infectious hepatitis. It can cause liver and eye inflammation and damage. It is spread by respiratory secretions, direct contact, or environments contaminated by infected animals.

2. Rabies: This is **the** “core” vaccine. Rabies is 100% fatal and can be passed to and from almost all mammals, including humans. It is spread by bite wounds from infected animals such as bats, skunks, foxes. Rabies infects the nervous system and once infected, there is no treatment. The rabies vaccine is given once when the puppy is 16 weeks of age. It is boosted 1 year later, and then given every 3 years.
3. Lyme: This is a very important vaccine for dogs who live in Minnesota. There is a high presence of ticks here, including the deer tick that carries Lyme disease. Once the tick is attached and feeding, it transfers a bacterium into your dog’s bloodstream. Lyme disease leads to joint disease, as well as kidney and heart issues. The vaccine is initially given in a series of two shots, spaced 3-4 weeks apart. It is then boosted yearly.
4. Leptospirosis: This is also a very important vaccine for dogs who live in Minnesota. The bacteria are passed into the environment in the urine of wildlife. It can be found in ponds, streams, or even in dew on the grass. The infection can cause kidney damage and kidney failure. It can also be transmitted to humans. The vaccine is initially given in a series of two shots, spaced 3-4 weeks apart. It is then boosted yearly.
5. Bordatella: This is a “lifestyle” vaccine for those dogs who will regularly be exposed to large groups of dogs. It protects against the virus that causes “kennel cough,” which is a very harsh cough that can become debilitating. The infection is spread through the air. If your dog will be going to grooming, boarding, training, dog parks, or “doggy day care,” we strongly recommend this vaccine. It is an oral vaccine that is given once and boosted yearly.
6. Canine Influenza Virus: This is a “lifestyle” vaccine for those dogs who will regularly be exposed to large groups of dogs. Dog flu was reported in Minnesota in spring of 2018. The vaccine is initially given in a series of two shots, spaced 3-4 weeks apart. It is then boosted yearly.

These vaccines are very safe. Side effects are usually minimal and include tiredness, low appetite, and minor pain at the injection site. Severe side effects are rare and include facial swelling, difficulty breathing, hives or injection site swelling, or vomiting. If your dog develops any of these symptoms within a few hours of receiving vaccines, please call us right away.

Parasites:

- Intestinal Parasites: Puppies can get intestinal parasites in several ways: through the mother’s placenta, through the mother’s milk, or from the soil. These intestinal parasites include roundworms, hookworms, and whipworms. Having intestinal parasites can cause diarrhea, weight loss, lethargy, and anemia. And some of these parasites can be passed to humans, causing GI upset and possibly blindness. Puppies should be given de-wormer every 2 weeks, starting at 4 weeks of age and continuing until they are 8-10 weeks of age. Then, they are old enough to begin their monthly heartworm preventative, which is also a preventative for these intestinal parasites. Monthly heartworm preventative should be used all year, not just seasonally.
- Fleas: Fleas are EVERYWHERE outdoors. They cause itching, allergic reactions, and anemia. They can also infect your dog with tapeworms, or transmit plague. The flea life cycle is very hard to break, because the pupae can survive for up to 1 year, even in freezing conditions, until conditions are right for

the larva to hatch. Preventing fleas on your dog, and therefore in your house, is simple. Using a once-a-month flea & tick preventative all year around will keep your dog and your house free of fleas.

- Ticks: There are many varieties of ticks in Minnesota. They attach to your puppy and feed on blood. In this way, they can transmit a number of different diseases such as Lyme, Anaplasmosis, and Ehrlichia. These types of diseases cause anemia, lethargy, fever, painful joints, and other symptoms. Ticks become active any time the temperature exceeds 32-40° F. To prevent these issues in your puppy, we recommend monthly flea & tick preventative all year round. We also recommend a yearly heartworm check, which will also check for these three tick-borne diseases.
- Heartworms: Heartworms are spread by mosquitoes, and live in the artery near the heart. As they multiply, they cause coughing and difficulty breathing. If the load is heavy enough, it can rupture the artery and cause sudden death. The best way to prevent this is to begin your puppy on a monthly heartworm preventative and use it year-round. We also strongly recommend having your puppy heartworm tested at 8 to 10 months of age, and then re-tested annually.

This is not a complete list of all potential parasites; it deals with the most common ones that your puppy will be exposed to. If you have any questions about these or other parasites, please ask us.

Parasite prevention and control:

There are countless products on the market for the control and prevention of parasites. The best way to determine what is best for you puppy is to study method of application, duration of action, and type of parasite that is being targeted. Consider your puppy's lifestyle: will your puppy be mostly indoors, outdoors, or both; will your puppy be used for hunting, breeding, showing; will your puppy be traveling. Discuss these with your veterinarian to determine the best products for you. You will need two types of products: one for flea and tick control, and one that combines heartworm prevention with intestinal parasite prevention. These are the products that we currently carry:

Flea & tick prevention:

- Frontline Gold is a topical product. It is applied to the skin every 30 days. When using this product, your puppy cannot be bathed or go swimming for 2 days before and 2 days after application.
- Nexgard is an oral product that is given every 30 days. There are no restrictions about bathing or swimming.

Heartworm & intestinal parasite prevention:

- Heartgard Plus is a chewable tablet that is given every 30 days. It prevents infection by heartworms, roundworms, and hookworms.
- Iverhart Max is a chewable tablet that is given every 30 days. It prevents infection by heartworms, roundworms, hookworms, and tapeworms.
- Proheart is an injectable formula. It has a slow release of medication that kills heartworms for 12 months. It does not prevent any intestinal parasites.

Combination products for heartworm prevention and flea/tick protection:

- Nexgard Plus is a chewable tablet that is given every 30 days. It prevents infection by heartworms, roundworms, and hookworms. It also kills fleas and ticks if they bite your puppy.
- Simparica Trio is also a chewable tablet given every 30 days. It prevents infection by heartworms, roundworms, and hookworms. It also kills fleas and ticks if they bite your puppy.

Grooming and desensitization:

Throughout your puppy's life, their nails will need to be clipped, their ears will need to be cleaned, and other grooming may need to occur. To make these events go smoothly, it is vital to start getting your puppy used to them. To do this, use the following actions:

- Play with your puppy's feet and get him/her to allow you to hold the paw without squirming. Don't release your hold on the foot until the puppy stops struggling, then reward this calmer behavior with praise and occasionally treats.
- Play with your puppy's ears, and try putting your fingers around the outside and rubbing. Again, reward calm behavior.
- When your puppy is laying quietly, try gently brushing their coat with a soft comb or brush. Do this at least once a week and end with a reward.

Feeding:

Until your puppy is at least 6 months of age, you should feed them three times a day. After 6 months of age, the feedings should be done twice a day. Always measure the food so you know what your puppy is eating. Put the food down for 20 minutes, then pick it up. Fresh water should always be available when you are home with your puppy.

To avoid food aggression issues later in life, try these training exercises:

- Feed some food directly from your hand. If your puppy tries to bite your hand, close it and take it out of sight.
- Sit with your pet in your arms, or have your arm around it, while it eats.
- Take the food away briefly and give a treat.

These will teach your pet that you are not a threat to its ability to get its food.

Give your puppy a high-quality food that is labeled for puppies. You should feed puppy food until your puppy is one year old, or until your puppy is spayed/neutered; whichever happens first. If your puppy is a large breed dog, be sure the puppy food is labeled for giant breed dogs. Be sparing when feeding treats, since most treats are tasty but high in calories.

There are thousands of brands of food on the market today. If you have questions about a specific brand, please feel free to ask. We recommend Hills, Purina, and Royal Canin brand foods because they do extensive clinical research to develop their products.

Please be aware that some of the current feeding trends can be risky:

- Raw meat diets: can easily be contaminated with Salmonella and other bacteria. These can cause diarrhea, dehydration, and sometimes death
- Home-Made diets: can be wholesome and healthy if formulated correctly. Before beginning any pet, especially a puppy, on a home-made diet, you should get a formulation from a board-certified veterinary nutritionist. This will ensure that your puppy is getting the appropriate vitamins and minerals necessary for correct bone growth and overall health.
- Grain-free diets: are a carry-over from a trend in human health. For humans with Celiac disease, a grain-free diet is very important. Dogs are, and have always been, omnivores (eat meat & vegetation). Very few dogs are allergic to grains. In fact, the #1 food allergen for dogs is the protein source, such as beef and chicken. In addition, current research has found that dogs on a grain-free diet have an increased risk of developing a heart condition called dilated cardiomyopathy (enlarged heart), which cannot be reversed.

If you have any questions about your puppy's diet, please call us to discuss it.

Dental care:

Even though your puppy still has baby teeth, it is important to start daily teeth brushing as soon possible so that it becomes a regular part of their routine. Just as for humans, your dog's dental health is vital to their overall well-being. Daily teeth brushing is the BEST way to prevent tartar build-up and gingivitis, which will lead to a longer, healthier life. Tartar build-up and gingivitis will eventually allow bacteria from the mouth to get into the bloodstream. If this happens, the bacteria can damage the heart, liver, and/or kidneys.

Other ways to help your puppy's teeth is by feeding dry food rather than canned food, which will act as a mechanical scraper to reduce plaque. Giving dental treats periodically will also help scrape plaque, but be sure that any treat you choose has the VOHC (Veterinary Oral Health Council) seal. This certifies that the treat has been tested and approved by board certified veterinary dentists. We do not recommend bones or antlers as chew toys, since they can cause teeth to crack.

House Training:

Positive reinforcement is the BEST way to train your puppy. By rewarding good behavior and ignoring bad behavior, your puppy will more easily learn what you want them to learn. Establishing a routine is also critical to the house-training process. Take your puppy out first thing in the morning, after all meals, after exercise, and before bed. These are the natural times for you puppy to need to go to the bathroom. Begin by taking your puppy out on a leash and leading them to the area that you want them to use. Give the puppy 10 minutes to go to the bathroom. If he/she does, be lavish with your praise and/or give a small treat to enforce this good behavior. If he/she does not go the bathroom in that time, return to the house and try again in about ½ hour. For the first two or three weeks, only use the trips outside for going to the bathroom, not for play. This will make it clear that being outside is where they go to the bathroom.

When you are in the house with your puppy, keep them close to you so that you can watch their behavior for signs that they need to go out: sniffing the ground, circling, crying, or acting anxious. If you see this, get them

outside so that they can take care of their business. If you have to leave them at home, be sure that they are in a crate, pen, or puppy-proofed room. This will prevent them from having accidents all over the house.

If your puppy does have an accident in the house, do not punish them. Simply clean up with a good enzymatic cleaner, then continue with your training routine. Patience and consistency are the keys to success.

Crate Training & Sleeping:

Crate training is a great way to give your puppy a safe place for them to have as their own and help to keep them out of trouble. It will also help increase the potential for success in house training because dogs will hold their bowels and bladder longer in order to avoid having to lay in the mess. Therefore, the crate should be large enough for them to turn around and lay down, but not so large that they can make a mess in one end and lay down in the other. If necessary, use a divider to shorten the area of a larger crate to fit the current size of your puppy.

To make the crate a good place in your puppy's mind, place it in a common area, such as a living room, kitchen, or bedroom, so your puppy will feel included in the family. When first introducing the crate, keep the door open so that the puppy can go in and explore it. You can put a treat in there occasionally to make it a more positive place. Once your puppy is comfortable with the crate, shut him/her in for short periods of time (about 10 minutes) while you are home. This will teach your puppy that they will be let out soon, and will reduce the potential for separation anxiety because they can see/hear you around the house. Gradually increase the amount of time your puppy is closed into the crate. Make it more comfortable for him/her with blankets or towels, but don't leave them in the crate with toys because puppies can chew and swallow them. Inspect the crate daily for loose parts, chewed blankets, or signs of damage from biting. Repair or replace these immediately to avoid injuries. If your puppy doesn't take to the crate with the gradual introduction, try feeding them their meals in the crate with the door open while you are nearby. If your puppy does mess in the crate, clean it thoroughly to remove any odors that will cause him/her to do so again.

While in the crate at night, if your puppy cries to go outside, take them out immediately. Carry your puppy from the crate to outside if possible so they cannot go to the bathroom on the way. Praise them for going outside and return them to their crate immediately. This will reduce stimulus so that they will sleep, as well as prevent them from thinking that this is a way to get out of the crate so they can play.

Training:

It is never too early to start basic training. The first rule should be: Never do anything to encourage bad behavior, even if it seems cute when they are a puppy. Remember that puppies have a very short attention span, so you need to reward good behavior within 3-5 seconds so that they make the association between the behavior and the reward. Another method is to use a clicker when the good behavior occurs, which will give you more time between the action and the reward.

- **Jumping:** This can quickly become a life-long habit if you don't teach your puppy when young that it is unacceptable. Practice "four on the floor": your puppy cannot have treats, praise, or even your attention until all four paws are on the floor. Turn your back, step away, or push the puppy off you to stop the action. Then, as soon as they stand on all four or sit, give them your full attention and lots of praise. Be

sure anyone who visits also follows this practice. Instead, you and your visitors should kneel down to greet the puppy on their level so they aren't encouraged to jump up to say "hi."

- Chewing and biting: These are normal behaviors for puppies, because it is how they get to know their environment. Chewing is also soothing to sore mouths as their permanent teeth are coming in, or to relieve boredom. However, it is vital to establish what things can be chewed and what things cannot. Start this right away and be very consistent. It is NEVER okay for your puppy to have its teeth on human skin. Re-direct them immediately to an appropriate toy. Kong toys are good because they are very durable and can be filled with food to make them extra satisfying. If your puppy continues to bite, remove all your attention from them (turn or walk away) which will teach them that playtime will end immediately if they bite. You can also yell "ouch!" loudly if your puppy bites. This is what other dogs would do to stop the behavior and should startle the puppy long enough to give you a chance to re-direct them to a toy.

If your puppy is chewing on an object that it shouldn't, such as furniture, take the object away and say "NO" in a firm voice. Then quickly offer an appropriate alternative.

- Aggression: This is typically the result of insufficient socialization. The socialization window closes at about 12-14 weeks of age, so try to introduce your puppy to as much of the world as you can (safely, of course) before that window closes. Have your puppy meet other healthy dogs of all sizes and ages, have them meet cats, take them on short car rides, have them interact with children, etc. Always be with your puppy for these encounters and intervene immediately if things get too rough or scary. This will teach them that the world is not a scary place and that you will always be there to take care of them. This will lower the potential for fear-based aggression. Once a dog has aggressive tendencies, it can be very hard for them to un-learn the behaviors. It may require the help of a board-certified behaviorist or pharmaceuticals to cope with aggressive behaviors.
- Being restrained: This is a vital behavior for your puppy to learn. Through its life, your dog will need to be restrained for various reasons: blood draws, giving medications, receiving vaccines, nail trims, etc. Try holding your dog while it is standing by placing one arm under their belly and another around their chest/neck and pull the puppy close to you in a "hug." Another position is while your puppy is laying on its side, kneel down so that their back is pressed against your knees. Lean over them and put one hand on each of the legs that are on the floor (called the "down" leg). With either of these positions, hold it until your puppy stops struggling and is still for 3-5 seconds, then let go and praise them lavishly. They will learn that it is not appropriate to fight the restraint and that it is a normal thing that will get them your praise. Letting go of them before they are still will teach them that they can wiggle out of the situation.

Spay / Neuter:

Pets that are spayed (females) or neutered (males) live longer, healthier lives overall. These surgical procedures to remove the reproductive organs are routine and safe. The benefits are significant:

- Males: Neutering decreases aggressive behaviors linked to hormones. It decreases their chances for prostate cancer and eliminates any chance of testicular cancer. Neutered males are less likely to roam, since they will not be actively seeking females to mate with.

- Females: Spaying removes both the uterus and the ovaries, so neither can develop cancer. It also significantly reduces the chances for developing mammary cancer significantly if she is spayed before her first heat cycle. Removing the uterus will also eliminate any chances of an infected uterus (called a pyometra), which can become life-threatening.

We recommend having this surgery done when your puppy is 5-6 months old. If your puppy is a giant breed, discuss the timing of the surgery with your veterinarian, as there is on-going research on this subject.

If you are thinking of breeding your puppy, let us know. We can help explain everything that is involved in breeding responsibly and caring for litters of puppies. Breeding is expensive and time-consuming, so consider carefully.

Insurance:

We strongly recommend taking out pet insurance for your puppy. It may be the deciding factor when emergencies occur. Some pet insurance will even help to cover routine health appointments and/or procedures. Most of these companies will allow you to choose your deductible, reimbursements, and coverage options, so that you can fit this into your budget. Pet insurance is also being offered by some mainstream insurance companies. Check with your home insurer to see if they offer this option. The three pet insurance companies that we have experience with are Trupanion, Embrace, and Pet Plan, but there are a great many more available for you to look into.