

Dog Health Care

Vet Care:



Dogs, just like people, need routine vaccinations to stay healthy and prevent illness. Some vaccinations, such as those against rabies, are required by law. You should get in the habit of keeping accurate records of your dog's vaccinations. It's a good idea to keep a folder in your house that is just for vet records.

Regular stool samples, blood work, and parasite prevention are also a normal part of dog ownership. Dogs can catch a wide range of external and internal parasites very easily. Internal parasites can be transmitted as simply as eating grass that has the eggs of a parasite on it. External parasites, such as fleas and ticks, can be caught by walking around outside or can even be brought inside on your clothes. Parasite prevention is key!

Get your dog microchipped! A microchip the size of a grain of rice is set under your dog's skin permanently and is programmed with your information. When scanned, the microchip will bring up a number that is paired with your information. If your dog is ever lost without ID tags, any shelter or veterinarian can scan the dog and see exactly who it belongs to. Another thing becoming more prominent in society is the increase in the number of dogs being stolen right out of people's yards! They can remove the dog's collar, but no one can remove that microchip. It's the best way to help increase the likelihood of your dog returning to you, should anything happen to him. Your vet can implant one in just a couple minutes!

Dog Health Care

Vet Care: (con't)



One of the most responsible things you can do for your dog is to get him or her fixed as soon as possible! Spaying and neutering your dog is the best way to prevent the growing issue of pet overpopulation, and thus is the best way to reduce the euthanasia rate in our local shelters. Furthermore, having your dog fixed will decrease or completely eliminate certain diseases and cancers of the reproductive organs.

What if my dog gets sick or gets hurt?

You must seek medical attention! If your dog is sick or injured, you must treat him as if he were a human. Your dog relies solely on you to help him feel at his best and help him when he is at his worst. Seeking veterinary care when needed is extremely important. If your normal vet is closed, head to the emergency animal clinic.

It's best to create a relationship with a trusted veterinarian that can help keep your dog on track throughout his whole life. Your vet will be able to answer any and all questions or concerns you may have, and will be able to provide one on one care for your dog.

Dog Health Care

Nutrition:



Your dog should be kept on a high quality food throughout his whole life to help ensure the best health possible. Look for foods without corn, wheat, or by-products and always make sure that meat is the first ingredient. Don't fall into the mainstream dog food brand trap! Many of the most popular dog food brands you see advertised are not very high in quality at all. Read the ingredients label on the back of the food to judge for yourself.

Generally, a dog under one year in age should be fed a puppy formula. When the dog is around one year old, he can be switched to an adult formula. Finally, around seven years of age, a formula specifically tailored to the needs of a senior dog is best.

Human food should be avoided at all costs! Dogs that are regularly fed human food are at greater risk for developing diabetes, obesity, and a range of other health issues. There are healthier ways to spoil your dog than with food. Sticking to a strict, healthy canine diet is the best way to keeping your dog in great shape.

Did You Know?

A high quality, healthy diet plays a big role in preventing dry, itchy skin and excess shedding! Studies have also shown a link between a dog's natural resistance to fleas and a healthy diet!

Dog Health Care

Grooming:



The amount of grooming your dog will require will depend greatly on his breed. Most dogs will shed to some degree. Many dogs that have a thick undercoat will shed frequently and will need brushed out several times each week.

Dogs that have a coat that continually grows will need their coat trimmed down every 6-8 weeks, preferably by an experienced groomer. These longer haired dogs will also need to be combed out several times each week to prevent matting. If mats in the hair are allowed to develop, they can pull on the dog's skin and become irritated and painful, even causing sores and infection.

Most people will bathe their dogs on an as needed basis. As a very general rule, once every couple months is suitable for most breeds. People with mild dog allergies should bathe their dogs every two weeks or so to help control the dander.

Can I just use my own Shampoo to Bathe my Dog?

No! Human skin releases oils, and our shampoo is made to strip those oils out of our hair. A dog's skin needs the oils to remain healthy and keep his coat shiny and soft. Dog shampoo is much gentler, and will still do a great job!

Dog Health Care

Can I just use my own Shampoo to Bathe my Dog?
(con't)



Dogs also need their nails trimmed regularly. If you do not feel comfortable doing this yourself, you can bring your dog to a professional groomer or even a veterinarian. When a dog's nails get long, they can be very uncomfortable. If left to grow to an extreme length, they can curl under and grow right into your dog's toe pads!

Did you know that you should be caring for your dog's teeth on a regular basis? Giving him something to chew on is simply not enough! There is a whole line of dental care options available to help you take care of your dog's teeth, preventing gum disease, bad breath, tooth decay, and expensive teeth cleanings! Brushing your dog's teeth daily is the single best option out there! It can take a while to get him used to the strange feeling, but the benefits are immense! Remember, only use toothpaste specifically for dogs! There are also dental sprays, cloth wipes, and water additives to help break up plaque and kill bacteria.

Exercise:

Dogs require regular exercise to maintain their health, no matter what breed you own. However, each breed does have its own general standard of exercise requirements and energy level. For example, a Border Collie is a high energy dog that can be highly active through most its waking hours, while an English Bulldog tends to

Dog Health Care

Exercise: (con't)



Dogs should have at least thirty minutes of rigorous exercise twice a day, in general. Letting your dog wander around the backyard isn't sufficient. He should reach the point of heavy panting by running around, chasing a ball or Frisbee, or jumping homemade hurdles. Be aware that thirty minutes of activity for one dog may be more than enough, but another may still be bouncing off the walls. A high energy dog may need several hours of exercise each day.

What if I Don't Exercise my Dog?

First of all, his health can be affected. Canine obesity is becoming a growing problem in the U.S. Not only is being overweight extremely hard on a dog's joints and body, but it is also just as bad for their overall health and lifespan. A strong body with a healthy heart is achieved in dogs the same way it is in humans: plenty of exercise and a healthy diet.

Second of all, his mental health (not to mention your house) will suffer as well. Dogs wake up each day with energy, and their instinct is to try to expend that energy. If you do not give them a daily positive outlet to wear them out and make them truly tired, he will look for other ways to expend that energy. This could be spending the day eating the couch, digging holes in the backyard, barking excessively, or harassing the cat. It is your responsibility to help your dog release his energy in a positive way. You will both be happier.

Dog Health Care

Training:



Training your dog should start the day you bring him home. Setting boundaries and rules from the get go is the best way to mold your dog into being a happy and content friend. Dogs are very much like a human toddler. Without rules and limits, they can throw tantrums and try to get away with almost anything! Once they realize bad behavior will never get them what they want, they will start offering better behaviors.

It's best to teach your dog basic commands as soon as possible. Even eight week old puppies can be taught basic commands, like sit and lay down. Teaching commands can be very fun, and can be a great way to drain mental energy! Once he gets the basic ones down, start teaching more advanced cues, such as stay, come, drop it, shake, speak, and stand.

Along with boundaries and commands, dogs need something called desensitization. When you desensitize a dog, you continually apply a negative stimulus until the dog's emotional response is diminished. For example, many dogs find it strange to have their feet messed with. If you gently message, caress, or look at their feet several times a day, they become so used to the feeling that they no longer mind when you touch their feet. It's so incredibly important, especially with a young puppy, that you are constantly touching their feet, touching every part of their body, looking in their ears, and looking at their teeth the same way a vet would. This is the best way to prevent later aggression, fear, and sensitivities to being handled by a groomer, vet, or even friends and family.