

Your Puppy

A BSAVA booklet in aid of Petsavers



Petsavers



BSAVA
BRITISH SMALL ANIMAL
VETERINARY ASSOCIATION

Owning a puppy brings its own special rewards and responsibilities. Your local veterinary practice is your best ally in keeping your puppy or dog healthy. The team of vets and nurses have plenty of knowledge and experience and will be happy to offer you advice.

Settling in

Your home will seem very strange to your new puppy, so give him time to get to know his new surroundings. Remember that although puppies love to play they need a quiet place to retreat to and to sleep.

He'll need:

- Food
- Water and food bowls
- A bed
- A puppy playpen
- Collar and lead
- A brush and comb
- Toys

Bedtime

Every puppy needs a bed, but as it's likely to be chewed, don't invest in an expensive bed until he's passed this stage of his development. He'll be just as happy with a small cardboard box lined with a pad of newspaper and a cosy old sweater or piece of blanket.

If you have children, teach them to respect the puppy's bed as a place where he can rest undisturbed.

House rules

Your puppy must know what is and isn't acceptable behaviour. Teach him what he should do rather than simply telling him off when he gets it wrong. If you tell him off, he won't understand why. It's better to make a big fuss of him when he gets it right.

Simple house rules:

- No begging at the table or food sharing.
- No barking at or leaping at people.
- Only special dog chews are for chewing.

Be consistent. The whole family must follow the rules, or the puppy will become confused.





Socialisation

A well socialised puppy will be able to cope with all of the situations he's likely to encounter in later life, rather than growing up shy or fearful.

During the early weeks and months, introduce your puppy to a variety of sights, sounds, people and experiences. Let him meet adults and children, the postman, the milkman and any visitors, approaching them in his own time. Never force the issue if he's not confident.

If you have friends with dogs which have been vaccinated and are good with puppies, let him meet them to help him to build up his canine social skills.

Don't take your dog out on to pavements, parks or gardens, which may have been soiled by other animals, until he has completed his initial course of vaccinations.

Puppy classes

Your veterinary practice may run puppy classes which specialise in socialising young puppies. They usually accept puppies between the ages of 8 and 14 weeks, but book early as classes are quickly booked up.

Meeting other pets

When your puppy has settled in, introduce him to other pets in the house. Keep him on a lead, and never leave them alone together until you're sure that they've accepted each other.

Don't leave your puppy alone with small pets such as rabbits, gerbils and hamsters, as he may see them as 'prey' to chase.

Feeding your puppy

Wait until your puppy has settled in before making any changes to his diet, to reduce the risk of stomach upsets. After a few days you can introduce a new food, gradually mixing an increasing proportion of it into the puppy's food over about a week. Initially he'll need 3 or 4 small meals per day of a good quality complete puppy food. Follow the guidelines on the packaging or ask your vet for advice if you're uncertain. This can then be reduced to fewer meals a day as he gets older. By the time he is about 10–12 months old – unless he's a giant breed, which have special requirements – he should be able to move on to an adult diet.

Dog foods are broadly divided into two kinds – dry and moist. Provided that you get the correct food for his age, the choice of the food for your puppy is down to you and your pet.



Chewing

If you catch your puppy about to chew something he shouldn't, distract him with a toy, or call him. Always praise him when he obeys.

- Although puppies love chewing bones this is not a good idea as it can lead to cut mouths and broken teeth. Fragments of bone can also be swallowed and may cause damage inside him. Give him a nutritious manufactured chew instead.
- Remember to wash and rinse your puppy's water and food bowls daily.

Basic training

You should begin your puppy's training as soon as you bring him home. When he is older, enrol in a puppy training class to learn how to teach him simple commands. Ask your vet for details of local training classes and always ask if you can observe a class before enrolling.

When training your puppy at home make sure that everyone in the family uses the same commands. Keep training sessions for young puppies short and fun.

House training

Establish a routine. Take him to a particular spot in the garden immediately he wakes up, after playing, first thing in the morning and last thing at night. Wait with him until he has done what's required and then praise him.

If accidents occur, don't shout at him. Clean up at once with water and biological washing powder to remove the smell so that he doesn't return there. If you see signs that your puppy wants to relieve himself (e.g. sniffing the floor in a circle) take him to his 'outside spot' immediately.



Exercise and play

Young puppies generally get all the exercise they need by racing around the garden and playing, but once your puppy is fully vaccinated you can take him for short walks away from home. This will help to familiarise him with different environments.

The age at which 'real' exercise should begin varies from breed to breed, as does the amount. Your vet will be able to advise you.

Make exercise fun by taking along a ball or a Frisbee, so that you can play games. Avoid small balls which he could swallow, or sticks which could lodge in his throat and injure him.

Play time

Your puppy doesn't need expensive toys but make sure that anything you do give him to play with is safe. If any toys become worn or damaged, replace them. Don't give him an old slipper to play with or he'll think that all shoes and slippers are fair game.

Puppies' minds need exercise as well as their bodies, so play games that make him think. He'll enjoy Hide and Seek, and "retrieve" games.

Grooming

Establish a grooming routine as soon as you bring your puppy home. Not only will it give you the opportunity to remove dead hairs from his coat, grooming also reinforces the bond between you.

Grooming sessions also give you the chance to check for fleas and ticks, and to examine your puppy's coat, paws, eyes, ears and mouth for anything that might require a trip to the vet.

Make grooming sessions short at first as puppies will soon become bored. The amount of time you will need to spend on grooming depends on his type of coat and how dirty he gets while he is being exercised.

Bath time

Dogs love getting dirty and rolling in things they shouldn't, so inevitably there will be times when your puppy will need a bath. However, don't bath him unnecessarily, as it can strip away the oils which help to keep his skin and coat in tip-top condition.

Always groom your dog before bathing to remove tangles, as bathing doesn't remove them. It just makes them worse!

You may also need to bath your dog if your vet prescribes a medicated shampoo to treat a skin condition.

Dental care

Your puppy needs your help to keep his teeth in good condition. Puppies' baby teeth (deciduous teeth) appear at around 4–6 weeks of age, and are replaced by the adult teeth by 6–7 months. If any deciduous teeth don't fall out naturally, your vet will need to extract them to prevent the adult teeth from coming through crooked.

If your dog needs a dental procedure he will need a general anaesthetic. His teeth will be scaled and polished, and any bad teeth will be removed. Don't be concerned that he won't be able to eat if teeth are extracted – dogs' gums are very hard and he will still be able to munch dry food without problems.

If your dog is having difficulty eating, appears to be chewing on one side of his mouth, or paws at his mouth, he could have a dental problem, so make an appointment to see the vet as soon as possible.

Tooth brushing

You should brush your puppy's teeth every day if you can. Start a tooth-brushing routine as soon as you bring him home, so that he gets used to you touching his mouth.

Always use a special dog toothpaste and a child sized toothbrush, or a special toothbrush which fits over your finger. Ask your vet or vet nurse how to clean your puppy's teeth. You can also buy special oral gels to put on your puppy's gums to help prevent plaque, and crunchy dental diets, from your vet.

Vaccinations

Vaccination protects your puppy from a number of serious and highly infectious diseases. It works by priming his immune system so that if he comes into contact with the disease later, his body is better able to 'fight back'.

All puppies and dogs should be vaccinated against:

- Canine Parvovirus
- Canine Distemper virus
- Infectious Canine Hepatitis (ICH)
- Canine Leptospirosis
- Parainfluenza virus is often also included in vaccine programmes.

These vaccinations are generally given at approximately 6–8 weeks with a follow-up dose around 2–4 weeks later. After this he'll need annual booster vaccinations, to maintain his protection. Annual vaccinations also provide an opportunity for your vet to give your pet a thorough health check to spot any possible problems early on.

Other vaccinations

Your vet may also advise vaccinating your puppy against:

- Kennel cough – your puppy will need this vaccination 1–2 weeks before going into boarding kennels, to a show, or anywhere else he could mingle with many other dogs.
- Rabies (if he needs to travel abroad).

Don't allow your puppy to walk where other dogs (who may not have been vaccinated) have been until he has completed his vaccination programme.



Fleas and other external parasites

Most puppies pick up fleas at some time. Your vet can advise you on products to treat your pet and your home (to kill eggs and larvae in the puppy's bedding, the carpets, and soft furnishings).

Fleas cause discomfort, and may also spread disease and cause allergies. Severe infestation can also cause anaemia, particularly in very young puppies.

Many people choose to apply regular anti-flea treatment to their dogs (e.g. once a month), to prevent fleas rather than waiting until there is an unpleasant flea problem to fix in their homes.

Finding fleas

Stand your puppy on a piece of white paper and comb his fur with a fine comb. Dab any dark specks falling on to the paper with a piece of dampened tissue – if any turn a reddish brown colour, they are flea droppings, which contain dried blood.

Other external parasites

If untreated, external parasites can lead to skin infections, and scabies mites can be passed to humans. So if you see creepy-crawlies, or if your puppy is itchy, seek veterinary advice.

- **Lice** – pale brown and resemble fleas but are much smaller. They cause itching and irritation.
- **Mites** – can cause intense irritation and itching but are often invisible to the naked eye. Examination of a sample with a microscope may be needed for diagnosis.
- **Mange mites** – burrow into the skin.
- **Cheyletiella mites** – don't burrow into the skin.
- **Ear mites** – Cause irritation and the production of dark brown wax with an unpleasant smell if the ear becomes infected.
- **Harvest mites** – small orange mites which tend to attach themselves in the folds of the ear or between the toes. Seen in late Summer. Cause some irritation.
- **Ticks** – round and can swell to the size of a pea. Never try to remove a tick without being shown how to do this first – **ask your vet for advice.**



Worms and worming

Any dog can pick up worms, and puppies may even be born with them or pick them up from their mother's milk. Puppies should be regularly wormed and your vet will be able to discuss a programme for treatment and prevention.

A heavy infestation of worms can cause vomiting, diarrhoea, loss of appetite, weight loss, constipation and a dull coat. Some worms can be passed to humans, especially young children.

The main types of worms are:

Roundworms – they look like tiny strands of fine spaghetti and are the commonest type of worm. They may be seen in the faeces of infected animals.

Tapeworms – these are made up of segments which form long chains up to half a metre long. The segments look like grains of rice. Tapeworm segments may be spotted around the dog's bottom.

Lungworms – can be picked if your dog catches and eats small prey such as slugs, snails or amphibians. Some dogs are symptomless; others may have a dry cough

Remember that your dog can have worms even if you cannot see any sign of them in his faeces. Regular preventive treatment is essential. Your local veterinary practice will be able to advise you on the safest worming programme to follow.



You can help prevent your dog picking up worms by regular worming, effective flea control (because fleas can transmit tapeworms), cleaning up after your puppy and preventing him from scavenging.



Neutering

If you don't plan to breed from your dog, having him or her neutered is the responsible thing to do. As well as preventing unwanted litters, neutering reduces the risk of a number of health problems, removes the dog's sexual urges and can also resolve or prevent some problem behaviours.

Puppies are generally neutered between 6 and 9 months old, although some veterinary practices may operate early neutering programmes.

The procedure in male puppies is called castration and involves removing the testicles, which produce sperm and the male hormone, testosterone. It is a straightforward operation performed under general anaesthetic.

The operation for female dogs is called spaying or "ovariohysterectomy". During the operation, the vet makes an incision in the dog's abdomen and removes the ovaries and the uterus (womb). Spaying is a longer operation than castration and the puppy or dog will need a couple of days' rest. She may need to wear an 'Elizabethan collar' to prevent her from licking her wound excessively.

Microchipping

Your puppy needs to have a means of identification in case he becomes lost – it's the law.

Get him used to wearing a collar with an engraved identification tag on it and also think about having him microchipped. Microchipping is an efficient and irreversible means of identification and your vet will be able to carry this out for you.

A tiny microchip the size of a grain of rice is injected under the skin at the back of the neck by the vet in a simple procedure. Each chip has a unique number which is stored on a central computer database. If your dog is found, his chip can be quickly read with a hand held scanner and the number checked against the database.

It's important that your correct contact details are kept on the database. Remember to contact the database if your details change, such as when you move house.



Pet insurance

It's a good idea to take out pet insurance so that you won't need to worry about vet's bills if your puppy has an accident or becomes ill. In return for small monthly or annual payments the insurance company will pay for most of your veterinary fees – including the cost of operations, medicines, laboratory tests and x-rays. Routine procedures like vaccination, teeth cleaning and neutering are not covered by insurance, nor are preventive measures such as worming or flea treatments

Shop around when you buy a policy, as policies vary and different levels of cover are available. More expensive policies generally provide increased cover and some cover a wider variety of treatments such as homoeopathy and acupuncture.

Check on the exclusion clauses before buying an insurance policy. You will probably find that conditions (and possibly related conditions) which existed before taking out the policy will not be covered. You may also find that some companies will cover a condition for only 12 months, while others continue paying year after year up to a maximum amount in any year.

Most insurance policies include third party insurance in case your dog injures someone or causes an accident.

Dogs and the law

As a dog owner you have a responsibility to see that you and your pet keep on the right side of the law.

- Your dog must always wear a collar bearing a tag with your name and address on it.
- You must keep him on a lead and under control at all times when you are around livestock. If your dog worries farm animals you may be prosecuted and your dog could be destroyed.
- You can be held liable if your dog causes an accident. It is the responsibility of a car driver who hits a dog to stop and report the accident to the police.
- Most local authorities have bylaws banning dogs from fouling certain areas. You could be prosecuted if your dog messes in a public place so always take a plastic bag or a poop scoop with you when walking your pet.
- If your dog is dangerously out of control in a public place you could be prosecuted.
- Anyone found mistreating a dog and causing suffering to the animal can be prosecuted and if convicted may be fined or jailed. They can also be disqualified from keeping an animal for a period of time.



Presented to you by:

Petsavers is dedicated to improving the health of the nation's pets.

We do this by funding clinical studies and clinical training programmes.

- Petsavers clinical studies give us a better understanding of pets' illnesses. This leads to improved diagnosis and treatment so that pets can have longer and healthier lives.
- Petsavers training programmes develop the skills of vets so that they can apply the results of the clinical studies and their expertise to pets as soon as possible. These vets are referred to as Petsavers Scholars.

No experimental animals are used in Petsavers studies.

In the last 30 years Petsavers has given over £1.7 million towards these goals.

Over this time the need for this funding has become even greater as other sources have dried up. We rely on the support of vets, nurses and pet owners.

By helping Petsavers, you can make sure that our knowledge of small animal medicine and surgery is improved. Find out how by going to our 'How you help' page which you will find on our website: www.petsavers.org.uk



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