

YOUR NEW PUPPY

Bringing home a new dog is an exciting time. For some, it's the culmination of months of anticipation, and for all it is hopefully the start of a long, happy life together. To help you start as you mean to go on, we've put together this info sheet to see you through those early days.

How old should the puppy be?

Ideally, puppies should not be separated from their mother before 7-8 weeks of age. A good age to get your puppy is at 8 weeks of age as by this time they should be well weaned, solely on solids and hopefully starting to get the idea of toilet training.



Puppy-proof Your Home

A puppy will chew whatever they can get at in your absence so it's important to keep your pup in an environment it can't destroy. Dangers of special concern are electrical wires, poisons or tiny toys. You must put the puppy where it can't do any damage. Remember besides the destruction, the puppy may well injure itself. Keep puppies and small children apart or under close supervision. Small children don't understand the need to keep fingers out of puppy's eyes or not to pull painfully on their tails or legs. Children's behaviour (eye contact and fast movements) can also be misinterpreted by a puppy as challenging or aggressive. Don't forget to make puppy play areas comfortable by placing flat mats, folded quilts, and old blankets down for your puppy to lie on. Puppy safe chew toys are great in the play and sleep areas to keep him/her stimulated and busy.

Supplies

Bowls: You will need two bowls for your puppy, one for food and one for water. Stainless steel is best as it's heavier than plastic and won't harbour bacteria. Ceramic works well also but can be easily broken or chipped if knocked over.

Gate: A gate is a helpful tool to block off a portion of the house, stairways or to close off a supervised playroom.

Leaving your puppy in a large gated room may make your puppy feel lonely and displaced. Dogs typically feel safest in small manageable spaces because they are den animals.

Playpen: A playpen can be used to contain your puppy when you are out of sight, toilet training, acclimatising to other pets and temporarily containing your puppy outside. They can be folded up and put away when not in use.

Crate: Crates are great because they give your puppy its own place to play, rest, and feel safe. A crate will keep your puppy safe in your home and your home safe from your puppy while you are away. They are available in plastic or wire. If you plan to travel with your puppy a plastic crate can be used in the home (in a well-ventilated environment) as well as while traveling. Wire crates have better airflow and can be made more den-like by covering it with a blanket at night.

Bedding: Store bought dog beds are great but it might be a good idea to wait until your puppy is house trained before spending money on one. You can use an old blanket or some old towels until your puppy is house trained. If your puppy likes to chew you may want to skip the bedding altogether to avoid the ingesting of fibres.

Toys: With an overwhelming variety of choices out there, it's best to start with only one or two toys at first and see which one your puppy likes best, then stock up on that one. Typically toys that bounce and roll are big winners, especially those that are oddly shaped, as they tend to bounce randomly. Rotating the toys can help prevent boredom.

Collars: Collars made of cotton, nylon or leather with a buckle to carry your puppy's ID tags, do not slide or choke. A lightweight nylon collar is ideal for a young pup. Make sure you are watching him/her for the first day or two of wearing the collar to be sure that your puppy has adjusted to wearing it. Be sure to check the tightness of the collar regularly as your puppy will grow quickly and the size will need to be adjusted. A good fitting collar should be snug enough so that it cannot slip off over your pup's head, but you should still be able to fit a couple of fingers underneath it to ensure it is not too tight.

Harnesses: Harnesses are great for walking and for riding in the car. Never take your puppy in the car without securing him/her with a car harness or in a crate. Beware of leaving your puppy in the car unsupervised – especially if strapped in a harness.

Leashes: There are many different types of leashes. A nylon leash is light weight and ideal for your new puppy's training. Make sure your puppy is used to walking on the lead before venturing outside. You can practice walking around the house and garden first to get him/her used to it.



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When Arriving Home

The first 24 hours should be reserved as time for your puppy to adjust to its new home. Have designated areas set up for playing, sleeping, and feeding. They will make your puppy feel more comfortable. Play areas are best if they are in a carpet-free area and should be in an enclosed room or gated area. Toys can be kept in the play area. Sleeping areas need to be in a quiet space or crate where the puppy can go to get away from any chaos, or to sleep. A few toys in this area will also comfort your puppy. Ideally the feeding area should be near the play area or if your puppy is easily distracted then you can use the sleeping area or crate.



Your puppy may jump right into your family with very little transition or it may sleep a lot for days. It may be up all night whining and crying or it may sleep all night right from the start. However your puppy reacts, just remember that it is still very young and trying to adjust to its new home.

Toilet training

By eight weeks of age most puppies are starting to get the idea of toilet training. However, they are still babies and will have accidents. Take your pup outside after they wake or just after having a meal, as these are times they will normally go to the toilet. Give them lots of praise when they go to the toilet in the right place. NEVER scold a puppy when they toilet in the wrong place. If you are not there when it happens, the pup will have forgotten all about it and your punishment will not be understood. If you catch the puppy in the act, then firmly say NO, and then take him/her outside.

Crate Training is the term used for the type of toilet training which involves using a puppy crate (cage, den, kennel) that you can close your puppy into at night or when you are away. This type of training can be very effective. It is natural for all dogs to have a 'den' and because dogs are very clean animals it is a natural instinct for them to keep their bed area clean and not toilet in the crate. Therefore, as long as you toilet them outside immediately before and after their time in the crate – you have a greater chance of getting your timing right and the opportunity to reward him/her when she does, therefore reinforcing the training. Please see our other clinic handouts or talk to our staff for more information on puppy crate training.

The best advice we can give:

Bring your new puppy in for a health check as soon as possible after you become the owner

Vaccinations

Several diseases can be fatal especially for little puppies. Fortunately vaccinations are available to prevent many of these diseases. We highly recommend that puppies are vaccinated against: Distemper, Viral Hepatitis, Parvovirus, Parainfluenza and Leptospirosis. In many cases Bordetella or Kennel cough vaccine will also be given. Our vets will discuss the vaccination protocol best for your pup. During the consultation our vets will also examine your puppy and check its general health.

Vaccination protects your puppy against serious infectious diseases which may threaten its life

How Do Vaccines Work?

Vaccines contain viruses that have been altered so that they don't cause disease. When given a vaccine, your dog's immune system produces a protective immune response, so that if later exposed to that disease, your dog quickly mounts a response to destroy the disease-causing virus.

When do I vaccinate my puppy?

Newborn puppies receive immunity from the colostrum contained in the mother's milk while nursing during the first few days of life. As this passive immunity gradually declines, the pup needs to be vaccinated to build up the pups own immune system and produce antibodies to various diseases. The vaccination schedule starts at 6-8 weeks of age with the first vaccination often given by the breeder even before you get the puppy. To ensure this immunity continues to develop booster vaccinations are repeated at 3-4 weekly intervals until 16 weeks of age. After this your puppy should have an annual check-up and vaccination to ensure the immunity is maintained.

Important points to remember

- It is important not to expose your pup to infection by allowing it access to high risk areas such as parks and other public places. Your puppy does not need direct dog to dog contact to contract these dangerous diseases.
- The protection given by vaccinations is only complete if the whole course is given. Allow 10 days after the final injection for full immunity to build up before taking your puppy outside to risk areas.
- However it is also important that your pup socialises at a young age with other dogs. If you know that a particular dog is up to date with its vaccinations then you can let your puppy socialise with it in a safe environment under supervision (that is in a fenced section where contamination from unvaccinated dogs is unlikely).
- An unwell puppy should not be vaccinated

Puppy School

Puppy classes provide a safe environment where pups can successfully learn to interact with other people and dogs. The classes also provide the dog owner with important information regarding living with a dog in your family. These sessions help you to form a close and strong bond with your puppy while allowing socialisation at this critical young age with other puppies. This should allow you to avoid common behavioural problems and pitfalls later in life. Sound habits are taught right from the beginning. Puppy school enhances your pups early training and socialisation skills. Veterinary Care regularly run puppy classes, for the next class dates and booking information please contact Rachelle at pointvets@xtra.co.nz. We recommend booking in when your puppy has its first vaccination.

Feeding

By seven to eight weeks of age puppies should be on puppy food only. They should be fed three to four small meals a day to help with their rapid growth. Good premium puppy pet food is especially designed with puppies growth in mind and contains all the vitamins and minerals they require. It has the right balance of carbohydrates and protein and everything needed for their joints, bones and muscle development. In this day and age there are many good quality dog foods, produced by companies committed to research and health. We recommend a complete and balanced puppy formulation, so you will NOT need to supplement with extra vitamins (over supplementation can do great harm to growing bones and joints). Beware of feeding human foods and leftovers as there are many very harmful foods which your dog cannot digest. (Chocolate, Avocado, Plums and Grapes are just a few.) We do NOT recommend giving your dog bones of ANY kind, as the risks of choking, blockages and intestinal upsets far outweigh the benefits. We stock leading brands of dog foods and our nurses are happy to advise you on the best selection for your breed of puppy.

Fleas

Few creatures can inflict more misery, weight for weight, than fleas. These tiny pests are much more than an annoyance: they make life miserable and are the cause of flea allergic dermatitis in many dogs.

A few flea facts.....

- A female flea can lay 2,000 eggs in her lifetime.
- Fleas can jump 150 times their own length; this is equivalent to a human jumping 1,000 feet.

In a young puppy, a heavy flea burden can suck a large amount of blood and cause a potentially serious anaemia. We stock many flea treatments, some you can use safely from 2 days of age, and many will have a prolonged period of activity of 1 month or more. Revolution*, Comfortis* and Frontline* are our recommendations as effective and safe flea treatment products available. Ask our vets or nursing staff for more information.

Worming

Worms can present a serious problem to puppy health and can interfere with the puppy's growth if left unchecked. Puppies most commonly become infested with roundworms and these often cause a pot-bellied appearance and poor growth. Other possible worm types include hookworms, whipworms and tapeworms. We can recommend the correct wormer for your pup and will usually give the worm tablet to your puppy during the vaccination consult. We recommend worming every 2 weeks until 12 weeks of age, then every month until 6 months of age, then three monthly for the rest of the dog's life. Worming tablets are not all created equal. Make sure you use a wormer that treats *all worms*. Ask our trained nursing staff for a recommendation for your puppy. **Remember that children can pick up worms and other parasite problems from their pets.** Encourage children to wash their hands after playing with any animals. Remember to remove your dog's faeces from the park so your dog does not contribute to the worm contamination in the environment and increase public health risk.

Teething

At around 4 to 5 months of age, puppies will start to get their permanent teeth. They lose the small front teeth first, then the premolars and molars at the back, finally the canine teeth come out. Sometimes the adult canines erupt before the baby teeth have come out and occasionally we need to surgically remove retained baby canine teeth. During this time of teething, some discomfort including bleeding gums is to be expected and your pup will want to chew more.

Micro-chipping

Since 1 July 2006, all dogs registered in New Zealand for the first time (except farm dogs used for stock control) must be micro-chipped. The unfortunate reality is that pets can get lost. When this happens it's devastating. We endorse micro-chipping - not just for dogs but most other pets - as a safe, effective and inexpensive method to ensure a beloved pet can be reunited with their family. The microchip is approximately the size of a grain of rice and is inserted under the skin. It has a unique identification number that allows the pet to be tracked back to you with the aid of a scanner and database holding your contact details. All shelters and veterinary clinics have these microchip scanners and are able to identify an owned pet by contacting the registration service. It is then possible to contact you to let you know where your loved pet has been found.

We can microchip your pet during a general health check exam, during a specific appointment or when they come in for any kind of surgery. The insertion procedure is quick and simple. For your pet it will feel much the same as having a vaccination injection.

Registration

All dogs over the age of 3 months must be registered. The cost varies depending on whether the dog has been de-sexed and whether the owner holds a dog licence. Please check with your local authority or council for details.

De-sexing

As a responsible dog owner you should consider de-sexing your dog if you do not intend to use it for breeding. De-sexing ensures you do not have the burden of unwanted litters of puppies. There are also health reasons for having dogs de-sexed. Your de-sexed female will not have the strain of continual litters depleting her body of essential nutrients. Desexing a female dog before her first heat means she is much less likely to develop mammary growths (breast cancer), and infections of the uterus. As an owner you will also not have the problem of keeping the male dogs away when she is on heat.

When you neuter your male dog, the benefits include a reduced chance of prostate problems and the elimination of testicular tumours. There will also be a reduction in roaming and thus reduced dog fighting and a reduction in dominance based aggression towards people. It also takes care of those embarrassing sexual habits of dogs.

The operation is performed under general anaesthesia by experienced surgeons under sterile conditions in our surgical theatre. All our patients are given pre- and post-operative painkillers and sent home on anti-inflammatory pain relief tablets for a few days. Surgery is usually performed from 5 months of age, before they reach puberty, to prevent your dog learning unwanted behavioural traits. Please feel free to discuss any questions you may have regarding de-sexing with our vets.

Grooming

It is important to make your puppy feel comfortable about grooming from an early age. Look into its eyes, ears, nose and mouth regularly. Look at its paws to prepare it for claw trimming later. Grooming requirements differ from breed to breed. We stock a variety of shampoos, brushes and other grooming aids such as nail clippers. Ask our nurses for a recommendation.

Pet Insurance

We often take our pet's health for granted, but their health can be unpredictable. Pet insurance is available through our clinic and is highly recommended. It is not always possible to protect your pet from all unforeseen circumstances. Pet insurance removes the worry of cost becoming a factor if your pet is injured or develops a serious illness. See our receptionist for information.

Introducing your puppy to other pets

Introduce your new puppy to other members of the pet population *s-l-o-w-l-y*. It may be a good idea to keep your pup in a separate room or part of the house for the first few days. This allows other members to get used to his/her smell and noises. It will also give your puppy chance to relax and adjust to his/her surroundings before having to face the next hurdle. If there is more than one other animal in your menagerie, introduce the newcomer to one pet at a time, so you don't overwhelm him/her. Let your new puppy and the other(s) sniff and inspect each other. They may growl and bark at first, but this may simply be a sign of insecurity.

Try reassuring ALL of your pets that everything's fine. Make sure you don't neglect them as you try to make the new pet welcome. Don't use physical force to put the older animals in their place; this may make them wary of the new arrival. **Never leave your new puppy unsupervised with any of your older pets until you're sure they all get along well.**

The team at Veterinary Care wish you many happy and healthy years with your new family member!

Feel free to phone us for any help or further information you may need

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