

## Clicker Training with Puppies

All puppies need to be trained. Regardless whether you keep a puppy to show or train for fieldwork or place him in a companion home or with another canine enthusiast, a puppy needs to learn right from wrong.

“One of the most important aspects of getting off to a good start with a new puppy is training,” says Keith Benson, president of Triple Crown Dog Academy in Hutto, Texas, near Austin. “Puppies are extremely impressionable, especially at 8 to 20 weeks of age, a time commonly referred to as the imprinting stage.”

### Imprinting Stage

During this time good habits can be developed and bad ones avoided through positive, motivational training. One of the best ways to have fun training a puppy and see fast results is through clicker training, Benson says.

Clicker training uses a combination of scientific principles of classical conditioning from Ivan Pavlov and operant conditioning from B.F. Skinner.

“Pavlov’s dogs salivated at the sound of a bell, and Skinner trained pigeons to perform series of movements in order to receive their food reward,” he says. “Clicker training teaches your dog to associate an auditory signal, like the clicker, with a pleasurable reward, like food. Through repetition, a dog learns that the clicker means that what he did at that moment was correct and a reward is to come.”

So, what is clicker training and how does it work? The clicker is an effective tool because the sound is clear and consistent, and it helps bridge the time between when you mark the correct behavior and when the reward is given, Benson says. Because it is a reward-based method, the clicker can help a puppy become an active learner.

### Timing and Motivation

Other aspects essential to training a puppy are timing and motivation. “Timing is important because dogs live in the present, and there is only a second for a puppy to associate cause with effect,” Benson says. “This means your reward for a job well done must be immediate for a puppy to make an accurate association with his action and the reward. Any lag in communication can result in confusion for a puppy or inadvertently teach him something unexpected. The clicker can actually help you mark the exact moment a puppy performs the correct behavior without a lag in communication time.”

“Motivation is finding something very appealing to a puppy for which he desires to

work. Oftentimes food rewards are used in training because dogs have an inborn willingness to work for food, but you can also use praise, petting or a special toy reserved just for training sessions," he says.

Remember that being patient and having fun are especially important when training a puppy, Benson says. "Training sessions should be kept short — about 15 minutes per session — and upbeat to prevent a puppy from getting bored. Praise and reward a puppy often when he performs an exercise well to help keep him motivated in your sessions."

You should choose quiet locations free from distraction in which to hold training sessions so a puppy can focus his full attention on you, Benson says. "Don't push too hard and only move onto more difficult exercise when you feel a puppy is ready. Along with basic obedience exercises, like sit, down and walking on a loose leash, you can also begin teaching a puppy how you would like him to behave as an adult. These exercises can include sitting to greet people instead of jumping up on them, staying off the furniture, and anything else that is important."

### **Puppy Group Classes**

Participating in group classes led by a professional trainer is a great way to teach a puppy essential obedience exercises, Benson says. "One benefit of group classes is having the input of a trainer to guide you in the right direction for training your puppy, as well as help with any problems or questions you may have."

A puppy will also benefit by being able to socialize with other dogs and people, as well as learning to pay attention to you in an environment with distractions, he says. "Look for a group class in your area geared toward the specific training needs of puppies that offers positive motivation techniques like clicker training."

"The first few months with a new puppy create a great opportunity to build the foundation of a lasting bond with a dog," Benson says. "The training you do now will help guide a puppy in the direction of a well-mannered canine companion for life."

Triple Crown Dog Academy located in Hutto, Texas, outside Austin, has offered training programs for dog trainers and dogs, including puppy group classes, since 1998.

## Protecting Puppies from Disease

Protection from infectious diseases in young dogs is initially “passive,” meaning it is transferred from the dam to the puppies via colostrum, milk produced during the first 72 hours after birth.

If a dam is not currently vaccinated or if puppies do not suckle adequately during this time, failure of adequate transfer of maternal antibodies in colostrum can occur. In either case, puppies can be more susceptible to infectious disease, underscoring the importance of good prebreeding health practices and careful attention to neonates during the early days after whelping.

The immunity that is stimulated by vaccinating puppies after the waning of maternally derived antibodies, usually during the early post-weaning period, is called “active” immunity. Traditionally, following a series of puppy vaccinations after weaning and an initial booster at 1 year of age, revaccination was done every year in adult dogs to continue protection. But in recent years, considerable discussion has arisen with respect to the duration of immunity produced by today’s vaccines. Duration of immunity — how long immunity protection lasts after vaccination — is important but not simple to define because it is based on the complex interplay among a dog’s immune response, health and the vaccine.

Some scientists and veterinarians have expressed the feeling that optimal vaccine use should be determined based on several factors:

- Measurement of serum antibodies (protection) against the disease agent.
- The disease incidence and severity in a locality.
- Available data on vaccine protection and safety.
- The health, welfare and lifestyle of an individual dog or individual kennel.

In 2002, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) updated its vaccine guidelines using the recommendations of a growing number of veterinary practitioners and infectious disease experts. Although many of these experts support giving core vaccines at longer intervals, the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) reports there is little published scientific documentation to indicate whether every three years is any more appropriate than every two years or every seven years.<sup>1</sup>

Although most dogs respond well to vaccines, vaccination carries some risk. The most common adverse responses are mild and short term and include fever, sluggishness and reduced appetite. Dogs also may experience temporary pain or swelling at the site of vaccination. Although most adverse responses resolve within a day or two, excessive pain, swelling or listlessness should be discussed with a veterinarian. If a dog has repeated vomiting or diarrhea, whole body itching, difficulty breathing, collapse or swelling of the face or legs, a veterinarian should be contacted. These signs indicate a serious reaction called anaphylaxis.<sup>2</sup>

## **Measuring Immunity**

Duration of immunity may be determined by performing an annual serum antibody titer, which measures the amount of antibody against a particular antigen present in the blood, says W. Jean Dodds, D.V.M., an immunologist/hematologist and president of Hemopet, a nonprofit canine blood bank and health databank in Garden Grove, Calif. "When adequate immune memory is already established, there is little reason to administer booster vaccines. This is true for all core and noncore vaccines except rabies, in which state laws determine the frequency of immunization," she says.

Dodds recently published a study in which she measured titers in an attempt to learn whether the method can reduce the number of vaccines needed for companion animals.<sup>3,4</sup> Evaluating 1,441 dogs for parvovirus antibody titer and 1,379 dogs for distemper virus antibody titer, Dodds found that 95.1 percent had adequate parvovirus titers and 97.6 percent had adequate distemper virus titers.

Vaccine histories were available for 444 of the 1,441 dogs and for 433 of the 1,379 dogs. Only 43 dogs had been vaccinated within the previous year; the majority of dogs — 268 dogs or 60 percent — had received a booster vaccination one to two years beforehand.<sup>3</sup>

## **Vaccines for Individual Dogs**

Vaccines are medically powerful agents about which important decisions, considering relative risks and benefits, must be individualized to the needs of the dog, says the AVMA. Vaccine guidelines from both the AVMA and AAHA encourage veterinarians to adopt customized vaccination programs that focus on what is best for an individual dog.<sup>1</sup> Revaccination recommendations should be designed to create and maintain clinically relevant immunity while minimizing adverse event potential, the AVMA says.

Veterinarians may need to take into account multiple factors, including a patient's overall health, lifestyle, exposure to other animals and climate. "Prevalence of disease, and therefore likelihood of exposure, can vary not only from region to region across the country but even among areas within a region," Lawler says. "In addition, dogs that are transported around the country for shows or field trials, especially during seasons with sudden changes in barometric pressure and relative humidity, can be subject to additional stressors that increase susceptibility." Lawler suggests that breeders and handlers work with a veterinarian who has experience managing groups of animals. The familiarity a veterinarian develops with a group of dogs helps him or her make informed decisions about which booster vaccinations may be required.

## **Importance of Immune Protection**

Though vaccination recommendations have been revamped by the AVMA and AAHA, it is still important to be sure your dogs have adequate immune protection. Consulting with your veterinarian about the age, life style, health status, home and travel environment of your dogs will allow him or her to develop an appropriate vaccination schedule for your individual dogs. In households or kennels with multiple dogs, the importance of providing adequate immune protection is crucial.

<sup>1</sup> Report of the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) Canine Vaccine Task Force: 2003 Canine Vaccine Guidelines, Recommendations, and Supporting Literature.

<sup>2</sup> What you should know about Vaccination. American Veterinary Medical Association. Revised 10/02.

<sup>3</sup> Dodds WJ. Changing Vaccine Protocols.

<sup>4</sup> Twark L, Dodds WJ. Clinical application of serum parvovirus and distemper virus antibody titers for determining revaccination strategies in healthy dogs. Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association. 2000; 217:1021-1024.

## Puppy Pride

New puppies come into the world full of promise and opportunity. Helping them develop into confident, well-balanced adult dogs involves understanding the important stages of canine social and behavioral development and knowing the optimal times to maximize learning and socialization opportunities.

Ever wonder why some dogs fear other dogs or why some dogs are fearful or shy of people? Behavioral scientists tell us that a puppy taken away from his or her litter and raised by hand forms its primary relationships with people.<sup>1</sup> Such a dog may always have problems relating to dogs, but is likely to develop a strong human bond. For someone wanting a performance dog, this could be desirable, although the risk of owning a dog without good dog social skills is great.

Likewise, if a puppy does not have opportunities to socialize with humans between 6 and 12 weeks of age, he or she most likely will always be fearful and shy of people.<sup>1</sup> If left with littermates during this time, puppies bond with them instead of an owner.

### Studying Canine Behavior

Puppies in a litter can vary in development even though they were all born in a relatively short period of time.<sup>2</sup> "Depending on environmental circumstances, a 3-week-old puppy can have normal or delayed development," says Pat Hastings, co-editor of the book "Another Piece of the Puzzle: Puppy Development," which addresses the impact of puppy-raising on a puppy's ability to develop happily and confidently.

"People have a tendency to read one book and believe it as the gospel, but it is never that simple," Hastings says. "All researchers find a little more information and come up with a different slant. You have to hear it all in order to do the best you can."

In her book Hastings frequently refers to research by Dr. John Paul Scott and Dr. John L. Fuller, co-authors of "Genetics and the Social Behavior of the Dog," published in 1965. Behavioral scientists, Scott and Fuller spent 20 years researching their topic. They found evidence of important genetic and environmental influences on the behavior of dogs that led to classification of the development of dogs into stages. They attributed 35 percent of a dog's ultimate behavioral makeup to genetics and 65 percent to management, training, socialization, nutrition and the health of the puppy.<sup>2</sup>

## **Stages of Development**

Scott and Fuller define these stages of social and behavioral development in puppies: neonatal, transitional, socialization and juvenile. They also note a fear period around 8 to 10 weeks of age, and a second fear period between 4 and 11 months of age. Hastings' classification of developmental stages is similar although she includes periods of awareness or identification, behavioral refinement, environmental awareness, and seniority classification.

Regardless which classification system of developmental stages you use to understand how a puppy grows and develops, it is important to realize that humans play an important role in the outcome of a puppy. Starting when a puppy is a neonate, sensitive early human handling helps a puppy's mind and body to develop faster, say Scott and Fuller. By the transitional stage of development, humans should be regularly handling, cuddling and picking up puppies, Hastings says. If puppies miss opportunities to become socialized with humans between 6 and 12 weeks of age, they will likely always fear humans.

### **Neonatal Period:**

#### **0 to 14 Days**

Born deaf and blind and totally dependent on their mother for survival, 90 percent of a newborn puppy's time is spent sleeping. Despite puppies' vulnerability, those that receive mild stress during this period are better able to withstand stress as adults than their no stressed littermates.

Hastings cites articles published by Dr. Carmen Battaglia on the U.S. military's "Super Dog" program showing that early neurological stimulation has important and lasting effects on puppies. Battaglia describes specific stimulation exercises for day three through 16 as follows.

For three to five seconds once a day a puppy should receive:

- Tactile stimulation by being tickled between the toes with a Q-tip.
- Head held erect stimulation in which a pup is held in both hands perpendicular to the ground so the head is directly above the tail in an upward position.
- Head pointed down stimulation in which a pup is held in both hands with the head pointed downward toward the ground.
- Supine position stimulation in which a pup is held on its back in the palm of both hands with its muzzle facing the ceiling.
- Thermal stimulation in which a pup is placed feet down on a cool, damp towel.

Battaglia attributes these exercises to helping "to kick the neurological system in action earlier than normal, which helps to build a strong cardiovascular system with stronger heartbeats, stronger adrenal glands, more tolerance to stress and greater resistance to disease. These pups were more active, more exploratory, calmer and less distracted when working."

**Transitional Period:****14 to 28 Days**

Puppies' eyes and ears open, they can crawl backward, and they start wagging their tails during the transitional period. In this period of rapid development of motor skills, a complex environment is important for optimal development of the nervous system.

"Placing novel toys or objects in the whelping box — a piece of 6-inch PVC pipe, a small squeaker or squeaky toy, a low step or platform for crawling, a ball or small nylon bone — along with providing a variety of noises and sights are important," Hastings says. "The more a puppy explores now, the more confident and assured he or she will be in the future. From week three on, puppies can be desensitized to potentially frightening sights and sounds."

Imprinting also occurs; puppies learn they are dogs. "They recognize their mother, other species, specifically humans that are part of their social relations," Hastings says. "A poorly imprinted puppy will have problems being a good dog in the future."

Research by Scott and Fuller showed these imprinting mistakes: Puppies raised in isolation from dogs during this period and introduced to dogs at 16 weeks get attacked and rejected. Puppies without dog contact will bond with other species or inanimate objects, such as a stuffed animal.<sup>2</sup>

**Socialization Period:****4 to 12 Weeks**

Weaning occurs and socialization opportunities are key during this period. As already noted, puppies that miss the opportunity to socialize with dogs at 4 to 6 weeks of age and with people at 6 to 12 weeks of age will most likely always be fearful of dogs and/or humans.<sup>2</sup>

"The greater exposure you can give your dog during this critical period, the more it will lead to improved social flexibility, communication, emotional stability and trainability," Hastings says. "Puppies that stay in a kennel for most of this time will generally be fearful and hard to rehabilitate."

A breeder or owner should try to expose a puppy to situations it is likely to encounter in its lifetime, such as dog shows, field trials, children, swimming, livestock and city noises.<sup>2</sup> Puppies need physical and mental challenges — things to move, chew, climb, carry and tug.

These experiences help to develop strength, agility and coordination skills they will need to function as an adult. They also help to reduce the number of things in the world in which a puppy might be frightened and continually provide the



experience of being afraid and then recovering. The more chances a puppy has to be properly exposed to something new during the socialization period, the less bothered he or she will be throughout his life when confronted by other new or frightening things.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Ed Bailey wrote in Gun Dog magazine that “deprived of stimulation, puppies either cannot learn or are poor learners at best. A puppy never experiencing and coping with frustrating situations has limited chance to develop the checks and balances of emotion” needed to problem solve and develop good temperaments.<sup>2</sup>

Puppies also are ready to be separated from the litter for increasingly longer periods of time to learn independence, prevent separation anxiety problems later, and encourage bonding and acceptance of humans. Between 7 and 8 weeks of age is often considered an ideal time to adopt puppies to their new owners. At this age they have fully functioning brains and are capable of learning anything and of forming strong relationships with both dogs and humans, Hastings says. Before this age, interactions within a litter are considered critical to a puppy’s development.

Breeders and owners should be cautious of the fear period that occurs around 8 to 10 weeks of age, making a puppy extremely susceptible to permanent and irreversible fears. “If a puppy is frightened during this period, it may take weeks to return to normal,” Hastings says. “In a nonsocialized puppy, anything associated with fear at this age will always be a fear stimulus throughout its entire life without desensitization. Most agree this is the wrong time for ear cropping, shipping or harsh discipline.”

### **Juvenile Period:**

#### **3 to 6 Months**

Teething occurs and a puppy starts chewing more frequently. Rapid physical development is under way along with a true juvenile sense of independence. A puppy that wouldn’t leave your side earlier now won’t come when called. The juvenile period is the worst time to train a young dog if a basis hasn’t already been established; dogs become more active and more excitable.<sup>2</sup> A second fear period typically occurs between 4 and 10 months, lasting about three weeks. Puppies become fearful and cautious even to things they previously were comfortable with.<sup>2</sup> The good news is that most recover spontaneously.

### **A Solid Beginning**

Breeding and whelping a litter is just the start of raising healthy, well-socialized dogs. Taking time to understand the important stages of puppies’ social and behavioral development is key to success.

<sup>1</sup> Scott JP, Fuller JL. Genetics and the Social Behavior of the Dog. Originally published 1965. University of Chicago Press. 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Hastings P, Rouse EA. Another Piece of the Puzzle: Puppy Development. Dogfolk Enterprises, Aloha, OR. 2004.

## **The Power of Nutrition**

Puppies grow rapidly. At times during their rapid growth and development — until around 4 to 6 months of age — puppies require up to two or three times the amount of most nutrients and calories per pound of body weight compared to their needs as an adult dog.

The first food that a breeder introduces to new puppies should provide complete and balanced nutrition and be formulated to meet the nutrient requirements of growing puppies. With proper nutrition, puppies are more likely to develop properly with strong teeth and bones, healthy vision, a lustrous hair coat, and energy and vitality.

Though rapid growth in many breeds is finished by 6 months of age, puppies continue to grow and develop for several months longer depending on the breed or size of dog. During this period, their nutrient requirements per pound of body weight are greater than they will be as adults, and thus, they should be fed a diet formulated to meet these increased nutrient needs.

Large and giant breeds, such as the Great Dane, Saint Bernard and Neapolitan Mastiff, may not mature physically until they are nearly 2 years old; these breeds should be fed a lower energy growth diet for a longer period of time. In contrast, toy and small-breed puppies may mature before 1 year of age, and they have an increased energy need relative to their body weight.

### **Nutrient Balance**

The nutritional health of puppies — just like adult dogs — depends on receiving the correct amounts and proportions of six essential categories of nutrients: water, protein, fat, carbohydrates, minerals and vitamins. These nutrients — except for water — must be present in the proper proportion to ensure a puppy food is balanced.

“Though fat, protein and calcium tend to get the greater emphasis in puppy foods, every single essential nutrient is key, especially during the period of rapid growth,” says Purina Veterinary Nutritionist Dorothy Laflamme, D.V.M., Ph.D., DACVN. “Deficiencies in almost any essential nutrient can lead to changes that can compromise short- or long-term health.”

Feeding a complete and balanced puppy food is important for numerous reasons. Laflamme notes problems that can happen if nutrients are not balanced:

- A zinc deficiency can contribute to compromised immune function and skin abnormalities.
- Too little protein can cause disturbed growth as well as immune compromise and increased susceptibility to various stressor and infectious agents.
- Calcium in balance with phosphorus is particularly critical for large-breed dogs. Too little or too much can lead to skeletal problems.

### **Keeping Puppies Fit**

Along with providing complete and balanced nutrition, puppies of all breed sizes need an appropriate amount of calories during growth. This is defined as the amount that supports normal growth but not excessive growth.

Excessive weight in large dogs that may be predisposed to developmental orthopedic conditions is a definite risk factor for these conditions. "When feeding a large-breed puppy, research shows that avoiding overfeeding may help development," Laflamme says. "A breeder or owner should monitor a puppy's weight, adjusting food intake as necessary to maintain ideal body condition."

Just as in adult dogs, ideal body condition means the ribs are easily palpable, with minimal fat covering, and that the waist is easily noted when viewed from above. A puppy in ideal body condition has an obvious abdominal tuck when viewed from the side.

"Even pups not predisposed to skeletal problems should not be allowed to become overweight since fat pups often become fat dogs with increased risks for various health problems," Laflamme says.

The Purina Life Span Study, conducted from 1987 to 2002, proved that a dog's median life span can be extended by 15 percent — nearly two years for the Labrador Retrievers in the study — by restricting diet to maintain ideal body condition. Nutrition scientists also found that control-fed dogs allowed to eat ad libitum tended to become insulin-resistant, a marker for onset of a number of late-life diseases.

A breeder or owner needs to keep in mind that puppy foods must be balanced in regard to expected intake, which is why the relationship between individual nutrients and the energy content of the diet must be in balance. "The idea is that once the puppy has consumed the appropriate calories, he or she will have met his or her need for all essential nutrients," says Laflamme.

Some breeds and some individual puppies may have higher or lower energy needs compared to average. "In general, a puppy should be able to consume food

in 10 to 15 minutes two to three times daily so that he or she gets all of the calories needed to grow at a healthy rate," she says. "This should provide sufficient calories for healthy growth without excess body fat."

"Portion sizes should be controlled, if necessary, to avoid excess calorie intake. Here, matching calorie density of the food is important to provide adequate satiety," Laflamme says. "If a puppy eats everything offered and then seems hungry after or between meals, the energy density of the diet may be too high so that he or she is getting too little volume. On the other hand, if so much food must be provided that the dog appears bloated after meals or is losing weight, the diet may be too low in calories."

### **Choosing the Right Food**

Most breeders know exactly which puppy food they prefer. Sometimes if a puppy is not doing well on a food — losing weight, vomiting, or has excessively soft stool for more than a few days — you should try another, Laflamme advises.

With plenty of puppy foods on the market, it can be challenging to decide which one to try. "Assuming that each of these products is complete and balanced, then the major differences are likely to be energy density and flavor or ingredient variety," Laflamme says. "For the vast majority of dogs, the ingredient issue is not a factor for the puppy, but it may be for the owner. On the other hand, a few dogs may not fare well on one diet but do better on another. Generally, there is no pattern here, as it is based on individual variation."

One thing to keep in mind, she says, is frequently switching foods is likely to create a pattern of pickiness and/or obesity in a puppy. "Beyond that, the key is to select a complete and balanced puppy food that matches the energy needs of the puppy," Laflamme says.

## From Puppyhood On ....

### A Guide to Health Care for Your Dog

#### Health Safeguards

**Vaccinations.** Safeguarding a dog's health against a number of diseases begins at the time of weaning. During the first one to three days of its nursing period, a puppy receives antibodies in its mother's milk called colostrum. When the puppy is six to eight weeks of age, this immunity begins to disappear. Consequently at eight to 20 weeks of age, a puppy becomes susceptible to a number of diseases. At this time its immune system should be stimulated to provide its own antibodies. This is why vaccination programs are initiated shortly after weaning. A vaccination program should be worked out by your veterinarian. You will also want to discuss a timetable for booster shots to provide a lifetime of protection for your dog.

Vaccinations to help safeguard a puppy's health are available for the following common and serious diseases:

**Rabies** is a disease of the central nervous system, usually transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. All warmblooded animals are susceptible to rabies and some may serve as natural reservoirs of the virus. Among these are the skunk, fox, raccoon and bats. Bats are also found in urban areas.

On rare occasions the disease may be transmitted by the contact of virus-laden saliva with broken skin. Airborne infections may also occur in confined areas such as bat caves.

Early symptoms may include fever, listlessness or altered behavior. Late in the course of the disease, paralysis, muscle tremors, convulsion and death follow. Since rabies is usually fatal and can be transmitted to man, most states have laws requiring dogs to be vaccinated for rabies.

The first rabies vaccination will protect your puppy for one year. Your veterinarian will then work out a timetable for booster shots. You will receive a rabies certificate and a rabies tag to document the vaccination. Keep this certificate in a safe place in case your puppy is exposed to rabies or is suspected of biting someone.

**Parvovirus** and **Coronavirus** can affect dogs of all ages, but they are particularly devastating to puppies. Immediate treatment by a veterinarian for these diseases is essential.

**Parvovirus** is a common and deadly viral infection. Puppies under five months of

age, older dogs and dogs stressed by other medical and environmental problems are most severely affected, but death can occur in any age group. Fever, vomiting, depression, severe diarrhea and dehydration can accompany the infection. In some instances, death can occur rapidly, at times, in a matter of hours. In other cases, the course can be severe, but more protracted. A dog exhibiting any of the signs of parvovirus should be examined by a veterinarian immediately. Fast action can increase a dog's chances for survival and help prevent permanent damage to its intestines. Puppies who manage to survive may have permanently damaged hearts. As a result, affected puppies may die weeks or even months after the infection has passed.

### **Important Parvovirus Warning**

Because canine parvovirus can survive many weeks on contaminated surfaces, great caution should be taken in placing puppies where parvovirus has occurred. It is advisable to introduce only puppies who have been vaccinated and then only after thorough disinfection of the premises. Household bleach is an effective disinfectant.

**Coronavirus** is a highly contagious infection of the gastrointestinal tract. It is less severe than parvovirus. Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, fever and dehydration.

These viruses are transmitted from dog to dog via contact with infected feces, or the viruses can be carried by shoes, clothing, carriers, food and water bowls.

Follow your veterinarian's advice on a vaccination program for these diseases.

**Canine distemper** is a virus that affects the central nervous system. Early warning signs include fever, lack of appetite, mild drainage from the eyes, lethargy or depression. They may be followed by a severe discharge from the eyes and nose, severe diarrhea, pneumonia or convulsions.

The distemper virus can be carried from one dog to another or transmitted through contact from a contaminated environment. Generally distemper virus spreads as an airborne infection. Vaccination is the only effective control.

**Hepatitis** is a virus that affects the liver. It is most severe with puppies, but dogs of all ages are susceptible. Early signs of hepatitis are similar to those of distemper: fever, loss of appetite, depression, vomiting and diarrhea. Other symptoms include a discharge from the eyes or nose, uncontrolled bleeding, skin bruises or pain when the abdomen is pressed. A vaccination program planned by your veterinarian will control this disease.

**Tracheobronchitis**, popularly referred to as "kennel cough", primarily affects dogs living in close proximity, such as in a kennel or shelter. It is highly

contagious, attacks the respiratory system, causes mild or no fever, nasal discharge and a dry, hacking cough. In severe form, kennel cough can cause a loss of appetite, lethargy and a moist, persistent cough together with nose and eye discharges. It can be treated with appropriate antibiotics.

Numerous organisms have been implicated as causes. It is possible for your veterinarian to vaccinate for three of the common components of this cough. The three vaccines are parainfluenza, canine bordetella, and adenovirus-2.

**Leptospirosis** is an acute infectious disease that spreads through contact with the saliva, urine or nasal secretions of infected animals. The early symptoms include fever, muscle pain, dehydration, shock, loss of appetite and vomiting. Within a day or two of the onset of the first symptoms, the temperature will drop sharply, breathing will be labored and stiffness, particularly in the hind legs, may be observed. For control, a vaccination program must be followed.

### **Internal Parasites:**

**Be aware of a hidden health threat.** Most internal parasites, commonly called worms, live in the dog's intestines where they feed and reproduce.

All puppies should be examined by a veterinarian for internal parasites. Your veterinarian can detect the presence of most worms by examining your dog's feces.

Some parasites, such as hookworms and roundworms, can be transmitted from the mother to her puppies before birth or during nursing.

**Canine heartworm disease** is among the most serious health hazards affecting dogs of all ages. Mosquitoes serve as an intermediate host to carry the heartworm larvae from infected to uninfected dogs. The larvae invade a dog's body through a mosquito bite and work their way to a dog's heart and nearby blood vessels.

At first, an affected dog shows few, if any signs of infection. Over a period of time, an affected dog will display less and less tolerance for play and exercise. More obvious signs are a dry, chronic cough, shortness of breath, weakness, nervousness, listlessness, and weight loss. Without treatment, death is the eventual result.

Heartworm is easy to prevent. In areas where dogs are exposed to mosquitoes year-round, preventive medicine must be given year-round, on a daily or monthly basis, depending on the medication chosen. If the mosquito problem is seasonal, medication should begin at the start of the mosquito season and continue well after the season. Even if the mosquito problem is seasonal, veterinarians may

recommend year-round treatment.

Spraying for mosquito control, draining mosquito breeding grounds, avoiding mosquito-infested areas and keeping dogs screened from mosquitoes at night will also help reduce the threat of heartworm.

**Hookworms** are among the most dangerous of all the intestinal parasites, especially in puppies who can be infected from their mother. Hookworms attach themselves to the intestinal wall of an infected dog and suck blood, causing severe anemia which sometimes can be fatal. Puppies with heavy hookworm infections can die from blood loss before they are three weeks of age. Infected puppies may appear healthy the first week of life, but deteriorate rapidly the second and third week. They exhibit pale gums and pass very dark feces, indicative of partially digested blood.

Adult dogs with mild infections show no symptoms, but those with severe hookworm infection may exhibit anemia, dehydration, weakness and listlessness. Feces are dark red or black in color because of the presence of blood. Diarrhea may also be present.

Regular fecal examinations for the parasite by your veterinarian minimize the risk of infection.

**Roundworms** are probably the most common parasite among young dogs. Puppies are infected by way of the placenta before birth. After birth, puppies can become infected by larvae in the mother's milk. In the small intestine, roundworms compete with the puppy for nutrients, resulting in stunted growth and poor health. Roundworms often make a puppy look "potbellied." Other signs include diarrhea, poor hair coat, listlessness and poor growth.

Microscopic examination of fecal matter is needed to diagnose roundworms as well as hookworms. Your veterinarian can prescribe appropriate medication and a schedule to follow to prevent reinfection.

**Whipworm** infection can become severe before any noticeable symptoms appear. As the infection progresses, symptoms include diarrhea, abdominal pain, nervousness, weight loss and anemia. Usually these problems are seen in puppies over three months of age. Untreated severe whipworms may occasionally be fatal.

Whipworms pass directly from one dog to another when a dog consumes food, feces or water contaminated with infective eggs. Your veterinarian can diagnose whipworm infection by microscopic examination of fecal matter and can prescribe appropriate medication.



**Tapeworms** can be transmitted by fleas, rodents or rabbits which may be eaten by dogs. A mild tapeworm infection may go unnoticed. Signs of a more severe tapeworm infection include abdominal discomfort, lethargy and diarrhea alternating with constipation.

There are numerous species of tapeworm. Different tapeworm species require different medications. Consequently, a veterinarian's diagnosis and instructions for administering any wormer are important.

**Giardia** is one of the most common of the protozoa that can infect dogs. It can be acquired by direct contact with fecal matter containing the parasite as well as from parasite-contaminated food and water. Symptoms, which can be intermittent or continuous, include foul-smelling feces, which may contain mucus, loss of appetite and weight loss. Routine methods of examination usually do not reveal the presence of giardia. Your veterinarian can perform fecal examinations designed to reveal this type of parasites. Once diagnosed, specific treatment is available.

**Coccidia** are common parasites of dogs, especially puppies. Eggs passed in the feces of the infected dogs become infective to other dogs within one to several days.

The most common symptoms include diarrhea, abdominal pain, dehydration, weight and appetite loss. However, coccidia may be present with no symptoms.

Veterinary diagnosis is made by examining the feces using the same methods as for the detection of hookworms and round-worms. Several medicines are reported to help control coccidia, but the general health of the dog and the function of its immune system appear to be important.

### **More About Internal Parasites:**

Usually signs of internal parasites are slow and subtle and may be overlooked by the dog owner or confused with other conditions.

General signs of parasitic infection include weakness, poor appearance, emaciation, distended abdomen ("potbelly"), rough hair coat and paleness of membranes of the mouth and, in some cases, frequent digestive upsets and diarrhea. Affected dogs may eat well and their temperature remains normal, but there is a loss of energy.

Consult your veterinarian as to the timing and methods of fecal examination and treat affected dogs precisely as directed.

Be aware that products that work well on dogs may be hazardous to cats and

other animals. Some products are hazardous when improperly combined.

Important preventive measures are proper nutrition achieved through feeding a nutritionally complete and balanced dog food and maintaining strict sanitary conditions in the dog's environment.

### **External Parasites:**

**Combatting Discomfort and Disease.** Dogs are subject to attack by a number of external parasites who live on a dog's skin. They not only cause irritation, but sometimes carry diseases. As you groom your dog, examine its hair coat for any evidence of parasites.

**Fleas** are tiny insects that feed on the blood of animals and create mild to severe discomfort. They cause chronic scratching and, if swallowed by a dog, can also transmit tapeworms.

Flea bite allergy is the most common allergy affecting dogs. It occurs when a dog is exposed to flea saliva as the flea bites. The saliva acts as an allergen and can cause intense itching. Hair loss and skin infections are other signs of flea allergy. Controlling fleas is essential in managing this type of allergy.

Fleas can hatch in a dog's bedding, carpets, furniture and out-door areas. To control fleas, the dog's environment as well as the dog must be treated.

Keeping the environment flea-free involves dealing with all stages of the flea life cycle. Fleas live on host animals and move readily from dog to dog, man to man, or from man to dog or other animals. Eggs are laid loose in the dog's hair coat and usually fall off soon afterwards and are generally hatched in four to seven days. Animals passing through an infested area pick up these newly hatched and developing fleas.

Special attention should be paid to the dog's sleeping area. It should be kept clean and the bedding should be washed frequently. In the house, thoroughly vacuum all carpets and crevices, under cushions, rugs and in the corners of upholstered furniture. Discard the vacuum bag because it may harbor fleas. Some flea control in the yard is possible through spraying.

Thorough cleaning and vacuuming help, but a professional exterminator may be needed to control heavy infestations. Multiple treatments may be needed to remove fleas from the household environment.

Fleas are diagnosed by finding either the parasites themselves or black specks called "flea dirt" (flea excrement) on the dog's hair coat.

Many preparations are available to aid in flea control. A once-a-month tablet for flea control is available through veterinarians. This tablet kills the flea eggs deposited on a dog. Adult fleas can still bite the dog and deposit eggs. Dogs can get an allergic reaction from the flea bites as well as tapeworms if a flea is ingested. Products to control fleas in the house and yard are also needed in a complete flea control program, especially in the case of moderate to severe infestations. Be certain the label on any product you use states the product is safe for dogs and follow label directions. Your veterinarian can also provide advice about products that will be effective in your particular situation.

**Ticks** are bloodsucking parasites and one of the most difficult to control. Because ticks suck many times their weight in blood, a heavy infestation on a dog can cause moderate to severe anemia. This condition can result in the death of puppies. The bites also cause irritation to the skin and secondary infection of tick bites is common.

The two most common kinds of ticks infecting dogs are the brown dog tick and the American dog tick. The brown dog tick is known to carry a parasite of the red blood cells as well as other infectious diseases. The American dog tick carries a number of diseases including Rocky Mountain spotted fever and tularemia.

Lyme disease is an infectious disease transmitted by the deer tick. It is being diagnosed with increasing frequency in the United States.

After walking your dog in a wooded area or field, always check for ticks. If you remove individual ticks, extract them manually and be certain that the mouthpiece does not remain in the puppy's skin. Remove the entire head and its mouth parts with tweezers or by the fingers protected with a paper towel, tissue or rubber gloves. Pull upward with a steady, even pressure. Do not twist. Wash hands thoroughly and disinfect the bite site.

As with fleas, proper treatment of the premises is essential to control ticks. Use a pesticide designated for ticks according to label directions.

Remove your dog from any area to be treated. Indoors spray its sleeping area and along baseboards, door frames and other cracks and crevices. Repeat the treatment as needed.

In tick-infested areas, keep grass and weeds cut short. Spray pesticides according to label directions. Shrubbery should be sprayed up to a height of two to three feet.

**Lice** are generally not common on healthy dogs. Serious infection usually occurs on poorly nourished and poorly managed dogs. Lice are classified by their feeding habits as either biting or sucking. Sucking lice injure their host by drawing blood

which can result in anemia. This blood loss is especially dangerous to puppies. The bites may be very irritating to the dog's skin, leading to self-injury.

Biting lice feed by chewing on dry skin, scales and scabs. This can cause skin irritations, often preventing sleep and may also cause diarrhea and appetite loss.

Infected dogs should be isolated and treated with any of a number of commercial products in the form of dips, sprays or shampoos.

**Mange** is a general term for parasitic diseases caused by any of several microscopic mites. A veterinarian should diagnose and treat a mange infestation as soon as possible.

Demodectic, or red mange, is seen primarily in young dogs and does not appear to be transmitted to other dogs or humans. However, young puppies may acquire the parasite from their mother while they are nursing. It is usually a mild, localized infection, found in small patches around the eyes and on the face, neck and limbs. Symptoms include hair loss, mild redness and some scaling of the skin. Serious secondary infection may result and treatment can be difficult.

Sarcoptic mange, or scabies, is highly contagious and can be transmitted to humans as well as other dogs. The mites burrow into the skin, causing irritation which leads to intense itching by the infected dog. The typical pattern of distribution includes the ears, chest, limbs and abdomen. Serious self-injury from scratching and biting and secondary infections are likely to occur if the infection is not treated.

**Ear mites** cause a thick, dark reddish-brown material to exude from the ears of the dogs. A foul odor to the external ear may also be present. Affected dogs make shake their heads and scratch around their ears, causing considerable self-injury.

Because ear mites can be transmitted by direct contact, all animals in contact with the infected animal should be treated. For all mite infections, your veterinarian can provide diagnosis and effective treatment.

### **Important Pesticide Precautions**

- When using pesticides the importance of reading the product information on the label cannot be overemphasized. It is equally critical to follow all instructions on the label exactly.
- Remove all animals from the area to be treated.
- Do not reapply more often than recommended to avoid overexposure to the pesticide. .Protect yourself by wearing rubber gloves and protective

clothing.

- Watch for allergic reactions by animals and people.
- Store pesticides in their original or clearly labeled containers where they are out of the reach of children and pets.
- Do not allow dogs and other animals into the treated area until it is thoroughly dry.

## Fungal Infection

**Despite Its Name, Ringworm Is Not A Worm.** It is a highly contagious fungus infection of the skin that can be transmitted to your dog by other infected animals, by humans or by contacts with the soil. Puppies and young dogs as well as children are most susceptible. Ringworm lesion is a rapidly spreading, circular, hairless, scaly area edged in red. It may be accompanied by mild itching. Because ringworm can be transmitted to other animals and humans, the infected dog must be isolated and treated by a veterinarian. The dog's bedding should be destroyed. Carpets and upholstered furniture must be thoroughly vacuumed and the vacuum bag discarded.

## Spaying and Neutering

**Be A Responsible Dog Owner.** Lack of information or misinformation about neutering and spaying are a primary cause of millions of puppies and dogs being euthanized or abandoned each year. Some dog owners are fearful that the procedure might be painful or cruel or that it will result in a personality change.

Separating myth from reality should reassure dog owners that neutering/spaying not only helps solve the problem of unwanted dogs but also contributes to their health and well-being.

*Myth:* Neutering/spaying changes a dog's personality.

*Reality:* While this procedure may decrease aggressiveness, the dog's genetic makeup and the attention and training it receives are factors that shape its personality.

Neutering is usually performed just as a dog is approaching puberty. The changes in a dog's playfulness and sleeping habits that normally develop at puberty are sometimes attributed to this procedure.

*Myth:* Females have a sweeter, gentler personality if allowed to have one litter before being spayed.

*Reality:* No evidence from behavioral research or from clinical observations

supports this belief. Some animal behaviorists suggest that this is "the placebo effect." The owner expects that breeding will bring about a behavior change and this leads to the assumption that behavior has improved.

*Myth:* Neutered/spayed pets become obese.

*Reality:* Neutering/spaying are often associated with obesity because reduced activity and metabolic changes may result. This problem can generally be avoided by close monitoring of the dog's diet (eliminating table scraps and, if necessary, reducing the amount of dog food offered). In addition to diet management, regular exercise and play periods should also help prevent obesity.

As in any surgery, neutering or spaying may have possible complications which you can discuss with your veterinarian. However, the benefits of neutering and spaying outweigh most complications.

## **Health Benefits of Neutering and Spaying**

Spaying a female before her first heat cycle protects against mammary tumors. However, if this surgery is done late in her life it does not provide this benefit. Early spaying also helps prevent the development or progression of several reproductive tract diseases.

Females come into heat at fairly regular intervals. With each heat cycle may come the unwelcome presence of unaltered male dogs. Spaying prevents this annoying problem.

Solid medical evidence supports the advantages of neutering the male dog. The risk for testicular cancer as well as other testicular diseases is eliminated. The desire to roam and aggression toward other dogs usually diminish. A neutered male usually becomes a contented stay-at-home companion. Consequently, the threat of his wandering into the path of an automobile or being killed or injured in fights with other dogs is reduced. Urine marking is also reduced.

## **Dental Care**

**Don't Neglect the Teeth.** The kind of dental care a dog receives over the years has a great impact on its health and longevity. Dogs can develop many of the same dental problems experienced by people.

Dog owners are realizing that regular dental care helps promote good health in dogs. Although dogs usually do not need the extensive dental treatments many people require, they do need dental care on a regular basis, especially as they

grow older.

Dogs have 28 deciduous (temporary) teeth and 42 permanent teeth. Deciduous teeth (sometimes described as "milk teeth") begin to appear when a puppy is about four weeks of age.

Shedding of deciduous teeth in favor of permanent teeth is a gradual process occurring between 14 and 30 weeks of age. During the time puppies are losing their teeth, they may eat slightly less and may tend to chew more. Hard rubber or rawhide toys made especially for dogs are a good investment to help prevent household damage during this time.

Occasionally a puppy retains some deciduous teeth after the permanent teeth have appeared. This retention may result in damage to the soft tissues of the mouth and may even accelerate wear of permanent teeth. A veterinarian should be consulted to determine whether or not removal is necessary.

The most common dental problems dogs experience result from plaque and calculus buildup. Food material, bacteria and saliva may accumulate and adhere to the tooth surface, forming a soft plaque. If plaque buildup continues, solutions of chalk-like materials form a hardened dental calculus on the tooth surface.

Calculus is seen more frequently in older pets fed large quantities of soft foods. If left unchecked, plaque and calculus buildup can eventually cause inflammation of both the gums (gingivitis) and the membrane lining of the tooth socket (periodontitis).

Without proper treatment, the teeth may become infected and fall out. The infection resulting from these conditions may spread to other parts of the body such as the kidneys or heart valves.

Unfortunately, signs of dental problems are often subtle and may go undetected for months or even years. Consequently, they are far advanced before being discovered. Unpleasant breath and salivation are signs of a dental problem.

Regular dental examinations by a veterinarian are recommended. A good opportunity for this dental checkup is during the dog's yearly physical examination when vaccinations are given. Regular cleaning and scaling under anesthesia, done by a veterinarian, aids in preventing or minimizing dental problems.

Dry crunchy foods such as Purina ® Puppy Chow ® brand puppy food and Purina ® Dog Chow ® brand dog food can be helpful in keeping teeth cleaner. The dog's chewing action while eating a dry food acts like a toothbrush as particles scrape against the teeth to help remove plaque. However, there is no substitute for

regular dental care.

If possible, accustom a young puppy to having its teeth cleaned on a regular basis at home. Use a mixture of baking soda with a little water added to form a paste or toothpaste formulated specifically for dogs. Apply with a soft toothbrush or a piece of gauze wrapped around the finger. Do not use toothpaste formulated for humans because dogs swallow, rather than spit out such a preparation, which may cause a digestive upset.

## **A Question About Age**

How does a dog's years of age compare to those of people?

No single rule is universally accepted. One rule of thumb suggests that the dog's first year is roughly equivalent to 14 human years. After that, each year is approximately equivalent to five years for people. Like people, dogs mature at different rates. Several factors influence a dog's longevity:

- The dog's genetic makeup.
- A lifetime of complete and balanced nutrition appropriate for a dog's life stage.
- Regular veterinary care.
- Proper daily care including clean, comfortable, draft-free housing.

## **Evaluating Your Dog's Health**

**Your Dog Cannot Tell You How It Feels.** Consequently, it can become quite ill before the signs of illness become apparent. Unless your dog is unconscious, bleeding or otherwise visibly demonstrating its distress, how can you know if your dog is ill?

*Know your dog.* Be aware of its usual behavior and appearance to provide a basis for evaluating its health on a day-to-day basis.

Contentment and alertness are two signs of a healthy dog. Contented dogs usually stretch on rising and look relaxed and unworried when resting. Healthy dogs are alert and respond to the activity around them. Observe your dog for any signs of illness which include:



**Unusual behavior:**

- Loss of appetite - it is normal for a dog to go "off feed" for a day or two, but if loss of appetite persists, consult your veterinarian
- Lack of interest in what is going on
- Hiding in dark places
- Persistent coughing
- Scratching or chewing at feet, skin or hair coat

**Eyes:**

- Discharge from the eyes and nose
- Red, inflamed or cloudy eyes

**Ears::**

- Persistent head shaking, scratching ears
- Strong odor, tenderness and swelling around the ears

**Mouth:**

- Unpleasant breath odor and /or swollen gums

**Poor Appearance:**

- Hair coat with a harsh feel or dull texture
- Dull and flaky skin
- Potbelly or thinness

**Other Warning Signs:**

- Blood in the urine
- Mucus or blood visible in the stools
- Repeated vomiting over several days
- Unusual lumps under the skin

**An Important Caution**

Obesity is the number one nutritional disorder among dogs. Studies suggest that over 30 percent of the dogs presented to veterinary clinics are overweight.

The same health problems obesity causes for humans can also affect overweight pets. Cardiovascular and respiratory systems and other major organs can adversely be affected. A veterinarian may find it difficult to assess a dog's

physical condition because excess body weight can mask symptoms or aggravate existing abnormalities. Dogs weighing 20 percent or more over ideal body weight may be obese. Your veterinarian can advise you as to your dog's body condition.

Among dogs the incidence of obesity increases with age, with a low of 12 to 20 percent at one to four years of age to about 40 percent over 12 years.

The following guidelines for dogs who are overweight or have the tendency to become overweight are presented as suggestions. They are not intended to replace the advice of a veterinarian.

- Reduce the dog's calorie intake by feeding less. A reduction of not more than one-fourth the previous caloric intake is recommended.
- Omit feeding food from the table.
- Switch to a lower calorie dog food such as Purina ® Fit & Trim ® brand dog food formulated for adult dogs in need of a weight reduction or weight maintenance program.
- Do not feed high calorie treats.
- Avoid diets high in fat.
- Enlist the cooperation of all family members to help ensure a successful weight reduction program.
- Two or three small daily feedings help prevent the dog from feeling hungry and keep it from begging.
- Combine exercising your dog with diet management.
- Make certain plenty of fresh drinking water in a clean bowl is available at all times.

### **The A, B, C' s of Health Care for Your Dog**

**A**lways feed a nutritionally complete and balanced dog food appropriate for your dog's life stage and activity level.

**B**ring your dog to your veterinarian regularly for its vaccinations, internal and external parasite check and physical examination.

**C**onsider your dog's environment - keep it clean and comfortable.

## Grooming Your Dog

Genetics is a factor in the texture and growth rate of a dog's hair coat.

Nothing will produce a coat of show quality if the genetic potential does not exist. However, the dog owner can do much to help a dog's hair coat achieve its full potential and to keep it in good condition: feed a good quality nutritionally complete and balanced dog food; keep the dog free of internal and external parasites and maintain a regular grooming schedule with the appropriate grooming equipment.

Grooming your dog not only helps him look his best at all times, but also helps keep him clean and healthy.

Grooming sessions are an excellent time to assess your dog's health. Learn what is normal for your dog, what characteristics distinguish him. Changes in appearance or behavior may be signs of illness. If a dog displays constant problems such as itching, sudden loss of hair, inflamed areas, any signs of tenderness or lumps under the skin, a veterinarian should be consulted.

A dog who is accustomed to grooming will be more at ease when he is examined or treated by a veterinarian.

The kind of grooming routine you establish for your dog will depend on how much time the dog spends outside, weather conditions and whether the dog is a longhaired or shorthaired breed.

Shorthaired breeds should be groomed two to three times a week. Longhaired breeds require daily grooming. Many terrier breeds require periodic plucking to remove dead hairs and to give them a trim appearance with careful brushing and combing between pluckings.

If your dog's hair coat requires complicated grooming, you may want to have it done professionally. However, trips to the groomer's are not adequate to maintain a healthy, handsome hair coat. Your dog still needs to be brushed and combed regularly between professional grooming sessions.

### Grooming A Puppy

Early in life a puppy should learn that grooming can be a pleasant experience. A puppy is easy to handle, and in a few months, with the proper training, he will be used to regular grooming. Begin with short grooming sessions. Reassure the puppy and praise him. As you repeat the daily grooming, accustom the puppy to opening his mouth for inspection and having his ears and paws handled. Later,

when his teeth and ears need cleaning and his nails clipped, he won't resist this care.

You may acquire a puppy or a young dog who resists grooming. Chances are, he had a bad experience and he will have to be shown, with considerable patience on your part, that there is nothing to fear.

### **Establish A Grooming Routine**

While there is no set time that is best to groom a dog, it is not a good idea to handle any dog, especially a young puppy immediately after he has eaten. Nor can a young puppy or even an older dog be expected to stand quietly for grooming when he has to go outside to relieve himself.

If the puppy tends to resist grooming, avoid chasing the puppy. This has only negative effects: the puppy may become even more resistant to grooming or he may interpret chasing as an invitation to play.

Plan time for grooming when you can give the dog your full attention. The place should be one that is convenient for you, has good light and is free from distractions. Have your grooming tools assembled and within easy reach.

Establish and follow a specific order in grooming and follow this order. This helps ensure that the dog will be completely groomed and no part of the routine will be missed.

Placing the dog on a table usually makes the job easier. Choose a sturdy table which places the dog at a comfortable height for you. Place a rubber non-skid mat on the table to give your dog secure footing. If it is feasible, you may want to do what professional groomers do. Place a mirror where you can observe your dog from another perspective as you groom him.

If you have several dogs or groom dogs for show, you may prefer a professional grooming table available through pet supply stores and catalogs.

After each grooming thoroughly wash, rinse and dry the grooming equipment.

### **Brushing Is Basic**

All dogs should be brushed. Brushing is basic to maintaining a clean and healthy coat. Frequent brushing loosens and removes scale, dirt and dead hair; distributes the natural oils throughout the coat and helps prevent tangles in long hair. How often this should be done and how much times it takes depends upon the hair coat of the individual dog. However, brushing every day is recommended during spring and fall when shedding can be very heavy to help control loose hair. Always brush the dog before bathing to remove dead hair and mats from the

coats of longhair dogs.

A brush with natural bristles is popular for removing dead hair. Use a brush with correct bristle length - short for medium and shorthaired dogs, long for longhaired dogs. Another option for many medium and longhaired breeds is a brush with fine bentwire teeth called a "slicker" or "carder." For shorthaired breeds a hound mitt with short bristles on one side that you can slip over your hand is very effective. Brushes and other grooming equipment are available at pet shops and knowledgeable pet shop personnel can help you make the appropriate choice for your dog's type of coat.

It's important to get the brush down to the skin as massaging action helps loosen and remove dandruff flakes. Most longhaired breeds are brushed in layers from the skin outward. Then brush with the lay of the hair for the final touch.

A dog is not groomed if only his back and upper body are brushed. Train the dog to lie on either side and lift its front and then its back legs for underbody brushing. This is particularly important for longhaired dogs because mats often develop in this area. Some dogs object to this and it is necessary to experiment with the most satisfactory way to handle them. Sometimes resting the dog's foot in the palm of the hand and using gentle strokes solves the problem. Some dogs may like to lie on their back or only one side. Others never like this aspect of grooming no matter how they are handled. If this is the case, be firm and let the dog know this step in the grooming procedure must be followed. Be as gentle and quick as possible, praise the dog for being good and reward him with a treat such as Purina ® Bonz dog snacks or Purina ® Dog Biscuits.

### **Mats and Tangles**

If a longhaired dog is not groomed daily, mats and tangles can be a serious problem. Sometimes tangles can be brushed out. If the coat is matted, try using your fingers to pull the mat apart and then brush the hair in place. If the mat cannot be worked apart with the fingers, grooming preparations are available that lubricate the mats so they are easier to comb out. If combing will not work, the mats must be cut off. Gently pull the mat away from the dog's body, then carefully cut the hair between the mat and the skin. Blunt-edge scissors are recommended to help prevent injuring the dog if he should wiggle during the cutting procedure.

### **Fleas and Ticks**

As you groom your dog, check for fleas and ticks. Brush the hair coat upwards to expose specks on the skin surface. Fleas are diagnosed by finding either the parasites or black specks (flea excrement), sometimes called "flea dirt" on the dog's hair coat. Many preparations on the market including sprays, powders, shampoos or dips can help rid your dog of fleas. Just be certain the label states the product is safe for dogs. Or you can ask your veterinarian to recommend an

appropriate product.

If you use a flea powder or spray, starting the application at the dog's head and working backward is recommended. Spray and apply the dust into the hair coat and between the toes and footpads. Be especially careful to avoid the eyes. Always read and follow label directions.

Although fleas feed on a dog's blood, they spend most of their time off the dog. Therefore it is necessary to treat both a dog and his surroundings for effective flea control.

Ticks can appear as small, flat beetle-like bugs or a tan-colored bean when they are engorged with blood. They adhere firmly to the dog's body and must be carefully extracted. This can be done with tweezers or by fingers protected with a paper towel, tissue or rubber gloves. Twisting or jerking may cause part of the mouth parts to break off in the skin, possibly causing chronic irritation. Disinfect the bite and wash the hands thoroughly.

## **Bathing**

Dogs should be bathed when they look dirty and/or have a strong doggy odor. Puppies or small dogs can be bathed in sinks and tubs while large breeds may require bathtubs. (After bathing your dog, be sure to scrub and disinfect the area prior to human use.) If the weather is warm, a child's wading pool and garden hose may be used. Have your dog's shampoo or soap, brush and comb and towels nearby before you begin. Place the dog in the tub and soak the dog through to the skin. Use a shampoo that is pH balanced for dogs. If your dog has a special skin problem, ask your veterinarian to recommend a shampoo. Two shampoos (the first shampoo to loosen dirt and the second shampoo to remove it), each followed by a thorough rinsing with warm water, not hot water, should be sufficient to get your dog clean.

Let the dog "drip dry" for a few minutes as you squeeze the excess water out of the coat. Put him on the ground or on a table, cover with a dry towel and squeeze the coat until most of the water has been absorbed. Begin to brush dry. A hair dryer may be held about 12 inches away from the coat to aid in the drying process. Move the dryer and the brush over the entire surface of the dog so the coat dries evenly. Never let a wet dog outside in cold weather or expose him to drafts. Keep him away from areas where he can get dirty before he dries completely.

## **Dry Baths**

Sometimes it is best to avoid using soap and water - especially during extremely cold weather, when the puppy is very young or when a dog is convalescing. Preparations for giving your dog a dry bath are available in most pet shops.

These products may be rubbed into the coat and brushed out. Be sure to follow the directions on the label.

### **Care of the Ears**

Check your dog's ears regularly. If the inside of the ear flap looks dirty, it can be cleaned gently with a small piece of cotton wrapped around a fingertip and moistened with mineral oil. Look for dirt, cuts, scratches, swelling parasites, discharge and an unpleasant odor. Clean off wax deposits carefully with a cotton-tipped swab dipped in mineral or baby oil. To avoid possible injury, never probe deep into the ear. If you discover dried blood, scabs or a thick discharge, consult your veterinarian.

Dogs with long hair or long ears sometimes get a heavy growth of hair on the undersides of their ears or at the opening of the inner ear which can collect dirt and eventually impair hearing. This excess hair should be removed by a professional.

### **Care of the Eyes**

Any dried matter in the corners of the dog's eyes should be gently cleaned away with a wash cloth or cotton swab moistened with warm water. Be careful not to rub over the eye with cotton as the fibers can cause irritation.

During grooming sessions, check your dog's eyes for any signs of irritation or other problems. His eyes should be clear and bright, and the area around the eyeball should be white. Any red spots or apparent damage should receive immediate attention. Discharge from the corners of the eyes should be considered serious if a mild solution of boric acid does not correct the situation. Excessive discharge, other abnormal conditions or injury to the eye require prompt treatment by a veterinarian.

### **Nail Care**

Keeping your dog's nails clipped to the proper length is essential for good feet. Because dogs do not wear down their nails, it is your responsibility to trim them regularly. Or, if you find this difficult, ask your veterinarian or a professional groomer to do the trimming. Excessively long nails can damage the feet, making walking and running painful. In extreme cases, the dog becomes lame. How often the nails should be trimmed depends upon how fast your dog's nails grow.

Puppies have needle-sharp nails and clipping the points off is not only good practice for future clipping, but it also accustoms the puppy to this procedure. Nail clippers, available at pet supply stores, should be among the first items to buy and use on a new puppy. If necessary, ask your veterinarian to show you how to do it.

In clipping nails, cut the tips only and do not cut too far back where you may hit

a vein, causing it to bleed. If this should happen, a moistened styptic pencil usually stops the bleeding. Or you can press a cotton ball against the end of the nail with a dab of petroleum jelly. If the bleeding continues or is excessive, consult your veterinarian.

### **Be Alert for Foot Problems**

Each time you groom your dog, examine its foot pads for the presence of foreign objects, cuts or punctures. Cuts should be cleaned with soap and water and treated with an antiseptic.

During winter months, snow, ice, salt or other chemical de-icers on icy streets as well as mud can injure a dog's feet. When your dog comes inside, clean the paws to remove mud and salt particles and treat the pads for cuts from sharp edges of ice. Clean with soap and water and apply an antiseptic.

Dogs housed outdoors should have their paws inspected regularly and treated when necessary.

During summer months or when a dog is being hunted in the field, inspect the paws for thorns which should be carefully removed with tweezers. Then apply an antiseptic.

### **Dental Care**

Dental care is another important aspect of grooming your dog. Plaque and calculus buildup begins to form on a dog's teeth after it is one year of age, particularly if soft pet foods are fed. Food bacteria and saliva accumulate and adhere to the tooth surface, forming a soft plaque. If plaque buildup continues, chalk-like materials form a hardened dental calculus on the tooth surface. If left unchecked, plaque and calculus buildup can eventually cause inflammation of the gums (gingivitis) and of the membrane lining of the tooth socket (periodontitis).

Some dogs will allow regular brushing of their teeth. Use a mixture of baking soda with a little water added to form a paste or toothpaste formulated specifically for dogs. Apply with a soft toothbrush or a piece of gauze wrapped around the finger. Do not use toothpaste formulated for humans because dogs swallow, rather than spit out the preparation, causing stomach upset.

Your dog should receive regular dental examinations by your veterinarian. A good time for this is during the yearly physical examination when vaccinations are given.

### **Other Considerations**

In addition to regular grooming, a dog owner should be aware that a dog's environment or a management problem may be affecting the quality of a dog's hair coat.



A dry, brittle haircoat and hair loss may result from low humidity. Indoor housing where humidity is always low is a good example. Too frequent bathing also dries out the skin and hair coat.

Dietary imbalance such as excessive feeding of table scraps or extended feeding of imbalanced pet foods (those recommended for intermittent feeding only) can result in poor hair coat. Feeding a nutritionally complete and balanced dog food such as Purina® Dog Chow® brand dog food or Purina® brand Hi Pro Dog Meal helps ensure a healthy hair coat that is enhanced by regular grooming.

## **Special Grooming Problems**

### **Summertime Cautions:**

A dog's hair coat serves as an insulator against the heat. For this reason, a longhaired dog should never be shaved or clipped during the summer.

After a day at the beach with your dog, rinse him with clean warm water. Salt water can irritate his skin.

When dogs are in fields or wooded areas, burrs may adhere to the dog's hair coat and, if not removed, cause skin irritation. Burrs are easier to remove if they are first saturated with vaseline, mineral oil or olive oil and then carefully worked out by hand, using the thumb and forefinger.

### **Foreign Substances:**

To remove chewing gum, rub an ice cube over the gum until the gum becomes brittle and easy to pull out. Or rub peanut butter into the area where the gum is imbedded and let it remain a few minutes. Then comb or work the gum out of the hair coat with your fingers.

To remove tar from the feet, rub butter, margarine or vegetable shortening into the affected areas and let it remain until the tar softens and can be pulled out. Or soften the tarred areas by soaking them in warm water, then in mineral oil. Repeat until the tar loosens and pulls out easily. Then wash and rinse the feet thoroughly.

To remove water-base paint, wash the dog repeatedly with warm water and a shampoo recommended for dogs as soon as possible. If the dog has brushed against oil-based paint, treat the paint-soaked hair as promptly as possible. Fresh paint should be wiped off with dry cloths and then washed with warm water and a shampoo for dogs. Dried paint should be cut off with blunt scissors and the remaining hair washed and rinsed several times.

*Caution:* Do not use paint removers, kerosene, turpen-tine or gasoline because

they may severely irritate the skin.

*The Importance of Early Training:* Dogs who have been accustomed to grooming are more likely to cooperate when time-consuming procedures are needed to remove foreign substances. Praise your dog for his cooperation and reward him with a treat.

## A Healthy Start for Your Puppy

### Needed Immunization

During the first one to three days of its nursing period, a puppy receives antibodies in its mother's milk called colostrum. By weaning, at six to eight weeks of age, this natural immunity will begin to disappear. Consequently at eight to 20 weeks of age, a puppy is susceptible to a number of diseases. At this time, the puppy's immune system should be stimulated to provide its own antibodies. This is why vaccination programs are initiated shortly after weaning. A vaccination program for your puppy should be worked out by your veterinarian.

Vaccinations to help safeguard your puppy's health are available for the following common and serious diseases:

**Rabies** is a disease of the central nervous system, usually transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. On rare occasions the disease may be transmitted by the contact of virus-laden saliva with broken skin. Airborne infections may also occur in confined areas such as bat caves. All warm-blooded animals are susceptible to rabies and some may serve as natural reservoirs of the virus. Among these are the skunk, fox and raccoon as well as bats.

Early symptoms may include fever, listlessness or altered behavior. Late in the course of the disease, paralysis, muscle tremors, convulsions and death follow. Since rabies is usually fatal and can be transmitted to man, most states have laws requiring dogs to be vaccinated for rabies.

**Parvovirus** and **Corona virus** can affect dogs of all ages, but they are particularly devastating to puppies. Immediate treatment for these diseases by a veterinarian is essential.

**Parvovirus** is a common and deadly viral infection. Fever, vomiting, depression, severe diarrhea and dehydration can accompany the infection. In some instances, death can occur rapidly, at times, in a matter of hours. In other cases, the course can be severe, but more protracted. Puppies under five months of age are most severely affected, but death can occur in any age group. The virus can also cause a fatal heart disease, myocarditis, in very young puppies.

**Corona virus** is a highly contagious viral infection of the gastrointestinal tract. Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, fever and dehydration.

Transmission of these viruses occurs from dog to dog via contact with infected feces, or it can also be carried by shoes, clothing, carrying crates, food, water bowls and other objects.

Follow your veterinarian's advice on a vaccination program for these diseases.

**Important warning:** Because canine parvovirus can survive many weeks on contaminated surfaces, great caution should be taken in placing puppies where parvovirus infection has occurred. It is advisable to introduce only puppies that have been vaccinated and then only after thorough disinfection of the premises.

**Canine distemper** is a virus that affects the central nervous system. Early warning signs may include fever, lack of appetite, mild drainage from the eyes, lethargy or depression. These early signs may be followed by severe discharge from the eyes and nose, severe diarrhea, pneumonia or convulsions.

The distemper virus can be carried from one dog to another or transmitted through contact from a contaminated environment. Generally distemper virus spreads as an airborne infection. Consequently, vaccination is the only effective control.

**Hepatitis** is a virus that affects the liver. It is most severe with puppies, but dogs of all ages are susceptible. Early signs of hepatitis are similar to those of distemper: fever, loss of appetite, depression, vomiting and diarrhea. Other symptoms include a discharge from the eyes or nose, uncontrolled bleeding, skin bruises or pain when the abdomen is pressed. A vaccination program planned by your veterinarian will control the disease.

**Canine cough** popularly referred to as "kennel cough," primarily affects dogs living in close proximity, such as in a kennel or shelter. It is highly contagious, attacks the respiratory system, and causes mild or no fever, nasal discharge and a dry, hacking cough. In severe form, kennel cough can cause a loss of appetite, lethargy and a moist and persistent cough, together with nose and eye discharges. Complications such as pneumonia may also occur. Veterinary treatment is required.

Numerous organisms have been implicated as causes. It is possible for your veterinarian to vaccinate for three of the common components of this cough. The three vaccines are Para influenza, canine bordetella, and adenovirus-2.

**Leptospirosis** is an acute infectious disease that spreads through contact with the saliva, urine or nasal secretions of infected animals. The early symptoms

include fever, muscle pain, dehydration, shock, loss of appetite and vomiting. Within a day or two of the onset of the first symptoms, the temperature will drop sharply, breathing will be labored and stiffness, particularly in the hind legs, may be observed. For control, a vaccination program must be followed.

### **Internal Parasites**

Internal parasites are commonly called worms. Most internal parasites live in the dog's intestines where they feed and reproduce. All puppies should be examined by a veterinarian for internal parasites. Your veterinarian can detect the presence of most worms by examining your puppy's feces.

Some parasites, such as hookworms and roundworms, can be transmitted from the mother to the puppies before birth or during nursing.

**Canine heartworm** disease is among the most serious health hazards affecting dogs of all ages. Mosquitoes serve as an intermediate host to carry the heartworm larvae from infected to uninfected dogs. The larvae invade the dog's body through a mosquito bite and work their way to the dog's heart and nearby blood vessels. Symptoms include coughing, labored breathing, lack of stamina, weight loss and, if left untreated, death.

Heartworm is easy to prevent. In areas where dogs are exposed to mosquito's year-around, preventive medication must be given year-around, on a daily or monthly basis, depending on the medication chosen. If the mosquito problem is seasonal, medication should begin at the start of the mosquito season and continue well after the season. Even if the mosquito problem is seasonal, veterinarians may recommend year-around treatment.

Spraying for insect control and draining mosquito breeding grounds will also help reduce the incidence of canine heartworm.

**Hookworms** are among the most dangerous of all the intestinal parasites, especially in puppies. They attach themselves to the intestinal wall of the infected puppy and suck blood, causing severe anemia which sometimes can be fatal. Signs of hookworm infection include lethargy, poor appetite, anemia and black tarry stools which may contain blood.

**Roundworm**, a thin, spaghetti-like parasite up to five inches long, is probably the most common intestinal parasite of young dogs. Puppies are infected by way of the placenta before birth. After birth, the puppy can become infected by larvae in the mother's milk. In the small intestine, roundworms compete with the puppy for nutrients, resulting in stunted growth and poor health. Roundworms often make a puppy look "pot-bellied." Other signs include diarrhea, poor hair coat, listlessness and poor growth.

Microscopic examination of fecal matter is needed to diagnose roundworms and hookworms. Your veterinarian can prescribe appropriate medication and a schedule to follow to prevent reinfection.

**Whipworm** infection can become severe before any noticeable symptoms appear. As the infection progresses, symptoms include diarrhea, abdominal pain, nervousness, weight loss and anemia. Usually these problems are expected in puppies over three months old. Untreated severe whipworm infections may occasionally be fatal.

**Tapeworms** can be transmitted by fleas, rodents or rabbits which may be eaten by dogs. A mild tapeworm infection may go unnoticed. Signs of a more severe tapeworm infection include abdominal discomfort, lethargy and diarrhea alternating with constipation.

There are numerous species of tapeworm. Different tapeworm species require different medications. Consequently, the veterinarian's diagnosis and instructions for administering any wormer are important.

### **External Parasites**

External parasites live on a dog's skin. They not only cause irritation, but sometimes carry other diseases. As you groom your puppy, examine his hair coat for any evidence of parasites.

**Fleas** are tiny insects that feed on the blood of animals and create mild to severe discomfort. They cause itching and, if swallowed, can also transmit tapeworms. Fleas can hatch in a puppy's bedding, carpets, furniture and outdoor areas.

To control fleas, the environment as well as the puppy must be treated. Special attention should be paid to the puppy's sleeping area. It should be kept clean and the bedding washed frequently. In the house, thoroughly vacuum all carpets and crevices, under cushions, rugs and in the corners of upholstered furniture. Discard the vacuum bag because it may harbor fleas. Some flea control in the yard is possible through spraying.

Many preparations are available to aid in flea control. Be certain the label states that the product is safe for dogs and follow label directions. Your veterinarian can also provide advice about products for indoor control.

**Ticks** are blood-sucking parasites. A heavy infestation can cause anemia which can become serious enough to cause mortality in puppies.

The two most common kinds of ticks infecting dogs are the brown dog tick and the American dog tick, which also carry a number of diseases, including Rocky Mountain spotted fever and tularemia.

Lyme disease is another infectious disorder transmitted by the deer tick. Lyme disease is becoming diagnosed with increasing frequency in the United States.

After walking your puppy in a wooded area or field, always check for ticks. If you must remove individual ticks from the puppy, extract them manually and be certain that the mouthpiece does not remain in the puppy's skin. Remove the entire head and its mouth parts with tweezers or by the fingers protected with a paper towel, tissue or rubber gloves. Pull upward with a steady, even pressure. Do not twist.

Keeping a puppy's environment clean at all times is an important factor in helping to prevent infestation with external parasites. Your veterinarian can recommend proper treatment for puppies who suffer parasitic infection.

Always follow your veterinarian's recommendations and be sure to read and follow precisely the instructions on the label of any substance used in the prevention or treatment of external parasites.

## **Dental Care**

The kind of dental care a dog receives over the years has a great impact on its health and longevity. The most common dental problems dogs experience result from plaque and calculus buildup. Food particles, bacteria and saliva may accumulate and adhere to the tooth surface, forming a soft plaque. If plaque buildup continues, solutions of chalk-like material form a hardened calculus on the tooth surface. If left unchecked, this buildup can eventually cause inflammation of both the gums and lining of the tooth socket.

Without proper treatment, the teeth eventually loosen and fall out. The infection resulting from these conditions may spread to other parts of the body such as the kidneys or valves of the heart.

In most puppies, deciduous ("baby" or "milk teeth") fall out between four and seven months of age. If they do not, a veterinarian should be consulted concerning their removal. The retention of deciduous teeth may produce damage to the soft tissues of the mouth and may accelerate wear of permanent teeth.

During the time your puppy is losing his teeth, he may eat slightly less and tend to chew more. Hard rubber or rawhide toys made especially for dogs are a good investment to help prevent household damage during this time. Never give a puppy an old shoe or any other clothing item or household object to chew on, or he will think all shoes and other objects are fair game.

Accustom your puppy to having his teeth cleaned on a regular basis. His teeth may be cleaned with a soft cloth dipped in a solution of baking soda and water, or

a child's tooth brush could be used.

Do not use toothpaste formulated for humans because dogs swallow, rather than spit out the preparation, causing stomach upset. Veterinary toothpaste preparations are also available.

Dry crunchy puppy foods such as Purina ® Puppy Chow ® brand puppy food can be helpful in preventing dental problems. The puppy's chewing action while eating a dry food tends to act like a toothbrush as particles scrape against the teeth to help remove plaque.

## **Importance of Neutering and Spaying**

Unless you plan a responsible breeding program and are certain you can place the puppies from such a program, neutering and spaying are recommended to avoid the serious problem of unwanted puppies.

Female puppies can be spayed at any time after six months of age. Spaying prior to the first estrus cycle helps minimize the risk of uterine infections and mammary tumors common in older unspayed females.

Neutering the male dog can be done at six months of age or any age thereafter. A neutered dog will be more content to stay at home and will not wander in search of females in season, making a better companion.

The possibility of neutering and spaying performed at earlier ages is under investigation at several universities.

Some people believe that when dogs are neutered or spayed they always become fat. If this is the case, it is usually because they are calmer and less active - and they overeat relative to their lower caloric requirement. In some cases, this might lead to obesity. A close monitoring of their diet (eliminating table scraps and, if necessary, reducing the amount of dog food offered) and regular exercise will help them maintain good body condition.

## **Preventing Problems**

After you take your puppy to your veterinarian for his initial visit, work with your veterinarian to develop a program of periodic checkups and booster vaccinations. Regular veterinary visits can help prevent problems from occurring as well as keeping other small problems from becoming big ones. If your veterinarian is familiar with your puppy, he or she will be better prepared to respond to an emergency. Always keep the veterinarian's address and emergency phone number handy.

Keep an accurate record of your puppy's medical history. This can be useful in an emergency or when your regular veterinarian or the veterinarian's records of the puppy are not available. This list should include dates and types of vaccinations, dates of surgery or serious illness, any known allergies and other health-related information. If you move to another city, such a medical record is extremely helpful to the new veterinarian. It's also a good idea to obtain the medical file from the veterinarian before moving.

Because a pup or an adult dog cannot tell you how he feels, he can become quite ill before signs of illness become apparent. Being aware of his usual behavior and noting his appearance provide a basis for evaluating his health on a day-to-day basis.

### **Puppy Proof for Safety**

In addition to preventive health care for your puppy, he should be protected from potential safety hazards. Electric cords, for example, can be a hazard to the puppy and the family. To help prevent fires from resulting from a puppy biting into a cord, keep exposed lamp cords and other wires as short as possible. If extension cords must be used, tack them against a baseboard or run them under furniture so they cannot be played with or chewed. In addition to placing the household at risk, the resulting electric shock can be fatal to a puppy.

Pesticides, rodenticides, paint thinners, bleach, cleaning fluid, disinfectants, drain cleaner, moth balls, and detergents are among the many household chemicals which could prove poisonous to a puppy. They should be stored in tightly closed containers where the puppy cannot reach them.

Herbicides present a threat after the lawn has been sprayed with a weed killer. Keep your puppy inside or in a restricted area until the lawn is completely dry.

Antifreeze, containing the chemical ethylene glycol, is a frequent form of pet poisoning. Many pets are attracted to its sweet taste and lap it up when spilled on the ground or improperly stored.

Containers should be securely closed and stored in a place not accessible to your puppy. Make certain your puppy is not in the vicinity when antifreeze is being drained, Dispose of used material promptly.

Among the drugs that can be dangerous to puppies are overdoses of aspirin and the aspirin substitute, acetaminophen; ingestion of diet pills, sleeping pills and tranquilizers. These and any other drugs or any product with a label warning, "keep out of the reach of children" should be kept out of the reach of your puppy as well.



## Housebreaking Your Puppy and Other Basic Training

The happy experiences your puppy experiences during his first few days in his new home will have a lasting effect on his personality. Let the “three P’s” - patience, persistence and a positive approach to training - guide you as you help your newcomer become a well-behaved family member.

Successful training of your new puppy requires understanding, correction and praise. Puppies have a desire to please and respond to praise. It is also important for all family members to cooperate in training the new puppy, otherwise the puppy may become confused.

As you welcome your puppy into his new home, remember that before dogs were domesticated, they lived and hunted in packs. Each pack had a leader. Although your puppy is domesticated, he still instinctively follows his pack heritage. Consequently, a puppy will try to test family members as he attempts to establish dominance as leader of the pack. His pack instinct must be tempered to help him interact appropriately with people and with other animals. If your puppy learns to recognize you as leader of the pack, he will be easier to train, more obedient and a happier, more content dog.

A code of conduct for your puppy should be established and enforced by all family members. To help him understand that he must obey this code of conduct, be consistent in reprimanding him. Eye contact and a firm “no” usually deter an undesirable activity.

In addition to eye contact, tone of voice is important. Do not laugh at a misdeed as you say “no” or add with an amused tone of voice comments like “such a naughty boy.” The puppy will sense a friendly, rather than firm tone of voice and probably ignore the “no” command.

As the puppy is trained to follow the code of conduct you establish for him, he will learn to recognize you as pack leader and settle into the routine you establish for him.

### Choosing A Name

Choosing a name for the new puppy can be fun for family members. Perhaps the puppy’s appearance or personality suggests a name. Or the children may choose the name of a character from a favorite story. Once a name is chosen, use it consistently and soon your puppy will understand and respond to it.

### Housebreaking the New Puppy

Establishing a housebreaking routine for your puppy should begin the day you bring the puppy home. An effective housebreaking method is the use of a crate or

sleeping box. Crates are available at most pet supply stores or you can make a sleeping box at very little cost. (See illustration on following page)

The success of the crate method is based on the den-dwelling instinct of dogs. Puppies consider a crate their den and will not relieve themselves in it unless it is absolutely necessary.

The crate soon becomes the puppy's "room of his own" or retreat. He enjoys its security when he wants to nap undisturbed. It is handy for travel, to confine the puppy if he is ill, or just for general control.

An out-of-the-way spot in the kitchen is a good location for the crate. Choose an area that is free from drafts and not too close to a heat source. It is a good idea to confine your puppy to a restricted area in the house until he is trustworthy. The kitchen is usually recommended because it is the center of activity and the floor is generally tile or linoleum so it is easy to clean if there are accidents.

For bedding use a towel or a piece of blanket which can be washed. A puppy should not be fed in the crate and will only upset a bowl of water.

The puppy may cry the first night or two as he adjusts to being alone in a new environment. This is normal. However, the crying may indicate his need to eliminate. Take him outside. If he does not eliminate return him to his crate, and do not provide attention.

To establish a crate routine for your puppy, close him in the crate at regular one to two hour intervals during the day (the times he chooses to nap will guide you).

Close him in his crate whenever he must be left alone for a longer period of time. Give him a chew toy for distraction and remove collar and tags which might become caught in an opening.

Take your puppy outside before play, when he awakens from a nap, after eating or drinking, before bedtime and before visitors arrive and before any activity which is likely to excite the puppy.

During the first week, your new puppy will be unable to go all night without eliminating. For this reason, do not feed him or give him water three to four hours before his bedtime. Set the alarm to take him out during the night. When he eliminates praise him and reward him with a small amount of drinking water. Work toward a morning feeding and watering schedule. After a week or so your puppy should be able to sleep through the night and make his first trip outside early in the morning. The goal in setting the alarm and in frequent trips outside is to help the puppy avoid making a mistake in his crate or in the house.

When you take the puppy outside to relieve himself, take him to a selected area and issue a command for that purpose, such as "business." Wait a few minutes for him to eliminate. Do not play with him or take him for a walk; there are other times for these activities. If he eliminates, praise him immediately and reward him by letting him roam freely in the house for a while.

If your puppy does not eliminate the first time, do not punish him. Simply return him to his cage. Wait 15 or 20 minutes and try again. Eventually your puppy will learn what is expected of him.

If you consistently take him out through the same door, once he is trained he will go to the designated door to "ask to go outside." Sniffing the floor, turning in circles and squatting indicate that he is about to eliminate - take him outdoors immediately.

Puppies that are calm and secure are easier to housebreak. Anxiety and fear can lead to bad behavior. This is why you should never shout at the new puppy, hit him or "rub his nose in it." If you punish the puppy, housebreaking may take longer or not work.

A puppy will probably make some mistakes in the house. When you catch him having an accident, say "no" firmly and take him outside where he should have gone. After a mistake, if possible, wait until the puppy relieves himself before returning him to the house to reinforce the training procedure.

Do not scold the puppy after he has made the mistake and left the area. He will not associate your firm words with the mistake. Mop up the puddle with a rag, and then use the rag as an housebreaking aid. Place the rag in the selected outside area to help the puppy learn that this is where he should eliminate.

Wash the soiled area with soap and water followed by a deodorizing solution or, in the case of a carpet, use a carpet shampoo and deodorizer. If the area is not deodorized, the puppy may return to the same area the next time he wants to relieve himself. Many deodorizing solutions are available. Make certain the label instructions indicate that the solution is safe to use on the surface or carpet you are cleaning.

Even if housebreaking does not go smoothly at first, don't weaken. Be persistent, patient and lavish the puppy with praise when he eliminates properly.

Some people who have problems housebreaking puppies are not consistent. They may decide the weather is too inclement to take the puppy outside and provide a paper for indoor elimination. This confuses the puppy. If the weather is cold or if it is raining, the puppy will be in a hurry to relieve him and get inside. The puppy must learn that he has to go outside in all kinds of weather.

Dry the puppy after he has gone outside in the rain or snow. This can also be a time to give him extra praise and affection for eliminating properly.

If outdoor training is impractical, it is possible to train a puppy (especially toy breeds) to relieve himself indoors on paper. However, this weakens the puppy's cleanliness instinct and establishes a habit. As a result, many dogs cannot be retrained to go outside.

### **Crate Construction**

A crate can be made at little cost. Construct a box with a door or a lid and adequate ventilation holes. The box should be large enough to allow the puppy to turn around, stretch out or stand up, but no larger.

The adult size of a purebred puppy is fairly easy to predict. Estimating the adult size of a mixed breed is usually based on identifiable breed characteristics and body type.

A crate too large for a young puppy defeats its purpose of promoting elimination control and providing security, so its space should be limited. The space of an adult-size crate can be reduced with a reversed carton or a moveable/removable partition made of wire, wood or masonite. Width can serve for length if the crate is large.

### **New Experiences for Your Puppy**

Plan ahead to introduce your puppy to his new home and to begin his socialization. Help him adjust to his surroundings, then gradually introduce him to people - one or two at a time under circumstances you control. Do not let him become overwhelmed by a crowd of people. Take him for walks in the neighborhood. Show the neighborhood children how to pet him and talk to him. Introduce him to the postal carrier, the meter reader and other service people who visit your home regularly.

If you have another pet, keep the puppy and the pet separated but within sight of each other for the first few days. Reassure the other pet to help prevent jealousy. When you feel confident that they will accept each other, you can put them in the same area and they should become friends. However, it is important to continue to give the other pet extra attention.

Introduce your puppy to riding in the car. Too many times, puppies learn to associate riding in the car with trips to the veterinarian and become, at best, reluctant travelers. Short rides (even if the ride is only around the block) soon become happy experiences for the puppy. When the veterinarian is the destination, the puppy arrives relaxed and is usually easier to manage during his

examination. A puppy accustomed to riding in the car becomes a better traveling companion when it is necessary to include him in family travel plans.

For safer driving for you and your puppy, confine him in a carrier or use a restraining device.

Some puppies may experience motion sickness, but they usually outgrow it. Withholding food for at least three hours before traveling and conditioning the puppy with short drives usually minimizes this problem.

### **Correcting Bad Habits**

The best way to correct bad habits is to avoid introducing them to your new puppy. Anticipating and taking action to prevent potential problems makes life easier for you and your puppy. Here are examples of how to help prevent problems before they start.

When the puppy first comes home, do not leave him alone for long periods of time. When he is left alone, he may become frightened or lonesome which may result in destructive behavior. Help him learn to accept being left alone. Begin by leaving him alone for short periods of time in his crate or in an area where he cannot do any damage. Be certain he has a chew bone and/or a favorite toy to help prevent boredom. Gradually increase the length of separation time until he is accustomed to being left alone.

Help your puppy adjust to loud noises. During a thunderstorm, fireworks or any other noisy situation, play with him as you normally do or hold him and in a soothing voice reassure him that "it's business as usual."

All puppies tend to chew, especially when they are teething (between 14 and 30 weeks of age). Help your puppy learn that his toys are for chewing. If he chews on anything else, grab him by the scruff of the neck, gently shake him and say "no" in a firm voice. Give him a chew toy, and as he starts chewing it, praise him to let him know this is acceptable behavior. Never give a puppy an old shoe or any other household item to chew. He will think that all shoes or other items are "fair game" for chewing.

Avoid playing tug-of-war with your puppy unless you want an adult dog who bites, pulls and tugs.

Biting can be encouraged by allowing a puppy to bite you during play time. Never wiggle your fingers or hand in a teasing way at a puppy to encourage him to attack you. Avoid letting him attack your arm or leg. Such "attack games" may seem cute when the puppy is little, but the end result is usually an adult dog who bites.

Puppies frequently get into wastebaskets and enjoy scattering and tearing up paper. Coming into the room after the puppy has had his fun with the wastebasket and scolding him is futile. You may feel better because you expressed your anger, but the puppy does not associate the scolding with the act. Until the puppy outgrows his wastebasket curiosity, it's easier to keep wastebaskets out of his reach.

At mealtime, a puppy can look very appealing and family members are sometimes tempted to give him food from the table as a treat. This may be the start of two bad habits: the making of a finicky eater who refuses to eat his regular diet and the begging dog who disrupts mealtime and may even try to take food from the table. Choose a good quality nutritionally complete food for your puppy such as Purina® Puppy Chow® brand puppy food or Purina® Pro Plan® Growth Formula and always have fresh drinking water in a clean bowl available. When a puppy jumps on visitors or climbs all over people, this behavior is often dismissed as "cute" or "friendly as a puppy." However, it does not remain cute or friendly as the puppy matures. Teach the dog to sit when someone enters the house. When the puppy sits, reward him with lots of praise.

Establish a command for each behavior problem such as "off" when the puppy jumps on furniture. Repeat this same command each time and you will soon break him of this bad habit.

If your puppy barks excessively while you are at home, he is probably not getting enough attention. Play with him, take him for walks and praise him for good behavior. Your love and attention will bring out the best in your puppy.

### **Begin Grooming Early**

Early in life a puppy should learn that grooming can be a pleasant experience. Begin with short grooming sessions. If the puppy fusses, say "no" firmly. Reassure the puppy and praise him lavishly for good behavior. As you repeat the procedure daily, accustom your puppy to opening his mouth for inspection and to having his ears and paws handled.

Later on, when his teeth and ears need cleaning and his nails clipped, he won't resist this care and he will probably be more at ease when he is examined or treated by a veterinarian.

The grooming routine you establish will depend upon how much time your puppy spends outdoors, whether he is a longhaired or shorthaired breed and local weather conditions.

How often a puppy should be bathed depends upon his breed, coat type, living conditions and climate. Never let a wet puppy go outside or expose him to drafts.

Use only a shampoo formulated for dogs.

Pet shops can advise you as to the appropriate grooming tools to effectively groom your puppy.

### **Being A Good Neighbor**

While puppies enjoy exploring the great outdoors, certain pre-cautions must be taken to protect them and to help make them welcome neighbors.

If you leave your puppy outdoors unattended, make sure he stays in his own yard. A fenced-in yard is ideal. However, to ensure safety after the puppy matures, make certain the fence is tall enough to prevent the dog from climbing or jumping over the top. The fence should fit tight to the ground or even be buried a few inches underneath it to prevent crawling or digging out under it. Also be certain the spaces between the posts and gates do not allow room for the puppy to squeeze through.

If you do not have a fence, try a swivel stake or a tree-to-tree wire with a pulley for your pup's leash. Remember not to leave him outside too long on very cold or very warm days.

If you walk your dog, it is your responsibility to clean up after him. Check with you police department or city hall about local pet ordinances.

### **Obedience School**

Most experts agree that after a puppy is at least six months of age, attending obedience classes is a good idea. Even if your puppy is well-behaved, good behavior can be reinforced and expanded through obedience classes. If you are having training problems, professional trainers can help you gain greater control of your puppy as the first step toward solving these problems.

Most schools will take your puppy through the following training exercises: heel, sit-stay, down, down-stay, "come" or recall, and stand-for-exam which is very useful for home grooming and veterinary check-ups.

Obedience classes are offered by many organizations, such as the YMCA, humane societies, kennel clubs and community colleges. You can also ask your veterinarian to recommend an obedience school.

The classes are usually for a 10 to 12 week period, meeting once a week for no more than one hour. However, you should work with your puppy between classes. This "homework" reinforces what he has learned in the previous class. Remember that the training you and your puppy receive does not end when the

class ends but should be continued and reinforced at home.

## **Selecting and Bringing Home A Puppy**

Before selecting a puppy, ask yourself if you are willing to make a commitment of time to train and care for the dog and money to provide the proper nutrition and needed veterinary care over the years. Choosing a puppy is making a commitment to provide long term care for a living creature who will be totally dependent upon you.

### **Making the Right Choice**

Once you and your family members have agreed that you are ready to make a commitment to care for a dog for many years (even up to 18 years for small breeds), it's time to decide what breed is best for you.

First, consider your lifestyle. Large breed dogs, hunting or working dogs require more exercise than small breeds and may crowd an apartment or small home. Long-haired dogs require daily grooming to help avoid mats and tangles in the hair coat which can lead to poor appearance and skin irritation. A short-haired dog requires grooming only a couple of times each week. Some breeds should be groomed professionally if they are to look like the standards of their breed.

Should you choose a purebred or mixed breed? Many mixed breed dogs grow into lovable companions. However, you are getting an unknown quantity as to adult size. Local humane societies, animal shelters and neighbors are sources for a mixed breed puppy.

If you would like a purebred puppy, first consult dog books at your local library for photographs of each breed along with a description of the breed's traits. To learn more about the breeds that interest you, contact breeders and attend dog shows in your area.

Important caution: Regardless of breed, the puppy you select will grow into an adult dog with behavior patterns largely determined by your care and training.

You may see a dog of a certain breed give an impressive performance in an obedience demonstration or admire a well behaved purebred who is a family pet. As a result, you may decide you want that particular breed because of these favorable impressions. Please remember that breed characteristics alone do not determine the behavior of an individual dog.

A dog's exemplary behavior represents the socialization and training it received as a puppy together with continuing reinforcement of that training throughout its lifetime.



If you decide on a certain breed, you will need to locate a breeder in your area and wait until a puppy is available for adoption. Most breeders separate their puppies into two groups, show quality and pet quality. If you select a pet quality purebred, you can usually get the breed you prefer at lower cost.

### **When You Are Ready to Adopt**

Do not adopt a puppy until it is six to eight weeks of age. Select a puppy who is alert, curious and active. Avoid one who is shy or nervous. Look for a puppy with clear eyes, no discharge from the nose, clean ears, white teeth, pink gums, no skin irritations or blotches from insect bites. Check around the tail area to be certain there is no evidence of diarrhea or skin inflammation.

If you are buying a purebred puppy, ask to see at least one of the parents. Registration papers should be provided when you pick up the puppy as well as a record of the vaccinations and any other medical treatment the puppy has received. If you are getting a large breed dog, have an understanding with the breeder that the puppy is guaranteed against bone abnormalities such as hip dysplasia.

Clean, odor-free living quarters for the puppies and their mother and a breeder who asks questions about the kind of home you will provide the puppy are indications that the animal has been well cared for.

Choosing a male or female depends upon your plans for the puppy and your personal preference. If you do not plan to enter into a responsible breeding program, keep in mind that a female will come "in season" for about 21 days twice each year, during which time she will attract male dogs. A male may damage shrubbery by frequent urination and will stay away from home for several days if he finds a nearby female in season. Neutering or spaying will ensure that your dog will not contribute to the serious pet over-population problem and will be a more contented companion. You should discuss the best time for neutering or spaying with your veterinarian.

If you buy a purebred puppy, you should be given a pedigree for the puppy and a registration slip which names the parents of the puppy and their registration numbers. If you wish to register your puppy, fill in the registration slip with your name, address and the puppy's name and send it, along with your fee, to the appropriate registry. The dog registries and their addresses are:

American Kennel Club  
51 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10010

American Field Stud Book\*  
222 W. Adams Street  
Chicago, IL 60606

United Kennel Club  
100 E. Kilgore Road  
Kalamazoo, MI 49001

\*A registry for some gun dogs

### **Planning the Homecoming**

If possible, make arrangements with the person from whom you are getting the puppy as to the time you will pick it up and ask that the puppy not be fed prior to pick-up time. This arrangement will help avoid the puppy's becoming car sick on his way to his new home.

Bringing the puppy home at the beginning of a weekend or, even better, a week-long vacation, is recommended. This provides time to introduce the puppy to its new environment and family members.

Go shopping before bringing the puppy home so you will have everything ready when the puppy arrives. Here's what you should have on hand:

- brush or hand mitt for grooming (depending upon whether your puppy is long-or short-haired);
- collar and leash;
- food and water bowls that are heavy, non-tippable and easy to clean;
- crate or bed for the puppy who is housed indoors;
- well-insulated doghouse large enough to house the pup at its full-grown size if it is to be housed outdoors;
- toys designed for dogs;
- high quality nutritionally complete and balanced food to meet the special requirements of growing puppies such as Purina® Puppy Chow® brand puppy food.
- information about housebreaking and basic obedience.

### **Choosing Your Veterinarian**

If you do not have a veterinarian, it's important to select one for your new puppy as soon as possible. You may wish to ask pet-owning friends and neighbors for recommendations of veterinarians in your area. The Yellow Pages of the telephone directory is another source. It's a good idea to choose a veterinarian who is conveniently located. A nearby location also saves time if an emergency should occur.

Once you have selected a veterinarian, take your new puppy in for a checkup as soon as possible. At this time, a schedule can be worked out for needed vaccinations to protect him from a number of viral and infectious diseases. The puppy should also be examined and treated, if necessary, for internal and external parasites.

Bring any papers you may have received when you adopted your puppy to your veterinarian so he can start a case history for future reference.

Always keep the telephone number of your veterinarian handy together with the telephone number and address of the nearest emergency animal clinic for quick reference in case of an emergency.