

Caring for Your Puppy

To the proud new “parent”,

Congratulations on the arrival of your new puppy. Owning a puppy is a big responsibility. We are trained in all aspects of caring for puppies, and would like you to think of us as your best source of advice. Your pet's health is our primary concern, and we are here to help, to answer any questions that you may have, and provide the best possible care for your pet.

These notes outline all of the most important health care issues for your puppy. If you would like more information, we have a range of more detailed information sheets on various topics – available as handouts or on our web site. If you have other questions don't hesitate to give us a call, or make a list and ask us at your next visit.

The first year of your puppy's life will be a lot of fun for you both – so enjoy it!

From the Vets and Nursing staff of Macarthur Veterinary Group



Vaccination:

Vaccinations are essential to protect your puppy from a variety of potentially fatal viral diseases. *Distemper* and *hepatitis*, once major problems, have now been almost eradicated by vaccination. However, *parvovirus* is still a big killer in this area, especially in young dogs. It causes severe bloody diarrhoea and vomiting, and death within a few days. *Kennel cough* (*parainfluenza virus* and *Bordetella*), although not fatal, is also quite common and causes a nasty choking cough. All dogs are at risk!

Vaccination is essential, as it's the only way to protect your pup against these diseases. We routinely use a “C5” vaccine to protect against all of these diseases. (A C7 vaccine may be recommended in some cases.)

An initial course of 2 or 3 vaccines is required:

- 1st at 6-8 weeks,
- 2nd at 10-12 weeks, and
- 3rd at 14-16 weeks,

followed by annual boosters. **We advise you not to walk your puppy outside your own backyard until 2 weeks after the final vaccination.**

Heartworm:

Heartworm infection is a serious disease causing damage to your dog's heart and lungs, and sometimes death. It is spread by mosquitoes; so **all dogs are at risk** even if they never leave your own yard. A number of excellent products are available to kill the worms before they reach your dog's heart:

1. **Annual heartworm injection (Proheart SR-12)**
This is the preferred heartworm preventive. Since your puppy is growing, 2 injections are required in the first year
 - 1st Injection – from 12 weeks of age
 - 2nd Injection – 3-6 months later
 - Annual Injections – starting at 15 months (this will coincide with the time of the first annual health check & vaccination).
2. Monthly spot-ons (*Advocate* or *Revolution*)
3. Monthly tablets or chews (eg. *Guardian*, *Interceptor*, *Sentinel*, *Milbemax* or *Heartgard*.)
Daily tablets are NOT recommended.



Flea Control:

Fleas cause irritation, skin allergies and in large numbers can suck enough blood to make your puppy anaemic. Good flea control requires an integrated approach, not just killing the fleas on your pup, but in the environment too.

We recommend **Activyl** – an easy to apply monthly spot-on liquid on the back of the neck. If your dog swims regularly or is likely to make trips with you into a tick area we advise **Bravecto** - a 3 month tasty chew. Alternatively, if you're not using heartworm injections, you can use **Advocate**, which also covers heartworm and all intestinal worms - except tapeworm.

Feeding:

A high-quality balanced diet is very important, especially for a growing pup. Your pup has different nutritional requirements than an adult dog, including extra protein for muscle development and calcium for bone growth. We recommend **Royal Canin Junior** Diets - a premium range of puppy food – with a money-back guarantee!

Pups should be fed 3-4 small meals a day until 4 months of age, then twice daily until fully grown. At least 75% of your pup's diet should come from a complete balanced commercial diet. With a proper balanced diet, calcium and vitamin supplements are unnecessary and we advise against using them. Make sure that your pup always has access to clean water and change it daily. Pups do not need to drink milk. However if you wish to provide milk in addition to water, please use a special pet milk. Cow's milk contains too much lactose for dogs and can cause diarrhoea.

Dental Health is also very important. *Royal Canin* foods reduce the risk of dental disease, but even that may not be enough. The best preventative is to brush your dog's teeth every day – but this may not always be practical. Another option is feed *Greenies* every day, or give raw bones 2-3 times per week (make sure they are too big for your pup to swallow them whole though!) Lamb shanks are an ideal choice for most dogs.

What NOT to feed: Due to an improper balance of nutrients it is not recommended to feed human food ONLY diets to dogs (up to 50 ingredients are required to make a nutritionally balanced diet derived from human food alone). Meat ONLY diets are also imbalanced and severely lacking in calcium (essential for healthy bone development). Large quantities of preserved "pet meats" (such as kangaroo meat) can result in vitamin deficiencies and cooked bones which splinter easily can cause intestinal obstructions. Chocolate, onions, large amounts of liver, grapes, sultanas & macadamia nuts should also be avoided to prevent potential life threatening toxicity.

Zoonotic Diseases:

Zoonoses are those diseases potentially transmitted from animals to people. Children are particularly susceptible. Hookworm, roundworm and hydatid tapeworm can all affect people, and worming your family won't help! Other common zoonotic diseases include ringworm, mites, fleas and infections from bite wounds. To reduce the risks it is important to worm and flea your dog regularly, and practice good basic hygiene - wash hands after handling pets especially before eating, don't allow dogs to lick your face, don't feed your dog offal and wear gloves when disposing of faeces. Ask us for more info, or visit the *Zoonoses* page under *General Pet Care* on our website.

Bathing:

We recommend that puppies (and dogs) be bathed every 2-4 weeks. Human shampoos and even many dog shampoos, can irritate and damage the skin, strip it of essential oils and reduce the effect of topical flea products. We recommend using gentle products such as the *Dermcare* or *PAW* range of shampoos and conditioners.

Microchip and Registration:

Microchips are a safe and permanent way of identifying your dog. A very small electronic chip is implanted (through a needle) under the skin in the back of your dog's neck/shoulders. The microchip contains a series of numbers which are linked, via a central computer registry, to your personal details. If your dog is ever lost or injured, then a vet or council pound will be able to scan the dog and contact you. Microchip identification and lifetime registration is compulsory in NSW. Microchip implantation must be done by 12 weeks of age (or before the pup is sold or changes owners – whichever comes first). Registration is handled by the council and must be done by 6 months of age. You'll save money by desexing your dog before registration. It is important that whenever your address or contact details change to notify council as soon as possible.

Desexing:

Unless you're serious about breeding, then all dogs, both males and females, should be desexed at 5-6 months of age. As well as stopping unwanted breeding, it makes them happier, healthier pets. There is no maximum age at which a dog can be desexed, but there are definite medical and behavioural advantages in performing the surgery at this age. Desexing reduces the territorial nature of dogs therefore aggression, wandering and urine marking. Serious illnesses such as uterine infections, ovarian and testicular cancer can be prevented and the incidence of prostate diseases reduced. If females are desexed prior to her first season then her risk of breast cancer is no more than that of a male dog (virtually zero).

Socialisation & Training:

Training begins as soon as you get your puppy home. Toilet training and basic commands (like "sit") can be taught at an early age. Puppies have a sensitive period of development called the socialisation period. It occurs from about 3 - 14 weeks of age. It's very important to socialise your puppy with other dogs and expose them to a wide variety of experiences during this time. But you must also protect them from exposure to disease.

Puppy Preschool is an excellent and safe way to provide this social contact for your dog. It also teaches your pup good manners and basic obedience, and educates you on the development and basic care of your puppy. And it's fun! Classes are run in our clinics every week.

Pet Insurance:

Veterinary bills sometimes seem high compared to bills from our doctor, dentist or pharmacist. But we rarely pay full price for our own treatment since our fees are substantially subsidised by our healthcare system.

You can also get subsidies on your pet's veterinary bills! Pet health cover can start from 30 cents a day, and can pay up to 80% of your vet bills if your pet should become sick or injured. Ask us for a brochure.