



NORTHPARK Animal Hospital

PUPPIES: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW OWNERS

We would like to congratulate you on the acquisition of your new puppy. Owning a dog can be an extremely rewarding experience, but it is also a large responsibility. We hope this handout will give you the information needed to make some good decisions regarding your puppy.

First, let us say that we are grateful that you have chosen us to help you with your puppy's health care. If you have questions concerning any subject related to your puppy's health, please feel free to call our hospital. Our entire professional staff is willing and happy to help you.

What type of playing should I expect from a puppy?

Stimulating play is important during the first week. Stalking and pouncing are important play behaviors in puppies and are necessary for proper muscular development. Your puppy will be less likely to use family members for these activities if you provide adequate puppy-safe toys. The best toys are lightweight and movable. These include wads of paper and rubber balls. Any toy that is small enough to be swallowed should be avoided. We can help you choose the safest toys for your pet loved one.

Can I discipline a puppy?

Disciplining a young puppy may be necessary if its behavior threatens people or property, but harsh punishment should be avoided. Hand clapping and using shaker cans or horns can be intimidating enough to inhibit undesirable behavior. However, remote punishment is preferred. Remote punishment consists of using something that appears unconnected to the punisher to stop the problem behavior. Examples include using spray bottles, throwing objects in the direction of the puppy to startle (but not hit) it, and making loud noises. Remote punishment is preferred because the puppy associates punishment with the undesirable act and not with you.

When should my puppy be vaccinated?

There are many fatal diseases of dogs. Fortunately, we have the ability to prevent several of these by vaccinating your pet. In order to be effective, these vaccines must be given as a series of injections. Ideally, they are given at about 6-8, 12, 16 and 20 weeks of age, but this schedule may vary depending on several factors.

The routine vaccination schedule will protect your puppy from seven diseases: distemper, hepatitis, parainfluenza virus, parvovirus, and rabies. These are included in one injection that is given at 6-8, 12, 16, and 20 weeks old. Rabies vaccine is given at 12 weeks of age. There are two other optional vaccinations that are appropriate in certain situations. Your puppy should receive a kennel cough vaccine if a trip to a boarding kennel or groomer is likely or if it will be placed in a puppy training class. Lyme vaccine is given to dogs that are exposed to ticks because Lyme disease is transmitted by ticks. Please advise us of these needs on your next visit.

Why does my puppy need more than one vaccination?

When the puppy nurses its mother, it receives a temporary form of immunity through its mother's milk. This immunity is in the form of proteins called maternal antibodies. For about 24-48 hours after birth, the puppy's intestine allows absorption of these antibodies directly into the blood stream. This immunity is of benefit during the first few weeks of the puppy's life, but at some point, this immunity fails and the puppy must be able to make its own long-lasting immunity. Vaccinations are used for this purpose. As long as the mother's antibodies are present, vaccinations do not have a chance to stimulate the puppy's immune system. The mother's antibodies interfere by neutralizing the vaccine.

Many factors determine when the puppy will be able to respond to the vaccinations. These include the level of immunity in the mother dog, how much antibody has been absorbed, and the number of vaccines given to the puppy. Since we do not know when an individual puppy will lose the short-term immunity, we give a series of vaccinations. We hope that at least two of these will fall in the window of time when the puppy has lost immunity from its mother but has not yet been exposed to disease. A single vaccination, even if effective, is not likely to stimulate the long-term immunity, which is so important.

Rabies vaccine is an exception to this, since one injection given at the proper time is enough to produce long-term immunity.

Do all puppies have worms?

Intestinal parasites are common in puppies. Puppies can become infected with parasites before they are born or later through their mother's milk. The microscopic examination of a stool sample will usually help us to determine the presence of intestinal parasites. We recommend this exam for all puppies. Even if we do not get a stool sample, we recommend the use of a deworming product that is safe and effective against several of the common worms of the dog. We do this because our deworming medication has no side-effects and because your puppy does not pass worm eggs every day so the stool sample may not detect worms that are present. Additionally, some of these internal parasites can be transmitted to humans. Deworming is done now and repeated in about three weeks. It is important that it be repeated because the deworming medication only kills the adult worms. Within 2-3 weeks, the larval stages will become adults and need to be treated. Dogs remain susceptible to re-infection with hookworms and roundworms. Periodic deworming throughout the dog's life may be recommended for outdoor dogs.

Tapeworms are the most common intestinal parasite of dogs. Puppies become infected with them when they swallow fleas; the eggs of the tapeworm live inside the flea. When the dog chews or licks its skin as a flea bites, the flea may be swallowed. The flea is digested within the dog's intestine; the tapeworm hatches and then anchors itself to the intestinal lining. Therefore, exposure to fleas may result in a new infection. Tapeworm infections can occur in as little as two weeks.

Dogs infected with tapeworms will pass small segments of the worms in their stool. The segments are white in color and look like grains of rice. They are about 1/8 inch (3 mm) long and may be seen crawling on the surface of the stool. They may also stick to the hair under the tail. If that occurs, they will dry out, shrink to about half their size, and become golden in color.

Tapeworm segments do not pass every day or in every stool sample; therefore, inspection of several consecutive bowel movements may be needed to find them. We may examine a stool sample in our office and not find them, and then you may find them the next day. If you find them at any time, please notify us so we may provide the appropriate drug for treatment.

How important are heartworms?

Heartworms are important parasites, especially in certain climates. They live in your bloodstream and cause major damage to the heart and lungs. Heartworms are transmitted by mosquitoes. Fortunately, we have drugs that will protect your dog from heartworms. These drugs are very safe and effective if given regularly. We can help you choose the best product for your pet's needs and lifestyle.

Heartworm preventatives are dosed according to your dog's weight. As the weight increases, the dosage should also increase. Please note the dosing instructions on the package.

There are lots of choices of dog foods. What should I feed my puppy?

Diet is extremely important during the growing months of a dog's life. We recommend a NAME-BRAND FOOD made by a national dog food company (not a generic or local brand) and diet MADE FOR PUPPIES. This should be fed until your puppy is about 12-18 months of age, depending on its breed and size. We recommend that you only buy food that has the AAFCO certification. Usually, you can find this information very easily on the label. AAFCO is an organization that oversees the entire pet food industry. It does not endorse any particular food, but it will certify that the food has met the minimum requirements for nutrition. Most of the commercial pet foods will have the AAFCO label. Generic brands often do not have it. In Canada, look for foods approved by the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA).

Feeding a dry, canned, or semi-moist form of dog food is acceptable. Each has advantages and disadvantages. Dry food is definitely the most inexpensive. It can be left in the dog's bowl without drying. The good brands of dry food are just as nutritious as the other forms. As a rule, most veterinarians will recommend dry food for your puppy.

Semi-moist and canned foods are also acceptable. However, both are considerably more expensive than dry food. They often are more appealing to the dog's taste; however, they are not more nutritious. If you feed a very tasty food, you are running the risk of creating a dog with a finicky appetite. In addition, the semi-moist foods are high in sugar.

Table foods are not recommended. Because they are generally very tasty, dogs will often begin to hold out for these and not eat their well-balanced dog food. If you choose to give your puppy table food, be sure that at least 90% of its diet is good quality commercial puppy food.

We enjoy a variety of things to eat in our diet. However, most dogs actually prefer not to change from one food to another unless they are trained to do so by the way you feed them. Do not feel guilty if your dog is happy eating the same food day after day, week after week.

Commercials for dog food can be very misleading. If you watch carefully you will notice that commercials often promote dog food on the basis of TASTE. Nutrition is rarely mentioned. Most of the "gourmet" foods are marketed to appeal to owners who want the best for their dogs; however, they do not offer the dog any nutritional advantage over a good quality dry food, and they are far more expensive. If your dog eats a gourmet food very long, it will probably not be happy with other foods. If it needs a special diet due to a health problem later in life, it is very unlikely to accept it. Therefore, we do not encourage feeding gourmet dog foods.

How often should I feed my puppy?

There are several "right" ways to feed puppies. The most popular method is commonly called "meal feeding." This means that the puppy is fed at specific times of the day. A measured amount of food

should be offered four times per day for 5-12 week old puppies. What is not eaten within 30 minutes is taken up. If the food is eaten within 3-4 minutes, the quantity is probably not sufficient. Puppies fed in this manner generally begin to cut themselves out of one of those meals by 3-4 months of age and perhaps another one later. If a meal is ignored for several days, it should be discontinued.

“Free choice feeding,” means that food is available at all times. This works well with dry foods and for some dogs. However, other dogs tend to overeat and become obese. If there is weight gain after the optimal size is reached, this method of feeding should be discontinued.

How do I housebreak my new puppy?

We all need a special place to call our own. Your pet is no different. Part of raising a healthy dog is providing him with his own sanctuary, and crates are a perfect solution. Both puppies and dogs can be easily trained to enjoy the retreat to their crate.

Crate training is neither cruel nor unfair, provided your puppy has sufficient exercise and an opportunity to eliminate before you place him in the crate. However, allowing your dog to wander through the home unsupervised to investigate, chew, and eliminate is unwise and potentially dangerous.

There are numerous benefits to crate training your dog:

- Security for your dog
- Safety for your dog
- Prevention of costly damage (due to chewing, investigation, elimination, etc.)
- Help with training proper chewing and elimination
- Easy traveling (helps your dog become accustomed to caging for traveling and boarding)
- Improved dog/owner relationship (fewer problems mean less discipline for your puppy and less frustration for you)

The first step is purchasing a crate. The main thing to remember is to leave enough room for your dog to stand and turn around – even when he is full-grown. Two basic styles exist: the metal, collapsible crates with tray floors and the plastic traveling crates. Some dogs adapt better to a small room, run, or playpen.

Because dogs are social animals, the ideal location for the crate is in a room where your family spends a lot of time, such as the kitchen, den, or bedroom. Avoid keeping the crate in an isolated laundry or furnace room. For the crate to remain a positive, enjoyable retreat never use it for punishment. You can, however, use the crate to avoid potential problems (e.g., chewing, house soiling). A radio or television can help calm your dog and mask environmental noises that sometimes trigger barking.

Introduce your puppy to the crate as early in the day as possible. Place a few treats, toys, or food in the crate to motivate your puppy to enter voluntarily.

The first confinement session should be after a period of play, exercise, and elimination (when he is ready to take a nap). Place your puppy in his crate with a toy and a treat, and close the door. Leave the room but remain close enough to hear your puppy. You can expect some degree of distress the first few times your puppy is separated from his family members. Never reward the pup by letting him out when he cries or whines. Ignore him until the crying stops, and then release him.

If crying does not subside on its own, a light correction may be useful. Avoid any excessive correction – it can cause fear and anxiety, which could aggravate the whining or cause elimination. When correcting, try to avoid being seen by your puppy so that he does not learn to associate the punishment with your

presence. A squirt from a water gun or a startling noise (try shaking an aluminum soda can containing a few coins) can be used to interrupt barking. Or try a remote control device that turns on a water pik or alarm strategically placed near the crate. There are commercial bark-activated devices that produce a distracting spray or alarm when your dog barks. Owners can fit their puppies with the devices or place them near the crate. If these devices do not immediately curb the barking or seem to cause distress, do not continue using them.

How do I insure that my puppy is well socialized?

The **socialization period** for dogs is between 4 and 12 weeks of age. During that time, the puppy is very impressionable to social influences. If it has good experiences with men, women, children, cats, other dogs, etc., it is likely to accept them throughout life. If the experiences are absent or unpleasant, it may become apprehensive or adverse to any of them. Therefore, during the period of socialization, we encourage you to expose your dog to as many types of social events and influences as possible.

What can be done about fleas on my puppy?

Fleas do not stay on your puppy all of their time; occasionally, they jump off and seek another host. Therefore, it is important to kill fleas on your new puppy before they can become established in your house. Many of the flea control products that are safe on adult dogs are not safe for puppies less than four months of age. Be sure that any flea product you use is labeled safe for puppies.

We will provide you with age and weight-specific flea control products that are safe for your pet.

My puppy seems to be constantly chewing. Why does this occur?

Chewing is a normal puppy characteristic. The puppy's baby teeth are present by about four weeks of age. They begin to fall out at four months of age and are replaced by the adult (permanent) teeth by about six months of age. Therefore, chewing is a puppy characteristic that you can expect until about 6-7 months of age. It is important that you do what you can to direct your puppy's chewing toward acceptable objects. You should provide puppy-safe items such as nylon chew bones and other chew toys so other objects are spared.

My puppy has episodes of hiccuping and a strange odor to its breath. Are these normal?

Yes. Many puppies experience episodes of hiccuping that may last several minutes. This is normal and will not last but a few weeks or months. All puppies have a characteristic odor to their breath that is commonly called "puppy breath." It is also normal and will last only until the puppy matures.

Can I trim my puppy's sharp toe nails?

Puppies have very sharp toe nails. They can be trimmed with your regular finger nail clippers or with nail trimmers made for dogs and cats. If you take too much off the nail, you will cut into the "quick" and bleeding and pain will occur. If this happens, neither you nor your dog will want to do this again. Therefore, a few points are helpful:

1. If your dog has clear or white nails, you can see the pink of the quick through the nail. Avoid the pink area, and you should be out of the quick.

2. If your dog has black nails, you will not be able to see the quick so only cut 1/32" (1 mm) of the nail at a time until the dog begins to get sensitive. The sensitivity will usually occur before you are into the blood vessel. With black nails, it is likely that you will get too close on at least one nail.
3. If your dog has some clear and some black nails, use the average clear nail as a guide for cutting the black ones.
4. When cutting nails, use sharp trimmers. Dull trimmers tend to crush the nail and cause pain even if you are not in the quick.
5. You should always have styptic powder available. This is sold in pet stores under several trade names, but it will be labeled for use in trimming nails.

What are ear mites?

Ear mites are tiny parasites that live in the ear canal of dogs (and cats). The most common sign of ear mite infection is scratching of the ears. Sometimes the ears will appear dirty because of a black material in the ear canal; this material is sometimes shaken out. The instrument we use for examining the ear canals, an otoscope, has the necessary magnification to allow us to see the mites. Sometimes, we can find the mites by taking a small amount of the black material from the ear canal and examining it with a microscope. Although they may leave the ear canals for short periods of time, they spend the vast majority of their lives within the protection of the ear canal. Transmission generally requires direct ear-to-ear contact. Ear mites are common in litters of puppies if their mother has ear mites.

Ear infections may also cause the production of a dark discharge in the ear canals. It is important that we examine your puppy to be sure the black material is due to ear mites and not infection. Please do not ask us to just dispense medication without having the opportunity to make an accurate diagnosis.

Why should I have my female dog spayed?

Spaying offers several advantages. The female's heat periods result in about 2-3 weeks of vaginal bleeding. This can be quite annoying if your dog is kept indoors. Male dogs are attracted from blocks away and, in fact, seem to come out of the woodwork. They seem to go over, around, and through many doors or fences. Your dog will have a heat period about every six months.

Spaying is the removal of the uterus and the ovaries. Therefore, heat periods no longer occur. In many cases, despite your best efforts, the female will become pregnant; spaying prevents unplanned litters of puppies.

It has been proven that as the female dog gets older, there is a significant incidence of breast cancer and uterine infections if she has not been spayed. Spaying before she has any heat periods will virtually eliminate the chance of either. If you do not plan to breed your dog, we strongly recommend that she be spayed before her first heat period. This can be done anytime between four and six months of age.

Why should I have my male dog neutered?

Neutering offers several advantages. Male dogs are attracted to a female dog in heat and will climb over or go through fences to find her. Male dogs are more aggressive and more likely to fight, especially with other male dogs. As dogs age, the prostate gland frequently enlarges and causes difficulty urinating and defecating. Neutering will solve, or greatly help, all of these problems that come with owning a male dog. The surgery can be performed any time after the dog is six months old.

If I choose to breed my female dog, how old should she be?

If you plan to breed your dog, she should have at least one or two heat periods first. She will then be more physically mature allowing her to be a better mother. We do not recommend breeding after five years of age unless she has been bred prior to that. Having her first litter after five years of age increases the risk of complications during the pregnancy and/or delivery. Once your dog has had her last litter, she should be spayed to prevent the reproductive problems older dogs have.

Can you recommend something for pet identification?

The latest in pet identification is microchipping. This tiny device is implanted with a needle much like administering an injection. A special scanner can detect these chips; veterinary hospitals, humane societies, and animal shelters across the country have these scanners. A national registry permits the return of microchipped pets throughout the United States and Canada. We strongly recommend microchipping all pets.

Are there any emergency tips that I should know?

There are several emergency situations that are common. The following recommendations could be valuable for you to know.

Hit by car. Let your dog stand up by itself. If it cannot, transfer it to a hard board for transporting. Apply pressure to wounds with soft gauze. Keep your dog warm to prevent shock. An injured dog may bite, even people that it knows very well. Use caution for the safety of both you and your dog. Seek medical attention quickly.

Overheating. If you suspect you dog has collapsed from heat stress, start to cool it down with a cool water bath, fans, cold compresses, or ice packs. Seek medical attention immediately.

Minor Burns. Treat with cool water and seek medical attention.