

# New Puppy Information Sheet

Bringing a new puppy home can be an exciting time but can also be quite daunting, not only for 1<sup>st</sup> time owner but also for owners who have had dogs before. There is a lot of information on the internet and lots of different ways to do things. We are here to help if you have any worries. We have put together some information to help you transition into puppy ownership.



## Feeding

Growth is very important for a puppy to ensure their bones and joints develop correctly. To start with, we recommend feeding the food your puppy was fed by the breeder for 1-2 weeks as sudden changes can cause tummy upsets. With the big change of leaving mum and siblings changing food as well can be unsettling. Once your puppy is settled we recommend feeding a complete puppy diet as this will be nutritionally balanced. There are lots of different diets available such as complete wet and dry foods, home cooked diets can be good but it can be hard to ensure they are nutritionally balanced. Raw diets are an option as long as a complete diet for the correct life stage is used. You must also be aware of the risks involved with raw feeding including being a source of infection of salmonella, e.coli and campylobacter which can be passed to humans. What we look for is that they like the food, they have formed stools, a clean and shiny coat and healthy skin and that they are maintaining their weight.

It is advisable to feed 3-4 meals daily to start and then reduce this down to 2 by about 6 months old. We want to avoid fussy puppies so we advise not adding human food on top if they aren't showing a bit interest to the food and keep from changing the diet frequently. Sometimes puppies find eating boring and so games and training can help them to eat. You can get puzzle/slow down bowls or do scatter feeding to help keep them interested and as mental stimulation for them. You can use some of your puppies daily allowance for training sessions and out on walks.

## Socialisation

The world is big new place for puppies, there is so much to experience and learn. The first 16 weeks are the most important. Socialisation can start before they are fully vaccinated. To start with, before they are allowed on the floor they can be carried around or taken out in the car to experience different places and people. Visit places like cafes, pubs, dog friendly shops, garden centres, the list is endless. Expose them to different people, sounds, sights, smells, animals, bikes, scooters, buses and trains. It is important to ensure that all experiences are kept positive and calm, so some sessions may need to be kept short if your puppy is unsure or overwhelmed with a certain experience.

## Exercise



Regular exercise is important to help puppies become strong, confident and fit adult dogs, however it is important not to over exercise them while their bones are still forming. High impact or too much exercise can cause joint or bone damage. This is especially true to certain breeds such as labradors, golden retrievers and German Shepards. There for things like repeated chasing after a ball, jumping in and out of the car or on and off the sofa and running up and down steps should be avoided.

On the other hand too little exercise can lead to boredom, frustration and possible behavioural problems like destroying things in the house. You may have heard of the rule of 5 minutes of exercise for per month of age, but there is limited evidence behind this. It is hard to have a one size fits all rule give the variety of dogs we see, a Great Dane and a Chihuahua have very different needs! It is important to look at:

- The age - the older the puppy gets the more exercise it can do
- The size - How big they will get and when the joints are fully developed with vary with every breed. Smaller dogs will stop growing earlier on while large breeds may not stop growing until they are 18months old.
- The breed - Are they at risk of joint problems?
- Lifestyle - Making sure they are on the correct diet and not overweight which will put pressure on the joints.

In general, it is important to be sensible and not to do too much when they are young. Build up exercise slowly and most importantly let them do lots of resting. A walk doesn't just need to be running around the whole time. A dog walk can be a small amount of walking or running, a short training session, letting them sniff and explore, even scattering some food for them to look for or just sitting and watching the world. Exercise can also be playing with your dog but we want to keep high impact play like fetch to a minimum. Instead, you can hide a toy and let them find it, play hide and seek with them or scatter food for them to find.



## Toilet Training

This will have started the day the puppy comes home, some breeders might have started this when they are still with their mum. The rate at which this is picked up depends on the individual, however it is important to be consistent until they are trained. To start with they may need to be taken outside and supervised every half an hour, after eating, sleeping and playing. Once they get older the time between will increase and they may start to indicate when they want to go.

When they are outside let them sniff and once they go praise them and give them a treat saying something like 'good wee wees'. If they don't go and try to go back inside, encourage them to walk around the garden. If they still haven't gone go back inside, watch them closely and take them straight outside if they look like they are going to go, or after 10 minutes. Avoid playing too much outside until they have gone as this may distract them from going to the toilet.

Accidents do happen, they are just babies and it is important not to react to these. If you miss the accident just calmly clean it up. If you catch them mid-accident calmly pick them up and place them outside. If they continue to go to the toilet then praise them like normal.

For the first few months, many puppies may not be able to hold on throughout the night. Take them outside last thing at night, if they do cry to go during the night take them outside to go to the toilet then back to bed. You do want night time trips to be boring so they aren't encouraged to start playing but they should still be praised for going. They should be taken out first thing in the morning.

## To crate or not to crate

Crates are sometimes seen as cruel, however they can be a safe space for the puppy to go for quiet time, to sleep in overnight or to keep them safe when left alone. It is important to get them used to a crate slowly and in a positive way. Make the crate a happy place by making it comfortable with a nice bed and toys. A blanket can be placed over the top with the front open to help it seem more secure. Feeding them in the crate and giving them chews or kong type toys while being in there for quiet time will also help them to see the crate as a positive place. The crate can be used for quiet time and rest but should never be used for punishment. Crates can also be used to help the puppy have a safe space when they want to get away from other dogs, pets and people, including children. It is important for children to understand that the crate is a place they should not disturb the puppy.

If you are using a crate for sleeping some adapt very quickly while others may cry when left alone. Remember this is the first time they are being left alone away from the litter and mum. Make sure the puppy is warm. Sometimes a toy can help for them to snuggle up with, or you can place a heat pad under a blanket. Covering the crate can also help settle them or the use of natural pheromones to help calm them. You can also leave a radio on low so they aren't in complete silence. If they are really upset there are 2 options, you can either sleep near the puppy downstairs and slowly move away or you can bring the crate upstairs and slowly move the crate away over a week or 2 until the puppy is back in the place you would like them to sleep.

## It is ok to be left alone.

It is important to teach a puppy that it is ok to be left alone. To start with the puppy may depend on you more then over time this will decrease. This process will vary depending on the individual and should not be rushed. The longer you spend doing this the easier it will be for the both of you. Before leaving the puppy alone in the house for the first time, start by helping your puppy to get used to you leaving the room and then slowly increase the time that you are away.

A sign that they may be ready to be left alone is when they no longer follow you everywhere or are happy to take themselves off to another room to rest and relax. To start leaving them, choose a time when the puppy is more likely to be relaxed and has had some mental and physical exercise and been to the toilet. You can give them a toy such as a kong, puzzle toy or a chew which will keep them entertained and occupied while you are out of the room. If they do show any signs of anxiety then it may be that your puppy is not ready to be left and you may need to go back a few paces. This is ok, every dog learns and adapts at a different rate. While you are going through this training and you do need to go out it

is advisable to either get a friend or a professional dog sitter to be with them.

## Play biting and mouthing and chewing.

It is normal behaviour for dogs to chew. Puppies chew as a way of soothing sore gums when teething. Adult dogs enjoy chewing because it helps to release endorphins which make them feel happy and helps them to relax.

It is better to supply puppies with something to chew instead of them finding your things to chew! There are many age appropriate chews for puppies, things like kong toys can also be a good alternative to keep them entertained.

Puppies play bite as this is how they play and learn with their siblings. This is not aggression and they should be relaxed and play bow and have a wagging tail. However this behaviour should be discouraged as soon as possible. It is generally down to excitement such as around greeting a person however it can happen when they are overtired tired and they don't know how to switch off. A toy can be used to direct the teeth away from the person. If this doesn't work then stepping away and giving them some quiet time can, ideally with something to entertain them, like a toy.

## Puppy Training

We recommend taking puppies to puppy training, not only is this good socialisation but can help you to form a bond with your puppy, teaches manners and is also good mental stimulation. The courses normally involve teaching to sit, lie down, how to walk on a lead, recall, leave and stay.

Most courses run for 6-8 weeks and generally start when the puppies are around 12 weeks old.

The amount learnt in this time is very limited for a little puppy and will only generally look at introducing the basics, therefore, it is recommended to carry on for a couple of courses to help them progress as they grow.

As well as puppy/dog training there are other activities

that dogs can do such as scent work, agility, flyball, hoopers, mantrailing, gum dog training and canicross.

Some activities can't be started until they are older but they are a great way to help satisfy their natural

abilities. When looking for training courses, we recommend looking for ones that use positive training methods.



## Getting your dog ready for the vets

The vets can be a scary place for some dogs and we aim to reduce this stress and make it a happier place. To help make it less scary we want to start to get them used to the practice as puppies. We also want to get them used to being examined like they would in a consult.

You can do this at home by looking at the ears, eyes and teeth, picking up the feet playing with the toes, running your hands over the full body and gently playing with the scruff where they get injections. This

can all be paired with treats so it becomes a positive experience. Sessions should be short and carried out when the puppy is relaxed. Ensure that the puppy is comfortable and if they do seem uncomfortable with a certain aspect then take it slowly to help build confidence. As part of your training you can also start getting them used to wearing a buster collar or body suit incase they ever need to wear one after surgery.

We love happy confident dogs coming to visit us, if you are ever passing the practice feel free to come in and say hi, we can also weigh them and get them used to the scales and there will always be a friendly person there to offer a biscuit and a cuddle.

## Muzzle Training

We feel it is important to muzzle train all dogs. Some dogs may never need to wear one but in the event that they do the training beforehand will make it less scary for them. Muzzles are used for a variety of reasons:

- If they are at the vets and in pain or scared they aim to keep everyone, including the dog safe
- They are used for reactivity towards people or other dogs
- They are used to stop them from scavenging foreign objects on walks or in the house
- If they travel abroad they may need to wear a muzzle in that country.

It is better to be prepared for all these situations and get them used to the muzzle when they are young. Basket muzzles are recommended so they are able to pant, eat treats and drink water as needed. If you would like advice on which muzzle and size then please ask. The Dogs Trust have a good video going through the steps to make the muzzle happy and fear free.

## Teeth Cleaning

Just like we need to look after our teeth, we also need to look after dogs teeth, plaque can build up and lead to issues such as infection in later life. This may mean that they will have to come in for a dental procedure under general anaesthetic. To help reduce the risk of plaque build up we recommend tooth brushing. This should be started as puppies so the dogs can learn to enjoy it. A soft brush or finger tooth brush is best to use with dog friendly tooth paste. Never use human tooth paste as this is toxic to them. For more information on how to brush teeth please see our website and the pet information sheet about tooth brushing.

## Neutering

Neutering will help to stop unwanted behaviours and pregnancies. There is a lot of information on the different options available for both male and female dogs. For more information there is an information sheet on our website or you can make an appointment when they are older to discuss which option is best for your individual dog.

## Female Dogs and seasons

A bitch will typically experience her first season between 6 and 24 months old, smaller breeds starting earlier at 6-9 months old and larger breeds starting later at 18-24 months old. Each season lasts approximately 3 weeks. Most dogs will have a swollen vulva, light bleeding or spotting and increased

licking of the rear end for the first 7-10 days. During this time the bitch will be attractive to male dogs, but she will not show them much interest. As her season progresses, the discharge will become straw coloured and the bleeding will stop, at this time the female will be at her most fertile and will accept a male. This period can last 5-9 days. It is important to keep the bitch under close control and supervision for the full duration of the season to avoid unwanted mating. It is recommended to keep her on the lead, walk in quiet locations where possible and warn other dog owners that you have a bitch in season. If your female dog is not spayed, she will continue to have seasons throughout her life, typically every 6 months.

## Insurance

It is important to consider if you should get insurance or not. Unfortunately dogs can have unexpected accidents or illnesses, some which could be life long, such as diabetes, which will require veterinary treatment. There is no NHS for pets and so the cost would be covered by the owners. If treatment is needed at a specialist referral centre the cost of this could start from £3000. It is important to ask yourselves if your puppy had an accident would I be able to pay this?

We advise a lifetime policy providing ongoing cover throughout your pets' life, with a minimum cover level of £5000 per year. Please ensure when taking out a policy with your chosen provider that is suitable for your pets and yourself financially. Remember changing insurers can leave pre-existing conditions void.

If you would like any more information then please contact us or book in for a free puppy check with our nurse team

