



11.18.2018

Basic Dog Care

Feeding

Providing your pet with a nutritious, low-sodium, high quality dog food ensures a well-balanced diet! Both canned and dry foods can provide adequate nutrition, but for some pets or situations, one may be more ideal. Ask your veterinarian to find out which is best for your pet. Puppies 8 to 12 weeks of age can be offered 3 to 4 meals a day. At 12 weeks to 6 months of age, slowly downsize to 2 to 3 meals a day. By 6 months of age, all dogs should be eating 2 scheduled meals a day unless otherwise directed by your dog's veterinarian. Your dog might also enjoy special treats. Choose treats that contain high quality ingredients and are low on protein, fat, and sodium. Some fruits and vegetables are good options, but make sure to avoid chocolate, macadamia nuts, garlic, onions, grapes, raisins, and certain artificial sweeteners. Treats and any additives, such as cottage cheese or cooked egg, should not total more than 10% of your dog's food intake. It is not recommended to feed table scraps.

Exercise

All dogs need both physical and mental exercise to stay healthy and stimulate their bodies and minds! Most dogs benefit from a minimum of 30 minutes of vigorous physical exercise each day. Be sure to know your dog's temperament and breed tendencies to better prepare for their exercise needs. Exercise tends to help prevent bored dog behaviors, which may decrease or stop destructive behaviors. Use supervised fun games and puzzle toys to satisfy your dog's instincts to herd, chew, retrieve, and chase. Other ways to exercise your dog physically and mentally include teaching Obedience, Rally-O, Agility, scent-work, and other sports or tricks.

Grooming and Handling

All dogs need bathed at least a few times a year and regularly brushed. Brushing your dog will help keep their coat clean and reduce shedding. Hairy breeds, like Poodles, Shi Tzus, Yorkshire Terriers, and others, have hair that grows quickly and needs trimmed up regularly, in addition to being brushed and bathed. Before bathing your dog, always brush out the coat and carefully remove any knots and mats. Not only does your dog's coat need grooming, their teeth, nails, ears, and sometimes anal glands need grooming too! Did you know that you should brush your dog's teeth daily? Start with once a week and work up to a daily routine. Get in the habit of trimming your dog's nails once to twice a month. Using a nail file or grinding tool can help smooth out sharp nail edges after trimming. Handling your dog and helping your dog become comfortable with touch is a must! Teach your dog to enjoy having all body parts touched for grooming, handling, and a quick snout-to-tail health assessment. Get to know what is normal for your dog's body so you can notice injury or illness faster.

Housing and Shelter

Your dog should spend time away from you in a safe resting spot such as a crate or small room. Crate training an indoor dog can be a helpful management and safety tool! Having a crate trained dog is a safe practice for a variety of situations, such as traveling by plane or car. Teaching your dog to be comfortable away from you for short periods can also prevent some unwanted behavioral problems, such as separation anxiety. If your dog is spending a lot of time outdoors, be sure your dog has access to clean water and shade or protection from the outdoor elements. Check your local laws and ordinances on keeping a dog outdoors. Some ordinances require dogs to be indoors under certain weather conditions.



Basic Dog Care continued...

Identification

All domesticated pets should wear an identification tag at all times. An ID tag in addition to a rabies tag may be required by law in some areas. Get your pet microchipped; an implanted microchip is an ID that your pet can't lose. This will better ensure that your dog is returned home if he becomes lost.

Health and Wellness

All young and adult dogs should visit the veterinarian at least once a year for an annual wellness examination and vaccinations. Senior dogs, over the age of 7, should visit the vet more often, such as every 6 months. Be sure to immediately take your dog to the vet when he appears sick or injured. It is recommended that your pet be on regular heartworm and flea prevention. Take an extra safety step and enroll in a pet CPR and first aid class to be better prepared to help pets in emergency situations.

Spaying and Neutering

A dog can be spayed or neutered as early as the dog reaches 2 months of age or weighs 2 pounds at many clinics. Most pet parents wait until the dog is 5 to 6 months, around the start of a dog's sexual maturity to spay or neuter. Spaying or neutering your dog will help control the pet homelessness crisis in the United States. There are also medical and behavioral benefits to spaying or neutering your animals. Spaying and neutering prevents many cancers, infections, and even tumors. Most professionals claim spaying your pet before their first heat cycle offers the best protection from these diseases.

Vaccinations

Every state has its own laws governing the administration of the rabies vaccine and other vaccinations. Most states require yearly rabies vaccinations. Proof of rabies vaccination is mandatory for most states. For dogs, the core vaccinations recommended are: distemper, parvovirus, canine hepatitis, and rabies. Other common vaccines given to dogs depending on the dog's lifestyle are: Bordetella bronchiseptica (kennel cough), Borrelia burgdorferi (lyme), Leptospira (lepto) bacteria, and Canine Influenza virus. Consult with your veterinarian to determine what vaccines your dog should receive based on your dog's health, age, and lifestyle.

Dog Supply Checklist:

- High quality dog food
 - A variety of dog training treats
 - Food and water dishes
 - Interactive toys, chew toys, and throwing/retrieving toys
 - Brush, dog shampoo, dog nail clippers
 - Dog toothbrush and dog toothpaste
 - 4-6 foot fabric leash
 - Small carrier for smaller dogs
 - Collar with ID tag and Rabies tag attached
 - Crate
 - Dog bed or blanket
 - Pet waste pick-up bags
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