

Care of your Puppy

Once you have chosen your puppy, it is important for you to make plans for their transition to your home. This will help reduce any extra stress caused by their new surroundings and give them the best start to life with you. Here are some basic guidelines for you to follow:

Preparation:

- Decide on a name for your puppy. This will be one of the first things they will learn.
- Decide where your new puppy is going to sleep and have a suitable bed ready with a blanket or an old jumper. Many people choose to place the bed in the kitchen, where the floor is easy to clean. Make sure the area is free from any draughts.
- Some puppies may have been brought up to used an indoor kennel or puppy playpen and they soon realise this is their own area where they sleep and keep their toys. A puppy will quickly learn to not make a mess in the cage, providing they are given plenty of opportunity to relieve themselves.
- Ensure you have all the necessary equipment such as a feeding bowl, water bowl, newspaper some safe toys, suitable grooming equipment for their coat type, a lead, collar and name tag and a supply of food they are used to (ask the breeder / rescue centre beforehand)
- Ensure the home environment is safe, 'Puppy Proofing' is wise to avoid any unnecessary accidents. Remove anything that you would not wish to be chewed, particularly electrical flexes and also ensure that garden fencing and gates are secure.

The puppy's first days:

- If the puppy appears unwell when you go to collect them -DO NOT take him - arrange to return another day.
- Request a written agreement that purchase is subject to a satisfactory examination by your veterinary surgeon within 48hrs.
- When you collect the puppy, it is best for two people to make the journey so that someone can hold the puppy in the car. It may be a good idea to take some newspaper in case of car sickness.
- If you have bought a puppy from a breeder, make sure you get all the relevant paperwork -such as Kennel Club registration forms, pedigree certificate, dietary advice, worming and vaccination details -at the time of collection.

- If your puppy has come from a rescue centre, ensure you listen carefully to any instructions given by the staff. If your puppy has already been vaccinated you should receive a certificate; as well as details relating to any medical treatment that they may have received. You should also receive literature relating to feeding, basic training techniques and advice regarding future health care. Most rescue centres will be happy to give follow up advice and support, should you require it.
- For the children in the family, this will be a very exciting time. It should be explained that the puppy is not a toy and that they need their sleep undisturbed. This is a good opportunity to teach your children about responsible dog ownership.

Training:

- Obtain a book, which can assist you with basic training techniques.
- The puppy is bound to feel confused at first. Be gentle and kind; allow them time to settle into their new surroundings. Introduce them to the areas of the house where they are allowed to go and show them where their bed and bowls are located.
- Training your puppy should start straight away to avoid them developing bad habits. Teach them what is acceptable. Make clear and simple commands and show your puppy what you want them to do. Lessons should be short and at regular intervals. Remember - always reward good behaviour.
- Play is essential and can be used to reward good behaviour. It will also give you the opportunity to build a good relationship with your dog and can be used to establish their position in the family unit.
- Most puppies are anxious to please, therefore rewarding good behaviour is far more effective than punishing for a poor performance.
- You will need to take your puppy outside hourly. Puppies have a very weak bladder control and will need to relieve themselves at least 12 times throughout the day. There is a fairly set pattern to this: immediately after waking, after exercise or play and after each meal. Always choose the same place in the garden. Remain with the puppy until they have performed and then give plenty of generous praise. It is essential that the puppy links the chosen area in the garden with reward. Remember accidents will happen. If you catch him in the act, simply take them outside and praise them for their efforts. NEVER shout or hit the puppy as this will cause confusion and is likely to make matters worse. During times when the puppy has no access to the garden, it is a good idea to place some newspaper on the floor.
- Place a suitable collar on your puppy and allow them time to get used to it. Remember to fasten it up tight enough, so that they cannot pull it over their head, but remember to make adjustments as they grow. Attach the lead gently, encourage the puppy to follow you using praise. If they struggle, hold the lead until they realise there is no escape, then gently coax them to move forward again.

Health Care:

- Get your puppy checked in with us as soon as possible - don't wait for an emergency.
- Routine healthcare is very important & should begin when your puppy is young and be maintained throughout their lifetime.
- Should your new puppy shows any sign of illness; bring the puppy to us straight away for a check.
- Make enquiries regarding pet insurance. Veterinary treatment can be expensive, particularly when you least expect it. Most good breeders subscribe to insurance schemes which offer six weeks free insurance cover for the puppy in their new home, but it is up to you to renew the policy after this time.
- If your puppy is not vaccinated we recommend you start the course straight away. If possible, allow your puppy a week to settle in before making the appointment.
- It is also important to maintain a strict worming and flea regime, particularly during the puppies 1st year.
- It is important for you to accustom your puppy to being examined regularly. Checking their entire body including ears, mouth, eyes and paws. This will allow you to check your pets general health and also make it easier should you need to administer any veterinary treatment that may be necessary for the future.
- Ask the breeder or rescue centre staff about coat care and grooming equipment for the particular breed. Not only is regular grooming beneficial to the dog, it also helps build a good relationship between you and your dog. Train the puppy to stand quietly and reassure them throughout the procedure. Try to make this an enjoyable experience for the puppy and remember to give plenty of praise for good behaviour.
- Only bath your puppy if necessary. This should be done with warm water and mild shampoo. How often your puppy should be bathed, will depend on the breed and coat type.
- By eight weeks of age, your puppy will have a complete set of teeth. Between the ages of three and six months the puppy will shed its baby teeth to allow the adult teeth to come through. Dental care should start as soon as possible. Brushing teeth, when done regularly, is the most effective way of removing plaque from your dog's teeth and keeping the gums healthy thus preventing dental work later in life. You may find your puppy will want to chew everything. Try to avoid leaving any objects lying around that you would not want to be chewed! Provide the puppy with their own safe chew toy.

Feeding & Exercise:

- Feed your puppy at regular intervals - at least four times - throughout the day. Some puppies may develop an upset stomach during the first few days in a new home. Try to stick with a diet that the puppy is used to and avoid offering a variety of rich foods or overfeeding during these early days.
- It is essential that your puppy is provided with a nutritionally balanced diet containing high quality ingredients. The amount each puppy needs will vary with age, size, breed and activity levels. Ask our nurses at reception who will be more than happy to help you with any questions you may have.
- Your puppy will receive all the exercise they need in the house and garden during the first few weeks. Over exercise at an early age, particularly in some larger breeds, can lead to problems with bone development, if extra care is not taken.
- Just like a new baby, your puppy will need plenty of rest and sleep during the early stages. The new puppy should be encouraged to rest regularly in their own area of the house. Avoid letting them climb the stairs or furniture and any other strenuous activity that may cause injury.