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Dog Care



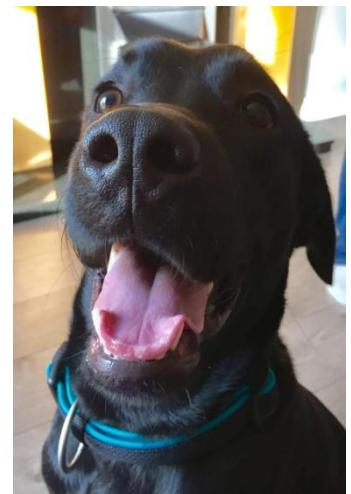
There are MANY breeds, types and sizes of dogs to choose from. Some will need lots of walks and exercise, others less. Some will need lots of mental stimulation than others so thinking carefully about getting a new dog is vital to ensure that their needs are met through your own family circumstances. Whether you decide to buy a puppy or look to re-home a rescue dog, they will all need time, effort and money for the duration of their lives.

Diet

You will need to ensure that you provide a good quality, balanced and nutritious diet for your puppy or dog which is right for their life stage, size or a specific dietary needs i.e. puppy food for the first 6-9 months, or perhaps a specific prescription food for allergies or other medical conditions that they may develop.

Clean, fresh water should always be available to your dog with bowls regularly cleaned and disinfected. This is particularly important during the warmer months of the year and it's a good idea to carry water with you when you take your puppy or dog for a walk/exercise.

Snacks and treats should be kept to a minimum to avoid unnecessary weight gain. If these are given then they should count towards your dogs overall daily food allowance.



Preventative Health Care

Vaccinations - If you choose a puppy they will need to have an initial vaccination course to provide them with protection against certain diseases. After that initial vaccination, an annual booster should be given to maintain their immunity. If you plan to go on holiday without your dog and plan to use a kennel service, they more often than not require your dog to be fully vaccinated, including kennel cough, before they will allow your dog to stay.

Flea prevention - All dogs are liable to catch fleas if they are not treated regularly. With central heating creating an ideal environment for fleas, treatment is required all year round.



Worm control - Puppies will need to be wormed every 2 weeks until 12 weeks of age, then monthly until 6 months old and then every 3 months for life. Worms can be dangerous to pets. They also pose a risk to humans, particularly children; some may even cause blindness. You do not need to see adult worms for your pet to be infected as most animals only shed the eggs in their faeces. For this reason, always make sure you 'scoop the poop' when your pet is in public areas.

Insurance - We STRONGLY advise pet owners to take out pet healthcare insurance. Owning a dog can be expensive, but unexpected treatment costs can be very unwelcome and sometimes, sadly, unaffordable. With good pet insurance you can rest assured your furry friend is covered for all eventualities.

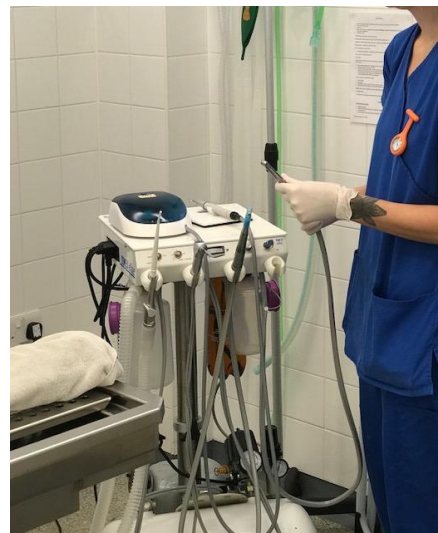
Microchip - It is the law in the UK that all dogs are micro-chipped from the age of 8 weeks old and keeper details kept up to date.

Dental Care - It is ideal to get a puppy into the habit of having his or her teeth brushed once a day. If your dog is older you should consider regular dental health checks with your vet to monitor teeth and gum health and to seek advice and guidance on the best way to care for their teeth. A regular scale and polish will help to maintain good oral health and hygiene and reduce the risk of expensive and intensive dental treatment and possible extractions later in life. In addition, a dry diet is better for dental health than a wet diet and there are dietary treats/supplements available, such as Hills t/d, which can be given but beware of products with a high calorie content!

Neutering - In the UK, it is routine to neuter unless you plan to breed from your dog. Please note that once your dog has been neutered he or she will need less food!

For bitches, spaying around 3 months after the first season is advisable. This usually occurs between 9 and 14 months. Spaying avoids unwanted pregnancy and removes the inconvenience associated with a season. It also prevents the development of pyometra (pus in the uterus) and reduces the risk of mammary cancer. Both of these conditions can be life threatening. Particularly in bitches neutered before their first season there is a small risk of urinary incontinence developing, which can usually be treated medically.

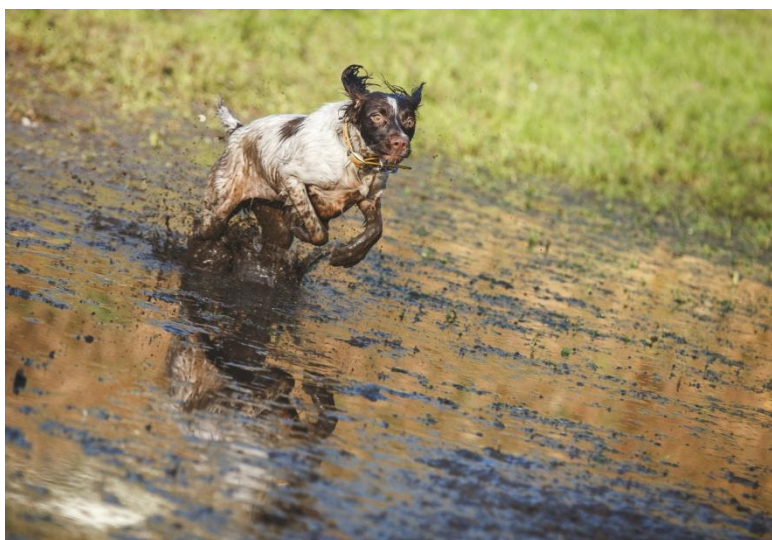
For dogs, castrating at around 6 months is advised which also prevents unwanted pregnancies and has potential health benefits. Done at this early age, castration usually reduces non-desirable behaviours such as marking, aggression, sexual activity and roaming.



Exercise, Play, Training & Socialization

The socialisation period for a puppy is between 3 - 14 weeks. During this period behaviours are established that will continue for life so it is really important to start training early. Try to introduce him or her to as many everyday experiences and (trusted) fully vaccinated pets as you can. For example, use the Hoover around them and start grooming early. Before your puppy is old enough to go for walks, he or she can be carried in your arms to experience things like traffic.

Your dog will require regular exercise and continued training to ensure that they are both physically and mentally stimulated. This can be achieved through structured classes or through fun activities such as fly ball or agility.



Equipment

Your dog will require several items of equipment some of which is necessary, others which are more desirable depending on your own preferences :



- Secure collar and lead.
- Food and water bowl.
- Bedding.
- Crate (to provide a secure, safe place for your dog to retreat to when required).
- Car safety harness/seatbelt to secure your dog in the car when travelling.
- Poop bags.