

Puppy Care

Congratulations! Owning a new puppy can be a rewarding and enjoyable experience. However, as with any new addition to a family, there are often adjustments and changes that can be made to make the transition easier for everyone in the household. This handout will address some of the questions and challenges facing the owners of a new puppy.

Puppies learn a great deal about the world around them and acceptable social behavior between the ages of four and twelve weeks. During this time it is important for you to expose to your new addition as many positive experiences with men, women, children, dogs, cats and other pets as possible. Positive experiences in many different settings during this time will help prevent your puppy from becoming scared or skittish in new environments and around strangers.

It is also important to stimulate your new puppy with many types of play and socialization in order to foster proper muscle development and to teach proper social skills. Two types of essential play behaviors are stalking and pouncing. These behaviors can be encouraged by providing toys that are lightweight, easily movable and have unique sounds to attract your puppys attention during play. Some examples of these toys are small balls, crumpled paper and objects that rattle when moved. Remember, however, that your puppy should always be supervised when playing with small items that may present a swallowing or choking hazard. Puppies are naturally rambunctious and inquisitive. Unfortunately, these normally cute characteristics can also lead to destructive behavior. If your puppy is caught in the act of destructive behavior, it may be necessary to discipline it. Physical and harsh punishments are never recommended. Instead it is best to use a punishment that will be associated with the undesired behavior and not the enforcer. Some examples of these types of punishment include using a squirt bottle, horn, or hand clap to startle the puppy and stop the behavior.

One type of behavior considered destructive is chewing. Most puppies will experience a normal period of increased chewing while they are teething. At approximately four to six months of age, your new puppys baby teeth will be replaced with his permanent adult teeth. During this period, your puppy will want to chew on many different objects to relieve any mild discomfort he may feel. In order to protect your household items, be sure to provide your puppy with many appropriate chewing toys. These appropriate items may include softer bones, toys that can be refrigerated (which will soothe your puppys gums), and other puppy proof items.

As with any new pet, proper veterinary care is essential to maintaining a healthy happy puppy. Your new pet will receive a series of vaccinations to help protect it against seven different diseases. These diseases include rabies, hepatitis, parvovirus, distemper and parainfluenza virus. The vaccinations are given as a series of injections and are normally administered between six to eight weeks of age, at 12 weeks and again at 16 weeks. Vaccinations are also available for Lyme disease and Kennel Cough. However, consult your veterinarian about these vaccines as they may not be necessary for your puppy if it is not exposed to ticks or will not be visiting a boarding facility.