

Puppy Health

What does it require?

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. The words of Benjamin Franklin cannot be truer than when it comes to the health and well-being of your puppy.

Starting out on the right foot with preventative healthcare means your puppy can enjoy a long life of quality living. Establish a daily routine of at least 15-20 minutes that fits into your lifestyle. Keep distractions minimized, devoting your full attention to your puppy.

What do I have to do?

Nutrition:

The pet food market has exploded during the last decade making it a confusing aisle for shopping. There are as many nutritional philosophies for your dog as there are for you: gluten free, raw, paleo, grain free, etc. We recommend researching which option fits the needs of both you and your dog.

Points to consider if selecting a commercial dog food:

- Purchase a quality diet from a reputable company. Not all pet food companies do actual feeding trials on their products.
- Package feeding guidelines are recommendations only. They do not take into account your exercise lifestyle with your dog. A cup measurement is a standard household cup, not the 32oz cup from the ball game last night.
- All pet foods and treats are required to have the calorie content per serving listed on the packaging. Treats can add a tremendous amount of calories to your puppy's diet daily, so take those calories into consideration. A pudgy puppy is a NOT healthy puppy.
- Do not hesitate to call the phone number on the package if you have questions. If you do not get satisfactory guidance from a pet food company, switch diets. All diets are not created equally.
- Whenever you switch a diet, take 5-7 days for the transition. Slowly decrease the amount of the current diet while increasing the quantity of the new diet.

Eyes, Ears and Feet:

Check the eyes and ears on a regular basis and reward calm behavior. Calm behavior will be greatly appreciated by your veterinarian and their staff during yearly exams.

Any suspicious appearance to the eyes should be checked immediately. Never put any over the counter products into your puppy's eye without consulting with a veterinarian.

Ears should be debris free and a healthy pink in color. Superficial dirt on the inside of the ear flap can be cleaned with a cotton ball. Never, ever stick a q-tip inside the ear to clean the ear. Shaking, scratching, redness, an odor, or rubbing the ear on the floor are indications that an ear exam should be performed. Never use any products in the ear without the advice of your veterinarian.



Gently playing with and manipulating your puppy's feet and toes daily will get him accustomed to a foot exam. Check the pads and toe webbing on a regular basis especially if you are in an area with a high foxtail population. This weed will lodge in between the toes, burrow through the skin and into the foot, creating discomfort and pain and will require a trip to your veterinarian.

Check the nails for length every couple of weeks. Depending on the walking surface for your puppy, they will either wear down naturally or they will continue to grow too long. Regular nail trimming with a nail clipper designed for dogs may be needed. Nails that are starting to curve too much are uncomfortable to walk on. With light colored nails the blood supply is easy to see. Black nails can be a challenge even for professionals. During your puppy's vaccination series, ask the veterinarian or a veterinary technician to demonstrate how to trim the nails at home.

Grooming:

Daily grooming sessions are essential to the care of your puppy. This activity will allow for quiet time to bond while at the same time, perform gentle inspections of the skin. Grooming allows you to look for fleas and ticks, skin abrasions, bruising, dry patches, minor cuts or wounds, lumps and bumps, and helps to keep your puppy clean and beautiful.

Dental Care:

Yes, all dogs need dental care. Tooth brushing is the gold standard. Do not use human products. Use products specifically designed for dogs. And a tooth brush is not always necessary. Some animals just do not like a brush. Alternatively, just apply some veterinary tooth paste to a baby wash cloth that has been draped over your index finger. Gentle apply the product to the teeth starting in the back molars and move your finger forward. Allow the puppy's mouth and tongue to do the rest.



Wellness Checks with Your Veterinarian:

Vaccinations:

Vaccinations are essential to your puppy's well-being. The colostrum that your puppy has been nursing on from mom is rich in antibodies. However, these antibodies will dissipate as your puppy ages and a vaccination schedule must be initiated. No one is really sure at which age maternal antibodies diminish. But most will agree that vaccine administration should be considered starting at 5-6 weeks of age and revaccinated at 2-3 week intervals.

Your puppy is considered immunized after the third round of vaccinations, usually at 12 weeks of age. Depending on your lifestyle and where you live, a fourth set of vaccinations may be recommended. Vaccines are usually administered as a combination in a single injection. This is commonly referred to as DA2PP and includes distemper, adenovirus 2, parvovirus, and parainfluenza. Some combination vaccines may also include leptospirosis and/or coronavirus.

Rabies is required by law and is given as a separate vaccination at 16 weeks and is good for one year. Bordetella is also a separate administration for those puppies who will be housed in a boarding facility



or will have regular play dates at the dog park. Lyme and giardia vaccines are recommended based on lifestyle choices. All vaccine administrations (and yearly boosters) will be performed by your veterinarian.

External and Internal Parasites:

Microscopic and not so microscopic organisms are everywhere and will happily find an opportunity to “bug” your puppy. Intestinal parasites are common and can be picked up anywhere other animals roam. The most common are roundworms, a long worm that is spaghetti-like when expelled by the puppy, and tape worms. Puppies are born with round worms. Tape worms are obtained from ingesting fleas and look like pieces of rice that move.

Every pet guardian will battle fleas and ticks. It is advised to not trust your health or your pet’s health to over the counter products. Over the counter products have a high risk of failure when it comes to the battle against these two pesky critters. And if the flea situation is not curtailed quickly, it can blow up into an overwhelming infestation in your home.

Heartworms are easy to prevent but costly to cure. Your puppy can become infected by a mosquito bite. There is no way to know which mosquitos are affected with the heartworm larvae. Heartworm prevention should begin around six months of age and can be managed with a once-a-month oral or topical medication. Yearly testing is required.

There are many products on the market for the control of fleas, ticks, heartworms, and internal parasites. Some are single product while others attack multiple parasites. Products can be chewable, topical, or in a collar. It can be a confusing choice to make and again a discussion with your veterinarian is required. Do not buy veterinary licensed products over the internet or at a big-box store. Although the pricing can be tempting, you do not know how the product has been handled and stored. Only when these products are purchased from a licensed veterinarian will a company give refunds or help to pay for pet treatment due to product failure.

Emergencies:

Emergency Veterinarian Care:

An emergency can happen to any pet guardian at any time. Even to the most diligent. Be aware of your surroundings and what is lying around on the floor and out on counters. Empty your trash can regularly. Have your puppy leashed when outside. The more common items ingested by a dog include but are not limited to chocolate, raisins, marijuana, xylitol (a food additive), human prescription medications, human underwear, and others. Many substances are toxic to pets.

- Have the SPCA poison control phone number handy: **888-426-4435**. They are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays.
- Be sure to check with your veterinarian about the after-hours emergency service they prefer for their clients.

Remember, when your pet is hurt, they may try, and many times succeed, at biting you, the owner. Always protect yourself first. You might consider teaching your puppy how to accept a muzzle without stress. (Please review our **Muzzles** handout for detailed information.)



Disaster Recovery Plan & Kits:

Have an emergency plan ready not only for pet trauma but also for natural/environmental events such as wild fires and earthquakes. The Marin Humane has a [Disaster Preparedness](#) page for more information to help keep you and your pets safe and calm during a disaster.

Training Resources:

Marin Humane's **Behavior & Training Consultants** are available for consultations (onsite or in-home) to help teach your puppy how to enjoy handling and have stress free veterinary experiences at 415.506.6280 or OhBeHAVE@MarinHumane.org.

Remember to license your dog (It's the LAW)! If your dog gets lost, a license tag on your dog's collar is the fastest way to reunite you and your dog. Even if your dog is microchipped, a license tag is immediately visible and doesn't require a scanning device to read. For more information about licensing, microchipping, and other services provided by the **Marin Humane**, visit us at MarinHumane.org or stop by at 171 Bel Marin Keys Blvd, Novato, CA.

