



HELP YOUR HOUND STAY HAPPY AND HEALTHY

Good preventative healthcare is an essential ingredient in making sure that your dog or puppy has a long, happy and healthy life. Regular dental care, grooming and the practice of protecting your dog from disease by vaccination and from parasites such as worms and fleas, should start during puppyhood and continue throughout his lifetime. Here's why this routine healthcare is so important and how to go about it.

Fleas

If your dog has ever had fleas you will know just how difficult it can be to get rid of them.

- A dog will almost certainly suffer from a flea infestation at some point during his life.
- The number of fleas would normally decrease during the cold winter months. However, as most houses are now centrally heated the fleas are provided with an ideal environment in which to survive and breed all year.
- The length of the flea life-cycle depends on temperature and humidity. In an ideal environment the cycle can be around 21 days.
- By far the most common flea in dogs and cats is the cat flea (*Ctenocephalides felis*).
- Some dogs will develop a hypersensitivity to flea **saliva** and this can lead to an itchy reaction. **One** or **two** fleas would be quite enough to cause a marked irritation. Most flea reactions in dogs are seen on the lower back area, above the tail.
- Fleas spend the majority of their life-cycle in the home environment. Only adult fleas are seen on the dog. The female flea lays the eggs on the dog's coat, these fall off and can be found wherever your dog spends most of his time - in his bedding, in the carpet, on the sofa, or even on your bed!
- Adult fleas do not live for long on your dog and die after 7-14 days - only to be replaced by the ones developing in the environment.
- The flea lives by ingesting blood from your dog several times a day.
- More often than not an owner will notice small specks of grit on the dog's coat. To establish whether this is flea dirt, brush the coat and allow the material to fall onto a moist white tissue. Flea dirt will produce a red mark.
- Dogs can also pick up fleas from outside the home or from other animals.
- Fleas are also the intermediate host of the tapeworm. Therefore it is important to remember when treating your dog for fleas, to treat him for tapeworms too.
- Effective flea treatment and control involves treating both the **environment** and the **dog** (for all the reasons stated above).
- Flea preparations come in all forms - aerosols, powders, pump action sprays, insecticidal collars, spot-ons, oral tablets or shampoos.
- Treatment of the environment involves using a recommended aerosol spray and regular vacuuming - don't forget under the skirting boards, under the sofa cushions and the dog's bedding.

There are a large number of flea products available. Ask your local veterinary surgeon for advice on which products will suit you and your dog's needs.

Worms

As a responsible dog owner, it is important for you to worm your dog regularly. Here are some of the things for you to consider:

- All dogs at some point in their life have worms; most commonly during puppyhood.
- Dogs with worms may not show signs of illness, except when the worms are present in large volumes.
- Puppies are most at risk from worm infections. Worms are passed from the mother before birth and after, through the milk. Infestation may cause weight loss, vomiting, diarrhea, a swollen abdomen and, in extreme circumstances, death. Puppies should be wormed from two-three weeks of age at two weekly intervals until they are twelve weeks of age, then every month until they are six months of age. Worming should continue **at least three times a year** with a recommended veterinary preparation for the rest of the dog's life.
- Pregnant bitches should be wormed at the time of mating and again when the puppies are one week old.
- The two main types of worms are Tapeworms (*Dipylidium species*) and Roundworms (*Toxocara canis*).
- Most worms will live in the intestine and feed on the partly digested food.
- Roundworms can appear like elastic bands, up to several inches in length. These are the most commonly seen worms, particularly in puppies. Tapeworms can appear like white grains of rice, which are joined together to form a tape. These are most commonly found in adult dogs and very rarely in puppies.
- Roundworms are spread through the environment. Tapeworms are spread through an intermediate host (usually the flea).
- The intermediate host is necessary to form part of the life-cycle; more development stages take place in the intermediate host.
- Both types of worms are easy to eliminate and suitable preparations are available through your veterinary surgeon.
- Adult dogs should be wormed at least three times a year.
- Remember, if your dog has tapeworm you must also treat him for fleas.
- As a responsible pet owner, you should discourage your dog from fouling in public places, parks and children's play areas. Always carry a poop-scoop or plastic bag with you to clean up after your dog. Regular worming will help to minimise the amount of egg contamination in the environment.

Vaccinations

Dogs can be vaccinated against distemper, hepatitis, parvovirus, leptospirosis and kennel cough. Despite the availability of vaccines, many dogs die each year from these diseases in the UK.

Here are some points for you to consider:

- Puppies receive some immunity from their mothers, both via the placenta before birth and in the first milk, known as the colostrum. However, this immunity fades, halving every 8 days until it is ineffective, from 6 - 12 weeks of age depending on the level of antibodies they initially received from their mothers. For this reason, a puppy should receive the initial vaccinations from 8 - 9 weeks of age.
- Vaccines contain a form of the organism that dogs need to be protected against. Administering a weak dose of a disease, in the form of a vaccine, stimulates the dog's immune system to produce antibodies which fight the specific disease.
- Vaccines are given in different ways. Most are injected into the 'scruff' of the dog's neck. However, the kennel cough vaccination (*Bordetella*) is given as drops via the dog's nose.
- Regular (usually once a year – more often for *Bordetella*) vaccinations are necessary to boost the dog's immunity levels to ensure the dog remains protected against the diseases.
- Should an unvaccinated dog or puppy be exposed to one of these diseases it could prove to be fatal. Those who do recover can be left with long-term damage to vital organs, such as the heart,

liver and kidneys.

- All of these diseases share the same initial symptoms of depression, a loss of appetite and a high temperature, so if your dog is unwell and unvaccinated seek the advice of your vet immediately.

Remember all of these diseases can be fatal.

Distemper

- Distemper is also known as 'hard pad' as the pads on the foot become hard, thickened and cracked.
- The virus usually affects young dogs in urban and city areas.
- The virus is passed through direct dog to dog contact via urine, faeces and saliva and droplets of the virus are released into the air where they are breathed in.
- It affects the lungs, nose, eyes, skin, stomach and intestines, resulting in sore discharging eyes and nose, pneumonia, diarrhoea, vomiting and dehydration. In approximately half of the cases the nervous system is affected too, causing fits.
- If veterinary treatment is delayed, distemper is usually fatal.

Hepatitis

- The virus usually affects dogs under two years of age. However, this disease is less common than parvovirus.
- The virus is passed through direct dog to dog contact via urine, faeces and saliva. The droplets of the virus are released into the air where they are breathed in.
- The virus spreads in the bloodstream to the liver, where it destroys the liver cells, resulting in the liver becoming enlarged and inflamed. It causes jaundice (a yellow colour), acute abdominal pain, vomiting and blood-tinged diarrhoea and dehydration.
- The virus can also affect the eyes and the kidneys.
- Dogs that recover from the disease continue to pass the infectious virus in their urine for up to 6-9 months.
- In severe cases of hepatitis, death can occur within 24 hours.

Parvovirus

- Parvovirus is highly infectious and affects mainly puppies and young dogs, although dogs of all ages can become infected.
- The virus is passed by direct dog to dog contact or contact with infected faeces.
- The virus is resistant to most disinfectants and can survive in the environment for a year or more.
- The virus affects rapidly growing cells, invading the cells of the intestines. It can also cause inflammation of the heart in very young puppies.
- The severity of this disease can vary. It can cause severe vomiting, bloody diarrhoea, dehydration and collapse. In some cases, death can occur within 24 hours.

Leptospirosis

- Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection, which can also cause serious or fatal disease in man.
- The bacteria damage the liver, kidneys and blood vessels causing jaundice, haemorrhage, vomiting and black diarrhoea and severe dehydration.
- The liver becomes enlarged causing acute abdominal pain, and in some cases, damage to the kidneys may lead to kidney failure.
- The bacteria are easily killed by most disinfectants.
- The bacteria are passed by direct dog to dog contact; the main source of infection is the urine of infected animals.
- The bacteria can also enter the blood stream through cuts or grazes on the dog's feet. Leptospirosis is also carried by foxes and rats.
- The severity of this disease can vary. Death can occur within two days.

Kennel cough

- Kennel cough is highly infectious and is easily spread wherever there are many dogs in one place, such as in kennels or at dog shows.
- Kennel cough is spread from minute droplets in the air which are inhaled, or from direct contact. As well as being infectious during the incubation period of around 10 days, the disease can still be spread for anything up to 10 weeks after coughing has ceased.
- There is recent evidence to suggest that it can be passed from dog to cat and vice versa.
- The symptoms are sneezing (in the early stages), a cough which may be dry and irritating or moist and productive and nasal discharges. In severe cases there may be a loss of appetite.
- Kennel cough could be compared to human 'flu in that whilst it is very unpleasant, it is not usually fatal. Recovery from illness is usually complete in two to three weeks.
- Severe cases in puppies, older dogs and giant breeds may lead to bronchitis or pneumonia if the condition is not treated, and could lead to death.

Pet dental care

Many people do not realise that dental disease is very common in dogs, particularly gum disease. Breed, age and individual tendencies are factors which affect the speed at which dental disease can develop. Dental care should therefore be part of your daily routine and will help to ensure that your dog lives a happy and healthy life. Ignoring the need for dental care could inevitably result in your dog's health suffering and ultimately reduce his life. Here are some facts and points you should follow to avoid your dog developing dental problems.

- Toothbrushing, when done regularly, is the most effective way of removing plaque from your dog's teeth and keeping the gums healthy. It will also prevent bad breath.
- Daily toothbrushing should start right away to prevent gum disease and tartar developing. With patience and time, your dog or puppy will soon learn to accept this as part of his daily routine.
- A good quality human toothbrush is the best type of brush for your dog. An adult toothbrush can be used for large and medium breeds, while a child's toothbrush can be used for small to medium breeds. Puppy toothbrushes can be purchased from your vet, which are suitable for miniature or toy breeds. 'Finger brushes' and soft brushes can be used initially to familiarise your dog with the sensation of toothbrushing.
- It is important to use pet toothpaste. These are flavoured so that dogs enjoy the taste and will co-operate with toothbrushing; malt flavour seems to be the favourite. Your dog will swallow all the toothpaste, so it should not contain any ingredient which may cause him harm.
- Pet dental products are readily available through your local veterinary surgery and some pet shops.
- Most dogs enjoy chewing. Select a safe rubber chew toy, such as a Kong or rawhide strip, which may also help to keep the teeth cleaner. Remember, dogs will chew with enough force to break their own teeth. Do not let your pet chew bones or stones, as this can break teeth or lead to serious health problems.
- A dog suffering with toothache will rarely show any signs of discomfort or changes in eating behaviour. You should, therefore, regularly check his mouth for any problems. Your dog's teeth should be checked by a vet at least once a year.
- Things that you check for in the mouth: bad breath; red, swollen or bleeding gums; chipped or broken teeth. Also check that the gum line fits properly around all of the teeth and that there are no swollen or ulcerated areas in the mouth.
- Hereditary problems such as remaining milk teeth, malocclusion (when the upper and lower teeth do not meet properly), missing teeth, crowding and overgrown gums can all make the mouth more prone to gum problems.
- Puppies should have all their adult teeth by the age of seven months. All of the milk teeth should be lost by this time.

How to clean your dog's teeth

- Apply the toothpaste to the brush and then push it down into the bristles.
- Choose a time when your dog is settled. Sit him down quietly, either on the floor or for a small

dog, on your lap.

- Place your left hand across the bridge of the nose or muzzle, with a finger or thumb under the chin to keep the mouth closed. Gently lift the top lip and insert the toothbrush inside the cheek. The most important place to brush is at the gum line.
- The goal is to brush the outside surfaces of all the teeth in a systematic way. Initially your dog may not co-operate for long enough; if so, start brushing at a different position in his mouth each time.
- Start by cleaning the back teeth, particularly the upper ones and then the canine teeth. Once the dog is happy to accept this, progress to the front teeth.
- Brushing the inner surfaces of the teeth can prove to be difficult. If you are unable to do this, do not despair. Providing the rest of the teeth are reasonably clean and healthy, the tongue will do quite a good job of this.
- Move the brush in gentle circular motions. DO NOT scrub the teeth.
- Toothbrushing should be carried out daily.
- If your pet has very inflamed gums (gingivitis), your vet may advise that you use a dental gel or solution containing chlorhexidine to improve the gums. Chlorhexidine works best when combined with daily toothbrushing to remove the debris.
- Remember, there is no point wrestling with your dog. Try to make it an enjoyable experience. If your dog behaves well, reward him with a small treat.

Grooming

Why should you groom?

- It is very important that you groom your dog and get him used to being touched and handled all over in a pleasant way. If you, the owner cannot groom your dog, then you will experience difficulties when visiting the vet or when trying to wipe muddy paws in winter.
- Grooming your dog is a good way of developing a good close relationship with your dog.
- Grooming is especially important in monitoring your dog's health, for instance lumps/tumours, skin complaints and external parasites may be concealed in dogs with long or rough coats.

When to groom

Grooming should be part of your dog's daily routine, even in short coated or wirehaired dogs. Use a soft bristled brush or soft cloth to get him used to being groomed. Do not use a hard brush and be very gentle, making sure you touch all over lightly, including the genital area, ears, feet and nails. Take extra care when looking at your dog's teeth and gums, especially if he is a puppy and still teething.

Grooming a puppy

- It is important that your puppy learns to associate grooming with a pleasurable experience. Distracting him with a tasty chew, or smearing Marmite or peanut butter on the fridge door at head height can be very effective.
- Whilst he is concentrating on chewing and licking gently touch him all over. If he keeps still and allows you to do this, praise soothingly.
- Do not release him from grooming until he is well behaved.

Grooming an older dog for the first time

- Start by restraining your dog. You can gently hold his collar with one hand whilst the other hand grooms him all over lightly.
- Again, smearing Marmite on the fridge door can distract your dog in a rewarding way. This will allow him to grow accustomed to being groomed in an appropriate manner i.e. standing still and allowing you to do so.
- Be careful when looking at your dog's ears, mouth, feet and nails as these are very sensitive areas. Start by just gently touching these areas and then rewarding until your dog is happy with this. Slowly build up to looking and holding them before rewarding.
- Continue to talk soothingly to your dog if he allows you to groom him without any unwanted

behaviour.

- Always finish on a positive note with your dog behaving and reward him with a walk, treat or a game with his favourite toy.

Grooming a difficult dog

- Grooming a dog that has learned to bite the brush or at your hands requires a different approach.
- Start by using a lead other than the one used for his walks. This should be clipped to his flat buckle collar, which must have no chain sections. Tie the dog up securely so that he can sit and stand comfortably but not lie down or turn his head. This will prevent him from biting you and allow you to continue grooming.
- Again, smear Marmite at head height to the area where you have secured him. This enables you to have both hands free to touch and handle your dog all over very gently.
- Praise your dog by talking soothingly if he remains well behaved. If he attempts to bite, don't worry as he is securely fastened and his attempts to stop you grooming will fail. You must not remove your hands or stop grooming whilst he is behaving badly.
- As soon as he behaves, praise him lavishly, release him and immediately reward him with a walk, game or meal.

Your dog will begin to learn that bad behaviour no longer works and that the only way to stop the grooming is to stand still. Standing still also results in a pleasant experience such as a walk or game. In time your dog will learn to look forward to the grooming session and be easier to handle for all concerned.

Remember: **Be Gentle and Reward Good Behaviour**

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