

Tips on Basic Care for Your Dog

Housebreaking

All dogs can be housebroken if you are consistent, as well as persistent, in training them. There are two basic housebreaking techniques: crate training and paper training. Crate training is preferred because it teaches direct housebreaking. Paper training should be an intermediate step, unless you deliberately want your dog to continue eliminating in a designated place indoors.

Paper training: Cover the entire floor of a confined space with paper. Wait for your dog to use the paper, then replace the soiled paper. Once your dog seems to understand the paper concept, begin to leave a bare area without paper. The goal is to have only a very small area covered with paper.

Crate training: When indoors, keep your dog in the crate or under very close supervision. Take your dog out frequently, and give your dog lots of praise for relieving itself. It won't be long before your dog gets the concept of only eliminating outdoors.

Feeding

Three feedings a day are usually adequate for young puppies. At around four to six months old, try cutting back to two meals. Most dogs can be fed only once a day when they reach adulthood.

If you want to discourage picky habits, try to feed at regular times in regular amounts. Do not leave food down any longer than 10 to 20 minutes. Always provide fresh, clean water.

Bathing and Grooming

In general, you only need to bathe your dog once a month or when it is dirty or smelly. Bathing too often can remove natural oils, making your dog's coat and skin too dry.

Brush your dog at least once a week. Brushing helps stimulate natural coat oils, prevents tangles, and is a great way to check for external parasites, such as ticks and fleas. You should also trim your dog's nails every 2 to 4 weeks to prevent pain when walking.

Grooming should be a comfortable experience for your dog. This should not be too difficult if you accustom your dog to being handled as a puppy. This will make it easier when your dog becomes an adult.

Brushing Your Dog's Teeth

Although dog biscuits and bones may have some benefit, they do not prevent the build-up of plaque and tartar. This is why it is so important to brush your dog's teeth regularly. The teeth should be brushed at least once or twice a week. As with grooming, this will be easier if accustom your dog early in life.

Routine Healthcare

Establishing routine healthcare from an early age can prevent disease, prolong the life of your dog and improve your dog's quality of life.

Picking a Veterinarian: It is extremely important to find someone you trust. If you are unfamiliar with the veterinarians in your area,

use word-of-mouth to start your search. If the veterinarian's personality makes you uncomfortable, hindering your ability to explain your concerns, find another one.

Vaccinations: Some of the most common vaccinations produce immunity to distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parvovirus, and parainfluenza. Puppies receive a series of these shots until they reach the proper degree of immunity, around three or four months old. Your dog will require regular booster shots and rabies shots as required by your state law.

Parasites: Gastrointestinal parasites are common in puppies. They are easy to treat if caught promptly. Left untreated, they can cause serious harm. Your vet may ask you to submit stool samples from your dog during routine visits to keep these parasites in check.

Another common parasite is heartworm. The heartworm gains entry through the bite of an infected mosquito. Heartworms can be life-

threatening if left untreated. Veterinarians usually dispense preventative drugs whenever mosquitoes are active. A heartworm test must precede the medication.

Spay/Neuter: Spaying (for females) or neutering (for males) is a surgical procedure that makes your dog unable to reproduce. If you don't plan to breed your dog or compete in the show ring, you should strongly consider spaying/neutering your dog. There are many benefits to spaying/neutering including preventing unwanted litters and overall health.

Exercise

Your dog needs regular exercise to stay fit and healthy. The amount of exercise your dog needs depends on its age, health, breed and temperament. Consider playing fetch, swimming or hiking or try an AKC event such as agility or coursing ability tests. Activities you and your dog enjoy regularly are the best.

For more information about responsible dog ownership, visit the AKC web site at:

www.akc.org



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