

Affordable Care Veterinary Clinic

New Puppy Owner's Guide

First off, congratulations on your new addition, and thank you for trusting us in the medical care of your new dog. The reason for this information packet is to help us to help you along the first couple of months of your dog's life, which are arguably the most important as far as their health, behavior and general well being is concerned. During your first visit with your puppy, we discuss a lot of important things, and we know it can be quite overwhelming and confusing. So in attempt to put things to paper, here are the highlights of what you need for the coming months and years...

VACCINATION SCHEDULE

It is possible that your new puppy has already been vaccinated by the breeder, shelter, rescue, etc. We will look at that information and make decisions based on the dates, type of vaccine, trustworthiness, etc. Puppies need to be vaccinated every 3-4 weeks, ideally starting at 8 weeks of age, however, some will have been vaccinated earlier. It is not a matter of how many shots a puppy receives, but dependent upon these 3-4 week intervals until the puppy is around 15-18 weeks old. Sometimes a breeder will erroneously provide a new owner with a vaccine schedule that is inappropriate. Some breeders are well informed, but it is rare, so disregard any schedule or recommendations they have made. You can trust the fact that what we are doing is based on the latest scientific American veterinary associations schedules and recommendations.

TYPES OF VACCINES

All puppies need to receive what are called core vaccinations. The first one is what veterinarians generically call the **Distemper vaccine** (contrary to misconceptions, this has nothing to do with behavior). This is a multivalent vaccine that provides protection against the diseases and illnesses caused by distemper virus, adenovirus type 2, and parvovirus. This is the vaccine that will be boosted multiple times as a puppy. At the last puppy appointment, around 15-18 weeks of age, the first and only **Rabies vaccine** of the first year of life is given.

Although all puppies receive these two vaccines (Rabies and Distemper), some will require more types, and although we try to figure out what is best for you and your pet, we need your help. Below is a list of non-core vaccines that may be required to protect your pet based upon lifestyle and activities....

Bordetella Vaccine- This is utilized to prevent Infectious Tracheobronchitis, or what is generically called Kennel Cough. Contrary to the name, your dog does not need to go to a kennel to need the vaccine. Any dog that does get kenneled, go to a groomer, spend time at dog parks, or anywhere else that a dog will be exposed to a number of other dogs needs to receive this vaccine. Let us know if you think your pet needs this protection.

Leptospirosis Vaccine- This is a non-core vaccine for dogs that are going to be spending time around outdoor sources of water, such as creeks, ponds, rivers, lakes, or any area that will have standing pools of stagnant water. This disease is very difficult to treat and can be fatal, so let us know if you have a likely hunting dog, swimmer, or plan on doing a lot of hiking/camping so we can protect against this terrible disease. Also, if you have a lot of deer/wildlife in your yard, this vaccine is recommended.

Lyme Vaccine- We all have heard of the tick borne disease known as Lyme disease. This vaccine is similar to Leptospirosis, but is transmitted from ticks, not from water sources. Although many dogs are somewhat protected from this via topical tick preventatives, we recommend this vaccine for any dog that is exposed to ticks on a routine basis either due to lifestyle (hunting/hiking/camping) or environment (heavily wooded property, high tick population areas). This disease is the fastest growing disease in our area based upon the number of positive Lyme disease dogs we see on a yearly basis.

The Lyme and Leptospirosis vaccinations require 2 vaccines initially, given at 3 to 4 week intervals. They are then boosted once yearly. It is never too late to add vaccines if your plans change, and we can always stop doing vaccines in the future if you find out your dog can't swim, hates hiking, or drinks only bottled water. After the first few months and the vaccines are finished, you will receive reminders in the mail or by email when your now adult dog will be due for vaccines in the future.

DEWORMING

Most puppies are dewormed by a breeder, shelter, rescue, etc with cheap, OTC products that are not considered broad spectrum, meaning covering many species and types of worms. Because of this, we always deworm puppies again with a product called Drontal Plus. These come as chewable treats that we send home on the first visit. Depending on the size of the puppy, this may be 1/2 tab up to 2 and 1/2 tabs, given all at the same time, preferably with food. If you didn't bring a fecal sample on your first visit, we need to have one at some point to be tested to make sure your puppy is parasite free. We will only call with fecal results if there is something that is not covered by the Drontal Plus (Giardia or Coccidia) in which case more specific medications will be required.

FLEA/TICK AND HEARTWORM PREVENTION

All we can say is trust us on this. Start on both of these at the time we give you your first sample, and don't stop doing it. These products come in a variety of types/brands, and are given MONTHLY for the rest of the dogs life. Contrary to previous thoughts, these should not be stopped in the winter months. Fleas and ticks are at all time highs in this area, and cause everything from rashes and infections, to allergic reactions, Lyme disease, and in extreme cases, even death. Once you have a problem, it is extremely difficult and costly to eradicate, so prevention is the key.

Heartworm disease is just what it sounds like, worms that grow in the heart. The disease is spread by mosquitoes, and as you are well aware, Pennsylvania has plenty of these. This is a fatal disease if left undiagnosed and treated. The good news is that it is nearly

100% preventable by using a monthly heartworm prevention medication. These products also prevent infestation of intestinal parasites that dogs are always being exposed to, some of which are zoonotic, or transferable to humans. Again, like fleas and ticks, monthly prevention is much easier and cheaper than treating the disease.

Remember, we always recommend that you get all preventative medications from our clinic or another veterinarian if there is one closer to home. All we can do is stress...**DO NOT BUY FROM INTERNET OR PET STORES/WALMART/GROCERY STORES.** These products are not sold by the manufacturer to these places, and therefore the authenticity and safety cannot be determined. Due to this factor, the manufacturer's guarantee is voided, and any adverse reactions leave you and your pet with no support or repercussions monetarily or legally.

The following briefly outlines the products that we carry and recommend for your pets;
ADVANTAGE MULTI- heartworm, intestinal parasite, flea prevention (topical)
HEARTGARD/SENTINEL- heartworm and intestinal parasite (oral)
FRONTLINE PLUS- flea and tick prevention (topical)
SERESTO COLLAR- flea/tick repellent/prevention (8 month collar)
NEXGARD - flea/tick control (oral)

We will discuss the options with you and decide what is best for you and your pet.

SPAY/NEUTER

So far we have protected your pet against devastating and sometimes deadly diseases and parasites. The last major step in caring for your pet in its first year is scheduling the spay or neuter surgery. We cannot stress enough the importance of this for your pet's overall health and behavior. We are adamant supporters of these surgeries being performed at 6 months of age, or before maturity to prevent major problems that can arise if not performed at this time. There are only a very few exceptions that we would not recommend surgery at this time, and again, trust us, we only have your pet's best interest in mind. We cannot tell you how many unnecessary cases of pyometra (infected uterus requiring life saving emergency surgery) or mammary cancer (non existent in dogs that don't ever have a heat cycle) or prostatic disease, rectal tumors, unwanted pregnancies (the list goes on) that we can avoid by doing these surgeries. Not to mention, we provide you with a significant price break when performed at 6 months to encourage you to get this done once and for all.

So those are the basics in writing. Of course, each puppy, owner, and situation is different, and together we will do what is best and appropriate for everybody involved. Please don't ever hesitate to call with any questions. There are no stupid questions, and we can promise you we have heard it all. Thanks again for trusting us at the start of your puppy's life and we look forward to taking care of your dog for many, many years to come.

Dr. Greg and staff