



1st Puppy Care Handout

Vaccination: Puppies receive a series of vaccinations usually starting around 8 weeks of age. The reason that a series is necessary is that puppies get antibodies from their mother that wear off over time. How quickly they wear off is different for every individual, but while they are present they neutralize the effect of the vaccine. So, we start vaccinating around 8 weeks of age which is about the earliest we would expect them to be wearing off and continue until we are sure that the puppy's immune system has responded to the vaccines, usually by 16-18 weeks of age. The shots are given 3-4 weeks apart; if given less than 3 weeks apart the puppy's immune system does not have time to respond to the vaccines as different shots.

At Animal Hospital of Salinas we recommend a series of DHPP shots, a Bordetella nasal vaccination during the puppy series, and a one year Rabies vaccination given when the puppy is at least 16 weeks of age. Other vaccines may be recommended based on your puppy's contact with wildlife, livestock, ticks, and rattlesnakes.

With any vaccination be observant for signs of an allergic reaction to the vaccines demonstrated by vomiting, facial swelling, hives, or extreme lethargy. If you see any of these signs bring your pet in for evaluation. If our hospital is closed please contact the emergency clinic. Please ask if you would like additional information on vaccines.

Heartworm Control: Heartworm disease is a 100% preventable condition. We recommend oral heartworm control, Trifexis, in all dogs beginning at 8 weeks of age. Because puppies grow rapidly during the first year, we recommend purchasing single doses of preventative, until the puppy reaches the dose range that it will be in as an adult. At this point if you want to continue with the monthly tablet you may purchase a 6 or 12 month supply. Yearly testing for heartworm is also recommended even with monthly preventative. Please ask if you would like additional information on heartworm disease.

Flea Control: Flea control is important year round in California. Aside from creating itchy bites, fleas also can transmit diseases and parasites (tapeworms) to your puppy. Trifexis, which is also a heartworm preventative provides 30 days worth of flea control. For puppies too young for oral or topical flea control, the safest method to remove fleas is flea combing. Before applying any flea product, be sure that your puppy is older than the minimum age stated on the label of the product. Please ask if you would like additional information on flea control.

Fecal Examination/ Deworming: We recommend bringing a fecal sample to check for intestinal parasites on your first or second puppy visit. The majority of puppies are born with roundworms that they acquire from their mother while either still in utero or while nursing. Roundworms are transmissible to humans. A fecal examination can also reveal infections with coccidia, giardia, hookworms and other less common intestinal parasites and may require different dewormers. Please ask if you would like more information regarding a specific parasite

At Animal Hospital of Salinas we deworm puppies at 2, 4, 6, and 8 weeks of age, at which time they are started on Trifexis which will also kill roundworms, hookworms, and whipworms. If your dog is kept on Trifexis, monthly, year round we recommend annual deworming with a prescription dewormer. If your dog is not on a monthly heartworm preventative we recommend deworming with a prescription dewormer 4 times a year. Please ask if you would like additional information on fecal testing, intestinal worms, and/or deworming.

Introducing your puppy to other pets: If you haven't already begun introducing your puppy to your other pets, here are some helpful tips:

- 1) Give your puppy his/her own space. It can be helpful to confine your puppy to a single room without other pets, until you know that everyone will get along. You can try exposing your other pets to the room the puppy has been in, while the puppy is not there, to get them used to the puppy's smell. During this time, give your puppy the opportunity to explore your other pet's areas. Do not allow your new pet to be alone with your established pet(s) unsupervised until you are sure they get along.
- 2) If you have another dog, it can be helpful to introduce them off of your established dog's 'territory.' Try introducing them on the sidewalk by your home, instead of inside your home itself. Make sure both dogs are on leash. You may be able bring them both into the house together if they seem to be getting along. This way your established dog will not be surprised by having an intruder in his/her space.
- 3) If you have more than one established pet, introduce them one at a time. That way your puppy is not overwhelmed by the experience. Pay close attention to each pet's body language to assess how they are feeling about each other. Do not physically force them to be together, but allow them to check each other out at their own pace.
- 4) Spend quality time with your established pet(s). They are less likely to have negative associations if the new puppy is not taking away their time with you.

House Training: We highly recommend crate training as a method of teaching your puppy not to go to the bathroom in the house. It also gives your dog a portable 'den' where he/she can feel safe and at home, even when travelling. Teaching your dog to be comfortable in a crate can also help make hospitalization less stressful as your dog will be used to being enclosed. PetPlace.com

has several articles on crate training and is an excellent resource for reputable articles on pet behavior and medical conditions.

Puppy-proofing: Remember that puppies are naturally inquisitive and often like to explore with their mouths. Put away delicate items that could be broken. Tuck cords away so they do not get chewed. Pick up any small objects that could be swallowed, and make sure any houseplants you have are nontoxic to dogs. Make sure shoes and children's toys are put away so they don't get destroyed and give your puppy appropriate toys to chew on. Make sure trash cans are covered. Also, don't forget your yard(s) when puppy proofing.

Feeding: Puppies should be fed a high quality puppy food. Large breed puppies should be fed a large breed puppy food that is formulated for the special growth needs of a large breed dog. If you are feeding a high quality diet no supplements are necessary, as the diet has been formulated for optimal nutrition. Dry food keeps dog's teeth cleaner, but wet food may be added to make the diet more palatable. Puppies should be fed a puppy food until they are fully-grown, usually at 9 months for small dogs and 12 months for larger dogs. We recommend feeding a measured amount multiple times daily. Most dog foods have recommended feeding amounts on the bag. This gives you a good idea of where to start, but often they overestimate the puppies' needs. For small breed dogs 4-5 meals a day while they are young puppies, gradually reducing the number of feedings down to 1-2 feedings/day by adulthood. Large breed puppies may do fine with fewer feedings as young puppies, but should never go below two feedings per day, as doing so would make them more at risk for bloat and stomach torsion (twisting). Remember that your puppy will be going through growth spurts and so will be very hungry at some times and less hungry when he/she is not growing as rapidly. By the same token, sometimes he/she will have difficulty eating enough calories to maintain their high level of growth and may get a little thin, or you may be feeding for a high rate of growth and he/she comes out of a growth spurt and gains a little pudge. Do not be too concerned about this, but adjust the feeding as necessary. It is important to try and prevent obesity to maintain health and because a recent study indicate that dogs live an average of 2 years longer if kept slim.

Socialization: It is important to introduce your puppy to other dogs. Before they have completed their puppy vaccination series it is important to make sure that the dogs you introduce your puppy to are healthy and up to date on their vaccines. Also make sure to pick up any poop in the yard before allowing the dogs to play together. It is important to start puppy training classes as early training leaves fewer bad habits to break. Just make sure not to bring your puppy if he/she is having diarrhea or seems extra tired. Also, be prepared to bring your puppy home if any other puppies in the class don't look healthy. It is important to safeguard your pet's health as puppies are more susceptible to diseases.

Body Handling: Puppyhood is an excellent time to get your puppy used to being handled all over and having his/her ears and mouth looked at. Also spend time touching your puppy's paws to make nail trimming easier.

Behavior Topics: Please talk with your veterinarian if you are experiencing any behavior issues such as house soiling, biting, mounting, aggression, eating of non-food items, destructive tendencies, etc. The earlier these issues are addressed the more easily these behaviors may be changed. Please also see our article on [Puppy Training](#) for more information about [Socialization](#), [Body Handling](#), and other [Puppy Training](#) topics.