



2nd Puppy Care Handout

Spaying and Neutering: We recommend spaying and neutering all dogs at around 6 months of age. Spaying before the dog's first heat almost completely eliminates the chance that later in life she will develop mammary cancer. Neutering your male dog also eliminates the chance of testicular cancer as well as decreasing the likelihood of prostatic problems. Six months of age is a good time for the larger breed dogs to screen for hip and elbow problems by doing x-rays while they are under anesthesia for their surgery. If you are interested in breeding your pet we still recommend doing the x-rays around 6 months of age if they are a breed that has a risk of hip or elbow dysplasia. If you are considering whether breeding is something you have the time, facilities and finances for, please ask for our article that covers this topic.

Microchipping: A microchip can be implanted under the skin over the shoulder blades of both dogs and cats. It acts as a permanent form of identification should your pet get lost or taken. Most veterinarians, pounds and shelters have scanners to be able to read the chips. They would then call the number of the company that makes the chip and find out to whom the pet belongs. The needle used for implantation is fairly good sized, so if possible, we prefer to implant the microchip while the pet is under anesthesia during a spay or neuter. It may be implanted without anesthesia if you are not planning on fixing your dog.

Collars and ID tags: Even if your dog is microchipped, having it wear a physical collar with identification on it can be beneficial in getting your cat returned to you. Some collars you may have printed with your contact information. If not, most pet stores have machines you can use to make an identification tag.

Dental Care: It is important to maintain healthy teeth as this promotes full body health. We recommend brushing your puppy's teeth, once daily, to keep his/her mouth healthy and prolong the time in between dental cleanings. Please see our handout on "How to brush your pet's teeth" for more information on how to get started. If brushing your kitten's teeth is not an option for you, please talk with your veterinarian about dental chews, treats and rinses for dogs.

Pet Insurance: Pet insurance comes in handy if you have unexpected/emergency veterinary bills. Most plans will also cover routine vaccination, spaying, neutering, and dental cleanings, although you should check with the insurance company to be sure. There are many insurance policies available and most veterinary practices including specialists will take them. Make sure the company you chose has a good reputation and experience.

Grooming: It is helpful to develop a regular grooming routine with your puppy. It helps him/her get used to being touched all over and prevents long haired dogs from developing mats. Speak with your veterinarian or groomer about what type of brush to use for your puppy's fur. This may change as he/she develops an adult coat. Brush your dog's fur in the direction that it grows. If you start brushing early and often, your dog will enjoy it and it will make it more fun for both of you in the long run.

If you notice that your dog's ears are dirty, you may clean the very outer section with a Q-tip, being sure not to insert it into the ear canal. If your dog is scratching at its ears, there is an odor to the discharge, or there is a lot of discharge, please bring him/her in to be examined by a veterinarian for an ear infection.

Toys and Exercise: It is important that your puppy have appropriate toys to chew on so that he/she doesn't resort to chewing on things not meant to be chewed. It is good for your puppy to have many chew toys, but try to keep them fairly similar. Start out with a bunch of one kind and when your puppy is consistent about chewing on his/her toys and only his/her toys you can add more variety.

Also try to keep your puppy's toys novel by swapping them out every few days. You don't have to keep buying new toys, just rotate what your puppy already has. Good toys can be nylon, rubber or stuffed toys made for dogs and rawhide (if the puppy will not swallow large chunks of it). Never give your puppy something harder than what you can make a fingernail impression into, as things this hard can break their teeth.

Exercise will help your puppy burn off excess energy. Without exercise many puppies can become hyperactive and difficult to train. Different breeds of dogs need different amounts of exercise. Walking, running, and off leash play in an enclosed area are all good methods of exercising your puppy. Please ask your veterinarian if you need more information on exercising your puppy.

Please also see our article on [Puppy Training](#) for more information about Playtime, Exercise, and Training.