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Taking care of your puppy

1. Bringing your new puppy home

The day your new puppy comes home is the start of a new phase in your life, and a great adventure for all of you. One which we hope you will enjoy for many years to come, as your puppy becomes a real part of your family. Although puppies look like cute little stuffed toys, they're real live baby dogs and they're going to depend on you for everything.

a) What to buy

Here's a tick list with some useful items

- Food and water bowl – one of each, preferably metal
- Diet – prescribed by a veterinarian
- Puppy crate/shelter, e.g. Igloo
- Dog bed and blankets
- Collar, lead and harness
- Brush and comb
- Shampoo for puppies
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Dog friendly toys and chews
- Dog treats

b) Setting up home

- Decide in advance where the puppy will eat and is allowed to sleep – a puppy crate is ideal. Make sure anything your pup might be tempted to chew is out of the way!

2. Veterinary care

a) Vaccinations

Canine distemper, parvovirus (a huge problem in our area), contagious hepatitis and rabies are potentially deadly diseases. Puppies are particularly at risk around 6-8 weeks of age when protective maternal antibodies wane. It is therefore essential to stick to a vaccination schedule as recommended by your veterinarian and follow-up with yearly boosters throughout your dog's life. We recommend the following schedule for optimum protection:

- **6 weeks** -> Distemper, Parvovirus, Adenovirus, Para influenza + Corona virus
- **9 weeks** -> Distemper, Parvovirus, Adenovirus, Para influenza + Corona virus
- **12 weeks** -> Distemper, Parvovirus, Adenovirus, Para influenza + Corona virus + Rabies
- **16 weeks** -> Distemper, Parvovirus, Adenovirus, Para influenza + Corona virus + Rabies
- **Yearly** Booster + Rabies

b) Worms

Worms parasitize the puppy's intestines, affecting how it digests its food and how much nutrition it can extract from it. Roundworms and tapeworms are the most common ones, but they are easily treated using veterinary de-wormer. Don't be tempted by supermarket products, although cheaper, they are not nearly as effective and will give you a false sense of security.

We recommend deworming with every vaccination and then at 3 monthly intervals, lifelong.

c) Fleas

Your puppy could have fleas. They aren't picky and as well as causing itching in your dog, will bite you too. You need to treat your puppy, the bed and the house itself, ideally with a product which interrupts the fleas' lifecycle; otherwise re-infestation will keep on occurring. We recommend monthly applications of a 'spot-on' product and a surface spray for the environment with infestations. It is also important to remember that fleas transmit tapeworm, therefore deworming is essential.

d) Neutering your dog – A decision you have to make

We recommend neutering at the age of 6 months. Neutering is one of the most responsible decisions any pet owner can make. It not only protects against unwanted pregnancies, decreasing the number of dogs in rescue centres, it also offers protection against various diseases, including uterine infection and certain types of cancer. Some owners are concerned about a change in personality, or that the puppy might become fat and boring. Neither of these changes are inevitable, but follow your vets' advice and make sure your puppy keeps up with its games and you watch the diet.

3. What to feed your puppy

a) Your puppy's first meals

- Clean and fresh water should always be available
- Ask the breeder what diet the puppy is on and keep it on that food for a week or so before you change it. The most important thing to remember with feeding puppies is that their digestive systems are still developing – so they are prone to upset tummies.
- Try an ultra-digestible food designed for puppies and frequent small meals. Divide the daily amount of food (the packaging will show you how much you should feed) into 3 portions, and feed at regular intervals, so that the digestive system doesn't get overloaded. At the age of 3 months you can reduce the meals to 2 per day. Supervised feeding of your puppy is always recommended.
- Puppies less than 2kg should be fed every 4 hours
- Let your puppy eat as much as it wants in 15 minutes and then pick up the food dish. Having food available continuously encourages overeating and chubby puppies are unhealthy.
- Small breed puppies should eat puppy food until 12 months of age.
Medium breed puppies should eat puppy food until 12-18 months of age.
Large breed puppies should eat puppy food until 18-24 months of age.

b) Milk?

As the mother weans the puppy the digestive tract loses the enzyme to digest the milk sugar. Adding milk to the diet of a weaned puppy will cause diarrhoea.

c) What to feed?

- There are many different varieties of pet food, but choosing the right one for your puppy is what really matters.
- A tailor made nutritional food available from your local veterinarian or vet shop will contain about 50 carefully selected nutrients, to provide exactly the right combination of ultra-digestible proteins, carbohydrates, fats and added vitamin and mineral complexes to ensure your puppy's current and future health.

d) Wet or dry?

Dry food is completely nutritionally balanced and it also has proven dental benefits.

e) Human food

Do not give human food. Goodies from the table unbalances the diet you spend a fortune on and your puppy could have more digestive troubles or get very spoilt.

f) Chewwies, bones and toys

Don't give your puppy anything small enough to swallow that can't be digested, or things that can be chewed into large indigestible chunks and swallowed. Avoid any bones (even chicken bones, rib bones etc.) and hooves. Hooves tend to split and cause obstructions in the intestines and bones break teeth. Keep them busy with toys that 'dispense' food as they play with it.

g) Your puppy's growth

• **1st Stage of growth**

Growth is generally divided into two phases. The first stage of growth is very fast and you will almost see your puppy getting bigger overnight. This is when it is building its skeleton and bones; its 'framework'. During this phase, the food needs to be ultra-digestible - because the digestive system is still immature - and the puppy needs exactly the right amount of calcium and phosphorus in the diet to help their bones develop properly. Too much of either is just as bad as too little. It's also really important that your puppy doesn't gain weight too fast, because that will put undue stress on growing bones and joints. It's best to choose a food which is particularly designed for this stage of growth and breed of puppy.

• **2nd stage of growth**

The second stage is one of consolidation. The skeleton is now fully developed and your puppy now needs to build muscle. This is when it will fill out and start to look more like its eventual adult self, although 'filling out' doesn't mean getting fat. It's still really important to control weight gain, so that solid muscles are developed rather than layers of fat.

The specialised food at our Veterinary Clinic or Vet shop has been individually formulated to provide the right nutrition for every phase of growth and life.

4. Introducing a new puppy to your pets at home

a) Introduction to your other dogs

1. Do not take any of your pets with you when you pick up your new puppy.
2. Wear clothing that smells like your pets
3. Put the new puppy in its crate, on the floor in the middle of a room in plain view. The other pets should be able to smell and see the puppy

4. Let your other pets into the room
5. Let them 'discover' the new dog. Introduce the pets to the puppy one by one, starting with the pet that is most likely to accept the newcomer easily. Keep the older pets on leads if necessary (even muzzle). Only once the puppy is fully comfortable with all the pets, should you start combining more than one in a single interaction.
6. Reward your other pets for good behaviour. Do not yell at them if they become aggressive. They will become anxious and they may feel they need to protect you from it.
7. If everyone has settled down, let the new puppy out of the crate. Allow the pets to interact. Do not get involved, unless you fear for the safety of one of the animals, but always stay close by. Do not force them to interact. Should one of the dogs become aggressive, immediately separate them.
8. Do not favour the new dog. Respect the hierarchy that already exist in the 'pack'.

b) Introduction to your cat

1. Keep the puppy and cats separate until they are used to each other.
2. Never allow a puppy to chase a cat
3. Choose a neutral room each day (not where any of the animals eat or sleep). Have the puppy on a loose lead and the cats loose so that they can climb away or leave the room if they want to.
4. Ignore the puppy for 15-20 minutes. Give it a toy to chew, so that it doesn't demand too much attention.
5. Give the cats love and attention and every few minutes give the puppy a gentle pat.
6. If the puppy runs at the cats, give the lead one tug, without talking to the pup.
7. As soon as the puppy approaches the cats slowly without the lead on, you can relax and things will sort themselves out.

5. Training your puppy

a) Why training your puppy is important

However delightful your puppy is, never forget that it is going to grow up maybe to a 45kg adult. Training will help it to become a happy, well-adjusted adult dog. Your training methods should always be kind, calm and reward based – never shout or hit, because that will simply upset the puppy. A great place to start is at puppy socializing classes. Feel free to contact the following trainer:

Thinking Pets - Heather Whitfield

Cell: 0835667009

Heather4paws@gmail.com

www.thinkingpets.co.za

b) House training

The key to house training is to identify the place where you want your puppy to 'go'. Take it there often and every time it performs make a huge fuss of it, with praise and treats. Take the puppy out frequently, at least once an hour, first thing in the morning and last thing at night. Stay with it, so you can reward it there and then.

Accidents will happen. If you are there when it's happening, interrupt it and take it out to the right place. Reward your puppy then. Don't punish it if you weren't there, because it won't understand.

c) **Chewing**

- Chewing is part of puppy teething, learning and exploring. You can't stop it, but you can give it some good chew toys (some of which you could stuff with food or treats, that act as a built-in reward). Make sure it can't get anything you don't want it to chew.
- Puppy proofing your home is also very important. Remove trailing wires, computer cables, and unstable shelves, bottles of bleach, medicine and even houseplants. If you don't want it to have it, or it's potentially harmful – move it!

6. **Oral health for puppies**

a) **Milk teeth**

Good oral hygiene starts off when your puppy is young. Milk teeth appear from age 5-6 weeks. They are shiny white 'needles' tested on everything!

b) **Adult teeth**

Around the age of 4 months, her adult teeth start emerging. You might find the odd milk tooth lying around from time to time, but most of the time they are swallowed.

c) **Brushing your puppy's teeth**

Tooth brushing is highly recommended. Starting young with a special toothbrush and veterinary toothpaste, have clear benefits and helps your dog get used to the ritual of having its teeth brushed. We recommend brushing at least 5 X per week.

7. **Bathing your puppy**

Bath your puppy as often as needed, but once a week to once a month with an approved veterinary shampoo is sufficient. The new generation veterinary shampoos have gentle cleansing action and patented technology for neutralising odours. It also contains essential components for the skin, such as ceramides and essential fatty acids that help to preserve the cutaneous barrier and the skin's ecological balance. Human shampoo is not suitable because:

- a. Your skin's pH is 5.5 and a dog's is 7.5. Your shampoo could irritate your dog's skin
- b. Dogs have sensitive skins. A dog's skin is about 3-5 cell layers thick, whereas we have about 10-15 layers.

8. **Microchipping your puppy**

How microchipping works:

Micro chipping, which is the painless insertion of a microchip under the skin on the neck, means that any vet or dog rescue organisation can 'read' the chip with a handheld scanner and your dog can be reunited with you quickly.

Your vet can perform the procedure at any of your routine appointments and it literally takes just seconds to make your dog identifiable for life. The chip number will be entered into a computer system which operates worldwide.

9. **Puppy Insurance**

Find the right cover for your dog

Every owner wants to do the best for their dog and vets try their hardest to keep costs reasonable, but there is no denying that accidents or long term illnesses can cause the veterinary bills to mount up. Insurance offers peace of mind that you will be able to provide the care your puppy needs, should a crisis happen. Pet insurances offer different levels of cover and prices vary according to your puppy's age, breed or size and type. We have two different options in South Africa:

Medipet – www.medipetsa.co.za

Have a look on the internet to find the package that suits you best.

A new puppy in your home is such an exciting time, full of fun, big plans, hopes and dreams...but it's not all sunshine and belly rubs. They depend on you for their health.

The points of Responsible Pet Ownership (RPO)

- 1. Make provision for the care of your pet for its entire lifespan
- 2. Choose your pet carefully to match your lifestyle and home environment
- 3. Interact positively with your pet every day
- 4. Provide adequate shelter and protection from harm
- 5. Feed a 100% complete and balanced diet appropriate for your pet's age, size and lifestyle to meet your pet's nutritional needs and provide fresh, clean drinking water
- 6. Take your pet to a veterinarian for a wellness examination at least once a year
- 7. Ensure that your pet receives regular vaccinations at your local veterinarian throughout its life
- 8. Always choose an approved preventative treatment against external (fleas and ticks) and internal (worms) parasites and ensure that your pet is treated regularly
- 9. Responsible breeders should register their pet with a recognised breeder's association
- 10. All male and female pets should be sterilised if they are not intended to be bred