

# Puppy Information

Congratulations on your new addition to the family! Welcome to the practice if we have not seen you before and if we have then welcome back!

We hope that we will have many happy years ahead of us as we help you to look after your new furry friend.

Now that you have your puppy we thought we would give you a summary of what your Puppy got up to before they went home with you and what normally happens in the first year of life and until they are elderly.

Let's start with the periods of development:

- Neonatal (birth to 2 weeks) – During this time puppies grunt and suckle. They make small noises which are mainly to do with being deprived of warmth and separation from the mother and litter mates. Puppies are born neurologically immature which means that their movements are restricted to crawling. Both the eyes and ears are closed and they need the mother's help to pee and poo.
- Transitional (2 – 3 weeks) – Rapid physical and behavioural change occur during this time; they will start to take in solid food, open their ears and eyes. They become more independent learning to walk. Early play fighting starts and growling can be heard as they play. Your puppy will have started to leave the nest at this point to pee and poo by themselves.
- Socialisation (3 – 12 weeks, possibly to 18 weeks) – The timing of this period varies with the individual. Your puppy learns to control their own bladder at this stage. Of course this is the time when your puppy will have come to you and hopefully the breeder will have been socialising the puppy a little during the time that they have had them. We call getting used to something habituating. This means that as your puppy gets used to a noise, object or smell they become a habit and something common place. Providing this is done in a non-scary way your puppy will be calm and relaxed when these objects/sounds etc are around. If it is scary for the puppy you will need to back off and slowly introduce the puppy again or you will potentially be left with a frightened puppy in certain situations. These fears can then become generalised. Puppies that are not exposed to other dogs during this time are more likely to develop aggressive behaviour or fearful responses to other dogs later.

We cannot advise strongly enough puppy training classes for your puppy, they are inexpensive and provide a wealth of information for you and your new little one. We can advise on what kind puppy training class you should attend. Training and dog behaviour has become a bit of a hot topic over the last twenty years as we have managed to find out more about learning theory and how dogs interact with us and different species. We originally thought that because dogs are distantly related to wolves the training methods used should reflect the dominance hierarchy seen in wolves.

Unfortunately it was assumed that the aggressive behaviour displayed by these wolves was the norm but the wolves that were studied were strangers to each other and so fighting ensued. Normally a true pack consists of mother, father and offspring and they communicate with each other much like we as a family would and aggressive behaviour is rare. This means that the latest scientific evidence regarding training our dogs should focus on reward based methods and it is important that we do this or it is possible that we can cause behavioural problems to develop. We are happy to give advice on any behavioural issues and recommend trainers – for further information regarding behaviour please look at our website [www.whitecliffsvets.co.uk](http://www.whitecliffsvets.co.uk)

Juvenile (12 weeks to sexual maturity) – There will be gradual improvements in motor skills and male puppies can begin to lift their legs to urinate. We think that a puppies learning capacity has become fully developed by the beginning of this period.

Adult (6-14 months – death) – the adult period is from sexual maturity to the end of the life cycle. Sexual maturity occurs between 6-14 months of age depending on the breed and the individual dog. Generally, the larger the dog the later the onset.

Social maturity is thought to occur around 18-36 months of age and is associated with the onset of many behavioural problems such as aggression and anxiety related problems.

Changes that we see in aging dogs has been studied extensively over the last few years. Just like dementia and Alzheimer's in elderly people there is a reduction in the amount of dopamine levels in the brain which may be responsible for behavioural changes seen. They may drink more or less, become incontinent, get lumps and bumps, get sore or stiff, cough or loose weight – these are all physical signs of aging.

Changes in behaviour to look for include: decreased interaction with you, confusion, disorientation and increased vocalisation. We can help these dogs very often and give you advice to help you make sure they are still enjoying as fuller life as possible.

## **Vaccinations**

Why have your dog vaccinated?

Unless regularly vaccinated, your dog runs the risk of contracting one of several possibly fatal infectious diseases. Parvovirus and Leptospirosis probably represent the most widespread threat, but it is also necessary to protect against Infectious Canine Hepatitis and Distemper. Vaccines are also available to protect against Parainfluenza and Bordetella bronchiseptica, who are involved in “Kennel Cough”.

If an animal (or person) is immune to a particular disease it means that there is little or no risk of falling ill to that disease. Immunity in an adult dog may be as a result of either regular vaccination or the dog having suffered (and survived) the disease.

Puppies are usually protected for the first few weeks of life by the immunity passed in their mother's first milk provided that the mother has been vaccinated and is immune. However, the immunity fades and leaves the puppies susceptible to infectious diseases, especially Parvo. Vaccinations at this point simply help providing protection.

Modern vaccines are products of extensive research. These vaccines are manufactured to standards which are no less exacting than those demanded for the production of vaccines for human use. With such safe and effective vaccines readily available, it makes sense to protect your dog at the earliest opportunity.

## **Parvovirus**

Parvovirus is a tiny but extremely tough and hardy virus that can survive in the environment for long periods. The disease was first found in the 1970s killing many thousands of dogs before effective vaccination became available. The main source of infection is the faeces of infected dogs. Be careful the virus can be spread on shoes and clothing and on the coat and pads of dogs!

Originally two forms of the disease were seen: heart disease (in young puppies) and enteritis. Now, heart disease is rarely seen. Enteritis is seen in any age of dog from about four weeks of age, but most commonly in dogs less than one year old. Signs appear very suddenly: depression, severe explosive vomiting, refusal to drink or eat, tummy aches and profuse foul smelling, bloody diarrhoea. This will result in rapid and severe dehydration leading to death.

“Parvo” is still commonly seen in unvaccinated dogs. We see cases every year and they are extremely sad.

Vaccination and annual boosters are vital to protect against this disease.

## **Leptospirosis**

Leptospirosis is caused by bacteria that are spread in the urine of infected animals. It can spread to humans by skin contact with infected urine. Rats commonly spread the disease with their urine. Two forms of disease are seen:

*Leptospira icterhaemorrhagiae* (Weil’s disease)

This is contracted from rats, most commonly via contact with infected urine or rat-infested water. The liver is the main organ affected, although the kidneys may be involved. Signs are usually a high temperature, severe thirst, lethargy, increased urination abdominal pain, vomiting, bloody diarrhoea and jaundice. Death can occur in a few hours in severe cases.

*Leptospira canicola* This is contracted from the infected urine of other dogs. Milder signs are often seen with the kidneys being the main organs affected; jaundice is seen less often and is less severe. However, damage to the kidneys may cause problems later in life. Dogs that recover can excrete the bacteria in their urine for up to a year and thus, be a source of infection.

Annual vaccinations are vital to protect your dog and prevent it becoming a source of infection to humans.

## **Distemper**

Whilst vaccination has resulted in a decrease in the incidence of this disease in recent years, many pockets of infection still exist, especially in large cities, which result in regular local outbreaks. The main source of infection is by inhalation during close dog to dog contact: signs may take up to three weeks to appear. Dogs less than one year of age are most commonly affected.

Typically, the first signs are runny nose and eyes with coughing and vomiting, followed by unusual tiredness, lack of appetite and diarrhoea. After several weeks there may also be a thickening of the pads, and nervous signs, including twitching or even fits. Dogs that survive may suffer from deformed teeth or even develop nervous signs later in life.

Treatment of canine distemper is often unsuccessful – vaccination is the best form of protection.

## **Infectious Canine Hepatitis**

(Canine Adenovirus, Canine Viral Hepatitis, Rubarth’s Disease) Infectious Canine Hepatitis, which mainly attacks the liver, can rapidly be fatal. Transmission is by close dog to dog contact; dogs recovering from the disease may be a source of infection for more than 6 months. Dogs are most commonly affected in the first year of life, but all ages are susceptible.

Early signs include general discomfort and lack of appetite, very high temperature, pale gums and conjunctiva, vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain. Subsequently, the dog may develop jaundice. In some dogs that recover, a clouding of the cornea, known as “blue eye” occurs, which will usually resolve.

Canine Adenovirus type 2 vaccines provide good immunity against Infectious Canine Hepatitis and one of the components of “Kennel Cough” syndrome.

### **Kennel Cough Syndrome (Infectious Canine Tracheobronchitis)**

Kennel Cough is an infectious disease that, as the name implies, can be picked up especially when dogs stay in boarding kennels. It can mean coming home to a distressed dog, whose coughing will undo all the good of your relaxing holiday. Kennel Cough represents a serious problem for kennels and, as a result, more and more are insisting on full vaccination cover for all dogs in their care.

Although there are other organisms which can cause Kennel Cough, infection with *Bordetella Bronchiseptica* can lead to a persistent hacking cough that lasts for several weeks. Dogs can pick up *Bordetella* anywhere; it doesn't have to be in kennels. The infection spreads from dog to dog through the air and dogs are just as likely to catch Kennel Cough at shows, training classes or wherever dogs are grouped together.

Fortunately your dog can be given a Kennel Cough vaccination – a vaccine which provides solid protection against *Bordetella* infection and can be given on its own or at the same time as your dog's annual booster against Distemper, Viral Hepatitis, Leptospirosis and Parvovirus.

It is given as nose drops and is effective in as little as five days, although the best time to have this vaccination is two weeks before your dog goes into kennels or to a show.

### **Rabies**

This disease is not seen in the UK but vaccination is compulsory for dogs travelling abroad on the ‘Pet Passport’ scheme or for export. Dogs have to be microchipped before receiving a rabies vaccination. Please ask for more information at reception if you wish to travel with your dog. If you are planning to travel with your dog be sure to look at the DEFRA website before you start the scheme.

## **When should your dog be vaccinated?**

### **Primary Vaccination**

Puppies may start their vaccination course as early as 7 weeks of age. If you acquire or have an older dog, vaccination is not immediate and the vet will advise when your puppy may be taken out for walks safely. It is important that your puppy socialises with other dogs and people early in life to avoid behavioural problems. If you have a puppy or adult dog that is unvaccinated or has an unknown vaccination history, please book it in for its vaccinations. This allows your new pet to have a general check-up. Remember that the protective effects last for a long time.

### **Booster Vaccinations**

Immunity to these diseases does not last indefinitely and will gradually fall leaving your dog at risk. Annual boosters are vital to maintain the immunity which will protect your dog from these infections and provide an opportunity for a yearly health check by the vet. It is important to ensure

your pet's vaccination status does not lapse as this may result in your dog requiring to re-start their vaccination course.

## **Flea and worm treatment**

There are now many different flea and worm treatments available. We will mention a few popular ones here.

**Advocate** - This is a broad spectrum protection against common internal and external parasites in dogs. It is a spot on application required every four weeks to treat fleas, flea larvae, whipworm, hookworm, roundworm, angiostrongylus (lungworm), crenosoma, heartworm, skin worm, microfilaria, spirocerca, ear mites, sarcoptes (fox mange), demodex, and lice! As you can see this is a very comprehensive treatment. It is important to prevent lungworm in any age of dog. See the Bayer website for more information on lungworm [www.lungworm.co.uk](http://www.lungworm.co.uk)

**Prinovox** - Prinovox is the same as advocate. There are four pipettes instead of three. This is also a treatment that should be applied every four weeks.

**Stronghold** - Spot on treatment for fleas, flea larvae, roundworms, heartworms, sarcoptes (fox mange), lice and ear mites. This treatment also needs to be applied every four weeks.

**Frontline Combo** - This is a broad spectrum spot on application required every four weeks to treat and prevent fleas, flea larvae and ticks.

**Nexgard** - For dogs. This is a tablet form so unlike the spot on liquid it cannot be bathed off! This is a monthly treatment for flea and tick infestations, prevents heartworm and treats for internal worms. It is now licensed for lungworm prevention and treatment.

**Bravecto** - also treats fleas and ticks. This is in tablet form and should be given orally every three months.

## **Worm treatments**

Again there are many products available. If you are using a spot on application it maybe that some intestinal parasites that are already being treated. We can advise you on the type of worming product that you will need depending on which flea product you use to treat your puppy/dog.

Wormers that we use regularly are:

- Milbemax – multiwormer
- Drontal – multiwormer
- Droncit – tapeworms

NB: The monthly spot on and tablet flea treatments do not treat for tapeworms. If you are using one of these products we advise a tapeworm every six months.

## **Microchipping**

We can microchip your puppy/dog at any time. Many people opt for microchipping at the time of neutering so they are asleep under an anaesthetic when the chip is injected. Many puppies/dogs do

seem to tolerate this procedure when they are awake so let us know if you would like this done at any time.

Please make sure that you register your puppy straight away and particularly remember that if you move house these details will need updating.

It is a legal requirement to have a puppy microchipped before it is 8 weeks old.

## **Neutering**

### **Bitch Spay**

Your dog should generally be aged 6 months or older.

#### **Seasons**

It is not necessary to have had a season to be spayed. Equally it is not 'a good idea' to have a litter of pups unless you are experienced with breeding dogs. It is an easier and quicker operation for your dog if spayed at 6 months of age, before the first season.

- Please let the vet/nurse know if your dog has had a season and when the last one was seen.
- Ideally we will wait 3 months following a season to spay a dog as there are increased surgical and hormonal risks if spayed too soon after a season.

#### **Why spay a bitch?**

- Spaying significantly reduces the risk of mammary tumours if performed before the first or second season. 1 in 2000 develop mammary tumours if spayed before first season compared to 1 in 4 if spayed after the second.
- Prevention of future uterine problems such as life threatening infections of the uterus.
- Prevents unwanted pregnancy, false pregnancies and the hassle of seasons.

#### **Potential side effects/ complications of spaying**

- Anaesthetic/ surgical risks (very low in healthy animals).
- Spayed dogs have a lower metabolism so need to be fed 10-15% less to prevent obesity - also saving you money on dog food!
- No proven link but may be a factor in urinary incontinence in old age. However if this were to occur it is easily controlled by medication.
- Transient false pregnancy can occur in some bitches shortly after spaying, especially in older bitches. This is more likely if spayed within 3 months of a season. It is easily treated.

#### **Post operation care**

- On the night you get home offer her water and bland food such as chicken and rice. If you would like us to provide you with a tin of chicken and rice after the operation please ask the nurse to dispense one for you.
- Dogs are sometimes sick with more complex food after an operation.
- Keep her on the lead for 7 days following the operation, lifting her into the car and preventing her from climbing steps.
- Check the wound daily for any signs of discomfort or infection
- We will also send her home with a buster collar to prevent self trauma.
- Your pet will be sent home with pain relief for a few days after the operation which is included in the price.

## **Dog Castration**

We routinely castrate from 5-6 months of age.

### **Why Castrate a dog?**

#### **Behaviour**

- Castrated dogs are less likely to develop signs of hypersexuality, such as mounting other dogs, people's legs etc
- Less chance of inter-male aggression.
- Less chance of wandering and escape in the hunt for bitches.
- Reduced desire to urine mark.

NB/ In dogs castrated over 2 years of age, there is less chance of improving hormonally driven behavioural problems by the procedure.

#### **Health Benefits/Prophylaxis**

- Precludes the development of testicular tumours
- Reduces development of prostatic disease, perineal hernias and certain peri-anal growths.

#### **Possible side effects/ disadvantages of castrating dogs**

- Anaesthetic/ surgical risks (These are very low in healthy animals).
- Castrated dogs have a lower metabolism so need to be fed 10-15% less to prevent obesity occurring also saving you money on dog food!
- Not all male dogs develop hypersexuality behavioural problems and can lead normal happy lives if left entire. Generally there is no disadvantage to waiting until the dog is a little older to decide whether to castrate ie. doesn't have to be done at 6 months.

## **Nutrition**

Puppy food is designed specifically for the nutritional needs of young and still growing dogs, with twice the daily nutritional requirements that a mature dog needs. Puppies are growing and developing rapidly -- in their bones, muscles, joints, internal organs and immune system, to name but a few of the developmental needs that are being met by nutrition. A well balanced puppy food contains those nutrients that a puppy specifically need for this purpose, nutrients that are not necessary once the puppy has finished growing into a dog and that are not added to adult formula dog foods. For example, to build a strong body, puppy food contains about 30 percent protein, as well as the vitamins and minerals that are needed for a puppy to be healthy.

Ideally, a puppy should be fed puppy food until he is about a year old. There are rare instances when you may need to stop giving puppy food before then; especially if the puppy is developing too quickly and we are concerned about complications (e.g., long bone disease and panosteosis are two growth diseases of concern).

A puppy should be fed three times a day until she/he reaches about six months old. In many breeds, growth slows down around this age, so unless we advise otherwise you should reduce her/his meals to twice a day only -- in the morning and in the evening. When your puppy reaches adulthood you can continue to feed twice a day or once a day.

If there are times when your puppy does not have an appetite, let them be. It is fine to skip an occasional meal, as long as the puppy is showing a normal energy level and does not skip more than

one meal. Place the uneaten food inside the refrigerator (or closed container, if it is dry food) so that it does not spoil and offer it to them again after a few hours have passed.

The amount of food that your puppy requires will depend on their breed and on their nutritional needs. Puppy food packaging usually indicates the recommended amount of food for puppies, but it can still depend on how much you think is enough to satisfy your puppy, or how much they need for growth and development. Some large, or higher energy dog breeds need more calories than smaller, or a laid back, low energy dog breeds. With that in mind, you must also be careful not to over-feed your puppy, so that they do not become overweight. For example, Labrador retrievers are especially prone to becoming overweight. This is often due to their seemingly constant hunger, leading their owners to feed them more than necessary, but this can also be true for almost any breed.

Overweight puppies will commonly develop health problems as they mature. If you are concerned about whether you are feeding your puppy enough, you can check above the waist line to make sure her ribs are not protruding. If that is the case, you can also talk to us about possible parasitic infection. Of course, there are some breeds that are genetically slim and that have defined rib bones that appear to jut out. The Greyhound is an excellent example of this.

## **Insurance**

At White Cliffs Vets we strongly support the idea of pet insurance. Since there is no NHS for pets, pet insurance makes sure that you can always afford the best treatment for your pet to get the quickest and fullest recovery from illness or injury. Please bring valid details of your pet insurance policy with you each and every time you use our services. It is advisable to register all policy details with our reception staff and confirm them every time you visit one of our surgeries. This will greatly assist both you and us when your pet requires treatment.

For the price of a daily newspaper it will cover unexpected accidents or illness and third party claims, such as if your dog causes an accident.

We strongly advise that all pets have health insurance. However, we obviously do not make it compulsory for you to take this insurance. Please note it is your responsibility to settle your account with us and reclaim your fees from your insurance company.

We are happy to assist you in identifying suitable insurance cover and explain how claims are processed. Whenever you have a claim, it should be passed on to our reception staff. If you require any assistance or further information, we will be pleased to help.

Two out of three pets require veterinary care each year and treatment can account for up to 30% of the cost of owning a pet. So, it really does pay to have the very best in healthcare insurance for your pet.

There is a wealth of information about insuring your pet on our website [www.whitecliffsvets.co.uk](http://www.whitecliffsvets.co.uk)

## **Behaviour**

If you would like any information about the behaviour of your puppy please ask us at the surgery.

Some behaviour is completely normal and some behaviour is not. If you are concerned we can help you. The most common problems that we encounter are:

- Problems with toilet training
- Chewing Problems and mouthing

- Going off food
- Vomiting or diarrhoea

Anything your pet does is a behaviour! Please try to notice any differences in behaviour during the lifetime of your pet, they may not be a problem but sometimes a small change in behaviour can give an indication that something is wrong.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Information correct at 1.7.17