Recommendations for Puppy & Kitten Owners

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APPOINTMENTS

Most puppies and kittens will need to be seen by a veterinarian every 3-4 weeks from the time they are adopted until 6 months of age. During these visits we will make sure your new family member is up to date on vaccines, staying healthy as they develop, and discuss common questions and concerns.

GUIDE FOR PUPPY OWNERS

GUIDE FOR KITTEN OWNERS

PARASITE PREVENTION

Puppies and kittens are often born with intestinal parasites from their parents and/or obtain parasites from the outdoors. All puppies and kittens should have a fecal test performed to check for intestinal parasites. We recommend deworming at each puppy/kitten visit.

At your first visit, we will also discuss flea, tick, and heartworm prevention options.

VACCINES

Puppies and kittens need to receive vaccines every 3-4 weeks until they are OVER 16 weeks of age. The number of vaccines is not as important as when the final puppy/kitten vaccines occur. We will work together during our first appointment to determine the best vaccine schedule for you and your pet. The timing and number of vaccines is going to depend on your anticipated lifestyle (e.g., hiking, boarding, grooming) and how much your animal weighs.

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SOCIALIZATION/TRAINING

Socialization is the process of exposing puppies/kittens to new experiences, sights, sounds, and smells. It's important to focus on exposing them to people, animals, and experiences you expect them to encounter in their adult lives. Please see the websites below for more information, tips, and tricks. In general, try to expose your new pet to 5-10 new people/pets each week. When exposing your puppy/kitten to other animals, please ensure the other animal is up to date on their vaccines.

Here are helpful resources for puppy and kitten training:
- **Importance of Socializing Puppies and Kittens**
- **Step-By-Step Puppy Training**
- **Guidelines for Dog & Cat Care**
- **Food Puzzles for Cats**
- **Virtual Dog Training Class**

DIET

Choosing a pet's food can be an overwhelming process due to the number of diets on the market. Puppies and kittens should be feed a puppy/kitten formulated food initially. Large breed puppies have special nutrient requirements and should be feed a diet specifically formulated for large breeds. Outlined below are our general guidelines:

1. The pet food should be certified by AAFCO to be "complete and balanced" using either (1) an AAFCO Nutrient Profile or (2) AAFCO Feeding Trial. AAFCO stands for the Association of American Feed Control Officials.
   - **AAFCO Pet Food Labeling Reference**

2. We strongly recommend against feeding grain-free, raw food, and homecooked diets. Please see the websites listed below for more information.
   - **Grain Free**
   - **Homecooked/Raw Diets**

3. Brands commonly recommended by veterinarians include Hill's, Royal Canin, and Purina ProPlan. These companies are established, employ board-certified nutritionists, and conduct safety testing on their products. This list is by no means exhaustive, it is simply a place to start.

4. Roughly, animals should be offered about 1 cup per 20 lbs. Since diets vary considerably in their calories, we recommend using the below website to help determine estimated feeding amounts based on the type of food and weight of your pet.
   - **Calorie Calculator for Dogs and Cats**

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SPAY & NEUTER

We recommend that every dog and cat be spayed/neutered to prevent unplanned litters and reproductive disease. The recommended age to perform this surgery depends on the specific patient, breed, and family circumstance. Once most puppies/kittens are over 6 months of age, they reach sexual maturity and can reproduce.

If you wait until over 6 months of age to spay/neuter, PLEASE be vigilant and prevent unwanted pregnancies. There is some evidence that waiting to spay/neuter large breed dogs until closer to 12-18 months of age can be helpful in joint development. However, there is also some evidence that waiting to spay female dogs can increase their likelihood of developing mammary cancer. Overall, there are no guarantees or hard and fast rules for the best time to spay/neuter dogs and cats. We encourage having an open conversation about what's best for you and your pet.

Very General Rules of Thumb:
- Cats should be spayed after 5 months of age
- Small/medium breed dogs should be spayed after 6 months of age
- Large breed dogs should be spayed at 12+ months of age

PUPPY/KITTEN LAB TESTS

Puppies

1. Fecal test during 1st or 2nd visits
2. Preoperative blood tests prior to spay/neuter
3. Heartworm test (blood test) after 7 months of age

Kittens

1. Fecal test during 1st or 2nd visits
2. FeLV/FIV blood test during 1st or 2nd visit
3. Preoperative blood tests prior to spay/neuter

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DENTAL CARE

Just like us, dental health is very important in dogs and cats. At-home care includes brushing their teeth, dental treats/chews, prescription diets, and water additives. Even with diligent at-home care, dogs and cats require professional dental cleanings by veterinarians to prevent severe periodontal disease. These professional cleanings are performed under general anesthesia and may require diseased teeth to be removed to stop infection.

- **More information on dental health**
- **Products that have undergone testing and have been shown to decrease plaque and tartar buildup**
- **How to brush your pet's teeth**

PET INSURANCE & BUDGETING

The below websites have more information on pet insurance. Unlike human medical insurance, most pet insurance plans provide coverage only for accident, illness, and emergency care. Some plans do cover wellness visits, routine dental cleanings, and vaccines. I strongly encourage you to do your research and compare monthly premiums, co-pays/deductibles, coverages, and exclusions. It's important to determine what type of coverage you anticipate will work best for you and your pet.

As an alternative to pet insurance, some owners elect to budget and routinely set aside money, so they have reserves for when their furry family member falls ill.

- **Pet Insurance Fact Sheet**
- **Pet Insurance – Learn the basics and compare quotes**

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