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Top Doggy Care Tips for Happy, Healthy Pets

Essential Doggie Care Items That Should Make Your Top Ten List

Just as people have certain basic items they need for life, so do dogs. Dogs need many things but making their top ten list includes dog food, a collar, a pet identification tag, bowls for eating, a dog kennel or crate, a dog house, a dog rug or bed, toys, chews and bones and number ten is treats. Let's take a closer look at the top ten list.

Healthy food is necessary for life and as a rule of thumb, whatever food your puppy started his life eating, allow him to continue to eat the same kind. If you decide to change it for some reason do it as gradually as possible. One hint would be to combine some of the old and new brands together to help his developing digestive system adjust accordingly. Keep in mind that the higher quality dog food you buy for your dog the healthier he should be.

A collar is a must in terms of walking your puppy, keeping him well supervised and also for identification purposes. The best type to get for puppies is an adjustable puppy collar because the collar increases on a gradual basis as your puppy grows in size. As far as grown dogs are concerned, a buckle collar is the best in terms of proper identification. It should be "tight enough not to slip over the dog's head, but loose enough to put a few fingers through." You don't want to choke your dog so aim for comfort but you don't want to lose him either.

A pet ID tag is one of the simplest ways to keep your dog safe and to ensure he or she is returned to you in the event that he gets lost. Make sure the ID tag includes the puppy or dog's name and your name, address and phone number. Most veterinarian hospitals and pet stores provide order forms for pet identification tags so they are not difficult to come by.

Another option that is pricier is to have your dog implanted with either a traceable ID microchip or have him or her tattooed. Your veterinarian can do this simple procedure. Then your dog will be entered into a national registry and in the event that he goes missing, he should be easy to track down.

All dogs should have two bowls, one that is used for water and the other for food. Fresh, clean water is a necessity for dogs at all times and non-slip bowls that have flat bottoms are the best for this purpose otherwise the puppy or dog might tip it over. Stainless steel bowls are the best choices as they are easier to clean and some adventurous puppies enjoy sinking their teeth into bowls made out of plastic material.

While not an absolute necessity, some dog owners like to keep their puppies in a kennel or indoor crate while they are away from home in order to help train them better and so they don't have to worry that the puppy will harm itself when left to its own devices. It is important that your puppy doesn't feel too cramped or confined in the crate or kennel and still is able to stand up, turn around and comfortably lie down.

It is not advisable to stick your dog out in the back yard all of the time by himself but occasionally is fine and many dogs enjoy being able to be outside in the fresh air. Backyard time calls for a decent sized doghouse. If you have a puppy keep in mind how big he will grow to be when designing or buying a doghouse. However don't make the doghouse too large or the dog may have a problem keeping warm during the winter months.

A dog's coat has oils on it that can stain your carpets and furniture. Buy your dog a comfy bed, rug or pad and lay it in a spot where he will use it. Encourage him to use it to nap on instead of your couch or favorite chair.

Toys are great fun for dogs and can make excellent playmates when you are not around. Dogs enjoy squeaky toys, tug toys, and hard rubber toys such as rubber balls that they can fetch. Be careful when buying toys for your dog that there is nothing that they can rip or bit off that can come off in their mouth and end up being swallowed. In the worst case scenario the dog could require surgery or his stomach needing to be pumped. There are instances where swallowing a piece off of a dog toy has proved fatal for dogs.

Chews are a must for your puppy as he is cutting new teeth and wants to bite down on something. If you don't provide chew toys your puppy is likely to start chewing on your furniture! The safest for puppies are hard rubber toys. Adult dogs are likely to enjoy chewing on a bone and some make a game out of it by burying them in the backyard to dig up at a later date.

Treats and goodies are ways to reward your puppy or dog for good behavior. Most dogs come to associate a treat with this purpose. Buy the most nourishing kind of treats you can but don't make "treating" too much of a habit or your puppy or dog could end up with unwanted extra pounds on his or her body.

Dippy Dog: Choosing the Best Times to Flea Dip Your Mutt

Nobody likes fleas. Fleas are pests. They spread disease and make everyone in your household uncomfortable. Here are some tips to help you choose the best times for dipping your dog.

First, you will want to verify that your dog actually has fleas. Every itchy pet does not mean fleas. Dry skin, rashes, and other skin irritations can also cause your dog to scratch. To inspect for fleas you will need to visually inspect your dog. With a flea comb, gently comb through a section of your dog's hair starting at the root. In the shed hair that comes away, you might see live fleas or a black, dirt looking substance. The black stuff, known as flea dirt, is actually flea droppings.

To distinguish between flea dirt and regular, garden-variety dirt, put some on a white paper towel. Moisten with a few drops of water. Flea dirt turns reddish-brown while no change will be observed in regular dirt. If you do not see flea dirt or fleas, and your dog still seems to be itchy, visit a vet prior to dipping. Your dog may have an underlying problem that needs to be addressed.

Next, consider your dog. Always read product labels carefully for warnings. Commercial flea dips should not be used on very young or invalid animals. Some people believe that if you have cats in the household you should not use dips for the dog, especially if the two animals spend a lot of time together. The chemical used in a lot of the dips marketed for dogs only is highly toxic to cats. In such cases, you might want to consider using a less harsh herbal flea dip or an alternative flea preventative.

Another thing to consider is how your pet is picking up the fleas in the first place. If this was from a one-time visit to the kennel and your dog has never had fleas in his life, then a one-time dip may be the solution for you. On the opposite side of things, if he constantly has fleas and appears to be picking them up somewhere in your own back yard then you will also want to consider some sort of preventative.

Dips will kill all of the fleas that are on your pet within 48 hours or so, but remain effective limitedly after that (anywhere from 10 to 30 days, depending on the product). During this time, you will also want to follow standard procedures for removing fleas from your home to prevent re-infection.

To prevent getting fleas again, you will want to take a few steps towards getting rid of them permanently. This means not only treating your pet, but treating your house as well. Flea eggs can fall off your dog and live in carpet, bedding, draperies, etc. As soon as a suitable host walks by, the fleas hatch, and jump right on.

To get rid of fleas in your home, pay particular attention to the areas that your pet frequents. Wash all bedding and draperies. For items that cannot be washed, vacuum the areas and immediately take the vacuum bag outside to prevent the fleas from jumping out again. In severe cases, you may want to consider having your home sprayed.

Sprays, however, can be toxic for both people and pets, so you will have to make arrangements to be away from home during that time. Make sure animals that cannot leave (such as aquariums) and food items are covered. Make sure that your home has completely aired out and chemicals have dispersed before you and your pet return.

After you have ensured that all of the fleas in your home are gone, you will want to start a regime of prevention. This could include a regular cycle of dips, approximately once a month or so, used alone or combined with another flea treatment, such as Frontline or Advantage, which are also applied once a month. All pets in your home need to be treated to prevent fleas from hopping from one host to another. Take care in combining flea treatments to prevent overdosing. Always wait a minimum of 48 hours after a dip before applying an additional topical treatment.

With a little work, both you and your pet can enjoy a flea-free lifestyle.

Banish That Scratching: Helping Those Fleas Flee From Your Dog

They are small, disease carrying, and hard to kill. What are they? Fleas! These little pests can make both you and your dog completely miserable. Here are some ways to help prevent them.

First, start out with a clean slate. If you already have fleas, you are going to want to make sure that they are completely gone. For minor infestations, wash all linens and bedding, including things like curtains and sofa covers. Pay special attention to the areas that your pet frequents. Vacuum all carpeted areas, immediately removing the bag and taking it out of the house.

Fleas can live quite happily inside the vacuum bag, so if it is not removed they will simply hop back out again and re-infest your home. In severe cases, you may want to leave your home for a few days, taking your dog with you, and have a professional exterminator come in and spray.

Always check yourself. Though humans are not the blood meal of choice for fleas, they can be carriers. Watch for small, itchy bites, especially below the knees. When going outside, avoid areas of thick brush or tall grass, and wear clothing that is tight around the ankles and wrists. You should shower immediately after being in flea-prone areas. If you are around other animals that have fleas, change clothes before entering your own home in the chance that there were any hitchhikers.

Next, check your pet. You might see the fleas themselves as small moving black bugs. Or you might only see a black dirty substance on your pet's hair. If you comb out a little of the "dirt" and place it on a white paper towel and moisten it, it will turn red. This is flea droppings, also known as flea dirt and is a sign of fleas. If your pet has fleas, check with your veterinarian about the best treatment. They may recommend a topical medication or a flea bath or dip.

There are several options for flea control. You can choose flea shampoos, which contain a minor toxin that kills fleas when you bathe your dog. These are used like a regular shampoo – just wet, lather, and rinse. You can choose flea dips, where a concentrated toxin is poured on the pet's coat and let to sit, and then rinse off. Dips offer some extended protection against new fleas.

You can choose a topical application such as Frontline or Advantage, where a small amount of liquid is poured onto the animal's skin. These last for about a month or so, and some formulations even offer protection after swimming or bathing. Or you can even get a product like Program that is offered in a small, chewable treat. Program sterilizes adult fleas to keep them from reproducing, thus controlling the invasion.

If you have fleas, you will also want to watch out for additional health problems. Some dogs are actually allergic to fleabites, and even one can set them off scratching and chewing at themselves. This can lead to skin infections and hair loss. Watch for excessive chewing and redness of the skin. Another common side effect of fleas is tapeworms.

Tapeworms are more difficult to detect on a stool sample diagnosis than some of the other intestinal parasites. However, they can sometimes be detected on the stool itself or on your

pet. Seeing small, rice-like segments in your pet's coat, on the stool, or on places where your pet frequents could indicate a problem and should be brought to the attention of your vet.

You will want to prevent future infestations of fleas to your home and pets. Make sure that all of the animals in your home are on a flea preventative. Even indoor only pets are at risk – pets that go outdoors can bring fleas in, you could bring them in on your clothes, or they can even come in through open windows. Check pets for fleas regularly, and you might consider spraying areas of the yard that your pet frequents with a pesticide. Be aware of flea-prone areas of your yard such as densely vegetated areas or piles of brush. Keep the yard clear and the grass short.

Fleas are a horrible nuisance and full of disease, but with a little prevention both you and your pet will be more comfortable in the knowledge that you are flea free!

Shedding Light on a Hairy Situation: How to Tame That Falling Doggie Fur

Your dog loves to lounge on your dark brown sofa and being the loving dog parent you are, you allow him to do so. Yet whenever he jumps down, he leaves ample fur behind, and prior to sitting in that chair yourself, you will need to “shave” it, or risk wearing your canine's hair yourself.

Similarly, when you look down at your rugs and carpets you see a trail of hair your canine companion left behind. Visitors to your home are somewhat reluctant to sit on the sofa, and at times you look a bit furry yourself when you arrive to work. Face it, your dog is shedding and you will need to deal with it. Yet you often wonder if there is anything you can do to tame that falling doggie fur?

While it is not possible to completely stop your dog's shedding, there are actually a number of things that can be done:

Be sure to brush your dog daily. This will allow you to eliminate a lot of the falling fur before it hits the sofa or the carpet. A well-kept secret is the lint-roller – not on the sofa but on the dog! There are some dog lovers out there who in addition to brushing their dogs sometimes also use a lint roller. It does not hurt the pet, but instead allows some of the hair to be picked off in between brushings.

If you are in the midst of a season change, such as from winter to spring, then odds are that your canine companion is losing his winter coat. There is nothing you can do from stopping this process, yet there are a number of grooming tools available that will permit you to strip the winter fur yourself before it finds its way onto your sofa.

Discuss your predicament with your veterinarian or groomer and see if she or he cannot recommend a tool that will help you. Before using an unfamiliar grooming tool for the first time, be sure to read all of the instructions, or even better, ask your groomer or vet to demonstrate the proper use.

Set up a grooming appointment. Proper grooming will get rid of a lot of the dead hair that is being shed in between seasons, and will also ensure that your dog's skin remains healthy. Your groomer will also be able to recommend some things to try at home to keep the flying doggie hair under control until it is time for the next grooming appointment.

Of course, there will be times when shedding may actually be an indicator of a health problem.

If the shedding is accompanied by the advent of bald patches in your dog's fur, it is time to visit the veterinarian. You want to rule out any illness, such as mange, or other problems that cause patterned hair loss. Hair loss is a very important indicator in failing or declining health, and if caught early, many health problems may be fixed before they become more serious.

Sometimes malnutrition will be indicated by a loss of fur. Discuss your dog's nutrition with your vet, or, if you have just gotten the dog, have him checked for nutritional deficiencies. At such a vet appointment it is extremely helpful if you bring a sample of the food you are giving to your dog, preferably in its original packaging to permit the veterinarian to take a look at the list of ingredients in case she or he feels the need to change the dog's diet.

Sometimes a vitamin deficiency will also contribute to irritated skin which may result in shedding. There are a number of over the counter remedies available, but it is advisable to discuss any such supplementation with your vet first. Self-medicating your dog should only be done if you are absolutely certain of what you are doing.

As you can see, a shedding dog is something you will need to live with, but the amount of shedding can be controlled with a few simple steps and a bit of easy know-how. So go ahead and embrace the changing seasons, and make sure you know where your doggie brush is!

Puppy Power: The Best Diet for the Furry Little Guy in Your Family

Charles Schulz once said "happiness is a warm puppy" and who could possibly argue that point? Puppies are cute, playful, and full of energy. They seem to go non-stop until they finally plop down and sleep. Another favorite activity of a puppy is eating. They can eat enormous amounts of food, and it is important that what is going into their stomachs will actually help them grow strong and healthy rather than sick. For this reason, there are several things to consider before buying puppy chow:

How big will your dog be, once he or she is fully grown? A large dog, such as one who will weigh more than 50 pounds, will have different dietary needs, even as puppies, than your average Yorkshire terrier who may not even crack the ten pound barrier.

Does your puppy come from a litter of dogs that perhaps was not as healthy as it should have been? In other words, does he or she need some extra vitamins to make up for some unhealthy conditions early on in life?

Do you know of any food allergies your puppy has?

As you can see, keeping your puppy happy and healthy while its tummy is full is not as easy as it sounds. Add to that the sheer volume of commercially available dog foods in your grocery store and the pet supply shop, and you will be sure to have to do some serious reading. Fortunately there are some tips that will help you in keeping your dog happy while feeding her or him the very best diet:

Have your puppy checked out by the veterinarian to make sure that she or he does not have a condition that needs to be addressed in the diet.

Stay away from cheap dog food – you do get what you pay for.

Purchase your dog food in small batches rather than the industrial sized bag, unless you can store it air tight. If you do not, the food will go stale, and the oils in it may even begin to go rancid.

Consider your puppy's size such as she or he is now. Manufacturers will make their food in regular kibble size and sometimes also mini chunk kibble size. If you have a small puppy, then the smaller kibble is probably a better idea than the regular sized one that may be easy to eat for a Great Dane puppy but a bit too large for a Chihuahua puppy.

When purchasing commercial dog food, look on the back of the package. The first few ingredients are the key ingredients and you should be able to read and understand what it says. If it sounds like an excerpt from your high school chemistry book, you might want to move on to the next brand. Similarly, if everything in your puppy's food seems to be a by-product of one kind or another, it might also be a good idea to move on to the next brand.

If you have a large breed dog, such as one that will weigh in over 50 pounds when he or she is grown, it is a good idea to contact your veterinarian or breeder for a recommendation. Commercial dog foods will fatten her or him up nicely, but the danger lies in over-supplying your large breed puppy with calories, and so the weight gain will be too rapid for the developing skeleton and internal organs.

Once you have chosen a dog food, be certain to follow the recommended feeding guide. Yes, it is easy to be goaded by those big pleading puppy eyes into feeding an extra portion, but be sure to resist that urge for the sake of your growing dog's health. You don't want her or him to become overweight early on in life and then spend years undoing the damage done in puppy hood.

Do not feed table scraps! Whatever you do, do not give in to the temptation of feeding your puppy table scraps. Innocent food items, such as Macadamia nuts, onions, chocolate and even grapes and raisins are toxic to your little canine companion!

Feeding the best possible diet to the furry little guy in your household is a joyful occasion, and there is nothing as cute as watching a little puppy eagerly consume every morsel of food put before her or him. Enjoy your warm little puppy!

Superior Seniors: What the Mature Dog Needs in His Diet to Stay Healthy

There is no hard and fast rule when a dog becomes a senior, but you will know it when you get there. She or he will get up slower, sleep deeper, tire more easily, and enjoy sitting with you more than running with you.

As your dog ages, it is important to adjust your routines to suit the new stage of life the dog has entered; thus, do not insist that she or he continue to run alongside you on your daily marathon runs in the morning. If your dog still enjoys this, let her or him, if you can tell that she or he is running out of steam sooner than usual, it is time to rest or maybe go back.

Another thing to consider with an aging dog is diet. Obviously, no matter what the age of your canine companion is, nutrition is important and will ensure a long and healthy life, yet dietary needs change as a dog matures. Just like you would not feed puppy food to a mature four or five year old dog, so you also would not feed regular dog food to a nine or ten year old canine senior.

Here are some dietary needs to keep in mind when feeding your senior dog:

An aging dog will require extra moisture to keep her or his skin supple and the fur shiny and healthy. Because of the aging process, these dogs become more susceptible to mite infections and also get bothered a lot more by fleabites. In addition to the foregoing, the dry air, environmental pollutants, and other irritants now tend to affect her or him a lot more. You may wish to supplement your dog's diet with some sunflower or flax seed oils to keep skin and coat healthy and shiny.

As your dog ages, so will its digestive system. An antibiotics treatment, such as is often needed when dealing with open wounds, may leave it in a bit of turmoil since the antibiotics also take out the beneficial bacteria in the stomach. Yogurt supplements in small doses will curtail this condition.

Considering that your dog's metabolism is slowing down, you may have to decrease the amounts of treats you feed. It is important to not let your aging dog become obese, since this will bring a whole host of health problems in its wake.

This may also be a good time to discuss a vitamin supplement with your dog's veterinarian.

If your dog suffers from arthritis, it may be advisable to look for a dog food that is low in sodium as salt aggravates that condition.

If your dog appears to gain too much weight, you may wish to switch her or his food to one that is lower in fat. Do not look for one that is lower in protein, as this may cause muscle loss and not the fat loss you are hoping for. Similarly, do not fall for the ads that want you to purchase high fiber foods since a dog's digestive tract is not set up for a large fiber intake.

Do not assume that an increase in age warrants a decrease in calcium and phosphorus. It has been thought that these substances contribute to kidney disease in aging dogs, but instead it

appears that decreasing these levels will not keep bones and joints as healthy. Do not feed a diet reduced in these substances unless specifically advised by your veterinarian to do so.

As your dog ages, keep an eye on his dental health. If he suddenly stops eating and medical reasons have been ruled out, then it is quite possible that the hard kibbles are hurting his palate and gums, and you may wish to moisten them to make them easier to eat.

It is evident that a dog's nutritional needs are changing with age. Yet it is not always easy to predict into which direction your dog's needs go, and therefore it is imperative that you keep a close eye on that mature canine senior in your household to make sure he gets everything he needs to remain healthy and active.

Stinky Breath: Helpful Hints to a Better Smelling Mutt

If your pet has bad breath, it could be a sign of some serious dental problems. Although using the term "dog breath" to describe undesirable breath is commonly tossed around, the fact is that dogs should not have foul breath. If your dog does, there are steps you can take to help make its breath fresher and to keep it healthy.

Periodontal Disease

One major cause of bad breath in a dog is periodontal disease, or gingivitis. In a healthy dog, the gums are a coral pink color and the breath, while not necessarily pleasant, is not foul. When a dog is in the early stages of gingivitis, however, it will have brownish deposits on the back of its teeth. It might also have a thin red line running along its gums and foul breath. These symptoms are fairly common in a two or three year old dog whose mouth has not been properly cared for.

Moderate periodontal disease is the result of neglecting the pet's mouth for several years. Those pets that eat soft food are also more prone to developing moderate periodontal disease. When your dog reaches this stage, its root attachment has started to deteriorate. In addition, part of the bone structure providing the tooth with support is gone. These factors make it difficult for your pet to chew, and lack of chewing actually worsens the problem.

There are steps a veterinarian can take to help correct the mouth of a pet that has reached this stage. First, he or she can provide your dog's mouth with a thorough cleaning, particularly the affected teeth. Then, the vet can apply a special antibiotic gel under the gums in the area where the bacteria has settled.

This gel then solidifies and gradually dissolves over a two week period in order to slowly release the antibiotics into the pet's gums. This helps kill the bacteria and encourages the dog's gums to reattach themselves to the teeth. It may take several treatments, but your pet's mouth can eventually return to normal.

If you don't get help for your pet at this stage and you continue to neglect its mouth, it will reach the advanced periodontal disease stage. At this point, there is little hope of getting your

pet's mouth back to normal. Advanced periodontal disease is also very painful for your pet and its teeth become loose and ultimately fall out. If they do not fall out on their own, they may need to be removed in order to prevent further damage. In addition, your pet's breath will be quite offensive at this point.

Caring for Your Dog's Mouth

There are a number of things you can do for your dog's mouth to keep it healthy and to prevent it from becoming stinky. First of all, you can encourage your dog to chew. Rawhide chews, dog biscuits, bones, and chew toys can all be great for encouraging chewing. Chewing is not only fun for your pet, but it also helps scrape the teeth clean.

Rawhide chews and dog biscuits, however, can be a bit fattening. Therefore, you might want to avoid these chew treats, particularly if your dog is already struggling with its weight. In addition, any dog biscuits you give to your dog should be large. Small ones can be swallowed up quickly and require very little chewing, so they don't do your dog's mouth much good.

Bones can also be a risk because cooked bones or bones fed to older dogs can cause constipation. Some bones can also splinter or be easily swallowed whole, which can cause harm to the intestine. Overly dry bones can cause fracturing of the teeth and spoiled bones can lead to food poisoning. Therefore, it is important to select your bones carefully.

Chew toys are often the best choice for encouraging chewing. These toys are made to endure being chewed by your dog without causing it harm. In addition, some are made especially for use with doggie dental toothpaste. You can put some of the toothpaste, which is meat flavored, on the chew toy and watch your canine friend brush its own teeth.

Of course, you can, and should, also set aside a time each day to brush your dog's teeth. It is best to start this process when your pet is still young so it will get used to the routine. You should also introduce tooth brushing gradually so your pet has time to adjust. Be sure to follow it up with plenty of praise and affection and, before you know, your dog will look forward to having its teeth brushed every day.

Winterize Your Mutt and Keep Him a Healthy Hot Dog

When the outside temperatures drop, we like to stay indoors and drink some hot chocolate or tea. Similarly, we bundle ourselves into our nice, warm coats, put on our warmest shoes, and may even add some earmuffs before heading outside.

Our canine companions may be in need of such a treatment, but there are different things we need to observe before taking out furry friend out in winter weather. Here are tips to help you to winterize your mutt and keep him a healthy hot dog:

If your dog spends a lot of time outdoors, it is important to bring him inside more often. Keep in mind the wind-chill factor, which makes the weather actually feel colder than it reads on your

thermometer. Even if your dog has a doghouse outside, do bring him in for the night. Frostbite is a very real danger to your dog's extremities, such as the legs, ears, and even the tail.

Do not assume that you can forego giving your dog water in the winter since there is snow all over the ground. Snow is not a substitute for a readily available supply of fresh water.

If you keep your dog in a tiled area of the house, such as a bathroom or a kitchen, make sure you leave some bedding, such as blankets, pillows, or towels. Tiled floors can become extremely cold in winter, and if there is nothing between your dog and the floor, so will he.

You will need to keep your dog safe from drafts.

If your dog is of a long-haired breed, it is a good idea to clip the hair around the paws to make sure that clumps of ice and snow do not accumulate and thus make it uncomfortable for him to walk. On the other hand, if your dog is of a breed known for its short to medium hair length, this may be a good time to unpack the doggie sweaters to make sure he can enjoy your walks as much as you can!

If you live in an area where salt is used to de-ice streets and sidewalks, you will want to make extra certain that your dog's paws are clean when you get back home. You may even wish to go so far as to spread a very small amount of petroleum jelly on his paw pads to ensure that the salt is not leading to painful cracks in the skin that may become infected.

When you come inside after playing in the snow, be sure to blow-dry your dog so that he will not have the coldness of water next to his skin for extended periods of time.

Yet there are other things to consider when winterizing your dog, and this involves winterizing your home as well. For example, while you may stock up on antifreeze to keep your car from freezing up, or while you may have a sack of de-icer for your driveway, you do not want to have these items accessible to your canine companion.

Dogs simply love the smell and taste of antifreeze, yet it is a deadly poison to them that has already cost many a dog's life. Make sure that your car is not leaking antifreeze, and when you replenish the antifreeze in your car's engine, be certain to clean up any spills, no matter how small they might be.

With the cold winter weather also come the festive winter holidays. Quite often these bring with themselves a whole host of items potentially dangerous to your four-legged companion, and winterizing your mutt may also mean keeping these problem items out of reach.

Two things that come to mind immediately are tinsel, such as it is used to decorate Christmas trees, and poinsettia plants that sometimes line our entry way or decorate our festive living rooms. These items may cause severe illness in dogs if ingested, and it is best to forego the tinsel altogether while leaving the poinsettias on high shelves where the dog will not be able to reach it.

So go ahead and enjoy the winter with your mutt! With a little bit of preparation and some simple safety precautions, you should have a great time together!

A Typical Vaccination Schedule for Dogs

Vaccinating your dog is not a particularly difficult task. It can be accomplished quite simply at the veterinarian's office. In addition, you can administer most vaccines yourself. This can save a great deal of money in the long run, as well as time.

Understanding Vaccinations

If you choose to administer the vaccines yourself, it is helpful to understand the difference between subcutaneous and intramuscular vaccines. Subcutaneous vaccines, called SQ for short, are administered underneath the dog's skin. Generally, they are injected in either the dog's right or left shoulder. Intramuscular vaccines, or IM, are administered in the muscle. No matter which type of vaccine being administered, it is important to use only one needle for each vaccine.

Vaccines are also either modified live or killed. A vaccine that is modified live will provide your pet with a stronger and longer lasting vaccination with more rapid protection. Killed vaccines, on the other hand, have a lower immune response and will need a booster vaccination in order to continue the protection.

Prepping Your Dog for Vaccinations

Before your dog can be vaccinated, it must be free of external and internal parasites. In addition, it must be of normal temperature, which is around 101.5 to 102 degrees Fahrenheit for most dogs. It should also be free of fleas, worms, and ticks and it is best to avoid vaccinating dogs that are pregnant. No matter the size or weight of your dog, all dogs receive the same dose of vaccinations.

Types of Vaccinations

For the most part, dogs should receive the following vaccinations: Distemper, Leptospirosis, Hepatitis, Parainfluenza, Parvo virus, Corona virus, kennel cough, and rabies.

Canine distemper is one of the most serious viral infections affecting dogs. Nearly 50% of those that are not vaccinated or otherwise immunized become infected with canine distemper. Sadly, approximately 90% of dogs with canine distemper ultimately die from the disease, which is airborne and highly contagious. Canine distemper is most frequently found in puppies under three months old.

Signs of canine distemper include diarrhea, vomiting, and dehydration. As it progresses, the dog may also develop a fever and appear to suffer from depression. Vomiting and diarrhea continue and blood may be present in the stool. In addition, the dog will show signs of respiratory distress, such as labored breathing and coughing. It may also experience inflammation of the tissues around the nose and eyes.

Kennel cough, which is technically called Bordetella Bronchiseptica and commonly referred to as Canine Upper Respiratory Disease Complex, is a serious bacterial illness. Symptoms include a dry, harsh cough. In addition, dogs suffering from kennel cough are aggravated by excitement

or activity. Gagging or retching as the dog attempts to clear mucus from the throat also follows the characteristic cough. The dog's body temperature may also rise. This disease, which is highly common, is most often passed on from dog to dog at kennels and dog shows.

Enlarged tonsils and fever characterize infectious canine hepatitis. Modified live canine hepatitis vaccines have some side effects, so it is generally best to use the killed vaccination. Viral hepatitis is not as common among dogs as it once was, but it is still important to protect your pet against it.

Canine Parainfluenza (CPI) is a very contagious respiratory disease. Coughing, which is worsened by activity and excitement, is the main sign of parainfluenza. Colds, drafts, and high humidity can aggravate the symptoms and make an animal more prone to catching the disease. Usually, CPI runs its course in five to ten days, but secondary bacterial infections can form as a result of the CPI and cause additional complications

Canine Coronavirus results in anorexia, lethargy, and depression. Sometimes, vomiting may occur and may be bloody. Moderate to severe projectile diarrhea can also occur, with yellow-orange coloring and mucus and blood present in the stool.

Vaccination Schedule

When your dog is six to eight weeks old, it should receive its first DHLPPC vaccination, which includes Distemper, Leptospirosis, Hepatitis, Parainfluenza, Parvo virus, and Corona virus. At ten to twelve weeks, it should receive its second DHLPPC vaccination, as well as a vaccination against kennel cough.

By fourteen to sixteen weeks, your dog should receive its third DHLPPC shot, as well as a rabies vaccination. In most states, you will need to have a veterinarian administer the rabies shot in order to prove it was given to your pet. Every year after receiving its initial shots, your dog should receive a DHLPPC booster, a kennel cough booster, and a rabies booster.

Bordetella Shots: What's the Story on This Particular Dog Vaccination?

Your vacation plans are all set and you have tickets to that once in a lifetime trip to Paris, France. Your luggage is packed, and your passport is up to date. The only fly in the ointment is the fact your loyal canine companion will not be able to make this trip with you. He will need to remain behind, yet you do not want him to spend a whole week all by himself at home.

After all, dogs are pack animals and loneliness can cause some serious depression in a dog. Yet none of your friends or family members is willing or able to take in your fluffy friend, and so you are contacting the local kennels to ask about having your dog boarded in your absence. No matter whom you speak to, everyone always asks if your canine friend's Bordetella vaccine is up to date, and you are beginning to wonder just what it is that they are asking you.

Bordetella is often referred to as kennel cough since it is a respiratory disease. A bacterial infection, it may occur when dogs are kept in close contact with other dogs, such as a boarding kennel, during a dog show, or even at the groomer's. A vaccination usually conveys the immunity needed to help your canine meet and greet other dogs without picking up bacteria.

You know that your pooch has picked up a case of kennel cough if you suddenly hear him cough repeatedly. The inflammation of the windpipe as well as the air passages will result in frequent coughing spells, some of which will be followed up by vomiting. Dog lovers are quick to point out usually a case of kennel cough is relatively harmless and actually goes away on its own within a couple of weeks. Yet this should not lure you into a lax habit when it comes to vaccinating your canine friend!

As a matter of fact, some dogs do develop serious complications that may actually result in life-threatening conditions. In addition to the foregoing, if you fail to vaccinate your dog, and even if she or he comes through a bout of kennel cough with no problem, he will still be a carrier and infection other dogs that may not be so lucky. Here the old adage that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" most certainly does apply!

Fortunately, an intranasal vaccination will protect your dog against Bordetella. The vaccine is also available as an injection, and some vets do prefer to give it via the needle. If you anticipate exposure to other dogs, perhaps you are planning to enter your dog at the local dog show or you may need to board her or him briefly while you are away, it is a good idea to give your dog a booster vaccination at least one week ahead of time. Otherwise, you can simply include this vaccination during your regular annual vet visit.

Of course, other than preventing your dog from catching this very contagious disease, there is another good reason why this particular dog vaccination is a good idea: you and your veterinarian will be able to exclude Bordetella infection from the list of culprits if your canine companion suddenly suffers from an inexplicable cough. Keeping in mind that coughing may be a sign of allergies, bronchitis, and even throat irritation after prolonged time periods of barking, it will help your vet to determine which route to take when treating your pooch.

As you can see, pet owners, or pet parents as some like to be called, have the important responsibility of ensuring their dog's continued health, and a simple vaccination goes a long way in stacking the deck in her or his favor. Much like human influenza, however, it is important to note that a Bordetella vaccination does not guarantee your dog's immunity from the bacteria. As a matter of fact, if your dog becomes exposed to it too soon after vaccination, odds are that immunity has not yet built up.

Similarly, if your dog has already been exposed to the bacteria, then a vaccination will be too little too late. It is important at that point to find out where the dog has become infected and the facility that they may have an outbreak on their hands. At the same time, alert your veterinarian to the exposure and have your dog treated.

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