

Caring for...

Dogs & Puppies





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IS A DOG THE RIGHT ANIMAL FOR YOU?

Just answer yes or no to the following questions and find out...

- *Can you afford anything between £6 – £10 a week (or possibly more) on dog food?*
- *Can you be with your dog for most of the time every day?*
- *Can you take your dog for regular walks?*
- *Can you provide an escape-proof garden where your dog can play?*
- *Can you afford the cost of vaccinations and other veterinary bills? Vaccinations for distemper, canine hepatitis, leptospirosis, canine parvovirus and kennel cough will cost you about £400 during your dog's life.*
- *Can you afford the cost of neutering your pet? – in the region of £80 – £100.*
- *Can you afford to board your dog if you cannot take it on holiday with you?*

If you can answer a definite YES to all these questions then a dog could be the right animal for you. Read on.

If you can't honestly say yes to these questions but still want a dog, think about this: every year the USPCA rehomes 1,000's of dogs who have been abandoned or badly treated by owners who didn't think carefully before taking their pet on.

THE RIGHT CHOICE

Puppy or dog?

Puppies look cute and cuddly, but they may not be the best choice for all dog owners-to-be: they need house training, can be very destructive and are really not ideal for families which have elderly people or very young children about. Puppies may make an elderly person trip or fall or could be handled roughly or trodden on by a young child. An adult dog is probably the best choice for people in these situations.

Male or female?

The sex of your dog is up to you but always keep neutering in mind when choosing your new pet. Neutering reduces the large number of unwanted puppies which come into the world and have to be destroyed and also makes your dog far easier to live with.

Neutering is best

Unneutered males may try to mate females (called bitches) they meet, wander off in search of them and spray urine to mark their territory. An unneutered bitch will be in season for about three weeks every six months, so don't be surprised if she is trailed by local dogs at this time. Sexual frustration can result in bitches getting over-excited and dogs becoming aggressive. Neutering bitches also has positive health advantages – especially in later life.

Neutering is a simple operation carried out under a general anaesthetic. Bitches are 'spayed' – this involves removing the womb and the ovaries. In a male dog the testicles are removed – this is called castration. A veterinary surgeon should always be consulted regarding the best age to neuter an animal according to individual circumstances.



FINDING A DOG OR PUPPY

Look for...

1. A nicely rounded animal.

Puppies must be at least eight weeks old before they leave their mother. Avoid skinny dogs or puppies. Also avoid puppies with pot bellies as they are quite likely to have intestinal worms.

2. Bright clear eyes.

Never be tempted to take puppies with runny eyes, runny noses or a cough.

3. A dry, clean tail.

Make sure the anal region is clean without any signs of diarrhoea or soreness.

4. A healthy coat.

Do a quick check for fleas and other parasites – many puppies have them. A few can be dealt with quite easily. See page 7 to find out how. Also watch out for sores, lumps and bald patches.

5. Strong teeth.

Teeth should be clean and white. Gums should be pink and not smelly.

6. Clean ears

Brown or yellow deposits in the ears are one sign of ear mites. As with fleas they can be treated – your veterinary surgeon will advise.

The USPCA will gladly provide general advice. Your local veterinary surgeon or friends may also be able to help. If you are buying a puppy, to get a good idea of its health and temperament,

it is essential that you see it with its mother and the rest of the litter. If you are rehoming a puppy from an animal rescue centre this may not be possible but ask the staff for any background information they may have.

The USPCA recommends that you don't leave your dog along for more than four hours – dogs need companionship to stop them getting bored and frustrated.

TOILET TRAINING

House training is the first lesson that every dog or puppy needs to learn. The best plan of action is take your pet outside regularly, especially after a meal and when it wakes up. As soon as your dog urinates or defecates outside, make a big fuss of it – immediate praise is essential. If it has an 'accident' then scold it gently without frightening it.

Remember, some puppies are far easier to toilet train than others. So be patient.

MAKING A GOOD HOME

Best bed

Dogs and puppies spend a lot of time sleeping and need a warm, dry comfortable place to snooze in. The ideal spot for a bed is in a quiet corner of a room well away from draughts.

Always look out for a bed which is easy to clean and which is big enough to allow the dog to go through its natural routine of turning around before sleeping. For puppies, remember that they will chew their beds



to bits given the chance. So choose a rigid plastic bed or, for a cheaper alternative, use a cardboard box with an opening cut into it. Bean bags also make very good beds for adult dogs. Bedding should be aired every day and washed or replaced once a week.

If your dog is to become a well-balanced pet it will need some time to itself each day.

Taking the lead

It's important to take the time to give your dog some basic obedience training. An untrained dog can be a danger to you, itself and to the public. Learning to sit, lie down, stay at heel or come when called – these and a few other simple commands will make life easier for you and your dog. The command 'leave' is also important in avoiding eating things it should not eat.

The basic principles of dog training are very simple. Give your dog brief and regular training sessions – rewards always work best. Remember that rewards and reprimands must be given immediately if they are to be successful. If you're new to dog owning, it's an excellent idea to join a dog training class.

FEEDING WELL

Regular feeding and a balanced diet are essential ingredients for a happy, healthy dog.

Dogs need lots of high quality protein, fat and carbohydrates. Protein comes from meat, fish, and occasionally cheese and eggs. Carbohydrate is found in cereal foods such as biscuits. Fat is in protein foods and milk.

Fresh food

Any meat and fish, which is fit for human consumption, can be fed raw. Any other

meat must be cooked. Back this up with biscuits which have added vitamins and minerals.

Drink up

Dogs and puppies need to have a bowl of fresh water at hand at all times. Make sure your dog gets regular water stops if you go on a long journey.

Prepared food

There is a wide range of products now available. Some of them are all-meat foods which require you to give extra biscuit or cereal. Others provide for all a dog's nutritional needs. If you choose a dried food, remember that it can make your dog very thirsty so make sure that plenty of fresh water is available. Whatever prepared food you choose, always read the manufacturer's instructions.

Dogs don't need a varied diet, so once you've found a balanced diet which suits them then stick to it. Changing diets can lead to upset stomachs.

Feed about the same time every day, but leave time for the dog to digest food before exercise. Most adult dogs are happy with one main meal a day. But small dogs, extra-large dogs and elderly dogs may prefer two meals a day.

Be careful

Vegetarian – If you want to put your dog on a non-meat diet, always get veterinary advice first. Otherwise your dog may miss out on essential proteins and vitamins.

Weight watch – Make sure that your dog maintains a good, healthy weight. If it starts gaining or losing weight rapidly, you must consult your veterinary surgeon immediately.



Bones – Give a dog a bone, but avoid cooked bones and small bones which may splinter.

Puppy feeding

Young puppies (between aged two and four months old) need their own special feeding regime. They need food which is easy to digest, such as minced meat, flaked fish, cereals such as cooked rice and porridge, and milk. But just like adult dogs, they still need fresh water always available.

At this age, a puppy needs about four meals a day. A good suggested schedule is:

8am	–	Cereal with milk
12 noon	–	Cereal with meat
4pm	–	Cereal with milk
8pm	–	Cereal with meat

When a puppy is between the ages of four and ten months old, the number of meals can be gradually reduced and the amount of food given increased. Stop providing one of the milk and cereal meals at four months, then drop the other at six months.

EXERCISE TIME

It is essential that dogs get enough exercise and you should take your dog for a walk at least once a day. How much exercise they need depends very much on the breed. For example, Labradors, collies or Alsatians will need loads of exercise throughout their lives, while the smallest breeds may be happy enough with the run of the garden combined with a daily walk. Of course, if your dog is to be allowed to roam in your garden. You need to make it escape-proof.

Lack of exercise can end up in a dog becoming both fat and bored. But remember that an elderly dog will want less exercise than when it was younger.

Puppies shouldn't mix with other dogs until their vaccination jabs have had time to work – that's around 14 week of age. But they should get plenty of chances to play in the garden.

A dog must get used to walking on a lead. In towns, a lead will protect your dog from traffic and keep it from places where young children play – dog faeces can be a health hazard.

In the countryside, no matter how placid the dog, use a lead when walking near livestock which can often be the targets of attack by dogs. But try to find a safe area where you can let your dog off the lead and let it have a good run-around.

Short-nosed and toy breeds may be more comfortable in a harness than in a collar and lead. Check chains – sometimes called choke chains – are used by some people to train big dogs. Take care – without careful use they really can choke. The 'Halti' head collar is a safe alternative for training purposes. A puppy shouldn't be trained with a collar and lead until it is about six months old.

ON THE MOVE

If you get your dog used to car travelling when it's young, it will probably end up enjoying its trips out. Make allowance for regular stops for water, exercise and toilet and keep the car well ventilated. Some dogs just don't travel well and end up feeling over-anxious or car sick. If this causes a problem, consult your veterinary surgeon for advice.



Hot dogs

In warm or sunny weather, NEVER leave a dog alone in a car. Even in the shade or with a window partly open, temperatures can soon soar. Each year, the USPCA deals with cases of dogs which have died after being literally cooked alive inside a car.

Holiday time

Most dog owners, at some time or other, will need to find a boarding kennel for their pets when they go on holiday. Think well ahead and book your pet into a kennel as soon as you know when you will be away. Check out the kennel yourself to make sure your pet will be comfortable, and leave your vet's details with the kennel. Ask yourself the following questions:

- *Is an up-to-date vaccination certificate requested?*
- *Is the kennel well staffed? Do the staff have a good attitude?*
- *Is the kennel clean and well maintained?*
- *Is the dogs' accommodation warm, roomy and clean?*
- *Are dogs given plenty of supervised exercise?*
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Be warned! There are strict quarantine laws which mean that any dog entering the UK has to be kept in quarantine kennels for six months before returning to its owner.

A pet travel scheme (PTS) exists that allows free passage of dogs between certain European countries. Details can be found on the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development website: www.dardni.gov.uk

HEALTH MATTERS

Grooming marvellous

All dogs benefit from a daily groom. It's not only a chance to remove dust and other debris but it's also a chance for an owner to do a check for lumps, bumps, parasites or skin problems. Check ears for ear mites and check pads and between toes for foreign bodies which may cause irritation.

If your dog is a long-haired breed then it needs to be groomed thoroughly every day, using a brush and comb. Otherwise it may end up with matted hair or skin irritation. Some breeds may need to have their coats clipped regularly – this should only be done by a skilled groomer.

It's fine to bath a dirty or smelly dog, but avoid doing this too often as it may make the coat rather dry. Bathing isn't recommended for puppies under the age of six months, unless essential.



FINDING A VET

Even the very best kept and healthiest animals need veterinary attention. Never let the thought of having to pay for veterinary treatment stop you from making sure a sick or injured animal has the best of care.

To find a vet ask your friends for recommendations or look in your local Yellow Pages which will have the addresses of all local veterinary practices.

If you really can't pay the full cost of veterinary treatment in one payment be honest with your vet as s/he may be able to suggest a way to help.

Insurance – the best policy

The USPCA recommends that you take out insurance for any accident or illness that could happen to your dog. Your vet will be able to provide information.

ACCIDENTAL PREGNANCY

The USPCA strongly recommends that both male and female dogs be neutered – see page 2 – to prevent unwanted puppies coming into the world. If you think your bitch may be pregnant and are uncertain about finding good homes for her puppies – a large animal may have a litter of 12 – seek advice from your veterinary surgeon. S/he will tell you if it's still alright to spay her.

If you decide that your bitch should go through with the pregnancy make sure that you treat her even more gently than usual – her abdomen is particularly sensitive at this time.

In the last four weeks of pregnancy – which

lasts a total of 55–66 days – she will want an extra diet of milk and meat as well as a mineral/vitamin supplement. Don't be surprised if she eats three times her normal diet.

In the last couple of weeks before whelping (giving birth), keep her away from other dogs. Encourage her to use her whelping bed which should be placed in a quiet part of the house.

Most bitches can give birth without any special help – puppies are born at intervals of several minutes to one hour. Call your veterinary surgeon immediately if a bitch strains for two hours without a pup appearing; has no contractions and if she seems to take little interest in trying to give birth.

Puppies should be checked by a veterinary surgeon after about three weeks. They should not leave the bitch before they are at least eight weeks old.

Vaccinate

Vaccinations are vital for dogs to protect them against infectious diseases such as distemper, canine hepatitis, leptospirosis, canine parvovirus, influenza and kennel cough. Puppies will initially need to be injected twice but bear in mind that regular boosters are needed for adult dogs at intervals of one or two years. If you go on holiday, any reputable boarding kennel will want to see proof of up-to-date vaccinations.



DISEASES AND COMPLAINTS

Parasites

Sooner or later, all dogs will suffer from parasites. If you see any warning signs, consult your veterinary surgeon immediately – it's kinder to your dog to get rid of the problem as soon as possible.

Fleas

Fleas cause dogs a lot of irritation and can also be a host for tapeworms. Treatments for your dog can be bought from your local veterinary surgeon – simply follow the manufacturer's instructions. You must also make sure that any flea eggs have been destroyed. Do this by burning or washing any other likely breeding areas with specialised flea treatments.

Worms

Your dog will need to be wormed regularly to protect it against the many types of worms which can cause harm. Some worms can also be harmful to humans and may even cause blindness in children. For this reason, faeces should always be cleared up if children are nearby. Children should also wash their hands after playing with dogs. Consult your vet.

Lice

Lice can cause a dog severe irritation and even anaemia. Check for tell-tale signs of white eggs in your dog's fur. Consult your vet.

Mange mites

There are two types of mange: demodectic and sarcoptic.

For symptoms of demodectic mange, look out for inflamed skin and bald patches. If you don't pick up on the symptoms early enough, your dog may become permanently bald.

Sarcoptic mange causes skin irritation and scabs. It is also contagious in both dogs and humans so early treatment by your vet is also essential.

Ticks

Ticks are blood suckers which feed off your dog for several days before dropping off. If you see a tick, only pull it off after cutting its air supply for 30 minutes with a dab of grease. Otherwise the head may still remain embedded in the skin and cause an abscess. Consult your vet.

Ear mange

Ear mange can cause permanent ear damage to your dog. You may notice your dog shaking its head a lot, losing its balance or holding its head in a different way. You may also see a discharge. Consult your vet.

Ringworm

In spite of the name, ringworm is not a worm but a fungal infection – look out for round, bare encrusted patches. Take care because humans can get it too. Consult your vet.



DOG IDENTIFICATION

Thousands of pets are lost every year – a tragedy which can happen to the most careful owner. Many of these animals are never re-united with their owners. The USPCA believes that the best way to avoid losing your pet is to have it implanted with a specially-developed microchip ‘tag’. This provides a permanent link between you and your pet.

The chip’s code is held on a national computer network which keeps a record of an owner’s name and address. The USPCA, as well as veterinary surgeons and local authority dog wardens, have scanners which can read the microchip’s code.

Microchipping is no more complicated than a normal injection. A tiny microchip – the size of a grain of rice – is painlessly inserted under your pet’s skin. The one-off cost can vary but its likely to be around £10 – £25. Contact your veterinary surgeon if you decide to have your dog microchipped.

DOGS AND THE LAW

It’s important for all owners to learn about all the laws which deal with dogs. A conviction for some offences can result in fines, imprisonment and the destruction of your dog.

1. It’s the law for a pet dog to wear a collar when in public with the owner’s name and address attached.
2. Local authorities may have their own bylaws which ban dogs or dog fouling from certain areas.
3. The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 imposed severe restrictions on ownership of specified types of dog which have been bred for fighting purposes. Regulations required compulsory neutering and microchipping for all such dogs which must be muzzled and kept on a lead in public. The law imposes a mandatory death penalty on the dog for breaches of this law.
4. Any owner can be prosecuted if a dog is considered to be dangerously out of control in a public place. An owner may be required to control the dog but a destruction order for the dog may also result.
5. The owner or person in charge of a dog which has been worrying livestock, can be prosecuted and made liable for damages; a destruction order may even be imposed.
6. The USPCA investigates many cases of suspected cruelty every year. The maximum punishment for anyone found guilty of causing unnecessary suffering to an animal is a £5,000 fine and/or six months’ imprisonment. Furthermore, conviction for a cruelty offence enables the court to disqualify the offender from owning a dog for a specified period. If you believe that an animal is being cruelly treated, call the USPCA’s Information Helpline on 028 9081 4242.
7. A driver must stop if s/he is involved in a road accident with a dog and must report it to the police. It’s a good idea to buy insurance cover in case of accident – the owner may be liable for damages if the dog is judged to have caused the accident.



A KIND END

Well cared for dogs can live to a good age – sometimes 18 years or more. But if a dog shows signs of a painful disability, has an incurable illness or severe injury, it should be gently put to sleep. This is a very difficult decision to make and you should always talk to your veterinary surgeon, but it is the kindest thing that an owner can do for a suffering animal.

Try not to blame yourself for your pet's death. If you gave it care and attention throughout its life and took it to your veterinary surgeon when it was ill, then you did all you could. Don't be afraid to show how upset you are in front of your veterinary surgeon – he or she will understand your feelings. And don't rush into getting another puppy or dog to replace the one you have lost until you really feel ready – give yourself time to grieve.

If you find a severely injured dog – a road accident victim for example – call a veterinary surgeon, or telephone the Society's Information Helpline on 028 9081 4242. No untrained person should ever put a dog to sleep and it is an offence to kill an animal by improper means.