

🐾 DOG CARE 🐾

Dogs can provide you with years of devoted companionship. They require a great deal of time and energy. We hope the following information will help you care for and enjoy your canine friend for many years.

VACCINATIONS

Dogs and puppies need 2 types of vaccinations:

- DHLPP Canine distemper is administered to young puppies, starting at about 6-8 weeks of age, in a series of 3 shots given about 4 weeks apart. Thereafter, this inoculation should be given annually to all adult dogs.
- RABIES is given to a puppy when it is 3 months of age. Another rabies booster should be administered a year later. After that, rabies shots are given every 3 years.

OTHER HEALTH MATTERS

- EARMITES are small parasites that can infest a dog's ears. A dog that scratches at its ears, has discharge from the ears, probably has earmites. See your vet for cleaning and treatment.
- TAPEWORM is transmitted to your dog if your dog ingests a flea. Signs are white segments (like white rice) in the stool, bedding or around the anus. See your vet for the necessary medication, over-the-counter drugs do not work.
- ROUNDWORM is common in puppies, as it's passed to them from their mother. See your vet for worming medication. Over-the-counter drugs do not work.
- HEARTWORMS are dangerous and deadly parasites and are passed to your dog via the bite of a mosquito which has previously bitten an infected dog. The heartworms lodge in your dog's heart or other internal organs and can eventually constrict the flow of blood, causing death. Ask your vet for more information on how to keep your dog safe from heartworms and other worm parasites.
- FLEAS are a problem about 9 months out of the year. Flea collars are generally not effective, as they do not kill the fleas at the rear of your dog, plus they concentrate a lot of poison in one small area against your dog's skin. There are many new extremely effective flea control products on the market. See your vet for more information.

DIET

Feed your dog a good quality kibble and that's all he will need. Puppies should be fed three times a day, at about six months of age they can be fed twice daily, and at about a year of age they may go to just one meal a day. Most of the dog foods available at pet supply stores will provide excellent, balanced nutrition. These foods taste good to your dog and won't require "dressing up" with expensive, messy canned foods.

SPAYING & NEUTERING

This is a health and safety concern for your dog. Unaltered dogs will escape your yard in order to breed, running the risk of being hit by a car or being attacked by another dog. Spaying and neutering can either eliminate or reduce the risk of several types of cancers which develop later in life. Spaying and neutering will ensure that your dog does not contribute to the serious pet overpopulation problem which animal shelters must confront daily. Puppies can be spayed or neutered as early as eight weeks.

GROOMING

Short haired dogs may only require a five minute brushing once a week. Long-haired breeds will require regular, often daily, grooming sessions. Brushing your dog gives him a healthy, shiny coat and gets rid of the dirt, dander, and dead hair. Bathe your dog when he's dirty or gets that "doggy" smell. Be sure to use a pet shampoo and rinse very well.

And don't forget your dog's toenails. Ask your veterinarian or a dog groomer to show you how to keep them trimmed.

Good dental hygiene is another element of grooming. Ask your vet about brushing your dog's teeth. This will help eliminate tartar buildup and reduce teeth and gum problems later in your dog's life. Many dogs will require annual dental scraping under anesthesia by your veterinarian.

LICENSING & OTHER ORDINANCES

Merced County requires that all dogs be licensed. If your dog is old enough to have a rabies shot, then he is old enough to be licensed. You will need to provide a rabies certificate in order to obtain the license. Discounts are given to senior citizens and to owners of dogs that have been spayed or neutered. You can be fined if your dog does not have a current license.

Dogs cannot run at large unattended in Merced County.

County and state-wide laws apply to dogs left in hot cars, and to dogs that are carried in open vehicles (pick-up truck beds, etc.) without the proper cross ties.

For your dog's sake, leave him home when the temperatures climb into the 80's and above, and travel with him inside your car or truck.

TRAINING & HOUSEBREAKING

Begin training your adult dog or puppy from the first day he comes home. Decide in advance what the "house rules" will be (no jumping on people, no sleeping on furniture, etc.) And then always stick to them. Consistency is the key to having a well-trained dog!

Dogs go through a "teenage stage" from about six months of age up until they are almost two years old. This is when they are most rambunctious, energetic and rebellious. Don't give up and stick your dog in the back yard for the rest of his life. Dogs are pack animals and don't do well without the company of other pets or people. Allow your dog to be part of your "pack" and with you in the house when you are home. Get your dog into training classes early on (as early as three months of age), give him regular vigorous exercise and play time, teach him tricks and give him "jobs" to do and you will have a much easier time coping with his teenage years.

Use a crate as your dog's inside dog house. A crate is your dog's "den" and is a safe place for him when you cannot be around to supervise him. Here he can sleep and hang out when you can't be around to keep him out of trouble. While he's in his crate he can't dig up the yard or chew the furniture. When you come home he'll be happy to see you and you'll be happy to see him, knowing that your house and yard will still be in good order.

Crating your dog is also an excellent way to house-break him. He doesn't like to soil the place where he sleeps and hangs out, so he will "hold it" until you let him out and immediately take him outside to relieve himself. Praise him highly when he does his business. If he makes a mistake in the house when you are not around to catch him in the act and whisk him outside, do not scold him or put his nose in it. Just calmly remove the mess and next time remember to keep him in his crate when you can't keep an eye on him. A young puppy can't "hold it" for long periods, so you will need to take him outside frequently so he won't have to use his crate as a bathroom.

Owning a dog can enrich your life with years of fun, unconditional love, and close companionship.