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## Checkpoints for a healthy pet

For determining whether your pet is healthy or not there are points you can check yourself. Of course, in case of any doubt **ALWAYS** consult your veterinarian.

### Appearance:

A healthy animal has a flexible body with a straight back, which is not bend up, bend down- or -side-wards. The tail moves in a flexible way, indicating the mood of the animal. However, unfortunately, in several dog breeds the tail is docked at as early as the puppy is only 2 to 4 days old. And some cats are born with only a tail stub. The paws are straight under the body with a flexible angulation. Walking, standing up and laying down is done with ease without any sign of stiffness or pain.

### Eyes:

Healthy eyes are moist and bright, without any inconsistent coloring of the cornea (the transparent covering of the eyeball). They should look alert into the world around it. No signs of any discharge or ulcers should be present, although some flat-nosed breeds tend to have a ‘natural’ continuous watery discharge. And there should be no signs of white skin (the third eyelid) in the corners of the eyes. Both pupils should be black and of the same size, with changing size according the amount of light that enters it.

### Ears:

Healthy ears are free of any unpleasant smell or discharge. Scratching should occur only occasionally. The ears are held erect (with the understanding that several dog breeds have dropped ears), alert to the noises around them, or indicating the mood of the animal.

### Nose:

Also a healthy nose is free from any discharge and is slightly damp and cool. However, a healthy dog or cat can also have a dry nose from time to time. Therefore, dry noses do not always indicate illness in the animal. Sneezing, coughing and a runny nose all can indicate disease.

### Teeth:

Healthy teeth are white, strong, smooth and with no signs of plaque or calculus (or tartar). The gum tissue around the teeth should be firm and pink, with the edges closely applied to the teeth. There should be no signs of intense redness or bleeding of any kind. In some animals the gums are pigmented with one or more dark patches or spots.

(The teeth of rabbits and guinea pigs keep on growing their entire lives. Normally they worn down while eating, keeping them on a sufficient length. However, when this does not happen for whatever reason, the teeth keep on growing resulting in problems for eating and/or infections in the mouth.)

### Condition:

A pet in good condition is neither too fat nor too skinny. The rib- and hip-bones should be covered with a sufficient layer of subcutaneous fat. Through light touch the bones as individual structures must be felt, but they should not be visible. When you can't feel the ribs at all your animal is too fat, with all the possible health hazards as a result.

### Skin:

A healthy skin is smooth, clean and elastic. The color may vary from pink to light brown, or it may be dark with patches of black. It should be free from redness, soreness, lesions, scales or parasites such as fleas, lice or ticks. And no sign of bald patches should be present, which could indicate the presence of skin diseases, such as mange or fungal infection, or a lack of proper nutrition.

### Coat:

A healthy coat is soft, shiny and vigorous-looking. No clumps, mats or bald patches should be present. A dull coat can indicate not only improper grooming but also a nutrition lack due to improper feeding.

### Stool:

Healthy animals have one to some movements a day, usually after they have eaten. The feces are firm, though not too hard, and the color should be brown. Feces of a healthy dog do not smell too much, which you can not always say of the normal feces of a healthy cat.

### Urine:

The male animals usually urine several times a day small portions. Females, on the other hand, tend to empty their bladder in one time, 3 to 4 times a day. Normal urine is clear, with a light-yellow color and hardly any smell. Although, the urine of healthy male cats can have a very strong, penetrating smell.

### Intestinal Worms

Many dogs have intestinal worms. In small amounts worms can not do any harm to the pet. The body even develops a certain amount of immunity which keeps the worms in check. However, in large amounts they can be harmful to the pet and to puppies and kittens it even can be fatal. Symptoms can be loose stool or diarrhea sometimes with mucus and/or blood, loss of appetite, loss of weight, upset stomach, anemia and a decline in the over-all health. Sometimes you can even see the eggs or the worms in the feces. A heavy roundworm infestation gives a potbellied appearance and a dull coat in young animals. Even respiratory problems can be cause by worms, that have migrated from the intestines to the lungs. The control of worms starts with a good sanitation and clean living quarters of the animal. Further, there are several dewormers on the market.

### Heartworm

Heartworm is a kind of worm that lives in the right side of the heart and can be fatal to dogs. Many dogs carry these worms for year before showing clear signs. Most common signs are a soft deep cough, shortness of breath and they tire easily. Treatment is expensive and not without danger, and therefore, prevention is better than the cure! A preventive cure can be given by pill, every month, or by injection, every 2 or three months. Another possibility is checking the blood for antibodies against the heartworm through the SNAP-test, available at your veterinary surgeon.

### Ehrlichiosis Canis (E.canis)

E.canis is another disease that can endanger the lives of our man's best friend. More detailed information on this dreadful disease you can find in the [article](#): Ehrlichiosis Canis: a dreaded and deadly killer.

### General physiologic data of small pet animals:

	<b>Breath /min</b>	<b>Beats / min</b>	<b>Body temp C</b>	<b>Gestation period (average)</b>	<b>Water intake in ml/kg body weight/day</b>	<b>Food intake /kg body weight/day</b>
Small dog	10 – 30	60 – 120	38 – 39	59 – 66	40	15 – 20
Medium dog	10 – 30	60 – 120	38 – 39	59 – 66	40	15 – 20
Big dog	10 – 30	60 – 120	38 – 39	59 – 66	40	15 – 20
Cat	20 – 40	110 – 140	38 – 39	63 – 69	40	15 – 20
Rabbit	32 – 100	220 – 325	38 – 39.6	29 – 33	50 – 100	25 + hay
Guinea pig	45 – 150	230 – 380	37.4 – 39.5	64 – 72	10%	20 + hay

### Average age of Dogs to Humans (average of All Breeds):

Age of dog in years	Age of human in years
1	15
2	24
3	28
4	32
5	36
6	40
7	44
8	48
9	52
10	56
11	60
12	64
13	68
14	72
15	76
16	80

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