

GENERAL HEALTH CARE OF YOUR DOG

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A healthy and well cared for dog is a feast for the eyes and is more likely to reach an old age. For keeping your dog healthy a routine worm cure, a full course of vaccinations and a general health care are absolutely essential.

WORMING and VACCINATION

Many dogs have worms. Some can be harmful to humans. Towards puppies worms can even be fatal. To eliminate them the worming program should start at the age of 4 weeks or as soon as the puppy enters its new home, followed by a second and third worming at 8 and 12 weeks of age respectively. To ensure a worm free dog worming should be repeated every 3 to 6 months, depending on how much the dog comes in contact with other animals, for the rest of the dog's life. Heartworm is another kind of worm that can endanger your dog's life. Therefore, prevention every month is strongly advised.

Some highly infectious diseases are often fatal to unvaccinated dogs. Through proper vaccination you can protect your dog against these 'killer' diseases. The vaccination program should start between the age of 4 to 6 weeks with Pneumonia, followed by Distemper, Hepatitis, Leptospirosis, Parvovirus and Rabies. Once the puppy has received all its vaccinations annual booster injections are essential to maintain the level of immunity throughout its life. If the dog swims often half-yearly boosters of the Leptospirosis vaccine are advised.

Your veterinarian can advise you on the exact vaccination program, which worm cure is most suitable for your dog and about heartworm prevention.

GENERAL HEALTH CARE

Feeding

The dog's diet plays a major role in maintaining its state of health. This diet should contain all the necessary vitamins, minerals, protein, fatty acids and carbohydrates, composed in the right proportions. On the market there are several complete and well balanced dog food brands.

Coat and skin care

Regular grooming promotes a clean and healthy skin and coat, it removes old hair and stimulates the blood circulation as well as the production and secretion of the skin's natural oils (which is the dog's own natural protection against skin parasites and fungal infections and against cold and heat). Also bathing helps removing dead hairs and cleaning coat and skin. Bathing frequency depends on the breed and the individual. In general, a clean and regular groomed coat may be bathed only every month or 6 weeks. Too often bathing takes away the skin's natural oils, resulting in a dry, flaky skin. There are several shampoos on the market specially made for dogs.

General health check

Grooming and bathing sessions give the opportunity to check for external injuries or parasites, such as fleas, ticks, lice or mites. There are several effective flea and tick agents, but in case of doubt or when a skin problem is suspected, consult your veterinary as quick as possible, making the cure faster and easier.

Further, eyes, ears and teeth can be checked for any disorders. The dog's eyes should be bright and clear and the nose cool and moist. In case of tearing and reddening of the eyes first look if there is anything in it, such as a hair, sand or grass seed. If there is a small infection some eye drops (available at your veterinary) may help. Persistent inflammation, spots on the eyeball, mucus discharge or itch are all signs of trouble. Warm, dry, running (if not due to excitement) or bleeding noses are all indications of (severe) illness. In all cases go to your veterinary quickly!

Healthy ears are pink, non-smelling and free from any substances. An infection or ear-mites may

cause an unpleasant odor. Let your veterinary examine the ears.

Deposit on the teeth traps bacteria, causing gases and/or infection of the gum. Small amounts of deposit can be removed by brushing them with a soft toothbrush or by giving your dog a marrowbone. In cases of too much deposit or a bad breath, caused by a mouth infection, intestinal problems, a wrong diet or a poor dental hygiene, it is better to ask the help of your veterinary.

Too long nails can cause difficulty in walking or may curl and grow in the skin. Your veterinary can show you how to cut the nails.

EXERCISE and TRAINING

Exercise is as necessary as food, water and general health care. Regular activity improves the dog's physical (e.g. muscle development, prevention of obesity) as well as its mental health (e.g. prevention of excessive barking or destructive behavior) and it strengthens the relationship between you and your dog.

Training is necessary to keep sufficient control over your dog and, thus being able to prevent possible (road) accidents.

YOUR VETERINARY

For understanding your dog is in good health or not, you should keep a careful watch:

- Does it eat well or refuses its meal?
- Is the coat soft and shining or are there hair-loss and the dog scratches a lot?
- Does the dog vomit and how often?
- Are the feces firm and non-smelling or does it have diarrhea with or without blood?
- Etceteras

In any case of doubt you should always seek professional help without delay!

When consulting your veterinary, rather sooner than later, only then possible illness can be caught in its earliest stages, making a cure faster and easier.

Having a good relationship with your veterinary means only benefit, as s/he knows you and your dog. After all **your veterinary is your dog's best friend!**