



AGAVE VETERINARY CARE
AND EXOTIC ANIMAL HOSPITAL

Your Complete Puppy Care Guide

Congratulations on your new puppy! Getting a puppy is both exciting and stressful but we're going to help ease the transition for both you and your new furry friend. We'll help you know what to expect for the next few months.

What should you expect from your first vet visits?

Most puppies should receive vaccines as early as 6-8 weeks and should come in every three weeks for boosters until they are 16 weeks of age. Puppies at higher risk of disease (like puppies in animal shelters) may need earlier, more frequent, and more numerous vaccines. When puppies are first born, they receive antibodies from their mother. This protects them from diseases during their first few weeks of life, but it doesn't last forever. Vaccines are given during this time to support the immune system and teach it how to fight off diseases.

- Distemper - Given with Parvo as DA2PP (aka DAPP aka DHPP)
 - Distemper is a neurological disease that is spread through airborne pathogens and direct transmission. Affected dogs develop symptoms like vomiting, diarrhea, and lethargy then worsens to head tilts, seizures, paralysis and eventual death. This disease can closely resemble rabies and is 99% fatal.
- Parvovirus - Given with Distemper as DA2PP
 - Parvovirus is a gastrointestinal disease that is spread through saliva or infected feces by direct or indirect contact. Affected dogs develop symptoms like bloody diarrhea, vomiting and lethargy which eventually leads to septic shock and death. Hospitalization and IV fluids are needed. Parvovirus can survive in the environment for up to one year.
- *Bordetella bronchiseptica*
 - Bordetella, also known as kennel cough, is an upper respiratory disease spread through airborne pathogens. Affected dogs may be lethargic and have a "honking" cough. Bordetella causes inflammation of the lungs and can lead to secondary infections such as pneumonia, which can be deadly in puppies. Treatment varies depending on the severity.
- Rabies
 - Rabies is a zoonotic neurological disease that is spread through saliva transmission. Affected dogs will showcase sudden behavioral changes such as being overly affectionate or being disinterested in usual activities. As the disease progresses you will notice increased aggression, excessive saliva, seizures and

death. Rabies is 100% fatal once symptoms arise. Rabies vaccination is required by law in the state of Texas.

- Leptospirosis
 - Leptospirosis is a zoonotic disease that targets the kidney and liver and is spread through wildlife urine. Affected dogs develop increased thirst, lethargy, jaundice, potential breath difficulties and potential blood disorders.

Dogs that are social butterflies (frequent trips to doggy day care, dog parks, or the groomer) should also consider the canine influenza vaccine that protects against both N3H2 and N3H8 strains.

Dogs that may encounter venomous snakes may also consider the rattlesnake vaccine (best given in the spring). The rattlesnake vaccine does not replace antivenom but it does allow you more time to get your dog to a vet and start on treatment.

During the puppy vaccination series, we recommend avoiding high risk areas such as dog parks, pet stores, or other areas where ill or unvaccinated dogs may be encountered. After their last puppy vaccines it'll take two weeks before your pet is fully protected and able to safely interact with other unknown dogs.

In addition to the vaccines, puppies are also screened for intestinal parasites, checked for fleas and ticks, examined for evidence of contagious or hereditary disease, given heartworm and flea prevention based on their growing size, and acclimated to the veterinary office and team.

What about heartworm and flea prevention?

What are heartworms? Heartworms are parasitic worms that survive in the heart of your pet. Heartworms are not directly contagious; an infected dog cannot give another dog heartworms through saliva or blood. Instead, these worms are spread by mosquitoes biting an infected dog in the area, then biting your dog.

Since mosquitos are present in Texas year-round both in our yards and homes, it is critical to keep all dogs on preventative. Puppies can start taking heartworm preventative as early as eight weeks and should stay on this medication lifelong. There are several options for heartworm prevention, some which are once a month and others that last a full year so you can choose whatever fits your lifestyle better.

Heartworm tests are performed once a year to confirm a dog is heartworm negative, even in patients on regular preventative to ensure the treatment is effective, screen for resistance, and to ensure the manufacturer's guarantee.

Heartworm testing for dogs that have not been on preventative or who have missed doses is especially critical, as infected dogs who are suddenly put on heartworm prevention can experience an anaphylactic reaction.

Symptoms of heartworm disease include:

- Coughing
- Exercise intolerance
- Trouble breathing
- Signs of heart failure

Heartworm disease can be treated in most cases, but the treatment is expensive and requires months of medications, numerous vet visits, extensive cage rest in order for your pet to recover. Even with successful treatment, there will be long-term effects on the heart, lungs, liver and kidneys.

Heartworms aren't the only parasite you'll have to worry about. Fleas and ticks are another common issue with pet owners. These are blood-sucking parasites that can lead to anemia and other issues in pets if left untreated.

You may see fleas crawling around or see small dark speckles through your pet's fur. These dark flakes are called flea dirt and are actually feces of digested blood left by the fleas. Fleas tend to make pets itch excessively and some dogs may also experience flea bite dermatitis which is an allergic reaction to the flea's saliva and leads to horrible itching and secondary skin infections. Puppies prone to this issue only need to be bit by one flea in order to have a reaction, so staying on top of flea prevention is vital.

Ticks are parasites that attach to the skin of a pet and slowly swell with blood. They may look like warts and have to be extracted carefully so their head isn't left in the pet's skin. Ticks can also transmit a number of tick borne diseases that can make your puppy ill. These parasites are common in wooded areas so if you and your pet go hiking or run around the countryside then you are likely to come across them.

Thankfully, there are a wide variety of preventative options to fit the needs of all dogs. It's important that you understand what the prevention treats and ensure that your dog is covered for heartworms and fleas at a minimum (often preventatives also help treat intestinal parasites and some, but not all, treat ticks).

What should you feed your puppy?

Young dogs should be kept on puppy food until they are one year of age. These diets provide a higher level of proteins, fats, calories, calcium, vitamins and other components than a normal adult dog food wouldn't. All these nutrients provide puppies with the fuel they need to grow so quickly and keep up their nonstop energy! Recommended diets are Purina Pro Plan, Royal Canin and Hills Science diet

Another thing puppies need is more frequent feeding times. Puppies need to eat 3-4 times daily until they are at least twelve weeks of age, then at least twice daily long term. This is especially

a concern in our small breed puppies. Due to their size, chihuahuas and yorkies are more at risk for hypoglycemia or low blood glucose. This can result in lethargy, trembling, vomiting, seizures, fainting and potentially death.

Puppies, and dogs of all ages should also not be kept on a grain-free diet. In 2019, the FDA released a report that dogs fed a grain-free diet were being diagnosed with dilated cardiomyopathy. This is a disease where the ventricles of the heart become enlarged and the heart cannot contract as well. Thankfully, this is a gradual change and if your puppy is currently grain-free then you can slowly transition to a diet with grains without any long-term effect.

Why and When should you spay/neuter your puppy?

Spaying and neutering your pet can be a scary thought for a lot of people. In order to perform the procedure, your puppy will have to be put under anesthesia. The veterinarian will perform an exam and run blood work prior to the surgery. These are all done to confirm that your pet is healthy enough to go under anesthesia. From there, your pet will be given medication to help them fall asleep and provide pain control. Once the procedure is finished, we will wake them up and monitor them for a few hours to confirm that they have recovered well before sending them home.

Female dogs should be spayed at six months. Spaying has many benefits for your puppy. It significantly reduces the chance of uterine cancer and eliminates the possibility of pregnancy and the complications that can come from being pregnant. Spaying prior to the first heat cycle has the added benefit of preventing mammary cancer.

Male dogs should be neutered at six to twelve months of age. Neutering your puppy reduces unwanted mounting and roaming behaviors, eliminates the risk of testicular cancer, and prevents him from impregnating another dog.

Can I give my dog table scraps?

Dogs are omnivores and, as a result, can eat most common food items without it being too much of a concern. However there are a few household toxins to look out for while trying to keep an eye on your hyperactive puppy

- Grapes, raisins, and currants/gooseberries
- Chocolate
- Macadamia nuts
- Caffeine
- Onions and garlic (including powdered)
- Ibuprofen and naproxen
- Creams and ointments
- Snail bait

In addition, dogs are prone to gastrointestinal upset and obesity. While an occasional snack of human food is unlikely to harm most dogs, we don't recommend this be part of the daily routine.

Socializing your new puppy

Puppy socialization is a crucial process that teaches puppies how to interact with humans, other animals, and their environment. It's a critical period in a puppy's development that starts at about three weeks of age and lasts until they're around 14 weeks old. During this time, puppies learn how to adapt to new experiences, surroundings, and situations. Proper socialization will help your puppy develop into a well-adjusted and confident adult dog that's comfortable in different situations and with different people and animals.

When socializing your puppy, keep in mind that puppies are still receiving vaccines until they are 15 weeks old and then they need an additional 2 weeks in order to be fully protected. Only meet with other healthy vaccinated animals and avoid dog parks and pet stores where diseases can fester.

1. Introduce your puppy to different people of different ages, genders, and races. Make sure they have positive experiences with each person.
2. Expose your puppy to different animals, such as other dogs, cats, and even livestock. Work only with animals that are calm and well-behaved.
3. Have your puppy walk on a variety of surfaces (grass, sand, wood, tile, carpet, etc.)
4. Use positive reinforcement, such as treats and praise, to reward your puppy for good behavior.
5. Avoid overwhelming your puppy with too much at once. Gradually introduce them to new experiences and environments. It's better to do quick 10-15 min experiences than hour long events that drain your puppy's patience and end on a negative note. If possible, always try to end on something good!
6. Socialize your puppy with other healthy puppies of similar ages and sizes. Puppies learn a lot from each other, and they can help build social skills and confidence.

Work with a professional dog trainer to develop a socialization plan that's tailored to your puppy's needs and personality. Starting puppy training is another good way to socialize and establish some basic commands and expectations for your dog. A trainer can work with your pet while also teaching you about your puppy's body language and how to reliably communicate with them. Learning how to train a dog is not just teaching them but also yourself. Establishing basic commands can save you a lot of frustration in the future and can make your dog more comfortable as they learn what you expect from them. Puppy classes are a great way to encourage socialization and training in a controlled environment.

If you are struggling with socializing and understanding your puppy's body language, another good resource for additional help is the book "Decoding Your Dog: Explaining Common Dog Behaviors and How to Prevent or Change Unwanted Ones" This book is written by the board certificated specialist from the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists and is a wonderful tool to help you understand your puppies needs. Even if your dog is older than 14 weeks or is a

senior citizen, It's never too late to start socialization. Even older puppies and adult dogs can benefit from socialization and training.

At this age, you can also start getting your puppy used to handling by gently touching their feet for nail trims, looking into their ears, and opening their mouths. By rewarding them for doing a good job, you associate tolerating this behavior with snacks! This makes it easier on your veterinary hospital and easier on you if your pet gets hurt and needs treatment around those sensitive areas. Much like everything else, don't stress your puppy and try to always end on a good note!

How to potty train your puppy

Potty training a dog can be a challenging process, but it's essential for maintaining a clean and healthy living environment for both you and your furry friend. Potty training involves teaching your dog where and when to go potty, and it requires patience, consistency, and positive reinforcement. Here are some steps to follow when potty training your dog:

1. **Establish a Routine:** Dogs thrive on routine, so it's important to establish a consistent schedule for feeding, potty breaks, and playtime. Try to take your dog outside to potty at the same times each day, such as after meals, when they wake up in the morning, and before bedtime. Some dogs might need to be taken out after playing too, especially since they are all riled up and not considering their new household rules.
2. **Choose a Potty Spot:** Designate a specific area outside where you want your dog to go potty. This will help them understand where they should go and prevent them from going in other areas of your yard or home. Bring your dog to this spot each time you take them outside for a potty break.
3. **Supervise Your Dog:** Supervision is crucial during the potty training process. Keep your dog within your sight at all times, especially during the early stages of training. This will help you anticipate when they need to go potty and prevent accidents.
4. **Watch for Signs:** Watch for signs that your dog needs to go potty, such as sniffing around, circling, or whining. If you notice these signs, bring your dog to the designated potty spot immediately.
5. **Use Positive Reinforcement:** Praise and reward your dog each time they go potty in the designated spot. You can use treats, verbal praise, or even a game of fetch as a reward. This positive reinforcement will help your dog understand that going potty outside is a good thing.
6. **Be Patient:** Potty training can take time, so it's important to be patient and consistent. Remember that accidents are normal during the training process, and your dog will eventually learn where and when to go potty with your guidance.

Accidents will happen during the potty training process. When they do, it's important to clean them up promptly to prevent your dog from being attracted to the scent and going potty in the same spot again. Use an enzymatic cleaner to eliminate the odor and discourage your dog from

going potty in that area.

By following these steps and remaining consistent and patient, you can successfully potty train your dog and enjoy a clean and happy living environment for both you and your furry friend. If you encounter any difficulties or have concerns, don't hesitate to reach out to a professional dog trainer or behaviorist for assistance

Why you should crate train

When you first get a puppy, there's the temptation to let them sleep in your bed with you every night. However, this can lead to behavioral issues and separation anxiety. Not to mention that your furry friend could get up in the middle of the night and wreak havoc upon your house! Teaching your puppy to sleep on their own in a crate can be hard at first, but pays off by providing them with a comfortable and safe enclosure in which to rest.

Here are some steps to begin crate training your puppy.

1. **Choose the Right Crate:** The crate should be large enough for your puppy to stand up, turn around, and lie down comfortably. However, it shouldn't be too big that your puppy has enough space to eliminate in one corner and sleep in another. A crate with a divider can be helpful for adjusting the space as your puppy grows.
2. **Introduce the Crate Slowly:** Place the crate in a common area of your home and leave the door open, so your puppy can explore the crate and get familiar with it. Place a soft and comfortable blanket or bed inside the crate to make it more inviting.
3. **Associate the Crate with Positive Experiences:** Feed your puppy their meals inside the crate to create a positive association. You can also offer treats and toys inside the crate to encourage your puppy to spend time in it voluntarily.
4. **Begin Crate Training:** When your puppy is comfortable entering and exiting the crate, you can start closing the door for short periods while you are home. Start with 5-10 minutes and gradually increase the duration as your puppy gets used to it. Be sure to praise and reward your puppy for good behavior and let them out to potty when needed.
5. **Gradually Increase Time in Crate:** As your puppy gets more comfortable, you can start leaving them in the crate for longer periods. However, it's important to gradually increase the time and never leave them in the crate for more than a few hours at a time.
6. **Use Crate Training for Housebreaking:** Puppies will naturally avoid soiling their sleeping area, so the crate can be a helpful tool for housebreaking. Take your puppy out to potty frequently and always reward them for eliminating in the appropriate spot.
7. **Avoid Punishment:** Never use the crate as a punishment or a way to isolate your puppy when you are upset with them. The crate should always be a safe and comfortable place for your puppy to retreat to.

The crate gives you a safe place to put your young dog when you are going to be gone for several hours and won't be able to monitor them. This way they are less likely to eat something they're not supposed to. You can also give them treats like frozen kongs while housing them to

keep them occupied until they are used to the idea. Always keep the crate open and available to them to use during the day when you are home. This gives them a safe place to retreat to when they are tired or feeling overwhelmed.

How to introduce dental care to puppies

Now is the perfect time to start brushing your pet's teeth. Brushing your puppy's teeth makes it so they'll need less frequent dental cleanings in the future. Dogs with bad dental disease are more susceptible to infections due to food getting trapped between the gums and teeth roots which can lead to tooth root abscesses. Having rotten teeth is also painful, leading to some dogs starting to drool excessively, paw their face, or avoid eating entirely. By introducing brushing your dog's teeth now, you can keep a close eye on how their teeth look and reduce the amount of tartar they develop.

Introducing brushing should be a slow process.

1. Allow your puppy lick the toothpaste from the tooth brush. This allows them to get used to the texture and gives them an immediate reward for their curiosity. Make sure to always use dog specific toothpaste rather than human toothpaste, which can contain xylitol - a toxin to dogs.
2. Slowly start to brush the incisors and inch your way farther into the mouth. Don't worry about making it happen on the first day. Go at your puppy's pace and try to end any occurrence on a good note.

Brushing a dog's teeth should be done daily; any longer and the plaque becomes tartar which cannot be removed. The most important part of brushing teeth is the movement, which means you can use either dog specific toothpaste or tap water.

As dogs get older, the tartar on their teeth builds up and leads to decay and gum disease. In order to remove the tartar efficiently, veterinary patients are put under anesthesia to scale the teeth. We also take dental x-rays to make sure the roots of the teeth are still secure and that there aren't any abscesses developing around the root. By brushing your puppy's teeth, you can increase the time between these procedures and reduce their time under anesthesia.

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