

What you need to know about your dog



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Do you know the five key things your dog needs to lead a healthy and happy life?

They're called the five animal welfare needs and the law requires you to provide these for all your pets.

These five animal welfare needs are:



Environment

Give them a safe, suitable place to live



Diet

Feed them the right food for their age, health and lifestyle



Behaviour

Allow them to show normal behaviour patterns



Companionship

Dogs are social animals and need plenty of company from people and other friendly dogs



Health

Keep your pet in good health and seek vet advice if they're ill or injured



This booklet's full of advice and top tips to help you keep your dog healthy and happy.



ENVIRONMENT

There are a few simple ways you can keep your dog healthy and comfortable both at home and when out and about.

Car travel

It's important to keep your dog safe when travelling: secure them behind a dog guard or on the back seat with a seat belt.



A comfortable dog bed

A cosy bed is important for dogs. This should be kept in a quiet, dry, draught-free area. Make sure you choose one that can be cleaned easily and thoroughly – and do this regularly.

Poisons and hazards around the garden and home

Keep your dog safe from hidden dangers in your home by checking out our poisons page pdsa.org.uk/poisonsandhazards

From chocolate and grapes to onions and human medicines, it's a comprehensive list of poisons and hazards to keep safely out of reach of paws.

Thousands of accidents and illnesses are caused by them every year, so by doing some simple safety checks you can help keep your dog safe.

CHECKLIST

- ✓ Keep hazards or poisonous substances secure and out of reach.
- ✓ Restrain your dog safely when out and about in the car.
- ✓ Provide a comfortable dog bed in a quiet area.
- ✓ Exercise every day through a variety of activities.



DIET

Dogs come in many shapes and sizes. The type and amount of food they need depends on their age, health and lifestyle.

What should you feed your dog?

'Life-stage feeding' matches your dog's diet to what they need at different ages and stages of development. Many companies make food especially for puppies, juniors, adults and seniors.

Feeding your dog a complete commercial pet food is the easiest way to make sure they get all the nutrients they need. Follow the guidelines on the packet on how much to feed your dog, and weigh it out at each meal as it's easy to feed too much accidentally.

It sounds obvious, but pets that eat too much get fat. If you feed your dog a lot of treats as well as their normal food, extra calories will turn into fat. Dogs don't need treats to know you love them: playing and spending time with you are what they enjoy most of all.

Change one thing today

We don't recommend feeding bones to your dog. Bones can get stuck in your dog's throat and splinters can damage the stomach and intestines.

CHECKLIST

- ✓ Ask your vet or vet nurse for advice on the correct shape and weight for your dog.
- ✓ Check your dog is on the right diet for its age, health and lifestyle.
- ✓ Cut out the treats.

How often should you feed your dog?

Dogs like routine. They're happiest when they've regular mealtimes – it also helps you make sure they're getting the right amount of food, and that they're eating it all. It's usually best to split your dog's daily food into two equal-sized meals.

Your veterinary practice is the best place to get good advice about your dog's nutritional needs.





BEHAVIOUR

Do you need to train your dog?

Training's a great way to keep your dog's mind active. It also helps you bond and understand each other, especially when you are out together. Without training, the world can be a pretty confusing place for your dog.

It's easier to learn when it's fun. The kindest and most effective method is **reward-based training** – also called '**positive reinforcement**' – check out our website for more information: pdsa.org.uk/dogbehaviour

Toys

A mentally stimulated dog is more likely to be a happy dog. So play with your dog regularly, using appropriate dog toys. Keep some stored away: use different toys in different weeks. This helps to keep



the toys interesting for your dog – and also gives you a chance to clean them.

Exercise

The amount of exercise your dog needs depends on its age, breed and health. Dogs enjoy regular walks, and playing off the lead whenever it's safe for them to do so. As well as keeping your dog fit, regular exercise is very important for their mental health too. Being out and about allows them to express normal behaviours such as sniffing, investigating and interacting with other pets and people.

CHECKLIST

- ✓ Teach your dog basic commands by taking them to a training class – check first that they use rewards, not punishment.
- ✓ Regularly give your dog toys to play with.
- ✓ Get out of the house – make sure your dog has daily walks.
- ✓ Seek professional advice for any problem behaviours.
- ✓ Never leave your dog unsupervised with children.





Do you have a problem with your dog's behaviour?

If so, you're not alone. Many owners experience difficulty with their dog's behaviour from time to time.

Problem behaviour is a sign of how your pet is feeling and it's very important to investigate the reason for the behaviour. Preventing and solving problems helps both you and your pet.

What types of problems do owners have with their dogs?

Examples include:

- Aggression towards people or other dogs
- Noise phobias e.g. thunder, fireworks
- Problems when left alone e.g. barking, destructive behaviour.

Remember never to punish your dog e.g. shouting, hitting or using gadgets such as rattle cans or water pistols. This creates anxiety and fear and will make your dog's behaviour worse. It's important not to blame your dog and to realise that your dog isn't acting this way on purpose – all problem behaviour has

a reason behind it. If you're concerned about your dog's behaviour, always visit your vet for a checkup. They'll make sure there isn't a medical cause (for example, pain) and may refer you to an accredited pet behaviourist.

For more information on pet behaviour, visit pdsa.org.uk/dogbehaviour or apbc.org.uk (Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors). To find an accredited dog trainer in your area, visit apdt.co.uk or abtcouncil.org.uk





COMPANIONSHIP

Dogs need plenty of company and it's important that adult dogs aren't routinely left on their own for more than four hours a day. If you've to leave them for more than four hours, think about asking a trusted friend, relative or local pet carer to visit.

If you're going on holiday and your dog can't join you, make sure your dog is properly looked after by booking them into kennels, or a friend or professional pet-sitter could look after them. Well-run kennels won't allow dogs to board if they haven't been vaccinated, so ensure you check your dog's vaccinations are up to date well in advance.

When you do go away, it's a good idea to leave a list of information, such as how much food and exercise your pet needs, any medication they might be on and how to give it – and your vet's contact details for emergencies.



Change one thing today

Spend one-to-one quality time with your dog. Plan out your quality time with them – you may take them for a nice long walk, play games, groom them or just have some cuddles. Whatever it is – you can bet your dog will love it.

CHECKLIST

- ✓ Make sure your dog isn't regularly being left alone for four hours or more.
- ✓ If you've to leave them for more than four hours ask a friend, relative or local pet carer to visit.
- ✓ If your dog gets anxious or distressed when left alone, speak to your vet practice for advice.
- ✓ Ensure your dog gets the care and attention it needs when you're on holiday.
- ✓ Never leave your dog home alone when you go away.



Vaccinations

Dog vaccinations give protection for your dog and peace of mind for you. They protect your dog against diseases, which can cause pain, distress and are often fatal. They also prevent diseases from being passed on to other animals.

How do vaccines protect your dog?

Vaccines contain a harmless form of the virus or bacterium that causes a particular disease. They stimulate your dog's immune system in a safe way. If your dog then comes into contact with the disease for real, its immune system 'remembers' how it dealt with the vaccine, so it can fight the disease.

Which diseases do vaccines protect against?

- Canine distemper ('hard pad')
- Canine parvovirus
- Infectious canine hepatitis
- Kennel cough
- Leptospirosis
- Parainfluenza.

Your dog should receive a primary vaccination course early in life, followed by 'booster' vaccinations throughout its life.

The primary vaccination course for dogs varies with the type of vaccine used. The first vaccine can sometimes be given as young as six weeks of age, with the second usually given two to four weeks later.

Booster vaccinations are needed as the body's immune response gradually fades over time. They're often given every year, depending on the vaccine.

Ask your vet when it is best to vaccinate your dog.



What is neutering?

Neutering is an operation carried out by a vet. In male animals, the testicles are removed – this is called ‘castration’. In female animals, the ovaries and the uterus (womb) are removed – this is called ‘spaying’.

Why do it?

There are hundreds of thousands of unwanted animals in need of homes. Neutering stops animals from adding to this problem by preventing unwanted litters.

Neutering can help your dog to live longer and enjoy a better quality of life. It also reduces the risk of pets developing some serious illnesses. In female dogs it reduces the risk of breast cancer and prevents a potentially life-threatening condition called pyometra (a serious infection of the womb). In male dogs neutering protects from testicular cancer and disease of the prostate gland.

When?

For male and female dogs, neutering is often carried out under one year of age for the maximum benefit – **ask your vet when the best time would be for your dog.**

Will neutering cause my dog to gain weight?

Many people believe that neutering causes weight gain. Neutered dogs can be more prone to gaining weight, but providing your dog with the right diet and exercise will make sure your dog maintains a healthy weight.



Preventing parasites – fleas, ticks and worms

How do I know if my dog's got fleas, ticks or worms?

Signs include:

- Fur loss
- Inflamed (reddened) skin
- Scratching, biting or licking more than normal
- Pot-bellied appearance
- Vomiting and diarrhoea.

My dog's showing some of these signs – what should I do?

- Take your dog to see your vet.
- If your dog has fleas it's important to treat your home, your dog and all your other pets. **Your vet can recommend safe and effective products to use.**

Dogs should be regularly treated for fleas and worms – speak to your vet or vet nurse for further advice. Preventive parasite treatments include sprays, tablets, injections and 'spot-on' preparations. Treatments available 'over the counter' (for example, from pet shops and supermarkets) may not be as effective as those available from your vet's – so bear this in mind if you want your pet to be properly protected.



Dental care

Looking after your dog's teeth is just as important as looking after your own. Regular tooth brushing using pet toothpaste is the best way to keep their teeth clean and healthy. There are also specially designed foods, chews and toys available to help clean your dog's teeth.

For a demonstration on how to brush your dog's teeth, visit pdsa.org.uk/pethealthvideos



Microchipping

Many pets go missing every year and, sadly, many are never reunited with their owners. But there's a simple solution. Identifying your dog with a microchip gives a greater chance of being reunited with your dog should they get lost, and this must be used together with a collar and identity tag. Microchipping will become a legal requirement across the UK in April 2016, so get your dog microchipped now.

A microchip is a harmless radio chip about the size of a grain of rice and is injected under the skin of your dog in the same way as a routine vaccination.

Speak to your vet or vet nurse for further advice on getting your dog microchipped and make sure you update your details on the microchipping database if you move house.

Pet insurance

When you buy pet insurance from PDSA, you'll not only be protecting your own pet but other pets too. That's because up to 25% of your premium goes towards funding our vital work to help pets in need of vets.

CHECKLIST

- ✓ Ensure your dog is registered with a vet.
- ✓ Ask your vet about neutering and make sure your dog's vaccinations are up to date.
- ✓ Check your dog's flea and worm treatments are up to date – seek advice from your vet about suitable, safe treatments.
- ✓ Look into pet insurance – injury and illness can mean unexpected vet bills.



For more information on the five animal welfare needs or further advice on looking after your dog, visit: pdsa.org.uk/dogs

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pdsa.org.uk

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