

Towne Square Animal Clinic

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“We treat your pet like our own.”

Puppy Basics

Congratulations on the newest member of your family! You are about to embark on a 12-17+ year relationship with a Canine member of the Animal Kingdom. Our job is to serve as your advisor and your companion’s health provider through these years. Towne Square Animal Clinic encourages you to always make it a two-way street of communication and feel free to call us with any questions you may have.

Preventative Medicine is the most important part of keeping your new canine companion healthy. Preventative medicine includes more than just annual visits for vaccines and a physical. It also includes proper nutrition, regular examination of the pet by the owner at home, proper teeth and ear care, training and obedience classes, neutering, heartworm and flea prevention, and even fencing and leashes to keep your friend restrained and away from harm. Preventative care not only benefits your puppy, but is the most cost-effective approach as well.

In this discussion, the subject of new puppy care will be divided into 3 areas:

- I. **Training**
- II. **Nutrition**
- III. **Health Needs**

Take your time to study this information and note any questions you may have for us during your office visit. Knowledge is the foundation to understanding. Be sure that all members of the family participate in this lifelong project.

I. **Training**

A. **Housebreaking**

This is one of the first training items you should start when your puppy arrives at your household. Realize your puppy assimilates information best between 8-14 weeks of age, so a puppy that is only 6 weeks old when you bring it home may need a little more patience and time.

The four basic times a puppy’s body tells it to use the bathroom are: 1) when she is waking up from a nap or sleep, 2) when she is about to take a nap or go to sleep, 3) when she has just gotten through exercising, and 4) (the most important) right after eating a meal. By knowing these 4 basic times, you can schedule times to take the puppy outdoors to eliminate.

It is a mistake to leave food and water down all the time! If you do, your pup may get hungry or thirsty when you are not there, eat or drink, and have no choice but to soil the area where it is staying. Instead, we recommend you set a rigid food and water schedule and stick to it. Feed your puppy three small meals a day, with the last meal being no later than 8:00 p.m. Look on the back of the bag of food you are feeding to find the total amount to feed per day and divide it into three equal portions. Leave the food and water down for a maximum of 30

minutes. After taking the food and water up, wait 15-30 minutes before taking the puppy outside. Each dog varies in the amount of time it takes for the reflex action of a full stomach telling the colon it is time to empty.

Always accompany the puppy outside at first. Take them to the area of the yard in which you would like them to eliminate in order to avoid the “land mine” effect. You will appreciate it when you cut the grass and are able to tell where to clean! As your puppy goes to the bathroom, softly say a phrase such as “Go potty” or “Hurry up”. The puppy will start to associate this phrase and other ‘potty language’ with using the bathroom and you will be very happy they know this command when it is -10 degrees or raining outside! Make it a very positive experience when your puppy urinates or has a bowel movement in the appropriate area. Encouraging words and praises are a must! Even giving the puppy a small treat, such as a piece of desiccated liver or a Pounce cat treat is terrific. A puppy will return to the same area where it has urinated, but does not like to return to an area where previous feces are, so be sure to clean the bowel movement each time your puppy has one. This will also prevent re-infestation with any parasites it may have.

If your puppy eliminates in the house and you are not there to catch her, just clean the mess. A puppy has a very short memory and it does not help to reprimand unless you actually catch them in the act. Do not rub their face in it! If you do catch your puppy soiling in the house, you must let them know this is not acceptable. Keep a rolled up newspaper or anything else you can use to make a loud noise close by at all times. This is not to hit the puppy but rather to smack the floor beside them to make a startling noise (a can full of pennies will have the same effect). At the same time, verbally reprimand your dog and then immediately take them outside where you should change back to a soothing, positive voice. The next time your puppy wants to eliminate, they will remember that when they had the urge to do it in the house, they had an unpleasant, scary experience and that when they went outside, they had a very pleasant experience. They will want to repeat the ‘good’ experience and (hopefully) give you a signal that they would like to go outside. This may include whining, a circling action, or something as simple as waiting by the door. You must learn to recognize these signals and respond to them. Your dog wants to please you and looks for reassurance through your praise.

Some owners report they take their puppy outside to go to the bathroom and they play or sniff every blade of grass instead of relieving themselves. Once they bring the puppy inside, it soon eliminates in the house. These puppies are just having too much fun romping and playing and forget to go to the bathroom. If this occurs, allow the puppy to play, then let them come inside, but be ready to take them out soon afterward for them to “potty.”

Crate training can be an important adjunct for housetraining. Crate training works on the premise that puppies do not like to urinate or defecate in an area where they sleep. By confining an unsupervised puppy to a crate, you are forcing the issue. You should crate your puppy at night or when you are not able to directly supervise them. The correct crate size is one that your puppy can just turn around and lie down in. If the crate is too large, your puppy will simply go to one end of the crate to use the bathroom then go to the opposite end to sleep. If you buy a large crate for a puppy that will be growing a lot, block off part of the area with pillows or a board.

DO NOT LEAVE FOOD OR WATER IN THE CRATE WITH THE PUPPY!!! If your puppy eats or drinks while in the crate, it will have to relieve itself 15-30 minutes later, and there will not be anyone there to take it out. Most puppies 8 weeks and older can “hold it” for 6-9 hours. It is important to reward the puppy for “holding it” by taking them out first thing in the morning and as soon as you get home from work. Don’t stop to make breakfast or look at the mail. This also means that you will not be able to sleep late on Saturday mornings until your puppy is fully trained. If your puppy happens to have an accident in the crate, be sure to clean it as soon as possible since you don’t want them to become comfortable with being in the crate with urine or feces. Never punish the puppy by using the crate – it should be a retreat and safe haven where they can go for some privacy.

If your puppy seems to be having problems even after using these training methods for 2-4 weeks, you may want to look for a physical reason such as intestinal parasites, digestive problems, or between meal snacking. A stool sample check or review of feeding habits may be in order.

B. Chewing

Chewing by puppies is natural habit. We all enjoy watching a litter of puppies playing. If you observe them, you will notice they all chew on each other. Our goal at home is to avoid destructive chewing. The habit tends to

stick with them until just after getting all their adult teeth (approximately 6 months of age). Puppies start getting their permanent teeth at approximately 4 months of age beginning with the upper and lower middle incisors. Be sure to provide your pup with appropriate chew toys such as hard rubber Kong toys or Nylabones. Beware of small rawhide strips, pig ears or cow hooves that can be chewed into small pieces that could possibly choke your pet or cause an intestinal blockage. Old socks and shoes should not be offered, since puppies can't tell the difference between an old shoe and a new one and could chew them into small pieces of leather or swallow a shoestring. The Kong toy is an excellent obedience tool. The theory it uses is that it replicates the center of the bone, the marrow, like we all used to get at the butcher shop for our dogs. The marrow was always the best part of the bone for the dog. The Kong Toy has a hollow center that can be stuffed with a small amount of peanut butter, cheese, or a dog biscuit. Some people will get an extra one to fill with canned dog food, put it in the freezer overnight, and then offer it to their puppy the next day. A wonderful 'frosty paws' treat for them. Your puppy will spend hours chewing while trying to get the treat out. Also use this toy as a diversion (in the crate) when you leave. They will be so enthralled with the Kong, they will not realize you are leaving and are less likely to suffer from separation anxiety. Kongs and Nylabones can be purchased at any pet store.

Finger chewing can be fun until the puppy bites down too hard. However, if you never allow them to chew on your fingers, they will never learn "bite discrimination." This means they will learn that they can mouth hands, arms, etc., but will know that at a certain point, they are causing pain and will learn not to go beyond that point. Allow them to chew on your fingers, but the first time they bite too hard, respond with a **loud** "OUCH! That hurts!" and then put her into a "time out" for 15 – 20 minutes in a laundry room or ½- bathroom. Make sure this room does not have things in it that will occupy your puppy's time. This is not a playtime for it! Do not use the crate for punishment since you want the crate to be associated with good things. "Time out" is a very hard thing for a puppy that only wants to be near you, and she/he will probably cry, but be strong! You are teaching them what is appropriate behavior now, when they are small, and not allowing any serious problems to develop later on when they are fully-grown.

Another way to teach the puppy good manners with their mouth is to occasionally put your hand into their food bowl before you add the food. Then add the food atop your fingers. Let them eat the food from between your fingers. This will teach them the difference between fingers and food. Then, when offered a treat, they will be more likely to take it gently and not take any fingers with it!

C. Leash Training

Puppies should be encouraged to accept collars and leashed at an early age. You should be able to slip two fingers between her neck and the collar for a proper fit. Remember to check the collar often since puppies grow very quickly and a too-tight collar can be a problem.

You may need to allow the puppy to go where they want to go at first and just follow them while holding the leash. This can be very effective to just get them used to having a leash attached. To avoid the "stubborn mule" technique when using a leash for the first time, get your puppy's attention by "snapping" the leash (short, sharp jerks). Then call their name and "Come" in an excited voice. When they respond, praise them lavishly. Pulling the puppy along by the leash will not make them a willing walking partner.

D. Handling

A very important part of keeping your pet happy is getting them used to being touched and handled, especially while eating and playing with toys, so that they do not become protective. Your puppy will be much less stressed at the vet and/or grooming salon if they are used to being handled at home by their owners. Every day you should handle all parts of their body including opening their mouth and checking their teeth, handling their feet (very important for nail trims!), looking into their ears, etc. They should be comfortable with having every part of their body touched. Furthermore, while doing these at-home "exams" you may notice potential problems before they become serious.

MAKE TIME TO ATTEND DOG OBEDIENCE CLASSES EARLY IN YOUR PUPPY'S LIFE! The best opportunity for them to imprint positive training and good habits is in their youth. Dog training classes also allow your puppy to become socialized, or used to many different types of dogs and people. If you cannot make it to

classes, consider an in-home trainer or rent videotapes and read books on training. Remember, no matter what your approach, training should be consistent and practices every day. Time spent on training now will be rewarded with a lifetime of good manners and a more pleasant companion.

II. **Nutrition**

Going into a modern pet food superstore may make this subject seem scary and confusing. Follow these simple rules to avoid a lot of confusion. Dog foods can be divided into three different categories: 1) Generic and store-brand foods, 2) Middle-of-the-road foods, and 3) Premium brands. The bottom line on generic foods is **DO NOT FEED THEM** to your dog! A vast majority of these foods do not meet their label requirements for essential nutrients. General side effects of feeding nutritionally inferior foods long term include poor coat quality, failure to thrive, diarrhea, and in extreme cases, death. Middle-of-the-road brands include the good commercially available foods such as Purina Puppy Chow, Puppy Kibbles and Bits, Cycle One, etc. These foods are made by reputable companies, are relatively economical and readily available. The disadvantages are, the protein source is sometimes not consistent and there may be more cereal fillers present. This leads to a larger volume of stool produced by your dog. If you decide to feed a middle-of-the-road food, we recommend adding a multivitamin, such as Pet Tabs, to your dog's diet. We can suggest the proper vitamin for your growing puppy's needs. They can be purchased at our office or at a pet store. The third level of puppy foods available is premium brands. These labels include Iams, Hill's Science Diet, Eukanuba, and Pro Plan. These foods tend to be moderately more expensive, and a bit less available, although Iams is now available in grocery stores. These foods are the best for your dog because their protein sources are better and more consistent, and there is less cereal filler in the mix. These factors lead to higher digestibility, smaller and less frequent bowel movements, and total food volume required for proper nutrition. If you decide to feed your puppy premium brand foods, do not add a vitamin to the diet. These foods may be purchased at your local pet store. No matter which food you use, avoid sudden changes in your dog's diet. Sudden changes in diet may lead to several days of diarrhea as your pup's digestive tract tries to adjust. The best approach is to gradually blend the new food in with the old over a period of 3-4 days.

DO NOT FEED TABLE SCRAPS TO YOUR DOG! This bad habit can lead to an unbalanced diet, diarrhea, and vomiting. Quality dog foods are fully balanced and meet all your companion's nutritional needs. This does not mean it is wrong to offer your adult dog an egg or two per week to keep their coat shiny, but stay away from fatty scraps, especially pork products. Your pup will enjoy baby carrots, broccoli, small bits of cheese, boiled liver, or Pounce cat treats as a tiny treat. You can even offer it mini rice cakes or butter-free popcorn when it becomes an adult. Feeding your dog at the same time you eat dinner may be a way to keep them from sitting by the table and begging while you eat. Do not encourage begging at the table by rewarding the behavior. Feeding your dog from the table will not only reinforce begging, but can also help contribute to an overweight problem in your pet. An accurate way to gauge proper weight is to check your dog's rib cage. You should not be able to see the individual ribs, but you should be able to feel each one cleanly. If there is fat padding over her ribs, they are overweight. Proper weight is a must for good health! If your dog loses the battle with obesity, it will surely lose the war with arthritis in the future.

III. **Health Needs**

A. **Vaccinations and Physicals**

Preventive medicine is always the least expensive health care option. Dr. Zekoff will start you puppy on a vaccination series to help protect her from some of the most common viral diseases such as Distemper, Parvovirus enteritis, Hepatitis, Parainfluenza, and Rabies. Your puppy received some initial immunity from its mother in its first milk, colostrum. This passive protection wears off at varying times for each pup. Rather than run the expensive blood tests to determine when passive immunity wears off, Dr. Zekoff sets up a regular schedule of vaccinations. These boosters will continue until the pup reaches 16-18 weeks of age. Her/his first Rabies vaccination in the state of Ohio will be good for one year. Any subsequent Rabies vaccines in the state of Ohio will be readministered every three years. Yearly physical exams and vaccinations for other viral diseases are a must. Towne Square Animal Clinic will send you a reminder in the mail each year when your dog is due for a visit. If you plan on boarding your dog at a kennel, or exposing her to frequent large group situations, please let us know, as a Bordatella vaccination will be required.

Many puppies may experience a temporary 12-24 hour period of muscle soreness from their vaccines. This may be accompanied by a decrease in appetite. If you feel your pup is uncomfortable, you may ease their soreness with baby aspirin at a dose of 1 tablet per 15 pounds of body weight every 12 hours, for a maximum of four doses. The series of physical exams, which accompany vaccines, is an important time for Dr. Zekoff to assess your pup's growth and development. He will report any findings that would be of concern to you, and is interested in your observations and questions about health, nutrition, and behavior. Bring a fresh stool sample to our office for your puppy visits and then yearly for her annual physicals to be used for fecal parasite checks.

B. Neuter/ Ovariohysterectomy (spay)

If you are not planning to breed your puppy, have her spayed (neutered for males) at approximately 6 months of age. The health and behavioral benefits of this procedure greatly outweigh its risks. In the female dog spaying decreases the instance of estrogen related breast tumors, eliminates messy heat cycles, and prevents life threatening uterine infections. In the male dog, neutering removes the possibility of testicular cancer, decreases prostate problems, and positively influences behavior by decreasing roaming, leg hiking, and male aggression.

Spay/neuter surgeries are performed as one-day procedures using the safest gas anesthetics and modern veterinary techniques. Sutures are taken out ten days later on a quick visit. It is important to monitor your pet's caloric intake after surgery, so they do not gain weight. We usually recommend for the typical indoor pet that you start them on a less-active diet within 2 – 3 months of having their spay/neuter surgery. Yes, your puppy is very active, but the Less Active/Lower Calorie diet will be the most appropriate for them at this stage. If your puppy gets obese, it will be a lot harder to get the pounds off than it will be initially to keep it off.

C. Heartworms

There are three kinds of parasites which affect dogs: 1) skin parasites such as fleas, ticks, lice and mites, 2) intestinal parasites like roundworms, hookworms, whipworms, and tapeworms, 3) blood parasites such as heartworms. Heartworms are the most difficult of the three to detect, as well as the most dangerous. These parasites were not common in the Ohio River Valley until the mid-1970's to early 1980's. This is because the heartworm uses mosquitoes as their part time host and method of infection. As mosquitoes have grown numerous in the Ohio River Valley so have the incidences of canine heartworm infection. Without the consistent use of heartworm preventative your dog may become infected and show no signs for 12-18 months. These symptoms would include persistent coughing, exercise intolerance, and vomiting. If left untreated, heartworms cause irreversible right side heart damage, leading to liver and kidney failure, pneumonia, and finally death. If performed in time, treatment is an option, however, it is expensive, time consuming, and potentially fatal to your animal.

It is much better to prevent heartworms early than to have to treat for them later! Your puppy's preventative program should follow these guidelines. At less than 7 months they will be started on a monthly heartworm preventative tablet (Interceptor or Sentinel). No antigen blood test is performed at this time, because if an infected mosquito bit them on the day they were born, it would take 6-7 months for a positive blood test result. Dogs over 7 months old are antigen-tested prior to starting preventative tablets and then resume the normal yearly testing schedule. Interceptor or Sentinel is given year round, because it not only prevents heartworms, but roundworms, whipworms, and hookworms as well. This is not true of other heartworm preventatives on the market.

D. Ear Care

Proper ear care is an important component to preventative health. Ear infections are second only to yearly exams as reasons for veterinary office calls. The anatomy of a dog's ear lends itself to yeast infections and bacterial build up. The canal itself drops down vertically before turning horizontally toward the eardrum. This causes water and wax to become trapped down deep in the interior. Densely-haired, lop-eared ears, like the ones found on Cocker Spaniels, Labradors, Poodles and Golden Retrievers, further lend themselves to infection by having an ear flap which shuts off air flow. The overall tendency is like having wet tennis shoes on the side of your head. Under these conditions the pH of the inner ear environment becomes basic (above 7.0) promoting yeast and

bacterial accumulation. Your puppy should have clean, pink ears with no discharge. Wax in the ear indicates a problem that needs attention. A typical yeast infection will have a chocolate brown, greasy consistency and possibly a foul & mildewy odor.

During your puppy exams, Dr. Zekoff will check your pup's ears for infection and ear mites. If a problem is found, we will help you treat their ears accordingly. Long-term preventative care may include douching their ears to create an environment that is not conducive to bacterial and yeast growth. At home you may use a prepared ear solution such as Nolva-Cleanse, or a mixture of 1:1 white vinegar and water. You should also put a cotton ball in your dog's ears during bathing and douche the ears any time water gets into them. If you would like to prepare a douching solution in an easy-to-use form, we recommend getting the Nolvacleanse solution and then going to the grocery store and buying some Wet Ones (antibacterial form) Wipes. They come 40 to a bottle. Open the top of the Wet Ones and pour in 2 oz. (1/2 of a small bottle of Nolvacleanse) into the center of the column of wipes. Recap the top and rethread the wipes. You now have 40 wipes with the right pH and are easy to use. On a regular basis (2x/week and after baths), take one wipe out to clean the ears. Use a routing action vs. a ram-rod motion to clean the ears. You do not want pack any discharge deep into the ear canal. You will not be able to get anywhere near the ear drum with this wiping motion, so don't worry about that. This will clean the ear, the dogs usually accept it pretty well, and it leaves a nice acid-pH residue behind. This discourages yeast and bacterial growth in the ear canal. If you notice a buildup of a dark chocolate brown/Tootsie Roll-colored discharge in the ear(s), your dog is probably starting with a yeast infection. We recommend increasing the frequency of the 'douching' to *twice-a-day* for 10 – 14 days to try to reverse the trend of an alkaline pH and growth of yeast. Usually this is more than adequate to control the situation and we do not need to see the dog.

E. Identification

All dogs in Hamilton County over three months of age must be licensed with the Hamilton County Auditor within 30 days of acquisition. If your pet is lost, anyone who finds it can call the number on the tag and enter the license number into the system. They will then be told your name, address, and phone number so your pet can be quickly returned to you. If your pet is found without a license, you would be assessed a fine. The license application is included in your puppy folder and the cost is \$13.00 in Hamilton County. Another form of identification available at Towne Square Animal Clinic is the Home Again microchip system. This form of identification is particularly useful if your dog has lost her/his collar. A small microchip is inserted with a needle under the dog's skin between the shoulder blades. The chip can then be registered with the retrieval service to include your name, address, and chip number. A tag with the retrieval center's phone number and your pet's personal identification number is placed on the dog's collar. However, if the collar is lost, most local shelters and many veterinary clinics have microchip scanners that will read the chip and reveal the identification number, which will provide the information needed to reunite you with your pet. There is a one-time fee of \$12.50 for registration, which is handled by the American Kennel Club.

Dr. Zekoff and the Towne Square Animal Clinic staff want to help you have a happy, healthy puppy! Your new companion will provide you with love and friendship for many years to come and we will be here for both of you every step of the way. Feel free to call with any questions and set up your new puppy appointment today!

