
How to Have a Healthy Dog

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Introduction

After our family, nothing comes closer to stroking our heartstrings than our pets. Both felines and canines are the favorites for most folks. But for our discussion today, we are going to help you determine whether you have a healthy dog.

“Fido” can’t speak for himself and relies on you to be his eyes and ears for everything in his or her world. That means everything from what is the best diet to reading the signs of illness.

In **How to Have a Healthy Dog** you will find answers to the questions that your pet isn’t able to ask. Hopefully our input will create a long and healthy life for your revered pet. Let’s get started!

Does Your Dog Have Allergies?

Constant scratching, tail-chasing, coughing and wheezing, eye and nose discharges – if these symptoms can be observed on your pet dog, chances are very likely that he/she is suffering from allergies.

Yes, dogs, just like their masters can suffer from allergies. Roughly about 20 percent of the dogs living in our homes suffer from some allergy type. Major classifications of canine allergies are atopic dermatitis, flea allergy, food allergy and inhalant allergy.

Atopic Dermatitis

Atopic dermatitis is skin allergy disease caused by hypersensitivity developed by your dog's immune system to several and very common substances like molds and dust mites.

If your dog scratches and licks himself very often (particularly licking and chewing the paws, abdomen and legs), and his/her ears are hot to the touch, he/she may be suffering from atopic dermatitis.

Check to see if your dog's saliva causes stains. A red to brown stain is another indicator that your dog is atopic. In persistent cases, the skin on the abdomen changes color from pink, to a bright red then to black.

Flea Allergy

Flea allergy is the most common form of canine allergy. However, it is not the flea but the flea's saliva that your dog may be allergic to.

To find out if your dog has flea allergies, a skin allergy test is preformed. If it he/she is tested positive, a strict control regimen can reduce symptoms. Consult you're your vet as to what type of treatment is best for your pet. There is a wide array of choices ranging from pills to sprays to shampoos

Inhalant Allergy

Just like their masters, dogs are susceptible to allergens inhaled from the air. Pollen from trees, grass, and flowers, dust mites and molds are just some of the common culprits.

However, unlike their masters who exhibit inhalant allergies through sneezing and coughing, dogs show their reactions through

scratching and biting as well as chewing of feet and licking constantly. A less common reaction is recurrent infections in your dog's ears.

You can help alleviate the allergy by vacuuming frequently and dusting the areas your dog spends much time in (like his sleeping area).

Food Allergy

Dogs also exhibit allergies to the food they eat. And this is perhaps the most tedious to diagnose because food allergies can mimic any of the other allergies mentioned in this article.

First thing to do is to remove all possible allergy causing ingredients from your pet's diet. You can do this by using a homemade meal of a protein and starch source your dog has not had before. Add gradually (one at a time for about a week), more ingredients into it. If symptoms return after adding a particular ingredient, then the possible allergen could be identified.

However, allergic reactions may not appear for about a week after consuming the allergen so be sure to confirm your findings with

your vet. Once it has been verified, avoid the ingredient in the dog foods you'll subsequently feed your pet with.

Other symptoms of food allergies are vomiting, diarrhea, wheezing and sometimes, even changes in behavior.

Relief

You can help your pet and alleviate his allergy woes by bathing and conditioning your dog regularly. Contrary to what most people will tell you, you can never bathe your dog too often. Water helps to relieve your dog's skin and keeps it healthy. It also rinses off allergens from their body. Different kinds of shampoos are available to treat allergies, depending, of course, on your pet's particular condition.

Treatment

Corticosteroids are also a useful for controlling allergies by reducing the inflammation in your dog's skin. Although it will weaken the immune system a bit, it is often necessary in order to treat the allergy. Some side effects are increased appetite and drinking, and higher chances of developing infections. It is therefore not recommended for long-term use. If a longer duration of use is

necessary, your pet has to have regular check up on his/her blood and urine.

Prednisone, a short-acting steroid, can be used orally and is safer than the long-acting steroids. Taken with antihistamines and Omega fatty acids and frequent bathing, these short-acting steroids can be used effectively in the least amount used.

An allergy injection, also called immunotherapy, is a series of treatments meant to produce immunity to substances your dog is currently allergic to. Skin and blood testing is performed to find out what substances causes your pet's allergies. These substances then are given to your dog in small but increasing amounts via injections. Over a period of time, the dog becomes desensitized to the substances and no longer exhibits allergic reactions to them.

Finding out what allergies your pets are suffering from and the allergens that cause them may be a tedious, pain-staking process. But it is worth the effort especially as you see the relief you give your dog translate to a pet that's in a better disposition and mood, perhaps in gratitude for the time you've spent to understand and take care of their ailments.

What is Canine Distemper?

Canine distemper is a serious disease caused by a highly contagious virus that attacks the respiratory, gastrointestinal, and nervous systems of dogs. The virus also infects foxes, wolves, coyotes, raccoons and other wild animals in the canine family. Juvenile dogs are most prone to infection. Older dogs can also be infected although with much less frequency.

More than 50% of dogs that acquire the disease die from canine distemper. An even lower 20% survival rate is present for puppies. And even if the dog survives the disease, it is very likely that its health will be permanently damaged.

A case of canine distemper leaves the nervous system impaired with little to no hope for total recover. Partial or complete paralysis is common as well as other effects on sense of smell, and hearing and sight acuity. Infected dogs are more prone to other diseases such as pneumonia. The canine distemper virus (CDV) is not transmissible to man.

Canine distemper virus is transmitted most often through getting in contact with mucous and discharges from the infected dogs' eyes and noses. Exposure to the urine and feces of dogs with this infection can also cause it.

Even without coming in contact with infected dogs, a healthy one can still contract the disease through exposure to kennels and other areas where infected dogs have been in. These areas can still harbor the virus since it is airborne and can stay alive outside a host for long periods of time.

It is almost impossible to prevent your pet from exposure to the virus. Some scientists predict that every dog living for 12 months has had contact with the virus at one point in time.

The symptoms of canine distemper are not necessarily easily detected. And it is because of this that immediate treatment is rarely given. The disease is commonly disguised as something like a bad cold with most of the dogs with the infection running a fever and a stuffy head. Complications such as pneumonia, bronchitis and severe inflammation of the stomach and intestines can also develop from the disease.

What an owner should be on the look out for in watching for signs of distemper such as squinting and/or a discharge from the eyes. If this occurs in tandem to loss of weight, vomiting, coughing, nasal drips, and diarrhea, there is more cause for concern.

The virus then affects the nervous system in more advanced stages of the disease, which can cause nervous ticks and twitches as well as partial to complete paralysis. Infected dogs may also display listless behavior and have poor to no appetites. There have been cases when the virus causes sudden growth of the footpad's tough keratin cells, which results in a hardened pad.

Prevention

Canine distemper is so well-spread and the symptoms so varying that if your pet displays any signs such as those mentioned above, a visit to a veterinarian for a diagnosis should be made promptly.

Similar to some viral diseases, surviving an infection usually develops the sufficient immunity needed to protect the dog from distemper infection for the rest of their lives. However, lots of dogs (especially pups) do not survive infection.

Vaccination is still the safest and surest protection. And until scientists develop a distemper vaccine that guarantees life-long immunity with a single series of inoculations, veterinarians recommend vaccinations for your dog every year.

Puppies who have been born to dogs that have survived the disease acquire a certain amount of natural immunity from the colostral milk produced by their mother during the first few days after birth. The amount of immunity a puppy acquires differs with the amount of antibodies its mother has. Nevertheless, it is never complete and will diminish quickly to about half by 8 days old and then nearly three-fourths by 2 weeks' time.

It is impossible for a pet owner to know when his pet should be vaccinated since the proper time for vaccination varies from one animal to the other. The veterinarian can determine the most proper time to begin vaccination basing this decision upon his experience and your dog's general health.

To maintain and assure this general good health and condition, regular care and close observation of hints of ill health are required.

Experts suggest consulting immediately with your veterinarian if your pet shows signs of:

- Abnormal eye and/or nose discharge
- Loss of appetite
- Fluctuating weight losses and gains
- Excessive water consumption
- Abnormal and uncontrolled stool production
- Abnormal viciousness or lethargy
- Abnormal limping
- Difficulty getting up or lying down
- Constant head shaking, scratching, licking or biting of body
- Loss of hair, open sores, ragged or dull coat
- Foul breath
- Excessive tartar deposits on teeth

It is possible that even with these symptoms, CDV infection may not be the case. But it is still better to be sure to bring these concerns to an expert so that the problem can be addressed right away.

Even with a disease this serious, you can turn the tide of canine distemper to your pet's favor with prudence for your pet's health,

taking the correct actions to symptoms observed and being in constant consultation with your vet.

Selecting a Proper Diet for Your Dog

How and what we feed our dog has a big effect on our pet's health and over-all behavior. There are so many commercially available dog foods to choose from that making the right decision can be somewhat impossible. But let's tackle the problem nonetheless.

For a change, look beyond the labels and advertisements and look into what exactly your dog food contains. What follows is a partial list to help you find out if your dog is getting what he needs in the right amounts.

If your pet dog has large, smelly stool, is gaseous, burps often, sheds constantly, is prone to ear and skin infections, has either no energy or is hyperactive and if his immune system is weak, something may be wrong with your pet's diet. Although any or a combination of these symptoms may occur occasionally, having

them recur often is a cause for concern and reviewing your pet's diet is one of the first things you should look into.

First of all, your dog needs 45 nutrients to function properly. Major groups for these nutrients are protein, carbohydrates, fat, vitamins and minerals, as well as water. These nutrients have to be in the right amounts so that they are properly digested and absorbed by the body.

Protein

Remember that your dog, or any dog for that matter, is a carnivore, meaning his body mainly uses meat. That also means that vegetables and grains are not supposed to have a major contribution to your pet's diet.

On dog food packages how much protein is in the food is indicated. But finding out how much protein is in the food is not as important as knowing what source the protein came from.

Dog food makers have a wide choice of protein sources to choose from. Aside from meats (beef, chicken, lamb, etc.), plants and grains like corn, wheat and soy are used as sources.

To find out what sources have been used most in the package you're buying, look at the ingredients list. By law, the largest amount of ingredient used is listed first and others follow in decreasing amounts. You should see 3 meat sources on the first 5 items mentioned. Any less than that and you may not be giving your dog the proper protein for his diet.

Carbohydrates

Your dog will also need carbohydrates primarily for energy. But unlike their masters, dogs do not need a lot of carbohydrates to be healthy. A diet high in protein and low in carbohydrates is ideal for your pet.

Since dogs are meat-eaters, diets high in carbohydrates will take a long time for your pet to digest, not to mention resulting to large and smelly stool and gas. The gums can also grow sore due to excessive chewing and his breath can develop a bad smell. So only use a small amount of a carbohydrate source (such as grains) in your pet's diet.

Fats

Two kinds of fat exist. One is saturated (animal fat) and the other is polyunsaturated (vegetable fat). Your dog will need both and taken together supply essential fatty acids (EFA) needed to maintain good health.

Not enough fat in the diet can cause low energy levels, heart problems and dry skin. However, too much fat can cause obesity. Tumors and cancers can also develop. In reading the label, look for a product that has a good balance between animal and vegetable fat in it.

Vitamins

Vitamins are necessary to release nutrients from the food that the body can use. There are two types of vitamins: water-soluble vitamins and fat-soluble vitamins. Both types are needed by your dog.

Vitamins B and C are water-soluble. Too much of these will not harm the body much since it is urinated out in 4 to 8 hours. This is the reason they need to be in each meal. Vitamins A, D, E and K are fat-soluble. They are stored in fatty tissues of the body and the liver.

It is important to remember that vitamins are easily lost in the making of manufactured dog food. And they break down as soon as you open the package and expose the food to light and air.

Vitamins B and C are particularly sensitive.

Vitamin C is needed for healthy teeth and gums as well as for a strong immune system to fight diseases. While dogs can produce their own vitamin C, it is not enough and therefore needs to be part of the diet. Vitamin B is needed for energy and to break down protein and carbohydrates.

Minerals

Minerals are a critical component of a diet but they make up less than 2% of most formulated dog food products. Since more than half of the necessary minerals are lost in manufacturing processes, adding mineral supplements to your pet's food is recommended.

Water

Ready access to fresh and clean is necessary for your dog to maintain proper body functions as well as to aid the body to break down hard-to-digest food like meats.

Whether you make your own dog food or buy them off the shelf, it is necessary to make sure the proper nutrients in the right amounts are given to your dog. Just a little effort goes a long way in helping our pets lead a healthy life as your companion.

What is Kennel Cough?

Kennel cough or infectious tracheobronchitis is a common and highly communicable respiratory disease in dogs. The disease is characterized by a dry, hacking cough that sounds as if something is lodged in the dog's throat, and can be quite forceful that it leads to retching or heaving.

Healthy dogs can easily acquire the disease in vaccination clinics, animal shelters, veterinary hospitals, local parks, kennels, dog shows, grooming parlors or animal boarding places with infected dogs. Crowded situations where the air is very warm and ventilation is poor are a potential source of kennel cough.

Kennel cough can be caused by one or a combination of the following airborne agents (either as the causative or secondary

agent): canine distemper virus, canine adenovirus 2, canine parainfluenza virus, the bordetella bronchiseptica or other gram negative bacteria. The condition is triggered when two or more of these pathogens attack the dog at the same time, leading to bronchial and tracheal inflammation. Other signs of kennel cough include thick yellow or green nasal discharge, rhinitis and conjunctivitis in some dogs.

A dog will exhibit clinical signs of kennel cough between five to 10 days following infection from carriers. Although the condition sounds serious, the self-limiting nature of the disease makes it generally harmless, with dogs recovering without any major effect a week or two after. Kennel cough symptoms can persist for up to 20 days. Owners should note that extremely young and old dogs may develop serious respiratory complications from the disease.

The disease is usually diagnosed by a veterinarian by checking on the dog's history and a physical exam. The trademark cough can be triggered by simply massaging the animal's trachea or larynx.

In cases where dogs have fever, depression or unusual lung sounds, veterinarians may require a chest x-ray, complete blood

count and a laboratory analysis to check for microorganisms in the airways. These diagnostic tests will help establish if pneumonia is already developed or canine distemper and other infections have already set in.

Affected dogs usually remain active and maintain appetite levels despite kennel cough. However, since the trachea becomes highly sensitive, owners should loosen or avoid leashes and collars to minimize the possibility of tracheal damage, particularly when their pets have a coughing spasm.

Since dogs often recover from the disease by themselves shortly after contraction, treatment usually focuses on cough control.

Butorphanol and hydrocodone are two common control drugs given for kennel cough, although pet owners should first consult their veterinarians for advice on the best treatment for their dogs, particularly for antibiotics in more severe cases. These cases - some of which could lead to pneumonia - typically call for isolation of the infected pet to prevent the disease from spreading.

Vaccinations are another preventive step. There is a subcutaneous vaccine of modified live parainfluenza, distemper and adenovirus 2

and an intranasal B bronchochiseptica vaccination. Similar to human patients, vaccination schedule and dosage varies across dogs in terms of age, with activities also considered by veterinarians.

Aggressive dogs are the ideal patient for injectable vaccination, particularly if they are the type that bites when their muzzle is handled. Owners should remember that this treatment will not prevent kennel cough 100%, but will make infection less severe.

Two-week old puppies can already receive intranasal vaccination, which gives 10-12 months immunity and followed with annual booster shots. This form offers faster immunity compared to injectables, as it stimulates local immunity by targeting the site where the infection naturally occurs.

The DHLLP vaccine is the standard vaccine for kennel cough, with the treatment for adenovirus 2 applicable also to adenovirus 1 - the canine hepatitis agent. Owners must remember that vaccination will no longer be effective if their dogs are already incubating kennel cough.

Some veterinarians prescribe a cough suppressant-antibiotic combinations following diagnosis. One recently developed antibiotic, azithromycin, has been found highly effective, particularly for mycoplasmal tracheobronchitis. Another option is the sulfa/trimethoprim combination.

Since multiple organisms cause kennel cough, immunization may not eliminate totally eliminate the problem. Owners should also consider preventive measures to limit exposure, including refraining other dogs - both familiar and unfamiliar - from sharing food and toys with their pets.

In addition, a good number of veterinarians feel that no treatment may actually be the best course of action, as antibiotics could later weaken a dog's resistance and increase exposure to pneumonia and other more serious complications.

Dental Hygiene for Dogs

Healthier Teeth for a Healthier Pet

Dental hygiene is important beyond having healthier teeth for dogs. Gum and teeth infection, broken teeth or tooth loss, and related periodontal problems involving connective tissue in the dog's mouth can lead to bacteria making its way into the pet's bloodstream. This can lead to infection of the heart, lungs, liver, intestinal tract, kidney and other internal organs and other side effects.

Dental pet care experts say that up to 80% of dogs manifest signs of dental diseases by three years in the absence of proper oral hygiene. Getting dogs accustomed to dental care as early as possible is crucial to ensuring their long-term health. With regular check-ups, cases such as bad bite or malocclusion, gingival irritation, deciduous teeth and tartar formation can be spotted earlier. This will prevent the situation from worsening and help save the dog's teeth.

In some cases, veterinarians may advise pre-anesthesia blood work, or an overall health check to determine if the dog's kidneys

and other internal organs are functioning properly and if blood count is normal. The process will also help establish any potential risk before anesthesia is applied.

An antibiotic may be administered to dogs with bad teeth before the dental to eliminate the infection and minimize complications.

Fasting will also be required the night before anesthesia application.

The check-up itself will involve looking for cavities, gum pockets, loose teeth, tartar and unusual palate or gum growth.

It should be noted that pets seldom experience tooth decay, due in part to their non-acidic saliva, cone-shaped teeth and natural cleaning from their habit of chewing and gnawing. However, an owner who notices that his pet has bad breath must recognize this as a sign that infection is already present and that tartar has already built up.

Tartar can be found below the gums and breeds bacterial growth, leading to inflammation. Owners who know how dog teeth develop would be better equipped in handling such a situation.

After being born without any teeth, dogs grow them from the second or third week after birth. At about eight weeks, puppies generally have 28 temporary teeth, including incisors, pre-molars and canines, that they start losing when they reach 12 weeks.

Adult dogs grow about 42 permanent teeth that start appearing at six months. When this happens, some dogs can become uncomfortable, chewing actively and mouthing anything to ease the discomfort and pain.

Dogs develop incisors - 12 small front teeth - that they use for grooming themselves and for picking up small objects. For larger pieces, including food, dogs use four canine or cuspid teeth that are long and pointed.

Slicing action on small food bits is done using 16 premolars, while grinding and crushing support comes from 10 molars at the back of the dog's mouth.

There are basic steps dog owners can take to keep their pet's teeth healthy. Toothpastes and toothbrushes designed specially for dogs are already available in the market. The finger brush - similar to

that for the human infant - is a rubber hood worn by the owner over his finger. The product has soft rubber bristles on one side and is used by the owner to clean the teeth and massage the gums of his pet. The finger brush can later be replaced by a regular dog toothbrush after the pet becomes accustomed to the cleaning process.

Brushing a dog's teeth should be done at a 45-degree angle, at the junction where they meet the gums. Small circular motions are ideal, followed by vertical strokes. This two-step process will help pull out and discourage the formation of plaque. The owner should brush his pet's teeth several times a week, making sure that all teeth are covered.

For affluent owners, bringing their dogs to a veterinarian for scaling and polishing every two or three years will also help. Since the goal is to make these check-ups regular, making the dog used to being handled as early as possible will make it comfortable even when its mouth and teeth are being held and prevent it from becoming angry or biting.

Owners should be aware of the things their pets eat and play with. Rawhide chews, knobby plastic toys and some other items are also part of dental hygiene, as they are not hard enough to damage teeth and help in the cleaning process. However, small toys and real bones should be monitored, as they would pose problems if they break into pieces and are swallowed.

Eliminating Heartworm

Should Dogs Be Given Medicine?

Studies show that all 50 US states have reported cases of heartworm infection, a condition that can affect all dogs regardless of sex, age or habitat. The highest incidence for dogs not taking preventive medicine rises to a high of 45%, including areas from the Gulf of Mexico to New Jersey, while some areas record rates of 5% and below for the canine heartworm disease.

The difference is due mainly to mosquito, environmental and dog population factors, although all dogs in affected regions are still seen as at-risk animals that need to be monitored regularly by veterinarians and covered by prevention programs.

Dogs become infected when they are bitten by mosquitoes with infective heartworm larvae. The infection is transmitted, with the larvae eventually growing into adult female and male worms that live not only in the heart, but also in the lungs and related blood vessels. The offspring, called microfilariae, are released by the female heartworm into the bloodstream.

Practically all experimentally infected dogs were found to have adult worms, with up to 250 worms possible for one dog.

More adverse changes to the lungs and heart are observed for dogs with a higher number of the worms. The infections later lead to inflammation that affects the lungs and surrounding arteries. The heart is thus pressured by the increased workload, becoming enlarged and weakening and eventually, congestive heart failure kills the dog. The heartworms can also be found in the caudal vena cava - the main vein between the liver and the heart - where they can cause liver failure syndrome.

The main purpose of treating infected dogs is to kill both offspring and adult worms using a microfilaricide and adulticide respectively. A crucial condition of treatment: minimizing any adverse side effect due to the drugs used and a tolerable level of complications due to the dying heartworms.

Dogs without or with mild signs have shown significant success following treatment, while those exhibiting more severe signs also have successful treatment, but are more prone to complications and death.

The US Food and Drug Administration has already approved an organic arsenical compound, melarsomine dihydrochloride, to kill adult heartworms. Dogs that will use this therapy are required to undergo an extensive pretreatment evaluation and must remain in the hospital during treatment.

This FDA-approved drug, which has proven to be less toxic and more safe and effective than its predecessors, is given through intramuscular injection into a dog's lumbar muscles. However, a key post-treatment concern is severe pulmonary thromboembolism, in which lesions in the lung arteries and capillaries and dead heartworms obstruct blood flowing through the pulmonary arteries.

More severe lesions and a higher number of dead worms cause greater obstruction, with cough, fever and hemoptysis appearing as symptoms. Dogs showing these clinical signs will have to be strictly limited in terms of treatment and exercise and given corticosteroids to reduce inflammation.

Although total elimination of adult heartworms may not be possible, dogs have shown clinical improvement following adulticide therapy.

A common follow-up to the therapy is heartworm antigen testing: the antigen will not be detected four months after adulticide treatment if all or a very small number of the parasites survived.

Dogs found to be antigen-positive post-adulticide may have the treatment repeated, but only following an extensive case review. One option is to resume arsenical use with ivermectin or other preventive, a combination expected to eventually kill all surviving worms.

Meanwhile, selamectin, ivermectin, and moxidectin are available as treatments for microfilariae. These macrocyclic lactone anthelmintics are present in regular heartworm preventives as active ingredients, although they do not have FDA approval as microfilaricides.

Although these drugs do not have regulatory clearance, they are still popular as treatments because of the absence of approved drugs to eliminate microfilariae. Thus, dogs using these ML anthelmintics must remain in the hospital after treatment to be monitored for any potential side effect due to the rapid death of the

offspring worms. Use of ML preventives is expected to eventually eliminate all microfilariae in six to nine months' time.

Thus, dog owners should thoroughly weigh the risk between heartworm treatment and the partial or full recovery of their pets. Whatever decision is made, the owners should always be pro-active in ensuring the best health care for their dogs.

Your Dog's Intestinal Parasites

Statistics show that one in three dogs at some time can be infected with intestinal parasites such as roundworms, hookworms, whipworms, and tapeworms. Taking care of our canine friends not only stop at grooming, but also checking for parasites which can be detrimental to their health. The following is a list of the common intestinal parasites that infect your dog, what they are, how your dog can possibly acquire them, its harmful effects to your dog and to you, and of course, how to get rid of it.

ROUNDWORMS (*Toxocara canis*, *Toxascaris leonine*)

Description

Most common to infect the animal kingdom, roundworms grow 2 – 4 inches long, tan or white creatures with tapered ends that look like spaghetti.

How they are acquired

Puppies are usually born with them. Those infected with roundworms have a potbelly or a bloated look and dry, scaly coat. When your pets are in unsanitary conditions, don't be surprised if your dog becomes infested. Unlike hookworm eggs, roundworm eggs are very resistant to drying, sunlight or antiseptics. They can last for years in soil and still be infectious.

Harmful Effects to your Dog

If in huge numbers, a dog may vomit these worms or discharge them all as a whole in the fecal matter. Roundworms can cause diarrhea – the infestation's effect is evident on your pet's general appearance. They can also cause intestinal blockage and stool cannot pass if they become too many.

Harmful Effects to Man

Since roundworms are zoonotic, they can be transferred to humans. They cause an infection known as “Visceral Larva Migrants”, which result in inflammation of muscle tissue. Young children are susceptible to transfer and can experience eye inflammations leading to blindness.

Treatment

Usually used to treat roundworms are pyrantel pamoate, fenbendazole and piperazine, both classified as Anthelmintics or dewormers.

TAPEWORMS (*Dipylidium caninum*)

Description

Tapeworms can be seen unlike other parasites. Tapeworm segments, usually white in color, can be seen after in the dog’s feces or rectum after elimination that broke off from the adult.

How they are acquired

Fleas can carry tapeworm eggs, so the ingestion of parasite eggs is the only way to infection.

Harmful Effects to your Dog

Although they don't cause much harm to our canine friends, tapeworms cause pet owners to squirm at their ghastly sight. Dogs experience cramping and sometimes gas.

Harmful Effects to Man

Children can accidentally swallow fleas that have eggs, causing intense discomfort. Fish can also be an intermediate host – so be careful in eating raw fish.

Treatment

Antiparasitic agents, praziquantel and epsiprantel are both used both by oral medication or injection.

HOOKWORMS (*Ancylostoma caninum*)

Description

Hookworms are blood-sucking intestinal parasites and are invisible to the naked eye.

How they are acquired

Puppies can acquire hookworm eggs from their mother and unhygienic surroundings or soil. Heat and dryness kills hookworm eggs quickly.

Harmful Effects to your Dog

If your dog is infected, their feces look abnormally blackish and loose. In the first week of infection, they may look healthy, but extreme infections in injured or young dogs can be lethal. They can cause intestinal bleeding leading to anemia and bloody diarrhea.

Harmful Effects to Man

In humans, hookworms can also cause intestinal bleeding especially to children. In adults, they can cause an infection known as "Cutaneous Larva Migrans" or "creeping eruption". Lesions that can be really itchy are caused by hookworm larvae nestling into the skin usually in the feet. More so, when severe, they can cause abdominal pains and eye problems.

Treatment

Hookworms can be diagnosed by the examination of the pet's fecal matter. Dewormers include pyrantel pamoate and fenbendazole. An example of a product is Heartgard.

WHIPWORMS (*Trichuris vulpis*)

Description

Another unseen freeloader is the whipworm, which is the most difficult to exterminate. They do not need to leave the intestines to complete a life cycle.

Eggs are passed in the dog's stool and after 2-4 weeks in a warm, moist environment, they become infective to another dog. The eggs hatch and the worms mature in the cecal area of the intestine where they can cause chronic bowel inflammation.

How they are acquired

Most common in adult animals especially those housed in groups or kennels because they can become infectious to other dogs after a few weeks in a warm environment.

Harmful Effects to your Dog

The symptoms may include severe diarrhea, flatulence, loss of weight and general overall condition. Whipworms can cause chronic bowel inflammation.

Harmful Effects to Man

Luckily, these parasites only adhere to our canine friends.

Treatment

Fenbendazole (Panacur) is usually prescribed after diagnosis. To regulate these parasites, give doses of milbemycin oxime every month, a heartworm preventive medication.

What breeds are prone Hip Displasia?

Usually, large breeds of dogs are more prone to hip dysphasia. Labradors, Great Pyrenees, Great Danes, Retrievers, German Shepherds, Saint Bernards, Rottweilers and Sporting Dog Breeds are examples. However, small dogs can also acquire this. If your dogs belong to any of the mentioned breeds, the following information might help you.

What is Hip Displasia?

Hip Displasia, a degenerative condition, is an abnormality in the expansion of the hip joint, where the ball joint of the dogs hips are misshapen, caused by too much laxity in the joint. This in turn results to wear and tear of the abnormal arthritic bones causing extreme pain. Not only can this cause pain, the joint can also come right out of the socket.

How did my dog acquire this?

Hip displasia is a genetic disease, meaning the pup can inherit it from its parents. Note that not all dogs inclined to get this disease will acquire it. Other factors also contribute, like environmental factors, rapid weight changes and other genetic factors as well. Tracing your pet's family lineage will help you determine if your dog is prone to this disease. If there is no incidence of hip displasia in your pet's family, then your dog will not get it.

What are its symptoms?

It is difficult to diagnose because it may or may not show clinical signs. Common signs exhibited are lameness on one or both rear limbs, difficulty in standing or walking, hopping like a bunny, and decrease in mobility. After the joint's growth period, many pups display pain sporadically even before arthritis begins to exhibit. It can lead to severe arthritis, in which your pet can be in extreme pain. Rarely, puppies as young as 5 or 6 months can show these symptoms.

What is the treatment?

If you suspect your dog has hip dysplasia, bring to the clinic and have your pet X-rayed. There are two methods to see if your dog has hip dysplasia – the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) testing uses a standard view and another developed by the University of Pennsylvania Hip Improvement Program (PennHip), which shows to be more effective in detecting Hip Dysplasia in puppies.

There are two treatment plans based on the time the disease has occurred – before and after the growth of the hip joint. Triple Pelvic Osteotomy, the surgical reconstruction of the hip joint, is

recommended for puppies less than a year of age. Be careful though – clinical symptoms related to hip dysplasia can be caused by other illnesses such as osteochondrosis, strain or sprain in one of the joints, or back and pelvis injury.

However, dogs that show symptoms after the growth, it is best to first find out if it can be treated through medication or surgery.

Medical treatment includes aspirin, phenylbutazone or glycosaminoglycans. Narcotics can be used to eliminate pain.

There is a strong connection between the administration of glycosaminoglycans and a considerable decrease in the dog's arthritis.

Although non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) medications can be used, different dogs have varying reactions to medicines. That's why it is best to consult your veterinarian on which medicine works well for your dog. If this proves to be unsatisfactory, you may resort to surgery.

Total Hip Replacement is most excellent, especially for severe hip dysplasia. This is very effective because the hip joint is replaced with artificial parts to eradicate pain. Femoral Head Osteotomy or

Femoral head and neck excision is also an option wherein just the femoral head is removed, which can be performed at any age. It eliminates most of the pain associated with hip arthritis because there is a reduced contact between the bones, but not all dogs are cut out for this method. Surgery is more costly primarily, but in the long run, it will save the dog owner on pain relievers. Once the surgery has completed, a recuperation period of about 3-6 months will be commended by the doctor.

Any more advice?

This illness is very painful for your pet. Thus, measures should be taken to alleviate pain such as medication and giving them a warm and comfortable place to rest in, especially for older dogs. Regular walks and physical exercises can reduce weight, which can decrease the dog's discomfort. For young pups, gradual introduction of adult dog food is recommended for gradual gain weight.

How to Control Fleas

Fleas are parasites that feed off your dog's blood. Flea eggs can be found almost everywhere – in your couch, carpet, etc. so the

likelihood of infection is very high. To know if your dog has fleas, look for flea excrement – small, dark, curly dots that are also known as “flea dirt.”

To do this, brush your pet’s coat with a white cloth or sheet and look for these black specks, which contains digested blood that looks reddish brown when wet. If your dog has a darker coat, eggs that resemble dandruff is visible when a magnifying glass is used.

Dangers of Fleas

Besides really annoying your dog, fleas can also cause an allergic reaction called flea allergy dermatitis (FAD) which leads to hair loss, skin inflammation and irritation. For severe cases, your pet can experience anemia due to blood loss. This can be fatal if your pet is young or debilitated. Also, fleas are carriers of common tapeworms, which can cause cramping and gas.

Preventing Infection

Putting flea powder on your vacuum cleaner will exterminate all the fleas inside the bag. Monthly topicals is an easy and inexpensive approach to protect your house from fleas. Bio Spot or Frontline Plus are recommended topical brands available. You might also want to build a doghouse or spot for your dog that is elevated since fleas can't jump higher than a foot. Water is a flea's top enemy, so wash the areas that a dog might run around – like your backyard. Minimal contact with grasses and woods will lessen the possibility of infection. If you have a garden, trim leaves and clear brushes, as well as grassy and kennel areas.

If you have a home grooming kit for your dog, it is best to include a flea comb. Use it regularly on your pet. Its soft, fine bristles, it will catch the flea. Start combing around the hindquarters and the pet's head, where flea dirt can also be seen. When you trap a flea, immediately put it in soap-water solution. Fleas thrive in warm conditions, that's why in warmer climates, it is best to give your dog flea products the whole year. Although pupa stages can become dormant in cold climates, increasing the length of its lifespan composed of egg, larva, pupa and adult.

Treatment

A flea bath is the first step to a parasite-free pet. Be careful in using a flea shampoo because most products are too harsh on puppies. Consult your veterinarian on what to use if your puppy has fleas. It can also relieve irritation and itching. Don't stop at shampooing because it doesn't really protect your dog after getting a bath.

One alternative is using flea dips that keep fleas at bay for some time after dipping, but it is not recommended by most veterinarians. The downside is that your dog might eat or swallow these parasites after licking, since a flea dip stays on the dog's hair coat. Another option is a flea collar. It will only kill all the fleas in the dog's neck and face – not the whole body. Some also dogs develop a rash when using flea collars. While flea medallions can contaminate the dog's drinking water, since it hangs loose from the collar.

A good choice is the use of flea sprays and powders – both for your dog and your house, so be careful in reading the instructions to know which is which. Products intended for your home is too strong

to use on your pet. Using two or three different flea products at the same time can be toxic for your dog.

If there are numerous fleas that infested your dog, it is recommended that you treat your home too. Methoprene and fenoxycarb, two active ingredients contained in flea sprays are efficient and safe. It stops the growth of eggs into adult fleas. As mentioned, sprays are too strong for dogs, so take them outside for a walk when you treat your home. Some products are designed to destroy adult fleas – one product is Insect Growth Regulators (IGR) can help kill flea eggs and larvae. Before applying such products, vacuum your carpet or furniture first to rouse eggs and larvae from their cocoons.

Veterinarians recommend these products to for flea control:

Pyriproxyfen (Nylor, Archer), Imidacloprid (Advantage), Lufenuron (Program), Fipronil (Frontline Top Spot), Cythioate (Proban), and Fenthion (Pro-Spot).

Parvovirus Is Deadly

Parvovirus is a word that is not to be taken lightly. For most dog owners, this word is the most dreaded thing to come out of the veterinarian's mouth. This virus causes the most common infectious disease among dogs in the United States. Aside from being common, it also is very deadly. Ignoring the symptoms of such will certainly result in death among canines.

Dog owners have to remain vigilant to signs and symptoms that point to the disease. Parvovirus is a highly contagious disease that manifests itself through diarrhea and bloody stool. It is caused by the canine parvovirus (CPV-2).

Signs and Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of parvovirus differ among dogs infected by such. Unfortunately, some dogs show very few symptoms. Some do not show any at all. Typically, parvovirus causes severe enteritis, or an inflammation of the intestines. This further leads to vomiting, diarrhea - which may be bloody, dark feces, dehydration, and lethargy. This virus will affect any breed, sex and age of dog. The virus manifests itself more severely among younger puppies.

There are a few breeds that are more susceptible to parvovirus than others. Among them are Rottweilers, Labradors, and Doberman Pinschers. Puppies six months and below usually manifest a more serious form of the disease.

After the onset of this disease, the dog could die in as little as two days if not given immediate and proper treatment. The virus typically takes 7 to 14 days to incubate. Active excretion of this virus through feces could begin as early as 3 days.

How the Virus Spreads.

Parvovirus can survive even on inanimate objects for up to five months. They particularly thrive on animals such as rats and insects. To prevent dogs from being infected, owners must keep kennels and surroundings clean. The virus can be spread through infected items such as clothing, food pans, cages, etc.

To disinfect such, cleaning the above mentioned articles with a 1:32 dilution of bleach or 1/2 cup per gallon is necessary. One may also expose the articles to Ultraviolet rays. Lots of sunlight can help eliminate the presence of these viruses.

It would do well to make sure that everything the dog will come in contact with is clean. Try avoiding having your dog come into contact with infected dogs and articles.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Although not all vomiting and bloody diarrhea is caused by parvovirus, it would still pay to take a trip to the veterinarian for a check up. The only way to verify whether a dog has parvovirus or not is clinical and laboratory diagnosis. It would be better to err on the side of safety on this matter. If you think your dog has the parvovirus, a quick trip to the veterinarian won't be in vain.

To treat the disease, a veterinarian will most likely recommend supportive therapy. This will involve replacing the fluids lost due to diarrhea and vomiting. This will probably be an electrolyte solution administered intravenously. In less severe cases, oral solutions will suffice. Antibiotics may be given to control secondary infections.

Medicines to control vomiting may also be given.

When the parvovirus symptoms subside, a de-worming agent may be used. Your veterinarian will also probably restrict the food the dog may take.

Fortunately, dogs that have recovered from the virus are immune from re-infection for the next twenty months. There is also a good chance that your dog will be immune for the rest of its life.

You may also want to consider vaccines for your puppies. You will want to consult your veterinarian on the right circumstances and effects of a vaccination for your dog. Vaccination may prove to be the best line of defense against parvovirus.

In the End

Parvovirus is not one disease to be taken lightly. It is a disease with a high rate of mortality, especially among puppies. Although one should not panic at the first hint of the disease, it should, at least, be taken seriously. Fortunately, through proper care and medication, the chances for survival after an infection are relatively high. But be warned that some cases, even with the best care and attention available, prove to be fatal. The best chance for preventing this disease is good information and vigilant hygiene.

How to Give Your Pet CPR

There will be instances where you might have to perform a CPR on your pet. What? A CPR on your pet? Are you serious? Yes, it is serious - serious enough that it may save your pet's life.

There are some instances where a pet may accidentally get something stuck in its airway.

This will cause choking and ultimately, death. Also, pet CPR will prove vital in cases where the pet has lost breathing or pulse. This is the case of most pets that go into arrest. If this happens, it is urgent that the pet's airway, breathing, and circulation is maintained.

To perform such, owners must be aware of the proper procedure of performing a CPR. Most trained veterinarians will be knowledgeable in this procedure. You may want to consult with them for proper advice on the procedures outlined here.

A. Airway

After determining that the animal is non-responsive, step one in performing animal CPR is obtaining a patent airway. This is a very important step. One should seek to achieve this first before continuing on.

Remember that making sure your pet has a clear airway is the most important aspect of CPR. Without oxygen your pet could die within minutes.

Pull out the tongue of your pet carefully. The emphasis here is on carefully. Pets, even when unconscious can bite by instinct. Keep the pet's neck straight, and line up the neck and the back. In case there is neck trauma, do not hyperextend the neck.

Afterwards, try giving the animal two rescue breaths. Perform this by putting your mouth to its nose, and keeping the animal's mouth closed. If your breaths go in then you can continue.

However, if they do not go in, it means that there is an obstruction in the animal's airway.

In this case, inspect the animal's airway, and try to extract the obstructing objects. If you cannot, try doing a modified Heimlich maneuver. Turn the animal over with its back against your chest

and its head towards the ground in a bear hug. Deliver five thrusts to the abdomen; imagine making each thrust dislodge the object. Be careful that you do not deliver too much pressure as it may cause damage if overdone.

Do not stop until you are able to clear the airway. Even if the animal goes into arrest, the primary concern for you is to keep the airway clear.

B. Breathing

With the airway is cleared, determine if the animal is breathing on its own. Pull out its tongue again (again very carefully) so that the tongue does not itself obstruct the airway, and perform mouth to nose respiration. Do this twenty times a minute. If the animal begins to breathe on its own, use a high-flow blowby.

C. Circulation

The last step of animal CPR should only be done if the airway and breathing are stabilized. First of all make sure there are no pools of blood or spurting. If there is, control these as necessary.

Lay the animal on its right side, now put your hands on the part where the animal's left elbow touches its chest. This is the marker for the middle of the animal's rib cage. Compress this part fifteen times then administer two rescue breaths per minute. This rate may have to change according to the size of the animal. If the pet is small use compressions that are half an inch deep, for medium dogs one inch, and for large dogs, one and a half inches. Repeat this as necessary until emergency assistance arrives.

When administering animal CPR, you must make a deliberate decision to be calm and collected. Doing such in panic will only result in wrong decisions that may further imperil the life of the animal. Your pet may not have a strong carotid pulse, so you might have to rely on its femoral pulse when assessing circulation.

Remember that your CPR actions are first-at-the scene maneuvers, and that your pet will still need expert medical attention. Make sure that the veterinarian has already been alerted as soon as the problem arises.

Pet CPR is a very important skill for those who deal with emergency medical cases concerning dogs. Although not everyone learns it,

those who do are a vital factor in saving the lives of many beloved pets.

Do Dogs Get Hepatitis?

Do dogs get hepatitis? People obviously do. But do dogs get this disease? And how does this affect them?

Hepatitis is actually a very broad term. It will signify an inflammation of the liver, although the causes may actually differ. Since the liver is a very complex and vital organ a disease that incapacitates it will prove to be fatal. The liver's primary functions are the detoxification, metabolism, the storage of glycogen and the synthesis of plasma protein. It also produces the bile that aids in digestion. The good news is, the liver is a large organ with plenty of reserves. The bad news is, since it has a large reserve, it won't show apparent symptoms unless the liver is seriously damaged.

Although dogs do get hepatitis, it may be different in cause and effect from human hepatitis. There is what is called Infectious Canine Hepatitis. This disease is caused by a virus, and may prove to be a fatal disease in some dogs.

What is It?

This disease is caused by the CAV-1 ? an adenovirus. Dogs typically acquire this virus from contact ? either through inhalation or ingestion ? of urine, eye secretions, and nasal secretions of infected dogs. This type of virus does not affect humans or other animals, only dogs.

The virus will attack the liver, eye, kidney, and blood vessel cells upon entry into the system of the dog. Fortunately, not all of these infections are fatal. Some dogs, after acquiring this virus, will manifest a cough, lethargy, loss of appetite, moodiness and low grade fevers. In some cases, they do not show any symptoms at all.

Some will develop i°blue eye.i± Blue eye is a bluish discoloration of the cornea of the pets eye. Dogs that go through these become immune to re-infection from the disease. This will usually be the case in healthy, mature dogs with a healthy immune system.

However, there are some dogs ? especially puppies ? that will become very ill due to the virus. These dogs will develop internal

bleeding, liver disease, tonsillitis, and general inflammation of the eyes and mouth. If left untreated, this condition could quickly deteriorate to shock and death.

The virus is also known to attack the dog's spinal cord and brain.

After infection the virus will take about five days to a week before manifesting openly. By this time the dog will be secreting the virus through its stool, urine, saliva, and nasal secretions. In two weeks time, the dog either succumbs to the illness or develops chronic hepatitis coupled with cirrhosis of the liver. This will seriously impair the dog's capacity for converting glucose, and absorbing toxins.

This condition will reduce the liver's capability to perform functions necessary for life. These functions include filtering harmful and toxic elements from the blood, storing blood sugar for conversion into usable energy, and creating many proteins that are necessary in the system.

Unfortunately, there is no way to destroy the virus after it has entered the dog's system. Veterinarians will treat the disease by good supportive therapy ? intravenous fluids, good diet, rest,

medicines to lighten the liver's workload, and good care ? all aimed to strengthen the dog's ability to recuperate. They will also give antibiotics to treat secondary infections.

There is a vaccine for this disease. It is a routine part of a puppy's vaccination plan. And partly due to its efficiency, the cases of canine hepatitis in the United States are low. Therefore, the best way to keep your dogs free from this disease is a proper vaccination plan, and prompt and periodic visits with the veterinarian.

Canine hepatitis can prove to be a troublesome disease that, if unattended, will surely result in a dog's death. With proper information about this disease dog owners will be able to take preemptive steps to assure themselves that their pets are safe from this debilitating diseases.

Chronic Active Hepatitis:

As opposed to the previous disease, this form of hepatitis is harder to treat and the prognoses are not very promising. This usually occurs in dogs of advanced age. The disease is caused by other factors such as toxins and molds in the dog's diet. Infectious Canine Hepatitis can also cause this.

The symptoms of this disease are hard to pinpoint, but generally they will include lethargy, diarrhea, loss of appetite, swollen abdomen, jaundice (or yellowing eyes, gums, and skin). This disease could advance into the nervous system and render the dog blind. Seizures, coma and death usually follow.

To avoid this disease, good health habits including a good diet that emphasizes foods screened for toxins and molds should be exercised.

Protect Your Dog From Leptospirosis

Leptospirosis is a contagious disease that affects animals as well as humans. Caused by a group of organisms called leptonospira interrogans (within such species there are different strains), the disease can lead to chronic liver and kidney disease and even death in dogs. Eight of the different strains give off different types and levels of disease which depends upon the animal that they infect. The disease causes more problems in dogs. Not until recently, the vaccines that were available are only for two types of bacteria

namely, *Leptospirosis canicola* and *L. icterhaemorrhagiae*, has virtually wiped out the clinical ailment associated with these strains between the immunized dog population. Vaccines for two other additional types of bacteria, *L. grippotyphosa* and *L. Pomona* are now readily available.

The leptospira organism

Leptospire grow well in water, appearing in a spiral shaped long body with hooks on both ends. They are called "aquatic spirochetes". They are of two species, *Leptospira biflexa* and *Leptospira interrogans* which cause disease in animals and humans. *Leptospira interrogans* is divided into strains based upon antigen (stimulates the production of antibodies) types, providing very little cross immunity opposed to one serovar and the host, which is the dog that has developed resistance to one strain either by vaccination or through former infection, will not be capable in repelling an infection brought about by a different strain.

Sources of infection

Bacteria carriers are generally rats and other rodents, though an infected dog can also be a source of infection. The most significant means of transmitting the disease is through urine ingestion and other forms of bacteria will penetrate very thin skin.

Leptospirosis transmission

The disease is transmitted when the animal comes in contact with the urine of other infected animals, through bite wounds and absorption of an infected tissue.

Indirect transmission happens when dogs wade in or drink contaminated water or food. Since stagnant water provides a very appropriate environment for the leptospira, dogs that wade in it get infected.

Infections are common in the fall and in summer because the survival of the organism is highly reduced by freezing.

Symptoms

During the first four to twelve days following the infection, the dog will have fever and experience shivering, vomiting, appetite loss, depression, conjunctivitis and pain.

In severe cases, the infected dog may develop hypothermia (abnormally low body temperature) eventually become depressed and die even before a kidney or liver breakdown.

Diagnosis

A microscopic agglutination test is performed on a blood sample of a suspected animal from a laboratory. This can test for individual strains and the animal's level of antibody (titer) to combat these strains.

Depending on the titer's level, a positive diagnosis to the precise and specific strain can then be made.

It will be helpful if many samples are drawn and tested as titers may have negative results in the first ten days after the infection, and former immunization shots may give an elevated titer and should be taken into consideration during the interpretation of the titers.

In dogs that are severely infected, they are expected to shed the leptospira organism in their urine, thus when a urine sample is taken and cultured, it can give a positive diagnosis. This is not the best way however, because the individual getting the sample may be at risk.

Treatment

Treatment usually will consist of antibiotics, fluid replacement for rehydration through intravenous as well as controlling the dog's vomiting through antiemetics and other problems related to liver or kidney infections. Note that dehydration must be correct within six to twelve hours.

Penicillin or one of its byproduct is the antibiotic that is given to treat early infection, after which, doxycycline is used for cure and prevention of possible continuing carrier state.

Prevention through vaccination

Currently, there are many vaccines available for a large variety of species. Chemically inactivated (killed species) vaccines are available for dogs and whole culture vaccine which causes the dog vaccine reactions. Before, leptospiral vaccines only protect against *L. canicola* and *L. icterohaemorrhagiae*. Only in the year 2000 that a new vaccine was developed to also protect dogs from *L. grippityphosa* and *L. pomona*.

Prevention through other forms:

1. Solve your rodent problem in the home, keep it well under control.
2. Keep away stagnant water. Make sure to clean and take stagnant water out every corner of your yard, so your dog will not be tempted to drink and to play in it.
3. Mow your lawn regularly.
4. Always provide clean drinking water for your dog.

5. Always be sensitive to your pet's condition. If he shows any abnormal signs, take him to the veterinarian immediately.

Regular Vaccinations And Your Dog

Vaccination is a sure way to protect your dog against viral diseases and ensure a longer happy life.

A mother dog protects her puppy around six to twelve weeks after birth. She has passed on her immunity mechanism to her puppies by providing disease-fighting antibodies in her first milk. This is called the Maternally Derived Antibody (MDA) or known as "passive immunity." After those weeks of immunity, MDA fades and the puppy is left to protect itself and soon, vaccination takes over the mother's role in providing protection.

Immunity means that there is little or no risk of falling ill to a certain disease. In adult dogs immunity can result from either vaccination or the dog suffering and survived the disease.

Vaccination stimulates the dog's immune system to produce its disease-fighting cells and proteins or what is known as antibodies to

protect against diseases. Regular and repeated vaccinations are required. There are vaccination schedules for certain types of diseases for puppies and adult dogs.

For the first vaccination, a course of two vaccinations are usually given as a primary course. This may be administered starting from the sixth week of your dog.

The vaccination history of your dog is an important document. If you happen to not know the history, you may want to consult your veterinary surgeon regarding vaccination right away. A general check up will also be helpful to see if your puppy is in good health condition before giving the vaccines. Having a good health is an important factor to make the vaccines work for your dog or puppy.

Re-vaccination is also necessary as immunity loses its effectiveness after a time, leaving your dogs at risk. Regular boosters are available to maintain the immunity your dog needs. A certificate will be given to you after completing your entire vaccination program. In the certification, the record of vaccinations and the advice for the next booster are indicated. Things you have to remember are:

- * that regular booster is necessary to maintain your dog's vaccination;
- * record of vaccination has to be kept in a safe place for reference; and,
- * consult your veterinary doctor if your dog appears to be unwell.

Vaccinations are made for the protection of your dog from certain types of diseases. Be guided and keep an eye on the early symptoms:

CANINE PARVOVIRUS DISEASE. This is caused by an extremely hardy virus that can last for long periods of time in an environment. The main source of this infection is the feces of infected dogs. Highly contagious and weakening. Symptoms of this disease are as follows: high fever, severe vomiting, listlessness, refusal of food and water and profuse smelly, bloody diarrhea. Common among young puppies and elderly dogs. Combination vaccines are due on the fifth to ninth week of your dog.

CANINE DISTEMPOR. This hard-to-treat disease is highly contagious and the main source of infection is by inhalation during close dog to dog contact. The first signs are: fever, coughing, diarrhea, and

vomiting followed by unusual tiredness and lack of appetite. Usually dogs under one year of age suffer from this disease. Survivors often develop nervous system breakdown later in life.

CANINE TRACHEOBRONCHITIS (Canine/Kennel Cough). Caused by various airborne bacteria and viruses, this infectious bronchitis is a contagious upper respiratory disease which occurs when dogs are in close contact. Signs are a distressing dry cough, tiredness and loss of appetite and moderately raised temperature. This disease may lead to pneumonia.

RABIES. An incurable, viral disease that attacks the central nervous system of almost all mammals including humans. This disease can be transmitted through bites, while the saliva is in contact with the skin. Once you have this disease, there is no cure and would already lead to death. Vaccine during the twelfth week is a great ounce of prevention.

INFECTIOUS CANINE HEPATITIS. This is caused by Canine Adenovirus Type I. Liver is the attacked organ and can be rapidly fatal. Transmission is through secretions like saliva, infected urine or feces. Early symptoms are general discomfort and lack of

appetite, high temperature, pale gums, vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain. This can cause also liver failure, clouding of cornea known as "blue eye" and breathing problems.

Other vaccinations that need booster recommendations from your veterinarian are as follows:

LEPTOSPIROSIS, a bacterial disease which attacks the kidneys and the liver; vaccines are due on the twelfth to fifteenth week of your dog;

CANINE CORONAVIRUS, which attacks the intestinal system; and, Lyme Disease, transmitted by ticks to both dogs and humans which results in chronic arthritis and, sometimes, death.

It is important to consult your veterinarian to determine the appropriate vaccination and schedule for your dog.

Recommendations on what vaccines to give may vary on the age, breed and health condition of the dog, susceptibility and risk, type of vaccine and the geographical setting.

Issues on vaccines having side effects are lurking but the benefits outweigh tremendously the danger of having it. Effectivity may not be guaranteed 100% but with the combination of proper nutrition and eating habits, a good and sanitized environment, vaccination is a great way to protect your dog and other of your pets as well.

The Best Toys For Your Dogs

Dogs is a major status symbol in American pet-keeping. Every year, over 12 billion dollars have been spent on dog food and veterinary care alone. According to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association's 2003-2004 Pet Owners' Survey, more than half of dog owners purchase toys for their dogs.

Playing with toys is not the monopoly of little kids but also pets of different kind. Dogs have their own sets of toys to enjoy during their playing time.

Dogs benefit from these toys, health and training wise. There are dog toys that can strengthen their teeth or build their intelligence especially if they also attend a series of training classes with the experts. Like man, dogs are very sociable. Interaction with their

companion or a sibling dog is very important in avoiding behavioral problems in the future.

When buying toys, you may want to match them with your dog's needs, demands and even personality. Is your dog the type that enjoys chasing and retrieving games, or chewing, sitting and sprawling? You may want to try experimenting first to find out which toys make your dogs the happiest.

Before going on a toy hunt, take a look at this list of toys that may help you identify the right kind of toy for your dog.

* CHEW TOYS. These are perfect for the dog that likes to chew a lot. Instead of your dog chewing your furniture, why not buy these TOUGH little babies for them. These types of dog toy are usually made of nylon or latex rubber. The "King Kong Toys" are among the popular brands of chew toys. You can experiment by stuffing these toys with peanut butter or cheese spread, freeze them and give them to your dog for hours of licking and chewing fun.

Doggie "potato chips" is also a favorite. These "edible chips" can last to a minimum of an hour to a couple of days. They are

available in different shapes like pig ears, snouts, cow knuckles, femurs, hooves and bully sticks. Others are bone-shaped made from a variety of vegetables such as carrots.

Another good toy for your dog's chewing pleasure is the rawhide. These are non- consumable, mummified skin-like toy that you have to throw away when they get soggy, and give your dog a new one. Some rawhides are basted with a variety of flavorings. Be sure to get the "USA rawhide" with a little flag sticker on the label because these do not contain preservative flavorings that are harmful for your dogs.

SQUEAKY TOYS. For these toys, choose the rubber over the stuffed toys for durability and to avoid synthetic materials. These little noisemakers are good for training your dog's hunting skills.

RETRIEVING TOYS. These are perfect for the chase-and-retrieve types of dogs. Dogs enjoy these toys because they get to play with you. Frisbees and balls made specifically for this activity, are the best to be used. Your dog will get a good workout and so is your arm.

TUG TOYS. These toys are best for dogs that like to grab hold and never let go. Available in rope-like designs.

BRAIN TEASERS. Best for dogs that is left alone a lot. "Biscuit balls" and "food cubes" are great examples. These toys require the dog to solve types of puzzle in order to get a treat.

Various toys of these forms are available in the market.

1. For Chewers of all Sizes

SQUIRREL DUDE – tough, durable and fun too; this hollow rubber chew toy takes on a new level in innovation; this helps to exercise your dog's jaw a little more with the four little rubber prongs blocking the hole slightly that the dog has to work a little harder to get the goodies out.

2. Ball Launchers and Throwers (Retrieve Toys)

FRISBEES – is an all-time favorite dog toy especially the soft version; fold to fit in a pocket; comes in blue and orange colors, size six to nine inches, prices at eleven to sixteen dollars.

THE ROUND ORBEE - a tough ball hallowed with ½ inch thick membraney surface and it's softish; it is flexible, durable, grippy, bouncy, and buoyant and has a peppermint scent; good for sniffing-and-getting-the- ball game; prices at five to twelve dollars depending on the size and form you choose

3. Squeaky Toys

SQUEAKERS – available in packages of ten each; dogs that love to silence squeakers are the best for this toy; excellent as attention and pocket squeaker as well; prices go lower if you buy in packages, from five to three dollars each box/package.

4. Tug Toys

LEATHER TUGS – great for tug-of-war games with your dog; made of high grade leather, 3/8 inches thick, tanned and not-treated; dogs like them a lot especially those with active lifestyle.

THE MONGO FETCH TOY – a chew and tug toy combined in one; the natural rubber bar is vanilla scented; rope running through the

center gives you a grip for tug games and the soft tasseled ends are made for exciting action with your dogs; medium to large in size, from five to seven dollars each.

5. Brain Teasers

I CUBE - this is a toy that challenges and develops your dog's intelligence and puzzle solving skills; be sure you are there for supervision; available in junior and jumbo sizes, six to eleven dollars.

DUCK EGG BABY - egg Babies are a plush toy with three squeaker eggs inside; there is an opening on the bottom of the toy so your dog can get the hidden treasures inside; this is a toy that challenges and develops your dog's intelligence and puzzle solving skills too.

Toys are a fun way to enjoy with your dog in a sunny day at the park. But be sure to apply proper safety measures especially when playing with balls, sticks and stones. You do not want to harm them in any way. Remember, this is a dog-eat-dog world! Even as harmless as playing can cause indestructible damage to your dog.