

DOG 2

Caring for **your puppy**



The charity dedicated to helping sick, injured and homeless pets since 1897.



Caring for your puppy

Taking on a puppy is a huge responsibility – both for you, and your family. After all, the dog may be with you for 15 years or more. Before taking on a puppy, think about the long-term commitment you are making.

Is there time for a dog in your home and your life?

A puppy needs regular and adequate meals, regular exercise in a safe place, to be clean and comfortable, veterinary care whenever needed, training and socialisation.

Looking for your puppy

Before starting, consider these points.

- Time – puppies need lots of time, and this continues throughout the dog's life – exercise, trips to the vet, grooming, training and play
- Cost – not just to acquire your puppy, but for vet's bills, kennelling costs, food costs and so on throughout the dog's life
- What sort of dog would suit my lifestyle? This is the most important (and most difficult) question to answer.

Acquiring your puppy

Consider carefully what type of dog will suit you and your lifestyle best. Research thoroughly; if you are considering a pedigree, then remember that there are some hereditary diseases which can be passed from parents to pups, further information can be gained from the Kennel Club or your vet.

It's well worth considering getting a puppy (or adult dog) from one of the charities, even if you are looking for a purebred.

Many of the animals available from most of the larger charities, including Blue Cross, will have been examined by a vet, undergone behavioural assessment, been vaccinated, neutered, treated for parasites and microchipped before they are even made available for adoption. Profiles are drawn up to match potential new owners and dogs to avoid personality clashes, and support is available if problems occur after rehoming. Many dogs from other sources don't have the benefit of this extensive screening and support.

If you do get a dog from a breeder, meeting the mother is important, as the mother's temperament contributes to that of the puppies. A fearful or aggressive mother may pass on this trait to a puppy. Puppies reared in a home environment make the most suitable pets; those kept away from human contact may be nervous around people.

Finally, consider whether you really want a puppy. An adult dog may suit your lifestyle better – see the pet care leaflet, Choosing the right dog (D1).



Health

A healthy puppy should not be thin and should have a shiny coat. There should not be any discharges from the eyes or nose, the ears should be free from black wax and the puppy should not have a cough. The area under the tail should be clean. If the puppy is a purebred or pedigree, research potential health problems and ask to see proof that the parents have been screened.

When you have your puppy, make an appointment for a check-up with the vet as soon as possible. If there are health problems, immediately get in touch with the breeder or charity you got the puppy from.

Insurance

It's a good idea to consider pet insurance, but pay careful attention to the small print. It's essential to get insurance whilst your pet is healthy, as

pre-existing conditions are excluded. Lifetime insurance may be worthwhile, as some 12-month policies will exclude conditions for which a claim has been made when the policy comes up for renewal. Don't forget to look at the "excess" (the amount of each claim which you have to pay), and do shop around before buying. Many puppies come with insurance – check terms and conditions and find out who will cover costs for any health problems within the next day or two.

A friendly puppy?

Puppies – as with most children – should be interested and playful. Although they sleep for long periods, do watch out for those that are sleepy all the time, or those that are overly nervous.

Feeding your puppy

Puppies should leave their mothers when around eight weeks old. Feed the diet they are used to at first, and introduce any new food gradually, but always use a food suitable for the puppy's breed and size. Several small meals are better than fewer large ones. Always make sure fresh water is available. Never give milk. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when feeding, and do not allow your puppy to become fat – obesity is a problem for dogs just as much as for humans.



Vaccinations and worming

If any vaccinations have been done, ask for the vaccination record or certificate, which should also show brand and batch numbers. You will need this to continue vaccinations and it is likely to be required if the pup has to go into kennels later on in life. Regular vaccination boosters will be needed throughout life, as will regular worming and flea treatments. Consult your vet for advice – see the pet care leaflet, Basic healthcare (D6).

Going home

A day or two before collection, take a blanket to place in the puppy's bed, then, when you take the pup home, transfer the blanket to the puppy's new bed – your puppy will feel at home. Also, make sure you have food and water bowls, grooming equipment and plenty of toys – play is an essential part of growing up. For further information, see the pet care leaflet, How to play with your dog (D23).

The best place for your puppy's bed is a draught-free corner of the kitchen. Kitchens tend to be warm and to have washable floors. Remember the bed is your puppy's refuge, so keep young children away from it, and never allow a tired puppy to be dragged out of bed to play – your pet is not a toy!



On the first few nights in your home, expect your puppy to whimper. Before you go to bed, play with your puppy to induce sleep. After the first few nights, the pup should settle quite happily. Also take your pet out to the garden to spend a penny (with plenty of praise when it happens). Put paper on the floor for your puppy to use as a toilet.

If you do have problems with your puppy making noise, there is an alternative approach. For the first few nights, keep your puppy in your bedroom, in a high-sided box so there is no chance to get out. Any noise can be quietened by a few kind words or a reassuring pat. After a few nights the puppy will be used to being away from litter-mates and can be moved into the kitchen. This method may also help the house training process as the puppy can be taken out if the need arises in the night.



something inappropriate, distract your pet by arranging for something interesting to happen elsewhere and then give something else to chew. Your puppy might need to be taught to chew so, to do this, play with the chew in an enticing way until the puppy begins to chew. For further information, see the pet care leaflet, Chewing and how to control it (D19).

Toilet training

In the morning take your puppy straight out to go to the toilet and praise when the pup “performs”. Do not be angry if your pup has toileted overnight, but do praise when there is no mess. Always give lots of praise when your puppy goes in the right place – and make sure you take your pup back there whenever the animal looks likely to go. For further information, see the pet care leaflet, House training an adult dog (D15).

Chewing

Chewing is a natural pastime for puppies, so do not discourage your pet, just ensure you let the puppy chew things you have chosen, rather than your shoes. Rawhide chews, nylon bones and large hard biscuits are ideal. If the puppy does chew

Learning to be a good dog

Socialisation is vital if your puppy is to grow up as a well-adjusted member of your family, so try to expose your puppy to as many new experiences as possible – travel by car and by bus, for example. Vacuum cleaners, traffic, radio and television are all noises the puppy will have to get to know. It is possible to overwhelm the puppy, however, so do be careful. For further information, see the pet care leaflet, Socialising (D17).

Your puppy needs to learn how to get on with other puppies and dogs as soon as possible. However, until your puppy is fully protected by vaccination (usually at least a week after the course is completed, consult your vet for advice), he or she should not be allowed to mix with dogs of unknown vaccination status. Some of the viruses which cause disease can persist in the

environment, so puppies should not be taken to parks or walked in other areas that other dogs have fouled. They can be taken out as much as possible in non-doggy areas, and can be carried if necessary to avoid unwanted contact from other dogs or soiled areas.

Your pup also needs to meet children, but make sure the children understand the ground rules first. The children must learn not to tease or bully the pup, and the animal must learn not to jump up or nip during play. For further information, see the pet care leaflet, Training your dog (D16).

Next steps

A collar and tag are essential – we recommend microchipping, but it is still a legal requirement for your dog to have a collar and tag as well. Remember to check the fit of the collar regularly – puppies grow quickly and the collar can become too tight!

Regular grooming is essential to keep your dog in good condition, and is also a good way of showing affection. Teeth brushing is also important, as dental disease is common in dogs. Do not use toothpaste for humans on your dog – vets have canine products available. Grooming and teeth brushing, if started young enough, will be

fun for both you and your puppy, see the pet care leaflet, Basic healthcare (D6).

Both male and female dogs should ideally be neutered at less than a year of age. Females can often be neutered before their first season; consult your vet for advice.

Finally

With correct planning and care, your puppy will give you and your family many years of pleasure and enjoyment, and will help you teach your children to be responsible.

If at any time you are experiencing difficulties, seek advice, either from Blue Cross directly, or by visiting our website at www.bluecross.org.uk



Happy, healthy pets

Blue Cross advice leaflets are packed full of top tips to help owners with their pet questions. They cover a wide range of topics, from training a puppy to caring for an older cat. So if you need some support to help you with a pet problem, whether it's about a dog or a degu, we're here for you.

You can read and download our leaflets online at www.bluecross.org.uk

Visit our website to take advantage of all its features, including:

- blog posts from Blue Cross experts
- latest news
- events near you
- pets needing new homes

Or you can join in the chat on our online communities:

 www.facebook.com/thebluecrossuk

 www.twitter.com/the_blue_cross

Blue Cross

Blue Cross has been dedicated to the health and happiness of pets since 1897. Abandoned or unwanted, ill or injured – we do what's needed to give every pet a healthy life in a happy home. We're a charity, so the more help you give us, the more help we can give pets.

How you can help

Blue Cross doesn't receive any government funding, so we rely on the generosity of pet lovers like you. There are lots of ways you can help the sick, injured and abandoned pets in our care, like making a donation, fundraising for us or leaving us a legacy.

Please call us on 0300 777 1897 or visit www.bluecross.org.uk



Blue Cross head office
Shilton Road, Burford, Oxon OX18 4PF

Telephone: 0300 777 1897

Fax: 0300 777 1601

Email: info@bluecross.org.uk

www.bluecross.org.uk



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