



# The Cooke Veterinary

*The Place for Healing* **Medical Center**

## Puppies: Recommendations for New Owners

### **Congratulations!**

We would like to congratulate you on the latest and greatest addition to your family! Owning a puppy can be an extremely rewarding experience, and it is also a large responsibility. We hope this handout will give you the information you need to make good decisions regarding your new best friend.

**The team at *The Cooke Veterinary Medical Center*** would like to thank you for choosing us as your partner to protect your puppy's health. We always want to do our very best to help extend the life of our animal friends. There are many things that we can do in partnership with you to accomplish this. This document will provide key information to help you during the early stages of your puppy's life, as well all your puppy's life stages to come.

### **Steps to Ensure Long and Happy Life for Your Pet**

#### **A. Care Provided by Veterinarian:**

- Routine Exams & Vaccines
- Annual Blood work
- Quality Spay/Neuter
- Dental Cleanings

#### **B. Care Provided at Home:**

- Healthy Diet
- Activity Level/Weight Control
- Heartworm/Flea/Tick Prevention
- Dental Health (Early at Home Prevention)
- Behavioral Training
- Being Watchful! Noticing subtle changes that can indicate your animal needs medical attention.

## When should my puppy be vaccinated?

There are many fatal diseases in dogs. Fortunately, we can prevent several of these by vaccinating your pet. In order to be effective, these vaccines must be given as a series of injections. Ideally, they are given at about 6-8, 12, and 16 weeks of age, but this schedule may vary depending on your pet's individual needs.

The core vaccination schedule will protect your puppy from several common diseases: distemper, hepatitis, parainfluenza virus, parvovirus, and rabies. The first four are included in one injection that is given at 6-8, 12, and 16 weeks old. Rabies vaccine is given at 12-16 weeks of age. There are two other optional vaccinations that are appropriate in certain situations. Your puppy should receive a kennel cough vaccine if a trip to a boarding kennel or groomer is likely or if it will be placed in a puppy training class. Lyme vaccine is given to dogs that are likely to be exposed to ticks because Lyme disease is transmitted by ticks.

## Why does my puppy need more than one vaccination?

During the first few weeks of nursing, a puppy develops maternal antibodies from its mother's milk. Vaccinations are used to provide long-lasting immunity. If the mother's antibodies are present, vaccinations do not have a chance to stimulate the puppy's immune system. The mother's antibodies interfere by neutralizing the vaccine. Since we don't know when an individual puppy will lose the short-term immunity, we give a series of vaccinations to ensure their protection.

## How serious are heartworms?

Heartworms are important parasites to prevent, especially in our climate. They live in a dog's bloodstream and cause major damage to the heart and lungs. Heartworms are transmitted by the bite of mosquitoes. Fortunately, we have medications that will protect your dog from heartworms. These drugs are very safe and effective if given correctly. Heartworm preventatives are dosed according to your dog's weight. As the weight increases, the dosage should also increase.

## Remember to:

- **Note the dosing instructions on the package!**
- **Administer the whole dose (half or partial doses can be ineffective)**
- **Give heartworm prevention every month, year-round and lifelong.**

## How does The Cooke Veterinary Medical Center differ in terms of heartworm prevention?

\*Some facilities may routinely deworm pets yearly even if the owner has been giving their pet heartworm prevention. This is considered an unnecessary treatment.

## The Importance of Spay/Neuter and The Cooke Vet differences

**Spay**- It has been proven that as the female dog gets older, there is a significant incidence of mammary cancer and uterine infections if she has not been spayed. Spaying before she has any heat cycles will virtually eliminate the chance of either.

**Neuter**- Neutering will decrease typical male dog aggression as well as preventing prostate cancer and prostate gland enlargement which leads to difficulty urinating and defecating.

**\*As opposed to numerous surgeries jammed into a day at other hospitals, we intentionally schedule a limited number of surgeries each day. This allows our doctors and staff the time to closely monitor your pet before, during, and after their procedure. We offer “big gun” surgical techniques with state-of-the-art surgical facilities and advanced laser/diagnostic equipment and a no corner-cutting approach. This helps promote less traumatic/more successful surgeries with a faster healing time.**



## What should I feed my puppy?

There are lots of choices of dog food! Diet is **extremely** important during all stages of a dog's life. Investing in your dog's nutrition is an important step towards keeping them happy and healthy for many years to come. We recommend a Veterinary recommended name-brand food made by a national dog food company (not a generic or local brand) and a **diet made specifically for puppies** or **“all life stages.”** Food labeled specifically for puppies should be fed until your puppy is about **12 -18 months** of age, depending on the breed and size. Food high in grains, corn and meat by-products are not recommended. Often, a good selection of canned wet food mixed with dry food is ideal. Here are some recommended high quality pet foods:

- **Wellness** (hospital carried)
- **Orijen** (hospital carried)
- **Innova EVO**
- **Acana**
- **Others- See “Five Star Dog Food List”**

See [www.dogfoodadvisor.com](http://www.dogfoodadvisor.com) for complete details on different pet foods.

For more information on diet, The Cooke Veterinary Medical Center offers **nutritional consults** with our veterinarians to answer all your questions concerning types of foods ideal for your pet, home-cooked meals, raw diets, supplements and more. Call today to schedule your appointment.

### **How much food should be given?**

There are several “right” ways to feed puppies. The most popular method is commonly called “meal feeding.” This means that the puppy is fed at specific times of the day. A measured amount of food should be offered four times per day for 5-12 week old puppies. What is not eaten within 20 minutes is then taken up. If the food is eaten within three to four minutes, the quantity is probably not sufficient. Puppies fed in this manner generally begin to cut back on one of those meals by 3-4 months of age and perhaps another one later. If a certain feeding is ignored for several days, it should be discontinued.

“Free choice feeding” means that food is always available. This works well with dry foods and for some dogs. However, other dogs tend to overeat and become obese. If there is weight gain after the optimal size is reached, this method of feeding should be discontinued.

### **Weight Control**

While puppies, it is vital to understand the importance of weight control for your future adult dog. An estimated 45% of all U.S. pets are overweight or obese, according to the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention. While the best treatment is prevention, it’s never too late to help your pet stay in better shape.

**Obese animals have much higher incidence of arthritis, heart disease, impaired reproductive ability, and greater risks with surgery and anesthesia. Most research in both people and animals suggest that increased weight shortens life span.**



**Healthy Weight**

**Your pet is a healthy weight if:**

- **You can easily feel its ribs**
- **It has a tucked abdomen without sagging**
- **You can see its waist from above**



## **Overweight**

**Your pet is overweight if:**

- **You have difficulty feeling its ribs**
- **You can feel fat between the skin and the ribs**
- **Sagging stomach**
- **Broad, flat back and no visible waist**

**\*\*If your animal is overweight, there are usually painless methods for losing those unhealthy pounds. With careful dietary management and oversight by your veterinarian, changes in diet and lifestyle can lead to a much more productive life. Routine walks and playtime combined with sensible feeding can avert the need for medical intervention. As your pet ages, we recommend changing to a low-fat, high-fiber senior maintenance diet.**

**Watch! - It is important to keep a watchful eye on your puppy/dog between routine exam visits!**

Sometimes when your pet is under the weather, the signs are crystal clear. At other times, the symptoms can be overlooked and unfortunately our animal friends can't tell us when they are not feeling well. Hiding illness is a pet's natural survival instinct so it is up to the owners to keep a watchful eye on their companions.

**See your veterinarian if you notice any of the following:**

<b>Blood or mucus in stool</b>	<b>Less interaction with family</b>
<b>Unusual lumps or bumps</b>	<b>Changes in sleeping pattern</b>
<b>Straining to urinate</b>	<b>Aggression toward people</b>
<b>Less enthusiastic greeting behavior</b>	<b>Bad breath</b>
<b>Coughing or sneezing</b>	<b>Unusual discharge</b>
<b>Gagging</b>	<b>Diarrhea</b>
<b>Listlessness/Weakness</b>	<b>Constipation</b>
<b>Lameness</b>	<b>Stiffness</b>
<b>Shaking of head</b>	<b>Difficulty with activity</b>

Excessive scratching	Change in activity
Significant hair loss	Increased thirst
Tremors or shaking	Excessive licking
Altered appetite	Excessive barking
Confusion or disorientation	Scotting of rear
Needs too much attention	Destructive behavior
Pawing at abdomen	Gums pale, white or blue
Ear discharge/odor	Restless or pacing
Watery or sunken, dry eyes	Vomiting
Rapid weight loss or gain	Fearful
Lack of bowel movements	Tripping or limping

## **Emergencies!**

**What is an emergency? Immediately contact your veterinarian or go to an emergency clinic if you observe any of the following signs/events:**

Labored breathing, blue, white or very pale gums	Inability to walk
Collapse or loss of consciousness	Temperature over 104
Dizziness, imbalance, or circling	Temperature under 99
Signs of acute pain (crying out excessively)	Holding eye closed, winking
Extremely bloated abdomen	Bleeding, excessive
Seizures	Hit by car

The well-being of our patients is our number one priority and we would like to take the time to inform our clients what to do should they find themselves in need of emergency treatment for their pet.

**\*\*We do our very best to provide needed treatment to all of our patients during an emergency situation. However, depending on the severity of the emergency, the time of day, and our staffing schedule, it is difficult to guarantee that we can accommodate every emergency/trauma.**

Because some situation may require 24 hour monitoring that emergency hospitals are better equipped and better staffed to provide, (time permitting) we ask that you **call the office at 757-547-9421**, and speak to one of our knowledgeable licensed veterinary technicians to discuss the signs and symptoms your pet may be exhibiting. This will allow us to determine if the situation can be addressed at our center or if the pet needs to be immediately directed to an emergency hospital.

## **We recommend that you keep this list close by, perhaps on the refrigerator, for emergency or after-hours care:**

**Blue Pearl Virginia Beach (Independence Blvd): 757-499-5463**  
**Bay Beach Emergency: (Nimmo Pkwy.) 757-340-3913**  
**The Cove (Suffolk): 757-935-9111**  
**Animal Poison Control: 1-888-426-4435 (\$65 per call)**

## **What do I do if my pet ingests poison?**

Your pet has just ingested something toxic; this includes household chemicals and chocolate. What do you do? First, take a deep breath. The more calm, cool, and collected you are, the sooner you can seek the correct medical attention.

- 1. Remove your pet from the area. Make sure no other pets or children are exposed to the area, and safely remove any poisonous material.**
- 2. Check to make sure your pet is breathing normally and acting fine otherwise.**
- 3. Collect a sample of material, along with packaging, vial, or container. You will need that information to help your veterinarian or a pet poison expert assess the situation.**
- 4. Do not give your dog any milk, food, salt, oil, or any other home remedies including hydrogen peroxide unless instructed by a veterinarian to do so. Doing so will likely complicate the poisoning.**
- 5. Never induce vomiting without talking to your veterinarian or pet poison expert first- doing so may be detrimental or contraindicated.**
- 6. Get help. Program your veterinarian's phone number into you phone, as well as an emergency veterinarian's number and a pet poison hotline number.**

\*Remember that a pet's prognosis is always better when a toxicity is reported immediately, so don't wait to see if your pet becomes symptomatic before calling for help. Calling right away is safer for your pet and could help save additional expense on treatment costs in the long run. Remember that there's a narrow window of time to decontaminate in cases of poisoning.

## Behavior

**Socialization:** The socialization period for dogs is between 4-12 weeks of age. During that time, the puppy is very impressionable to social influences. If it has good experiences with men, women, children, cats, and other dogs, it is likely to accept them throughout life. If the experiences are absent or unpleasant, it may become apprehensive or adverse to any of them. Therefore, during the period of socialization, we encourage you to expose your dog to as many types of social events and influences as possible.

**Chewing:** Chewing is a normal puppy behavior. Chewing is a puppy characteristic you can expect until about 6-7 months of age. It is important to direct your puppy's chewing toward acceptable objects. You should provide puppy-safe items such as nylon chew bones and other chew toys so other objects are spared.

### Housetraining Tips:

- Teach the puppy where to go by taking him/her on a leash to the same area outside to eliminate. Don't just let him/her wander outside in the backyard every time. Say a keyword phrase like "go potty" and he/she will associate the phrase with eliminating.
- Take the puppy outside **frequently!** Immediately take the puppy outside after it has been sleeping, eating, or playing. It is also good to take him/her out again 15-45 minutes after he/she has eaten. Watch for behaviors like pacing, whining, or circling which indicate it is time to go. Praise the puppy when it eliminates.
- Do not feed for 3-4 hours prior to bedtime.
- Provide constant supervision or confinement (see crate training), until the puppy has not soiled in the house for two consecutive weeks. The puppy should stay in the crate no longer than 1 hour plus the age of the pup in months (a 4 month old puppy=5 hours in a crate at one time). Inadequate supervision and confinement are the most common reasons for failure to house-train a puppy.
- The only punishment necessary is a loud "no" if the pet is caught in the act of eliminating in an appropriate area. Submissive or greeting urination should never be punished as it will only make the problem worse.

## Crate Training

One of the most useful devices for raising a puppy is a dog crate. This device can be used as an aid in house-training puppies and it can also save hundreds of dollars in damage to household items. Since a crate is portable, it can easily be taken along on trips. People who raise, train, and show dogs have been aware of the benefits of crates for years. Often a puppy's canine tendency is to bed down in a den-like atmosphere comfortably.

### Crate rules:

- The crate should be just large enough for your pup to stand, turn around, and lie down in comfortably. Owners of large breed puppies can buy larger crates and divide it while the pup is small. If the crate is too large, the pup might use part of the crate to eliminate in and the other part as a den, which defeats the crate's purpose.
- Introduce your pup to the crate by placing several treats around it. Toss a treat into the back of the crate and say a word (ex: "kennel" or "crate"). The pup will run to eat the treat thereby learning to associate the crate with the keyword and a pleasant reward.
- Long before bedtime, toss a treat to the back of the crate while saying the keyword. Once your pup runs in, close the crate door and give him praise.
- Leave the room. Stand outside of the door to monitor your pup's behavior. At the first sign of any separation responses (barking, whining, howling), intervene with a sharp, raised voice. The idea is that your pup will associate its behavior with the inflection in your voice. Some pups will not

respond to a raised voice however, many will respond to the sound of a shaker can (an empty soda can filled with a few coins, sealed with tape). Your goal is to startle, not frighten, the pup.

- Eventually your pup will settle quietly in the crate. Once your pup is quiet, keep it inside the crate for about 10 minutes. Do not praise your pup immediately after release, otherwise it could reinforce the desirability of leaving the crate.
- After 30-40 minute intervals, repeat the procedure. Gradually extend the pup's quiet time in the crate to about 30 minutes.
- While the pup is in the crate, provide a chewable toy. Also, be sure to remove any collars from your pup to prevent entanglement. Remember to take your pup directly outside to eliminate after being in the crate for extended periods.

## **Play-time**

We discourage hand-to-mouth play with puppies as well as rough-housing. This type of play can create future behavior problems that can be difficult to control once your puppy is a larger, adult dog. Hands should be off-limits for puppies to chew and bite at. Chewable toys would be an acceptable alternative to this type of play

## **Importance of well visits/exams**

One of the **most** important things you can do to help maintain the health of your pet is to take them to their bi-annual/annual exams with their veterinarian. These exams are all about prevention and catching problems early. Your veterinarian has special training and experience in detecting subtle illness in pets.

Listening to the heart can detect murmurs. Increased lung sounds may indicate early illness. Abdominal palpation may reveal pain in certain areas, abnormal size, and shape of various organs or even tumors. Checking out the eyes can detect early signs of cataract or other ocular problems. Ears may need cleaning or medication. Dental disease may be detected as well as signs of allergies or skin problems.

It is easier for someone who does not see your pet every day to detect lumps and bumps that you may not have noticed. Comparing their weight histories can also determine if your dog is heading down the path to obesity or identify unexplained/unnoticed weight loss. As a dog reaches middle to old age, annual physical exams become even more important.

Exams also allow for client education on topics such as maintaining a good diet, feeding habits, heartworm & flea/tick prevention protocols, dental health, and behavioral problems, etc.

## **Importance of Annual Bloodwork**

Annual blood work helps monitor liver and kidney function, red and white cell blood counts, and can help identify abnormalities that your pet may not be telling you about! Again, the importance of annual blood work is all about prevention and the early detection of any problems.

Blood and urine tests are extremely useful tools for looking at the overall health of your pet. From them, your doctor can learn if your pet is a diabetic, has kidney or liver disease, or an infection. If caught early, problems

like these can be successfully treated or controlled, giving your pet a longer and better quality of life.

## **Importance of Flea/Tick Prevention**

Fleas and ticks are tiny pests that can cause big problems, and the damage isn't just skin deep. Animals can ingest fleas containing tapeworm eggs, which then hatch in their intestines. In a flea-ridden area, the same thing can happen to a child.

Ticks can also carry a variety of diseases, which can be further transmitted to people! Risks vary by region, and the Tidewater area is a high-risk area so prevention is critical.