

# Puppy Information

## Puppy raising tips

### Socialisation advice

Socialisation is a term that is often used in dog training books, in dog magazines and by breeders and trainers. But what does it actually mean and how will it affect you as a new puppy owner? Like human children, puppies are not born with the social skills that they require to live with their family, be that a canine family or a human one.

The term 'socialisation', in simple terms, means the learning process that a puppy must undergo in order to learn key life skills to ensure that it is happy and confident in its environment, and can communicate effectively within its social group. We ask a huge amount from our dogs in their role as a companion animal, as not only do they need to understand humans and the human world, they also need to become fluent in the language of dog. This involves having pleasant social interactions with adults, children, vets, adult dogs and other animals, as well as careful exposure to different situations in the environment such as traffic, crowds, travelling in the car, vacuum cleaners and any sights and sounds it will have to cope with in life. It is so important that this is done thoroughly and correctly while your puppy is still young and he is young enough to happily accept new things.

Puppies that have been socialised effectively in these early weeks are far less likely to react negatively to new situations, noises, people, dogs and animals than their counterparts, who have not had these important early experiences. A well socialised puppy is far more likely to integrate easily into your life, therefore making your life together much more enjoyable and rewarding.

There are two parts to socialisation and both are equally important. The first is teaching the puppy to be social with people and other dogs, while the other (called habituation) is about teaching all the things we want the puppy to ignore and not be worried about (noises, traffic, household objects etc.). Being a companion is the hardest job we ever ask a dog to do as our expectations are so high. We want dogs to get on with everybody and everything, and to go everywhere with us when we want, but also be happy to be left alone without complaint, to be accepting of loud noises, strangers, other dogs...the list is endless. It is a sad fact that one of the major causes of death in dogs under 2 years old is euthanasia, as a result of behaviour

problems. Most of these behaviour problems arise from fear (fear of strange noises, fear of being left alone – and indeed aggression nearly always arises from fear – fear of strange dogs, fear of strange people or fear of strange situations). In addition, far too many dogs are ending up in rescue centres. Behaviourists and trainers up and down the country are seeing dogs with problems that could so easily have been prevented if the first 16 weeks of that dog's life had been properly managed, and they had been prepared for the life they were going to lead. Some breeds need far more socialisation and habituation than others – with more reactive breeds (such as those bred to guard, some terriers etc.) needing more (and earlier) – socialisation than others. Therefore, it is important for breeders and new owners to know how reactive their chosen breed is so they can focus their socialisation accordingly.

On the breeder's part, socialising their litter can start as early as when the puppies are a few days old. Gentle handling and checking the progress of the litter are all important steps in the first few days of a puppy's life. Over the course of the following weeks, the breeder can introduce noises, different surfaces, different play items as well as different play and feeding locations around the house – all of this habituation and novelty contributes to the puppies' early development. The early groundwork that the breeder puts into their litters' social and emotional wellbeing has a direct impact on their puppies' ability to be fit for function as a family dog. It is imperative that the puppy's new owner continues this when their new puppy comes home.

From around 5 weeks old and continuing from the time the puppy goes to his or her new home, an important transition takes place in the puppy's ability to take in new situations as his natural fearfulness increases. It is therefore essential that new owners don't miss this valuable window of opportunity for their puppy to experience new things – which will close at around 14-16 weeks. This time also coincides with the puppy's vaccinations, so a balance must be struck so as not to miss out on this important learning opportunity. This can be achieved by taking your puppy out and about in your arms, while not allowing them to come into direct contact with other dogs until their vaccinations have taken place.

Getting out and about with your puppy is key to them accepting everyday things, such as traffic and busy places, as part of normal life. It is important that you think about what life as part of your family will entail for a puppy; for instance, if you live in the inner city, spending a significant amount of time socialising your puppy to farm animals may not be of great benefit, as it is unlikely they will encounter them in their day to day life: The same also goes

for all the different people your puppy is likely to meet such as people with beards, people wearing hats, people wearing high visibility clothing, babies, children, people with pushchairs/prams, elderly people, people with walking sticks and people in wheelchairs to name but a few.

### **Puppy parties**

Vet surgeries often hold ‘puppy parties’ for their new clients, but these should be treated with some caution. Well managed puppy parties can be great social interaction for puppies of all ages and sizes.

Well managed parties should:

- Match puppies up according to their size so that the bolder puppies don’t intimidate the more nervous or smaller ones, and thereby create negative experiences for the smaller puppies, and make the bolder ones ‘social bullies’
- Manage any off-lead play carefully and if necessary, separate puppies that get a bit too boisterous so that they can calm down and re-join the party once they are calmer
- Discourage any kind of anti-social behaviour, such as biting that gets out of hand, very rough play and also show the owners how to discourage this
- Show owners how to handle and groom their puppies and have others do this too
- Be fun positive experiences for puppies and owners

### **Puppy socialisation**

Puppy socialisation is critical and should be done from birth up to 16 weeks of age, otherwise important learning and development phases have passed. The below list covers everything from getting used to household noises to getting out and about and meeting new people and other dogs. Therefore, you need to plan and incorporate some extremely important life lessons during the early stages of your puppy's development so that you end up with a well-balanced and sociable dog.

### **Socialisation chart**

Tick a box for each encounter

#### People

- Men

- Women
- Babies
- Young children
- Teenagers
- Elderly people
- Disabled people
- Loud, confident people
- Shy, timid people
- People in uniform
- People wearing hats, crash helmets etc.
- People with beards
- People wearing glasses, sunglasses etc.
- Delivery people
- Visitors
- Joggers

#### Around the home

- Washing machine/tumble dryer
- Vacuum cleaner
- Lawn mower
- Kitchen noise
- TV/radio

#### Animals

- Friendly large dogs
- Friendly small dogs
- Domestic pets e.g. rabbits
- Livestock Cats Horses

#### Outside the home

- Traffic e.g., Motorbikes Bicycles Buses Trains
- Crowds
- Fireworks

- Umbrellas
- Car travel e.g., Different surfaces (gravel, slippery floors, grass etc.)

### Gentle handling

- Head Ears Mouth Tail Paws and legs Grooming (short periods)
- Gentle restraint
- By family and friends
- By strangers

### **Exercise advice**

An important part of a dog's life is exercise, not only for fitness, but also for mental stimulation. Exercise times and feeding times are often the most exciting parts of a dog's day, and your puppy will grow to keenly anticipate them.

### Small beginnings

Puppies need much less exercise than fully-grown dogs. If you over-exercise a growing puppy, you can quickly overtire it, and more importantly damage its developing joints, which may cause early arthritis. A good rule of thumb is a ratio of five minutes of exercise per month of age (up to twice a day), until the puppy is fully grown, i.e. 15 minutes when 3 months old, 20 minutes when 4 months old etc.

Until a puppy has completed its course of vaccinations, there is a risk of infection. Therefore, it is usually better that exercise is restricted to within the confines of your garden. Exercise in the garden also provides an excellent opportunity to start early training, and to get your puppy used to wearing a collar. Make sure your puppy has a number of safe toys, and always accompany them in the garden. This way, you can engage your puppy in suitable levels of activity, and start to reward good toileting behaviour, which can usually provide all the puppy's exercise needs during this time. If the opportunity arises, take your puppy to other safe environments where there is no risk and it is able to mix with other animals and people, such as private gardens where only vaccinated dogs have access. Socialising at an early age is a vital part of your dog's development.

It is important that puppies and dogs go out for exercise every day in a safe and secure area or they may become frustrated. Time spent in the garden (however large) is no substitute for exploring new environments and socialising with other dogs. When you go out, make sure

your puppy is trained to recall, so that you are confident the puppy will return to you when called (see the accompanying sheet on training your puppy).

You should never exercise your puppy on a full stomach as this may contribute to bloat or stomach dilation which can sometimes prove fatal.

All dogs require regular exercise to remain fit and prevent them from becoming overweight, which may also lead to health problems. You should remember however, that exercise needs to be introduced gradually, and that a young puppy will not have the same exercise requirement as an adult dog. The duration and frequency of exercise should remain consistent and any increases should be gradual. For the majority of dogs, exercise is an important part of their life and so they will take as much as you can give. A dog will also enjoy play, whether with you or on its own, and so toys play an important part in a dog's life. Dependant on breed, temperament and mobility, a dog will normally be capable of walking to the same capability as its owner, however as a dog becomes older, exercise should be reduced and your dog should be allowed to walk at its own pace.

### **Puppy training advice**

Bringing your puppy home for the first time is naturally a happy and exciting occasion, but it can be a little daunting too – there is so much for both you and your puppy to learn! The information below should help you on your way to raising a happy and well trained dog right from the start.

#### Important training tips

- Start as you mean to go on. If you are always consistent you will avoid confusing your puppy
- Puppies have a very short attention span so train for short spells on a regular basis
- Keep it short and keep it simple, but most of all keep it fun - puppies respond better to cheerful voice tones rather than to threatening orders. Gentle play builds trust and a strong bond between you and your puppy as well as making training enjoyable
- Patience is the key ingredient in dog training. If you try to rush things you will only get frustrated and confuse your puppy
- Keep it interesting. Cultivate a range of different rewards incorporating play, fuss, praise, treats and toys - this will stop both of you from getting bored

### **Toilet training puppies the easy way**

Toilet training is obviously a crucial part of your puppy's early learning. Getting it right is relatively simple, and will make those first weeks so much more enjoyable for you both. However, like all things, bad habits learnt early on can lead to problems that may take weeks or even months to resolve. Initially, you will have to build your daily routine around your puppy's needs. Fortunately, these are quite predictable when they are very young, and with careful supervision you should quickly establish when it is the right time to go outside and minimise any accidents.

Like babies, puppies have poor bladder control, and need to go to the toilet several times an hour when they are awake. They will also usually need to be taken outside first thing in the morning, last thing at night, after each meal, waking from a nap, and after any exercise, play or excitement. You may find it useful to keep a record of when your puppy sleeps, eats and goes to the toilet so that you can identify any patterns that emerge. One tip is to use a food timer to remind you when it's time to take your puppy outside to relieve itself. If you find that your puppy needs to 'go' every 20 minutes then set the alarm as soon as he has gone and take him outside the moment the alarm goes off.

Always go with your puppy into the garden and establish a regular spot.

Puppies are creatures of habit, so as long as you introduce the garden to the puppy as its toilet area early on, you should be able to avoid most accidents. Decide on a cue word or phrase to use when the puppy is actually going to the toilet, so that the puppy will start to associate the word with the action and should learn to go on command. By accompanying your puppy into the garden each time, you will be there to attach cue words and praise to any successful actions. If toilet training is not going quite as well as planned, some common reasons for why your puppy is struggling are as follows:

### Feeding

- You are feeding the puppy too much
- The food you are giving your puppy is unsuitable or you are giving too much variety for a puppy of their age
- You are not feeding at regular times
- You are feeding at the wrong times (which could mean your puppy needs to go to the toilet during the night)
- You are giving foods which are too salty, causing your puppy to drink more

### Training

Punishing your puppy for accidents indoors may make them scared of going to the toilet in front of you – even outside. Expecting your puppy to tell you when it needs to go to the toilet is unrealistic and it is far better to make sure they go outside at regular intervals. Leaving the back door or outside access open for your puppy to come and go as it pleases can cause confusion, particularly when that access is closed.

Don't leave your puppy on its own for too long so that it is forced to go indoors, and don't leave them alone in the garden as this means that you are not there to praise, reward, or reinforce the idea that the garden is the correct place to go. Try to avoid saying "good boy/girl" when your puppy is going to the toilet - you don't want your puppy going to the toilet every time it is praised. Puppies can exhibit submissive or excitable urination when greeting you on your return home, so toning down greetings can help prevent your puppy from becoming overexcited. Remember that young puppies will not be able to go through the night without needing to go to the toilet, so if they do wake you up, it really is worth getting up to let them out.

### Environment

Being surrounded by lots of absorbent or grass-like surfaces, such as rugs and carpets, may confuse your puppy. Ammonia based cleaning products used around the house can smell like urine to them and lead to unwanted accidents. If your puppy does have an accident inside, the scent will still be apparent to the puppy for a long time afterwards, even if you have thoroughly disinfected the area. Specialist cleaning products specifically designed to mask the odour are available. Beyond the garden, many owners can be disappointed that their young puppy does not initially toilet when first venturing out on walks.

Often, your puppy will only relieve itself the second you get home. This is because the puppy has not yet associated going out for a walk as an opportunity to go to the toilet, so will wait until they return home to their garden, which they know is a good place to go. To break this habit, get up a little earlier in the morning (when you have plenty of time) and take your puppy out on a walk before it has had a chance to visit its usual spot. Stay out with your puppy for a reasonable length of time until it has been to the toilet, and then give plenty of praise. If you are not successful, make sure the puppy is whisked into the garden to relieve itself or you will run the risk of a large puddle indoors! Remember, patience and consistency is key.

All puppies take different amounts of time to learn, so don't worry if your puppy seems to be taking longer to get the hang of things. Your patience will pay off and you will both get there in the end.

### **A trained dog is a happy dog**

Housetraining aside, every puppy also needs to be taught good manners and have constructive lessons in basic control and social interaction. This includes:

- Responding to its name
- Learning how to greet and behave politely around other people and dogs
- To come back when called.
- To walk nicely on the lead
- To sit down and stay on command
- To allow itself to be groomed and examined by you and your vet

### **Dog training classes**

Most owners can benefit from attending good training classes, and training in the company of other dogs is very useful, because of the realistic distractions it involves. Ideally, you should start your classes as soon as your puppy's vaccinations are complete, but classes can be invaluable for older dogs too, and continue throughout the dog's life. There are lots of schools of thought on dog training and it is naturally important that you find a class and training instructors with the right approach for you and your puppy.

Dog training can be lots of fun and very rewarding. After all, a trained dog is a happy dog, and a happy dog makes for a happy owner too. Finding the best dog training club Before enrolling with a dog training club it can be beneficial to go and visit several classes first (without your puppy) to make sure you have made the right choice.

Things you may wish to consider include:

- Do you like what you see – are the trainers friendly, are people happy and enjoying training their dogs?
- Are the dogs happily focused on their human family?
- Are the instructors giving lots of encouragement and information to all attendees?
- Are the instructors maintaining a controlled, safe environment for all?
- Are instructors treating everyone fairly and meeting the needs of the whole group?

### **Diet advice**

Feeding your puppy sensibly and correctly is vital to its health, development and general wellbeing. Below you will find details of your puppy's current diet.

Your puppy's current diet .

Current meal times: morning, lunch, and night

Type of food: beef mince, fresh chicken and puppy food satchels (Purina)

Quantity (per meal): as recommended

### **Little and often**

Like all infants, puppies grow very rapidly (up to 20 times faster than an adult dog), and so require a specially formulated diet to aid their physical development. A high energy growth food is recommended and needs to be fed at evenly spaced intervals to avoid over stretching your puppy's small stomach. Meals should be split during the course of the day and ideally a young puppy should go approximately four hours between meals. It is better not to leave food down (so throw away any uneaten food after 20 minutes) and not to change your puppy's food regularly as this could cause havoc with its digestion and toilet training regime. Make sure that water is always available to your puppy, so never take its water bowl away.

### **Quantities**

The quantity of food should be approximately the same for each meal. Young puppies, particularly those of a large or fast growing breed, can sometimes need more food as puppies than they require as adults. Increases of food should always be gradual and a good idea is to increase the amount on a weekly basis from 8 weeks until the puppy is 16 weeks old. Typically, by the time a puppy reaches 16 weeks, it will need roughly the same amount as when it is an adult. Puppies can be greedy or picky with their food so it can sometimes be difficult to gauge how much to give them. Care should be taken not to over or underfeed your puppy. Puppies can often appear 'chubby', particularly after they have eaten, but under normal circumstances they should have a defined 'waist'. If in any doubt about your puppy's weight or diet, consult your vet when you next visit for a puppy check-up.

There are many varied feeding regimes to choose from: dry complete diets, semi-moist or pouch, tinned food (with or without biscuit mixer), raw food, and home-made food. Each food category has different qualities, and finding the right balance for your puppy is

extremely important. The most suitable diet should be easily digested and produce dark brown, firm, formed stools. If your puppy produces soft or light stools or has wind or diarrhoea, then the diet may not suit your puppy or it might have some kind of digestive problem or infection. If the condition persists for more than two days, consult your vet for advice. Please remember that stability in the diet will help maintain good digestion. Any change in diet should be made very gradually over at least a week to avoid upset and you should try a new diet for at least 10 days before making any further changes.

### Dry complete foods

There is a wide range of dry complete foods on the market and the quality varies widely. To get the best out of your puppy's development choose a food specially designed for puppies. Some puppies are not accustomed to complete dry foods immediately after weaning but will normally grow to like them with time. If your puppy does not seem to like eating dry complete and this is what you wish to feed, you can try soaking the food in a little warm water to soften it, or mix in a little tinned puppy food, gradually reducing the quantity until your puppy is fully weaned and accepts dry complete.

### Semi-moist, pouch, tinned and frozen foods

As with complete dry foods, semi-moist, pouch, tinned and frozen foods can vary in quality. Again, choose a good quality diet which is easily digestible, nutritionally complete and does not require additional foods to be added to it. As before it is best to avoid changes in your puppy's diet - so if you find a product that works for your puppy, stick to it.

### Home-made food (raw fresh or frozen meat)

Before the advent of commercial dog foods, it was quite common to feed dogs raw or cooked fresh meat. Many people still consider that there is no substitute for feeding raw meat; these diets are sometimes referred to as BARF (bones and raw food diet). Just meat on its own however, is not enough, and dogs need other ingredients and supplements to maintain a completely balanced diet.

Puppies in particular need a balanced and nutritious diet whilst they are growing up, as even a slight imbalance may harm their development and growth. Additionally, home-made foods obviously necessitate a fair degree of pre-planning and preparation. However, there are a number of manufacturers now providing pre-packaged complete BARF diets, which make the feeding regime easier to administer.

## Treats

Giving treats is a good way to reward your dog during training and encourage the behaviour you want. There are a wide variety of prepared and natural treats on the market which vary hugely in quality. Some commercial treats have lots of sugar, colourings, milk products and fat in them, so always check the ingredients label. Good quality prepared treats have been developed with dogs dietary needs in mind. However, all treats should be given sparingly, and never comprise more than 15% of your puppy's total calorie intake. If you use treats regularly, reduce the amount of main meal food your dog is receiving in order to avoid obesity. Some chew treats have proven ability to help prevent dental diseases, but again check the label to ensure you are getting a genuine product.

Human chocolate is poisonous to dogs and can cause liver damage and even be fatal, so never give your dog any chocolate or leave any lying around where it might be found and eaten. Be especially careful at Christmas and Easter time. Avoid giving your puppy any sweet biscuits or sugary treats which are bad for its teeth as well as its waistline, and can cause sugar 'highs' and 'lows'. Stick to prepared which tend to be much more popular. Always remember that table scraps contain calories so they should be taken into account as part of the daily diet. Better still, don't be tempted to feed table scraps at all.

## Food sensitivities and intolerances

Like humans, some dogs are sensitive or intolerant to certain foods, and this can cause a variety of problems. In extreme cases, they may develop colitis (slime and blood in their stools).

Always consult your vet if you notice you dog displaying any of the following symptoms:

- Lethargy
- Aggressive or hyperactive behaviour
- Chronic skin and ear problems
- Light to mid-brown loose bulky stools or diarrhoea
- Slime or jelly being passed with stools and flatulence
- Bloating and weight gain or loss

Clean fresh water should always be available.

Dogs eating wet food (i.e. canned) will receive moisture through their food and therefore require less water than dogs eating dry food. However, whatever the diet, water should always be made available

Do not refill half empty bowls, but ensure that fresh food is always provided at each meal time. This is particularly true in the hot weather when food left in bowls can attract flies and other insects

Half-full cans of dog food should be kept covered in the fridge, but allowed to stand until the food is up to room temperature before feeding

There are two different types of dog food manufactured, 'complete' and 'complementary', and are clearly marked on the label. A complete food can be fed as a sole source of nutrition and is available as both canned and dry food.

A complementary food is designed to accompany the complete food and should not be used as the only source of daily nutrition

- It is better to stick to one variety of complete puppy food, so you don't need to add anything to the diet. Always remember that over-supplementing can be harmful to your puppy
- If your puppy does not eat all of its meal in one go, you may be offering it too much. Not all puppies eat the amount recommended by the pet food manufacturers. The appetites of puppies can vary enormously, with some eating much less than the recommended amounts, whilst others scoff their meal down as if it was their last
- As long as your puppy is not showing any growth or digestive problems, resist the temptation to change its diet or offer it a range of foods, as you may turn your puppy into a fussy eater
- Never change your puppy's diet abruptly (unless under the direction of your vet). If you want to change its diet, do it gradually over a period of a few days to a week or longer if necessary
- Avoid feeding your puppy before travelling in the car, as this can encourage car sickness
- Do not feed your puppy an hour before or after exercise or play, as this could lead to stomach dilation and torsion (also known as bloat), which is a life threatening condition requiring immediate veterinary intervention.

- Leave your puppy in peace while it is eating from its bowl. Taking the bowl away while it is eating causes anxiety and this can lead to food aggression. If you want to be sure that your puppy is comfortable with you approaching it during mealtimes, add a little food to the bowl while it is eating, so it sees you as an asset, rather than a threat
- Never feed your dog from the table or your plate, as this encourages drooling and attention seeking behaviours, such as begging and barking

**Potential toxins/poisons (this list is by no means complete and always consult your vet if you puppy ingests anything it shouldn't)**

- Alcohol
- Chocolate
- Coffee/caffeine.
- Grapes/raisins/currants/sultanas
- Artificial sweeteners containing xylitol
- Some human vitamins and supplements
- Mouldy food
- Onions, chives and garlic
- Slug pellets and other pesticides
- Yeast/dough
- Some garden/household plants
- Macadamia nuts
- Brassica plants (cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, swede, turnip)

**Grooming advice**

All dogs will benefit from regular grooming, whether they are a short haired breed or one with a long or fluffy coat. Reasons for grooming – remember ‘CHAIR’

- Cleanliness – keeping your dog's coat clean by removing dirt and dead hair helps encourage new hair growth, and reduces the amount of hair deposited on household furniture
  - Health – grooming helps to stimulate new coat growth, and prevents the formation of knots or matting which may lead to skin irritation
  - Appearance – most owners take a pride in their dogs looking smart, and regular grooming will certainly help your puppy to look its best
- Inspection – regular

grooming is also a great way to check for parasites, or any suspicious lumps and bumps

- Relationship – grooming is part of dog's socialisation activities.

Regular grooming helps create a bond between you and your puppy, and accustoms your puppy to being handled. Do remember that grooming should include checking ears, nails, teeth, and eyes etc. on a regular basis

### Getting started

It is important to groom your puppy at a height which is comfortable for both you and your dog. For many dogs it may be advisable to groom them on a table and custom made grooming tables are available. But any sturdy table or work bench with a non-slip surface will suffice.

Remember: never leave your puppy unattended on the table for even a short moment.

Start the grooming experience at an early age as part of your puppy's socialisation programme and routines. Keep the sessions short to start off with – just a couple of minutes, gradually increasing the time spent on the table. Always make the experience positive, rewarding with praise and suitable treats. Any struggling should be dealt with firmly but kindly, as your puppy may be frustrated, mischievous or even afraid. Build up the experience and your puppy will come to accept the grooming routine and also being handled on the table. This will help with other activities such as veterinary visits. Finish the grooming if your puppy shows signs of getting bored or tired, so that each session ends on a positive note.

### Dog coat types

It's worth bearing in mind that factors like neutering, age, poor diet and poor health can dramatically influence your dog's coat.

### Knots and matts

A knot occurs where the coat is slightly tangled but it can be removed by careful brushing or combing out. Matts are formed when dead, loose undercoat hair becomes trapped by the top or guard hair, and starts to clump and twist together. If this matted coat becomes wet, the matting tightens and becomes almost solid. Do not attempt to remove matts unless trained in the procedure. Otherwise, refer to a professional groomer.

### Care of ears, nails and eyes

- Check your puppy's ears to see if they are clean. You can remove excess dirt from the inside of the ear flap with damp cotton wool. Never probe inside the ear as you may perforate the ear drum. Any odour is usually a sign there is something wrong and your puppy should be taken to a vet
  - If nails are excessively long remove the tip of the claw, taking care not to cut the quick or blood vessel
  - If needed, clean the eyes with clean, damp cotton wool using a separate piece for each eye
- External parasites A parasite is something that lives on another animal (the host) and gets its nourishment from the host. If left unchecked, the parasite causes disease or even death. The most common external parasites found on dogs are fleas and ticks.
- Fleas are very small, brownish black, extremely agile creatures. Excessive scratching and self-biting can be symptoms of flea infestation. Even if no fleas are to be seen the presence of shiny black specks like coal dust (flea excreta) is a sure indication of the presence of fleas (dab the specks with a damp piece of cotton wool and if it goes pink it confirms the presence of fleas; these are the remains of a digested blood meal from the host)
  - Ticks are largish grey pea shaped parasites that can be 3-4mm in length. They attach themselves to other animals in order to have a blood meal. There is evidence that ticks are also a threat to human health as they can spread Lyme disease. There is now a wide range of proprietary powders, sprays, 'spot-on' treatments and anti-flea and tick collars available. A dedicated pet care professional will be happy to advise on suitable products.

### Other skin problems

- Ringworm is a fungal disease, affecting the skin, nails and hair. Circular lesions appear causing hair loss, which become scaly and crusty. Ringworm is contagious and is a zoonotic condition (transmissible to humans)
- Dermatitis causes irritation, hair loss and inflammation and is a result of sensitivity to the environment
- Alopecia can range from a thinning of hair to total hair loss and can be caused by a number of factors such as skin parasites, hormonal imbalance, infections, stress or

poor nutrition. Seek veterinary advice for any skin problems Professional grooming  
Some breeds of dog may require professional trimming and styling.

Most coated breeds will require full grooming about once every four to six weeks but even short coated breeds can benefit from a 'wash and brush' up more regularly to remove dust and dirt.

### **Worming advice**

Worming your dog throughout its lifetime is important, and you should talk to your vet about a suitable worming programme for your puppy at the earliest opportunity. Regular worming not only protects your dog's health, but helps to prevent the spread of infection and potentially hazardous health risks to other animals and humans too. Worm infections carried by your dog do not always display obvious symptoms, so an adequate treatment schedule is vital. Some worming treatment has been carried out prior to you receiving your puppy and a record of this is provided in the chart below. Do discuss this further with your own veterinary surgeon. Signs aren't always obvious Dogs can appear healthy even when they have worm infections. Detecting an infection can be tricky, particularly as worm eggs are too small to be easily visible in your pet's faeces. In addition, your dog may be more at risk from some worm infections than others depending on where you live. It is therefore extremely important to keep your dog's treatment regular and up to date.

Specific signs will be described for each worm, but remember that not all worm infections will be obvious in your dog, so some more general signs to look for include:

- The presence of visible worm segments that could stick to your dog's bottom and become itchy. This can cause dogs to 'scoot', whereby they drag their bottoms along the ground with their back legs. Doing this also means that your dog will be rubbing its infected bottom on your floor or carpet, which is naturally unhygienic
- Weight loss
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- A dull, lifeless coat
- A change in appetite (it may be either increased or decreased depending on the worms present)
- A lack of energy

- A pot-bellied appearance (most commonly seen in puppies)
- Breathing difficulties and coughing
- General changes in behaviour

You should seek advice from your vet if you see any of the above signs in your dog. Many of these symptoms may be indicative of other illnesses. Your vet will be able to investigate the problem and provide appropriate advice and treatment.

### Worming products

There are a wide variety of worming products available from a number of different sources. These products vary in activity spectrum (the worms they treat or prevent), how you administer the treatment (spot-on / injection / oral medication), dosage instructions and speed or duration of activity.

Always check with your vet before initiating a worming regime. This way you can be confident that you are using the most appropriate products, and following the best treatment for the needs of your dog and family. How often should you worm? All animals are at risk from acquiring worm infections. However some animals will be at higher risk than others depending on factors such as their lifestyle and area in which you live.

Children are at increased risk of disease from worms; if you have a young family or your dog often comes into contact with children, you should pay particular attention to regular worming. Again, always consult with your vet with regard to the most appropriate treatment schedule.

### Control check list

As well as following a worming plan following consultation with your vet, there are also many other practical things you can do to help prevent the spread of worm infections among your pets and family. These are as follows:

- 'Poop scooping' - make sure you pick up your dog's faeces immediately on a walk and remove it from the lawn or surrounding outdoor environment daily - bag it, and put it in designated poop bins, double bag it, and put it in with the domestic waste, or check with you local council
- Ensure you and your children wash your hands after handling/stroking your dog
- Wash all food including fruit and vegetables before eating them

- Don't allow children to put dirt in their mouths
- Throw away any food dropped on the floor/ground rather than eating it
- Cover children's sandpits when not in use

### **Travelling pets**

There are specific parasitic worms to which your pet may be exposed to on visiting countries outside Australia. Two notable worms are heartworm (*Dirofilaria immitis*), transmitted by a mosquito bite, which could be fatal if your dog is not protected, and one type of tapeworm (*Echinococcus multilocularis*), which can cause serious and fatal disease in people. If you are intending to travel with your dog, you should talk to your vet in plenty of time to establish the best worming regime to ensure the protection of both your dog's health and that of your family.

### **Vaccination advice**

There are a number of common infectious diseases that dogs are susceptible to throughout their life. Some of these diseases are life threatening and young puppies are particularly vulnerable, so it is important that your puppy is vaccinated against them. Further vaccination as adult dogs may be required to ensure that your dog continues to be healthy and happy throughout its entire life. Some vaccination may have been carried out prior to you receiving your puppy and a record of this is provided below. Please take this with you on your puppy's first visit to a veterinary surgeon.

#### First vaccinations

Normally, your puppy can receive its first vaccination from approximately 8 weeks of age although this can vary depending on the normal practice of the treating vet. The vet will most likely start your puppy on a course of vaccinations against the four main infectious diseases: canine distemper, hepatitis, parvovirus and leptospirosis. All of these diseases can be fatal, so after its first course of vaccinations, your puppy may need booster vaccinations according to your vet's advice.

#### Keeping a record

Once a puppy is vaccinated, the vet will issue a vaccination certificate showing a record of exactly when the puppy was vaccinated and which product was used. This should be kept safe, as you may need to show them at boarding kennels, dog-training classes, or if you take

your dog abroad. If you change vet, they may recommend a slightly different regime, and it will be useful to see what vaccination your puppy has had in the past.

### **Vaccination and socialisation**

Until your puppy is fully vaccinated you should prevent them from being exposed to dogs that could be infected or areas that infected dogs could have had access to.

Puppies are most receptive to new environments and situations at this age, so keeping them confined to your house and garden may be counterproductive. During these important first weeks at home, you could take your puppy out to different places in your arms or the car to get them used to different situations and noises, as well as letting them meet new people.