

# GENERAL HEALTH



Dogs need regular maintenance to keep things in perfect working order. By doing the basics you can prevent many serious problems from developing. Here is a list of what every dog needs to stay well.

## VACCINATIONS

Your puppy needs to have up to three vaccinations when it's young and then a booster shot one year later, after that a booster every 2 to 3 years after a consult with your vet. It's important that you don't take your puppy into parks and other areas where dogs frequent until 10 days after their third puppy vaccination as it could pick up Parvo virus and other deadly diseases. Please do not let any unvaccinated dogs onto your property.

## WORMING

All puppies must be treated with a broad spectrum worming product every two weeks until they're three months old. Then your pup needs to be wormed every three months for the rest of its life. Always buy your worming tablets from a vet or pet shop; worming tablets that are available from the supermarket may not be a broad spectrum wormer. Remember that hygiene is important as some worms that dogs carry can be transmitted to humans. Make sure you wash your hands thoroughly after handling your dog.

## DEFLEAING

Your dog must be regularly treated for fleas. Flea infestations can lead to itching and more serious skin conditions in some breeds of dogs. We recommend using a topical flea treatment such as "Advantage". This treatment lasts for one month. "Advantage" or "Frontline" flea treatments are available

from your vet so ask your vet for the right treatment for the age and size of your dog. Flea collars, flea powders and flea shampoos are not recommended.

## VET VISITS

It is a good idea to schedule annual health checks for your dog and if ever you are concerned about your dog's health do not hesitate to contact your vet.

Some dogs can become quite anxious when they visit their vet. The clinic has lots of smells that you and I can't detect but your dog's sensitive nose will notice them very quickly. When you need to visit your vet there are some things you can do to make things easier for everyone, including your dog.

- At home, spend time getting your dog used to having his ears, eyes, mouth and feet examined. It's hard for your vet to do their job if your dog won't sit still and be examined.
- Take your dog to the toilet before you enter the clinic. That makes it less likely that he'll urinate on the floor or walls when he gets inside.
- If your dog is fearful or anxious don't pat him and tell him it's alright. This is rewarding his behaviour so he'll continue to be afraid. Be very matter of fact and only acknowledge your dog when he has calmed down.
- Allow the veterinary staff to hold your dog. They are trained to safely restrain even the largest dog so there won't be any injury to you, the staff or your dog should he wriggle or jump away.
- If you're passing by call into the clinic for a social visit and a treat. This will teach your dog that not all visits mean an examination and he'll be much happier to come in when he needs treatment.

## COMMON DISEASES

Listed below are two of the most common infectious diseases that a dog can contract in New Zealand. Up-to-date vaccinations and annual check-ups at your vet are the best way to avoid the possibility of these illnesses affecting your dog.

## **Kennel Cough:**

Kennel Cough (Infectious Tracheobronchitis) is a highly contagious upper respiratory tract infection that can affect dogs of all ages.

The clinical signs are a characteristic harsh, hacking cough that is often followed by the dog attempting to gag or vomit. A white froth is often brought up which is not actually vomit but expectorant or the fluid which lines the trachea or windpipe.

Affected dogs are usually otherwise well and symptoms are more annoying (for both dog and owner!). However, in very young or very old dogs and those who are otherwise unwell, the effects can be much worse and pneumonia is a possibility.

It is important to bring your canine companion to the veterinarian when they are coughing to assess for more serious signs, but often they simply prescribe medicine to soothe the throat and an antibiotic to clear the infection. Keeping them warm and adding some honey to their water are ways you can help too. Time is also a factor as infection will usually clear by itself within 3 weeks.

Because it is so contagious it is also important to keep dogs isolated from others. If this sounds a bit like the human flu to you then you're right and the best cure is prevention.

Annual vaccination against kennel cough is important and also compulsory if your dog is going to stay in kennels. For those dogs who are more at risk (for example, by staying frequently in kennels or if they have had kennel cough before), 6 monthly vaccinations are recommended - an intranasal vaccination (no needles involved!) offers more immediate protection. Talk to your vet about whether your dog should have more frequent kennel cough vaccinations.

Like the human flu shot the vaccinations do not always stop dogs from contracting kennel cough. But even if your vaccinated dog does contract kennel cough vaccinations do help in lessening the severity of the symptoms.

## **Parvo Virus:**

Canine parvovirus is a severe viral infection which causes depression and a sudden onset of profuse smelly bloody diarrhea, vomiting and fever. This can lead to severe dehydration and death.

Parvo virus in dogs is prevalent throughout New Zealand. Dogs infected with parvovirus excrete the infectious virus in their faeces and saliva from 10 days to 21 days after the onset of the disease. It can be spread from one dog to another through water and food contaminated by faeces. Parvovirus can survive freezing temperatures and most household disinfectants will not kill it. This virus can also be spread on shoes and clothing; dog kennels, parks, river banks and show grounds are all major sources of infection. Your dog does not have to have contact with another dog to pick up the virus.

Vaccinating your dog is the best way to prevent canine parvovirus infection. This will help protect your dog against this serious infectious disease that can kill very quickly. The vaccine stimulates the dog's immune system to produce antibodies against parvovirus.

During the first day or two of life, pups usually receive some immunity (antibodies) from their mother's first milk (colostrum). This natural immunity allows the puppy to resist disease and will help protect the pup for its first 6-12 weeks of life. After this time, the level of immunity drops off and the pup can no longer be sure of protection. Puppies should therefore start their vaccination programme from 6-8 weeks of age to ensure that their risk of infection is greatly reduced. It is extremely important that puppies complete their vaccination programme so they are protected against this disease. They will also need regular vaccinating throughout their lives for continued protection.

Until your puppy is fully vaccinated - 10 days after its final puppy vaccination - do not walk or place it down in any park or public place, including footpaths. Stay home and restrict any contact with soil to a minimum until your puppy is fully vaccinated. It is extremely important to safely socialise your puppy during this period. There are classes for puppy socialising and you can mix your puppy with friends dogs that are vaccinated

## HEAT STRESS

On a sunny day the interior of a vehicle can reach temperatures of up to 50°C in a matter of minutes. It is recommended that you do not leave a dog in a vehicle. Dogs don't have as many sweat ducts as humans and therefore cannot regulate their temperature effectively. This makes them more susceptible to exhaustion and dehydration. Dogs cool down mainly through their nose, mouth and paws, and in hot conditions moisture is constantly evaporating from their body. Short-nosed breeds can become overheated in a matter of minutes.

**NEVER LEAVE YOUR DOG IN THE CAR ON A SUNNY DAY!** If you leave your dog in the car on a cool, cloudy day, ensure that you take the following precautions:

- Place sunshades on your windows (especially the front window) and make sure all windows are down at least 8cm.
- Ensure that the dog has plenty of clean fresh water.
- Park in the shade and remember that as the day goes on the shade will move.
- Minimise, as much as possible, the time the dog spends alone in the car. Although some dogs appear to enjoy a ride in the car it's not good practice leaving a dog unattended in a vehicle. The dog has no way to escape any perceived threat which can be very stressful.
- Remember that food requires water to aid in digestion and will simply make the dog thirstier.

If you recognise that your dog is suffering from heat stress while walking along a hot surface such as asphalt or sand, quickly lift the dog so that the paws are off the ground. Dogs can expel a lot of heat through their paws.

