

Dog Care

Helping animals and their carers since 1886™



Owning a dog can be one of the most rewarding things you have ever done. But many prospective dog owners underestimate the investment of time, energy, and money required. Your dog will live anything up to 20 years, depending on its breed, size and general health. This is a long term commitment, and you must be ready to provide your dog with a home for that duration.

Dog ownership requires commitment and a responsible attitude and should never be entered into lightly. It is important to remember that you will have full responsibility for your dog's care. Your dog will prove to be a loyal and entertaining companion only if you are prepared to give enough in return.

So please consider the following things before making a decision to get a dog.

COST OF KEEPING A DOG

In addition to the initial cost of getting a dog, it's estimated that ongoing costs such as food, veterinary fees and treatments and pet insurance are approximately £25 a week, depending on size and breed.

CHOOSING A DOG

Before you get a dog it's wise to think long and hard about the breed or crossbreed of dog you get and whether your new dog will suit your personality and lifestyle.

Considerations should include:

- Does the dog you're considering suit your home, family, working hours etc?

- Can you make a lifelong commitment to your dog?
- Time and effort required to train and socialise your dog?
- Whether you are prepared for your home to change from muddy paws to fur shedding, it will never be the same again!
- Whether you'd like to get a male or female / puppy or adult
- Are you prepared to walk your dog every day?
- Will your new dog bond with other pets in the household?
- Lastly, and most importantly, whether you can afford to keep a pet.

The secret to choosing a dog is to do lots of research on the different types of dog and it's also worth finding out more about potential health problems and characteristics such as length of coat and therefore how much grooming is required, how much hair they will shed, whether the dog dribbles etc.

WHY NOT THINK ABOUT A RESCUE DOG?

It is a common misperception that rescue dogs have ended up in shelters through some fault of their own such as bad behaviour – this is rarely the case. The vast majority of dogs end up in rescues because of a lack of commitment or lifestyle changes of their previous owners!

Benefits of getting a rescue dog from a shelter such as The Mayhew Animal Home:

- The rescue centre can help you select the right dog for you;
- You will gain an understanding of the dog's established behaviour from the staff;
- The dog will be vet assessed and you will be made aware of any existing conditions before you adopt;
- The rescue centre will give you the guidance and support you will need to become a great owner;

- You will be giving a forever home to one of the 100,000 abandoned dogs who are looking for a new home every year in the UK.

Beware of purchasing a dog on a whim without any information or history on the dog's parents and background.

COLLECTING YOUR DOG

Once you've decided that you're going to get a dog, do a bit of planning so that your dog's first days in its new home are as easy and pleasurable as possible.

- Equipment for your dog should include a dog bed big enough for your pet to stretch out in, a comfortable collar which you can slip two fingers underneath with an identity tag, a lead and food and water bowls;
- Buy some pet food for your dog – this can either be dry complete food or semi-moist and tinned foods;



- Depending on your dog's medical history, you may need to phone your vet and book an appointment for vaccinations, fleaing and worming. Your vet will also carry out a 'nose to tail' MOT;
- Look into puppy/dog training classes to help socialise and train your pet including house training, sitting, staying, recall and general manners.

FEEDING YOUR DOG

Your new dog will need two tasty meals each day and fresh water should be available at all times. Dogs' nutritional requirements change according to their lifestage, with puppies, adults and senior dogs all having different nutritional requirements. Use a good quality dry food as a base for the diet, but then mix in some 'human' foods to make the diet more interesting.

Beware though - there are a small number of foods which are dangerous to dogs such as grapes, raw onions, raisins and chocolate, so it is always worth checking what is in your food before offering it to your dog.

EXERCISE AND TRAINING

Taking your dog out for long walks and exercise in the park is one of the main attractions for people wanting to own a dog. But many forget that daily off-lead exercise is essential to keep dogs healthy and mentally and physically stimulated - the level of exercise they need will depend on their breed, age and health.

Exercise not only improves your dog's wellbeing, but also helps build muscle tone and prevent depression, obesity, joint problems, heart conditions and behavioural issues. It doesn't matter if you aren't feeling in the mood, if it's cold and wet outside, or you have a busy day planned, your dog needs exercise and stimulation every day! A large garden is no substitute for regular exercise elsewhere.

And don't forget it is a legal requirement to pick up poop after your dog. You could face a fixed penalty or a court fine if you fail to "bag and bin" what your dog leaves behind in most areas easily accessible to and routinely used by the general public.





Training is also part of the fun of having a dog and it is important that your dog has good manners and is well-behaved when being walked and when meeting new people. You may just want to train him or her in the basics, but if you are keen to do more you can go to agility and advanced training classes. Visit www.apdt.co.uk to find a class near you; they have a broad range of classes from very basic through to higher levels.

IDENTIFICATION

It is your legal responsibility as a dog owner to ensure your dog has visible identification in the form of a collar and tag with your contact details on.

We would advise microchipping as a more permanent and inexpensive way of identifying your dog – it is a simple procedure that is over in seconds, for a lifetime of peace of mind. A microchip about the size of a grain of rice is inserted into the skin between your dog's shoulder blades. Each chip has its own unique number held on a central database.

If your dog gets lost, it can then be scanned to find your details. Engraving 'I am microchipped' on your dog's tag will highlight the fact the dog has identification.

Your vet will be able to microchip your dog for you.

KEEPING YOUR DOG HEALTHY

Register your dog

Your new dog should be registered with a local vet.

Pet insurance

We also advise taking out pet insurance for your new companion as soon as possible, as veterinary treatment can be very expensive.

Neutering

Neutering is the name for a veterinary procedure which offers animals a permanent solution for birth control. It may also be known as spaying, castrating, desexing, fixing or sterilising. It is one of the hallmarks of responsible dog ownership.



Neutering improves your pet's health by reducing or eliminating the risk of certain cancers and other diseases.

Neutering improves your pet's health by reducing or eliminating the risk of certain cancers and other diseases. Your pet is also less likely to develop unwanted behaviours such as the need to escape, roam, or fight with other dogs. Male dogs can be neutered from as early as nine weeks and female dogs from twelve weeks old.

Talk to your vet about this procedure on your first visit.

Vaccinations

It is essential to vaccinate your dog against common canine illnesses, some of which may be fatal. The main diseases vaccinated against are Canine Parvovirus, Canine Distemper, Infectious Canine Hepatitis, Leptospirosis and Parainfluenza. If you are thinking of putting your dog into kennels, they may request that your dog also has the Bordetella vaccination. Puppies can be vaccinated from eight weeks of age; it is a simple course of two vaccinations three to four weeks apart, followed by annual boosters.

Worming

Worms are internal parasites that can be a serious health risk to puppies and dogs if left untreated and may potentially infect and cause disease in humans. Roundworms and tapeworms are the most common ones to infest dogs, although it isn't always easy to tell if your dog has worms as there may not be any noticeable symptoms. There is also the life-threatening lungworm *Angiostrongylus vasorum* is carried by slugs and snails. If your dog comes into contact with these common garden pests there is a risk he could become infected. Your vet will be able to advise you on appropriate worming products.

Fleas

Most dogs suffer from a flea infestation at some point in their lives and while there may be no symptoms at all, the most common symptom to look out for is scratching or chewing, most commonly at the tail-base and lower back.



The adult fleas you may see on your dog are only the tip of the iceberg – 95% of the problem exists as eggs, larvae and pupae in the home.

Your vet will be able to advise you on an effective approach to flea control.

ONGOING HEALTH CHECKS

Your vet will carry out a 'nose to tail' MOT when your dog is given its annual booster vaccinations. But you can play a role too by keeping an eye on your dog's health and helping him to stay in tip top condition and live a long and healthy life:

- Look out for changes in your dog's food consumption, drinking and toilet habits.

Does your dog have less energy or are they slower in getting up or jumping? Monitor your dog's faeces for colour, consistency and signs of worms.

- Rub your hands over your dog's body including the head, legs and paws to check for any lumps or bumps to anything stuck in his pads.

- Keep your eyes open for evidence of fleas, ticks and other parasites. Check your dog's coat quality and whether any dandruff or hair loss is evident. Is your dog scratching, chewing or biting excessively?
- Check your dog's eyes and ears for any abnormalities or discharge. The corners of his eyes should be free of discharge and his ears should be clean.
- Regularly examine your dog's mouth for signs of disease such as bad breath, reddened, bleeding or swollen gums and build up of tartar.
- If it looks like your dog is losing weight or is overweight, it's advisable to see the vet.

In bringing a dog into your family, you are taking on a lifelong commitment – make sure you're ready for it!

The Mayhew Animal Home has a vision of a world where all companion animals are wanted. We offer a wide variety of community services providing advice, care and assistance to animals and their carers whatever their circumstances. Your support in helping us achieve this goal is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Supported by



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