

Recognizing Health Issues

Canine Health



CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Recognizing signs of health issues early can go a long way toward preventing a mild problem from becoming a serious one. When in doubt, call your vet. They can help you determine if your dog needs veterinary attention.

Prevention Regular vaccines are critical to your dog's ongoing health. Parvo, distemper, rabies and other contagious, often deadly diseases can all be prevented through vaccinations. You never know when or where you will encounter infected dogs, or their waste. Therefore, **your** dog should always be protected. Exact types and frequency of vaccination will vary according to location, activity and even breed. Talk to your veterinarian to determine the best vaccination regimen for your dog.

Common Ailments **ARTHRITIS:** Former injuries and heredity can cause your dog to develop arthritis. Dogs often get arthritis in their backs, hips, knees, shoulders, and elbows. Symptoms include difficulty getting up, stiffness in the morning, limping, and discomfort after exercise. There are many anti-inflammatory medications and supplements available to keep your dog comfortable. Consult your veterinarian for safe medications and dosage. Swimming and mild exercise also help. Keep your dog at an appropriate weight for his size and build.

CANCER: If your dog develops any lumps or bumps, have the vet take a look. They may be simple fatty cysts, common on old dogs. However, dogs can get cancer at any age. Spaying or neutering helps to prevent the two most common cancers: testicular cancer, and mammary cancer. Some cancers can be removed. Others require ongoing treatment.

DENTAL AND GUM DISEASE: Regular dental care is just as important for dogs as it is for humans. Gum disease can make it difficult for your dog to eat, lead to tooth loss, and allow infection to enter his body and organs. To help prevent periodontal disease, provide chew toys that will massage his gums. Canine toothpastes and toothbrushes are available at PETCO. Human toothpaste can be toxic to dogs and should never be used. To prevent dental disease, an annual cleaning by a veterinarian is often necessary.

EAR INFECTIONS: A dog that frequently shakes his head and scratches at his ears may have an ear infection. Ears get filled with dark brown, foul-smelling waxy debris. Floppy-eared breeds and dogs that swim a lot are more likely to get recurring infections. If untreated, an ear infection can become chronic. Constant head shaking can cause large hematomas in the earflaps, which require surgery. Regular cleaning and care can help prevent infections.

FLEA BITE DERMATITIS: A common problem easily prevented with topical flea treatments or pills. Some dogs react violently to a fleabite, chewing on their skin. Secondary infections develop, and antibiotics are needed. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

HEARTWORM: This deadly disease, carried and transmitted by mosquitoes, is easily preventable. Your vet will test your dog for heartworm, and then prescribe a monthly or daily pill for prevention. The heartworm test needs to be repeated annually, or if your dog misses a month of his medication. Consult with your vet. Collie breeds, such as Shetland sheepdogs, border collies, collies, bearded collies, etc, should avoid products with Ivermectin. Heartworm preventative is sometimes combined with other medications which will also kill other types of worms (not tapeworms).

HIP DYSPLASIA: This is an inherited disease in which the hip bones don't properly fit into the hip sockets, causing arthritis and lameness to varying degrees. Some mildly affected dogs never show any symptoms. Others become crippled as early as one year of age. When buying a purebred puppy, check to make sure both parents have been checked for and cleared of dysplasia. Dysplasia is diagnosed by hip x-rays, but often cannot be diagnosed until the dog is 2 years old. Mixed breed dogs can be affected too. Treatment depends on the dog's age and severity of the disease. Treatments range from painkillers as needed to various surgical procedures. Keeping your dog at an appropriate weight helps to minimize strain on damaged joints.

CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Common Ailments (continued)

HOT SPOTS: A raw rash that is irritated or puss-filled: This is probably an infection, and your dog will need antibiotics from the vet to clear it up. Your vet will also want to determine what caused the infection. Fleabites, allergies, and lack of grooming are frequent causes.

OBESITY: An obese dog cannot run and play comfortably and may develop many obesity-related health problems. Swimming, easy walks, short games and less food are all keys to trimming down the pudgy pooch. Avoid table scraps and biscuits that can add up to hundreds of extra calories. Your dog may go on a hunger strike when you start a new regime, but after refusing a meal or two he'll dive right into that low calorie kibble.

WORMS: Worms are easily treated with proper medication. Some puppies are born with worms. Adult dogs can easily pick them up from eating wild animals or from contact with an infected animal's feces. Follow your veterinarian schedule of worming. Worms can sometimes be seen in the dogs stool, but often are not visible. Keep feces picked up to prevent spreading worms to other animals. All dogs and cats in the household should have a stool sample checked by the vet on a yearly basis, especially if they go outside of their home.

TAPEWORMS: If you see small rice-like pieces around your dog's rectum, your dog has tapeworms. Tapeworms are caused by eating fleas. Tapeworms respond to different treatment than other types of worms. Flea prevention helps prevent tapeworms.

Check With Your Vet Immediately if You Notice:

BLOOD: If your dog is coughing up blood or has blood in his stool, get him to the vet immediately. This could be a symptom of Parvo or an intestinal blockage. Carefully look for other symptoms so the doctor will have a better idea of what is wrong. Bleeding may be the only visible sign that a pet was hit by a car. If this is a possibility, get to a vet immediately.

BLOAT (gastric dilation volvulus): A life-threatening distension of the stomach that most often occurs in large dogs. The dog's stomach becomes filled with air and fluid that cannot be expelled. If this is not corrected within a few hours, the dog may die. If your dog keeps getting up and moving around like he's uncomfortable, retches but is unable to vomit, looks extremely bloated, is depressed or is salivating a lot, go to your vet for care. An x-ray will allow the veterinarian to diagnose bloat. Surgery may be needed in order to save your dog's life.

SWELLING: Test the swollen area to see if the dog is in pain. Feel if the skin is hot. (You might want to use a muzzle, since even the best dogs may bite when they are in pain) If you suspect a broken bone, don't rotate the limb, Try to fashion a splint for the ride to the hospital. Bee stings, snakebites, or an infected wound can also cause swelling.

OPEN WOUND: If there is a lot of bleeding, don't attempt to clean the wound. Cover the area with clean gauze or a washcloth and apply direct pressure. Add another cloth if the first gets soaked through. Transport your dog to the vet immediately.

SEIZURES AND TREMORS: A seizure can be caused by many things, including poison. Get to the vet right away. Your dog also may sit and quiver like he has the chills. If not poison, seizures could be a symptom of epilepsy, heat stroke or an internal organ problem. Blood tests can help your vet diagnose the problem and prescribe treatment.

GENERAL DEPRESSION, REFUSING TO EAT: Know your dog and his normal behavior. He could have an intestinal blockage, an infection or other serious problem that shows no other symptoms. Call the vet. Be ready to tell her how long these symptoms have been present. Many dogs are like people – they have an "off" day or two. If your dog is depressed or refuses to eat for more than 24 hours for no obvious reason, call the vet.

Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please refer to the above sources or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.