

**Winchester Veterinary Group**  
**95 Cross Street**  
**Winchester, MA 01890**  
**(781) 721-0707**

**PUPPIES**

Congratulation on your new puppy! We wish you many years of good health and companionship. Raising a puppy is a lot of fun, but does require patience. Your puppy has an innate desire to please you and to follow your instructions but needs to be shown what to do and how to behave. As your new pup depends on you for training and care, we have put together some basic information and recommendations to help you get things off to a healthy start.

**VACCINES:** Starting at 6-8 weeks of age, a distemper shot is given every 3 to 4 weeks until the puppy is at least 15 to 16 weeks of age. This is then boosted at one year of age. Distemper is a serious viral disease causing vomiting, diarrhea, pneumonia and possibly seizures. This vaccine is a combination shot that also protects against parvovirus, some respiratory viruses and viral hepatitis.

Protection against bacteria called Leptospirosis, a bacteria found in standing water that usually affects the kidneys and liver, can be included in the distemper vaccine or given separately as a series of two vaccines two to three weeks apart.

A rabies vaccine is given to all dogs (state law required) once they are at least 3 months old. This is also required to license your dog. When given for the first time, the rabies vaccine is valid for one year. When the dog is vaccinated 9 to 12 months later, the rabies vaccine is good for 3 years. If there is a possible rabies exposure situation (e.g. a bite wound), then it may be necessary to give a rabies booster vaccine at the time of exposure. Also, never let a rabies vaccine expire. If it does then your pet is considered unvaccinated and can be subjected to a prolonged quarantine period, or possibly euthanasia if exposed to rabies.

If your dog is to be kenneled, be at dog shows, go to doggy daycare, or have extensive contact with other dogs, the "kennel cough" vaccine should be considered, as well as the Canine Influenza vaccine.

Additionally, a vaccine against Lyme disease has become available. Lyme infection and disease are commonly seen in dogs in this area. Most dogs should be vaccinated against this disease. As Lyme disease is spread by ticks, good tick control is essential from at least March until December. If we are having a warm winter, then year round protection may be needed. Ticks also carry other disease in addition to Lyme disease, such as Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Anaplasmosis and Ehrlichiosis, for which there are currently no available vaccines.

**FEEDING:** Puppies should be fed a well-balanced puppy food until approximately 1 year of age, then an adult food. Large breed dogs that are predisposed to hip dysplasia should be fed a "large breed" puppy food. Too rapid growth in these breeds can promote hip dysplasia development. They should be fed 3 times daily until at least 3 or 4 months old, then twice daily until they go on adult food. In general, start with the lower amount specified on the package. and

divide this into separate meals. Certain supplements such as calcium are not recommended, and can cause problems. Feeding table food is discouraged as it may not be balanced and may turn the dog away from its proper diet. Bones and fatty or spicy foods should never be given (it is a myth that dogs need to eat bones). They can cause severe gastrointestinal problems.

**PARASITES:** Puppies are commonly infected with various parasites. Roundworms, an intestinal parasite, infect up to 90% of puppies. It is also possible, though uncommon, for roundworms to potentially infect people (especially children), causing serious ocular problems. Good hygiene is stressed. A stool sample should be checked on every puppy, especially if any diarrhea or vomiting is seen. Fortunately, most parasites are easily treated. We prefer to see two negative stools 2 to 4 weeks apart to be sure parasites are not present.

Heartworm is a common parasite carried by mosquitoes. It becomes established in the heart and great vessels of the heart and lungs. All dogs should be on heartworm preventative. Heartworm can infect dogs of any age. Dogs over six months of age require a blood test before being placed on preventative. We recommend administering the preventative year-round as it is easy to give, coverage is assured through the entire year, and the yearly heartworm test can be obtained at any time of the year. A yearly test is required as no medication is 100% effective, and should the dog spit up the preventative without its owner's knowledge, it would not be protected for an extended period. It is also the recommendation of the American Heartworm Society to test yearly.

Fleas and ticks can infect dogs of all ages. There are many products available for their control. Be certain that they are safe for the age of the puppy by carefully reading the instructions on the label or discussing it with the doctor. Once old enough, the once monthly products are very effective and convenient. They are based on the weight of the pet so growing puppies will have changing dosage needs.

**TOYS:** As you have probably noticed, puppies will put anything and everything into their mouths! Be very careful with toys. Objects that are easily shredded, or non-digestible, should be given cautiously and with supervision (a classic example is a "squeaky" toy or a rubber toy with a bell inside). Too often, we end up surgically removing these items from an obstructed intestine. We recommend allowing one of the "safe" toys, such as a hard rubber "Kong". Remember, your puppy cannot discriminate between an old shoe and a new, hundred-dollar loafer. If given one item, then all similar items are considered "free game".

**SPAYING AND NEUTERING:** In general, we recommend dogs that are not to be used for breeding be spayed (females) and neutered (males). This can be done as young as six months of age, although we often will wait until older in some cases, for confirmation reasons. There are well established medical benefits to spaying and neutering. Spaying female dogs before they come into heat (estrus) reduced the incidence of mammary tumors by 98-99 percent. Neutering male dogs can eliminate many types of prostate disease (but not prostate cancer which is relatively uncommon), and also reduces certain perionel tumors and testicular tumors. For specific breeds, such as Golden Retrievers and Weimaraners, spaying and neutering has been linked to an increased risk of certain tumors as the dogs age. Risks and benefits of spaying and neutering need to be considered.

Every year millions of unwanted pets are killed in overcrowded shelters. Additionally, having an intact pet can have consequences, such as not being accepted by kennel or daycare services.

**TRAINING:** Taking the time now to teach your puppy some basic things will have an enormous pay-off in your relationship through the years. By working with the pup with exercises such as sit, stay, come, etc., you are establishing who is in control, which is crucial for good behavior. We recommend a puppy training class for all puppies or at least obtaining a training book (there are several available) for do-it-yourself types. Remember, training classes are not just for misbehaving dogs. In fact, the whole idea is to prevent misbehavior from occurring. Training will make an already well-behaved dog even more pleasant to be with. Certain games should not be played, such as tug-of-war or any game that pits you against the dog. These kinds of games can promote aggressive behavior. Use the “nothing in life is free” approach to training. Your pup should learn to sit and stay and to follow other commands.

**HOUSEBREAKING:** In general, we recommend crate training as the single most effective way to housetrain. It is based on the principle that even at a very young age a puppy instinctively does not want to be where it eliminates, and thus will hold eliminations longer if crated. The crate should be large enough to allow the puppy to stand, turn around, and lie down in comfort, allowing for growth (or purchasing a larger one as needed).

Accidents tend to be minimized but can still occur. Have patience. One should not expect a very young pup to routinely hold its eliminations longer than 1-2 hours longer than the number of months of age (e.g. 4-5 hours for a three-month old puppy). Additionally, puppies often need to have a bowel movement soon after eating, so make sure they have the chance to do so. Taking the pup out frequently encourages outdoor eliminations. Developing a consistent routine will help in forming good housetraining habits. If an “accident” occurs, then it should be cleaned with an odor neutralizer.

**PLEASE DO NOT LET YOUR PET RUN FREE:** Every year we treat several victims of car accidents. Some cannot be saved. It is hard for everyone, especially the pet, when such a preventable loss occurs.

**MICROCHIPPING:** A small microchip can be placed under the skin for identification purposes if your pet is lost. This is often placed at the time of spaying and neutering. Most veterinary hospitals and shelters have scanners to identify these chips. The chip gives information used to determine where the pet lives.

**DO NOT FEED:** Chocolate, raisins and grapes, onions, and macadamia nuts are all toxic to dogs and should never be fed. If ingestion occurs, contact a veterinary facility to determine the appropriate course of treatment.

A word of caution about member of the puppy’s family. Children should be carefully taught that the new little animal is only a baby itself and that they should always be gentle with their pet. If there are any cats in the household, they should not be allowed near the puppy without supervision. Puppies are generally trusting by nature and their eyes or face can easily and suddenly be scratched by the family cat.