

Puppy 101

If your family is about to add a new member to your home, here are some helpful ideas about training and veterinary visits.

- 1) All puppies need their vaccines. There are 4 sets of shots that start at 8 weeks and go until 20 weeks of age. Deworming puppies at every visit is recommended. Heartworm and flea/tick prevention needs to start at this time and continue year-round for the life of the pet.
- 2) Once your puppy has had all of its shots, spaying or neutering at 6 months of age is recommended to prevent medical problems in the future.
- 3) Picking the right food for your puppy can be a difficult choice. Stay with the top brands (Hill's, Purina One/Pro-plan, Eukanuba, Iams, or Nutro). You should buy a food based on the type of dog; for example, large breed for labs or toy breed for yorkies. Feed your puppy 3 times per day, but only what they will eat in 5-10 minutes, and then pick up any left over food. As your puppy gets older, 2 meals a day should be sufficient.
- 4) Crate training is a wonderful option to help with training your puppy. If you have a large crate, block it off so the puppy has enough room to lie down comfortably and turn around. They should not have enough room to use the restroom on one side and then lay on the other side. Never use the crate as a place of punishment; you want the crate to be their special safe place. Think of your puppy as a small

child and you cannot let them wander off by themselves, they get into trouble.

When you start crate training, the puppy will whine and cry and know that this is part of the process, but do not let them out until they are calm. Only good behavior should be rewarded. Also use crate training to housebreak your new pet. Let the puppy out first thing in the AM and immediately after meals. Play and praise them after they have used the restroom.

- 5) It is important to practice good behavior for vet visits early. Play with the puppy's ears and feet every day so they will stay calm for nail trims and ear cleanings. Most dogs do not like those parts of their body to be messed with.
- 6) Introduce new puppies slowly to small children. Small children tend to be over excited and want to play too rough. This can scare the puppy and they may bite. Short play times help acclimate the puppy and children to each other.
- 7) When puppies play, they like to bite. DO NOT encourage this behavior. Your puppy should know that biting humans is not acceptable. When the puppy starts to chew on your fingers, try to redirect their attention to a chew toy.

Kitten 101

Now that your new kitten has established themselves as the ruler of your house, here are some training ideas to help.

- 1) Vaccines start at 8 weeks and go through 16 weeks of age. Deworm your kitten at each set of shots. This is also the time your kitten needs to start their heartworm medication and flea/tick preventive. Both of these are year around and for the life of the pet.
- 2) Litter box training is very easy. All you usually do is show them where it is and they will come back. If you move the litterbox, you will have to re-show them where it is.
- 3) Scratching furniture is usually the biggest annoyance facing kitten owners. However, they can be trained to use a scratching post or box. You have to catch them in the act of “being bad” (scratching the leather sofa or climbing the curtains) and either use a squirt gun to spray them or shake an empty medicine bottle with pennies in it to scare them away. Most cats do not like water or loud noises. Eventually the constant correction will work with the help of regular nail trims or soft paws. Last line of defense is declawing the front paws only. Try the correction method first, as it is not as invasive.
- 4) It is highly recommended to spay or neuter your kitten at 6 months of age to help prevent medical problems that tend to develop when the cat gets older. We can also declaw them at this time.
- 5) Introduce new kittens slowly to small children. Small children tend to be over excited and tend to play too rough. This can scare the kitten and they may scratch or bite. Short play times help acclimate the kitten and children to each other.
- 6) It is easier for kittens to learn and accept grooming and brushing habits when they are young. I recommend starting to brush your kitten’s teeth and hair (if long

haired) so they will accept this task. There are all kinds of toothpaste made for cats on the market.

Having a new member of the house hold is very exciting. A good relationship with your vet can help you overcome common problems while everyone is adjusting.

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