

## **CONGRATS! YOU'RE A DOG/CAT OWNER**

Did you just adopt a dog? You should think about crate training. The crate gives your dog their own space, and also provides security and comfort.

## **MICROCHIPPING YOUR PET**

With a microchip, your pet can easily be identified if they ever get lost. Microchips contain personal information and a unique identification number for your pet.

Just like getting vaccinated, the microchip is inserted under your pet's skin with a needle. It stays in place for life. If an animal shelter finds your lost pet, they'll scan him for a microchip, and the microchip company will find you.

You can get a microchip from your vet.

## **PET BEHAVIOR**

Dogs are social creatures and love being around others. Many "annoying" behaviors, like barking and scratching, are actually your pet's way of trying to get your attention.

## **SOCIALIZING YOUR PET**

Dogs are pack animals and leaving them alone goes against their instinct. Leaving them by themselves in the heat or in the cold is one of the worst things you can do. We encourage you to let your dog inside and treat it like a part of the family.

## **WALKING YOUR DOG**

Walking your dog is a great way to socialize them and keep them happy. Even if you have a fenced-in yard, you should walk your dog at least once a day or a few times a week. Here's why:

- Doing activities with your dog establishes communication and a bond.
- Your dog will get to interact with other dogs and learn valuable social skills.
- Keeping your dog in the backyard all day doesn't give them the exercise they need.
- Being confined to a yard will make your dog bored and create bad behaviors.

Your dog deserves some variety and joy in their life. If you give it to them, they'll return the favor with love and companionship.

## **KEEPING YOUR PET SAFE**

Your pet is a member of your family. You should have an emergency plan in place for your family, including your pets. Learn how to prepare your pet emergency plan.

### **HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS**

Feeding your pet table scraps creates bad behaviors. Also some foods — like chocolate — are poisonous. If you want to feed them scraps, do it away from the dinner table. Some common holiday plants are toxic to pets, including:

- poinsettias and holly
- ivy and mistletoe
- pine and balsam
- juniper and cedar, and
- Hibiscus.

Keep ribbons, strings, decorations, and ornaments out of reach, and never use tinsel on your Christmas tree. If your pet swallows any of those items, it could create an emergency. You should also cover electric cords to prevent chewing, and never leave a lit candle out around your pet.

Put your pet somewhere quiet and comfortable if you're having guests over. Having a lot of people and noise in your house may stress them out. You should also keep an ID tag on your pet. The commotion of the holidays may cause your pet to slip out of your house.

### **WINTER CONCERNS**

Our department discourages keeping pets outdoors. If it's too cold outside for you, it's probably too cold for your pet! Dogs and cats should be kept indoors where they can socialize and stay warm. They also need a warm place to sleep.

If you want to keep your dog outside, by law you must provide them with shelter. Please make sure that the dog house is:

- raised a few inches above ground
- large enough for your dog to walk in, but small enough to stay warm
- insulated — wheat hay is great for insulation and bedding
- faces away from the wind, and the doorway is covered with fabric, and
- **NOT** made of plastic. Plastic doghouses usually aren't warm enough.

Your pet needs to always have fresh water nearby. Outdoor water bowls can get frozen in winter. You should also give your pet extra food during the cold months. They'll burn off the extra calories to keep warm.

Prevent frostbite by wiping off your pet's coat and paws after being outside. This also gets melting salt off their paws, which is toxic and can cause burns.

Antifreeze is also highly toxic to pets. Clean up spills right away and keep bottles of antifreeze out of the way.

### **TOYS THAT AREN'T SAFE FOR PETS**

Just because a toy is sold in a pet store doesn't mean it's safe for all pets. You need to know what kinds of toys are safe. Here are some tips:

- Rope toys can cause problems if your pet pulls the strings out of them.
- Dog toys made out of thin rubber can break apart and get ingested.
- Toys with glued-on decorations can come off and become choking hazards.
- Cat toys with tinsel-like strings are dangerous and can cause intestinal problems.
- Be wary of toys stuffed with cotton. If your pet swallows the cotton, it can block their intestines.
- Feather toys can come apart easily, and the feather shaft could get lodged in your cat's throat.
- Keep small objects — like yarn, floss, rubber bands, and bells — away from your pet.
- Look out for sharp objects or edges on toys for birds.

### **CAN CATS DRINK MILK?**

Contrary to popular belief, giving a cat milk is a bad idea. They can't digest the milk, which can cause stomach issues. If its mother isn't feeding your kitten, you can get special milk products at a pet store.

### **KEEPING YOUR PET HEALTHY**

Routine vet appointments and daily care will keep your pet healthy. There are some common health problems your pet may encounter in their lifetime. Make sure to familiarize yourself with the health topics below.

### **SPAYING OR NEUTERING YOUR PET**

Please make sure to spay or neuter your pet. You can find low-cost animal clinics in your area to do the operation. If you don't spay or neuter your pet, you will add to the growing number of pets who don't have homes.

You'll also create a number of issues for your pet:

- Your pet will stray and look for a mate. Your dog may even jump a fence and get lost.
- Your pet could get serious health problems, including cancer and other diseases.
- An unneutered male cat will spray all over the house. They do this to mark their territory.
- Female cats that have not been spayed may leave stains on furniture or carpets. During their heat cycles, female cats and dogs will bleed.

- You'll have to fight off other animals looking for mates.
- A female pet's chance of getting mammary tumors increases greatly if she's not spayed.
- If your pet gets pregnant, you'll have to care for 12-15 puppies or kittens. This means spending money on vet bills and finding homes for them.
- Even just one litter can add up to hundreds, even thousands, of puppies or kittens! If you know someone who is looking to adopt a pet, send them to the shelter instead.
- Neutering a male cat or dog won't make them less macho. They will live longer lives and will be less likely to get testicular cancer. They will also be easier to handle because they won't try to claim dominance over your family.

### **WHAT IS KENNEL COUGH?**

Kennel cough is an upper respiratory infection that affects dogs. It's very contagious and common in kennels. It's even more common in shelters where animals may not have received proper vaccinations.

Kennel cough usually takes about three to four days to show up after your dog is exposed, and it can last up to two weeks. Like the common cold, kennel cough usually runs its course and doesn't cause major complications. In some cases, it can cause secondary bacterial infections and take longer to treat.

Dogs more than 8 years old or younger than 4 months are more vulnerable to kennel cough. Kennel cough can get worse and cause pneumonia, which is much more serious.

### **SYMPTOMS OF KENNEL COUGH**

Look out for coughing, sneezing, or hacking up of a white foamy substance. If your dog has these symptoms but is still active and eating normally, it's NOT an emergency. Take your dog to the vet to treat the infection with antibiotics.

Kennel cough is only an emergency if:

- your dog has a green or yellow discharge coming from the nose
- is acting tired or not eating, or
- is having trouble breathing.

If your dog is showing any of these symptoms, take them to the vet right away.

### **WHAT IS PARVOVIRUS?**

Parvovirus attacks a dog's intestinal lining. Dogs get Parvo when they don't have a strong immunity to it. They'll pick it up if they come in contact with fecal matter from another animal that's shedding the virus.

An animal can transmit the virus even if they're not showing signs of being sick. Puppies younger than 6 months and older dogs that haven't been vaccinated are the most vulnerable.

### **SYMPTOMS OF PARVO**

Dogs will start showing signs of the virus within 6 days of being exposed to it. Look out for the following symptoms:

- lethargy and loss of appetite
- severe dehydration
- diarrhea, which may be bloody, and
- vomiting.

Take your dog to the vet **RIGHT AWAY** if you see symptoms. Parvovirus can be fatal if it's not treated aggressively. Even with the best treatment, only 40 percent of dogs will survive.

The best treatment is prevention. Get your dog vaccinated against the virus and stay up to date on vaccinations!

### **WHAT ARE VACCINE REACTIONS?**

Vaccine reactions can happen to any animal. Younger animals getting their second or third vaccine are more vulnerable. If your pet has had a vaccine reaction in the past, you'll need to take it to a vet where they can provide pre-treatment for follow-up vaccinations.

The symptoms from a vaccine reaction usually comes in two forms:

1. The first form starts out looking like a bug bite. You may notice hives or swelling around the face. This can happen in a few minutes or hours after the vaccination. This is an emergency and you should bring your pet back to the vet right away.
2. The second form is serious and usually happens within 15 minutes of the vaccination. The animal will become lethargic and may vomit. Eventually, they will collapse. You may notice pale gums and a slow, faint heartbeat. This requires emergency treatment and you must go to the nearest vet **RIGHT AWAY**.