



Health Care for Puppies

As a responsible pet owner, it is important to be aware of the following health and wellbeing issues:

Vaccination: It is important to protect your puppy (or dog) against the three most common deadly diseases- *Canine Distemper*, *Canine Infectious Hepatitis Virus* and *Parvovirus*.

For you puppy to be fully protected against these diseases they will require:

Vaccination	Age
1 st C3	6-8 weeks of age
2 nd C3	10-12 weeks of age +/- 1 st leptospirosis
3 rd C3	16-18 weeks +/- 2 nd leptospirosis
Annual booster vaccination	Every 12 months until 3 years of age then after discussion with the veterinarian

Your puppy should be kept away from unvaccinated dogs and areas where unvaccinated dogs could have been until two weeks after their final vaccination. Additional vaccines are considered non-core and can be discussed with your veterinarian.

Intestinal Worms: Treatment for intestinal worms is very important. Puppies that are not treated for worms can become very sick and sometimes die. Some worms can also be spread from dogs to humans (particularly *hookworms*, *roundworms* and certain *tapeworms*)

Puppies require more regular deworming than adult dogs:

- Puppies **2-12 weeks old** should be dewormed **every 2 - 3 weeks**.
- Puppies **3-6 months old** should be dewormed **once a month**.
- Dogs **6 - 12 months** should be dewormed at least **every three months**.
- After one year of age discuss with your veterinarian an appropriate deworming schedule.

Heartworm: Heartworm is a disease that affects dogs and occasionally cats. The heartworm larvae are **spread by mosquitoes**. The larvae develop into adults and live inside the heart and associated vessels of your dog. Prevention for heartworm should commence when your puppy is 6 months of age and continue throughout their lifetime. You can protect your dog against heartworm using either a **monthly chewable**, **spot-on therapy** or an **annual injection**. You should take the time to discuss this with your veterinarian and decide which product will suit you best.

Fleas: Fleas are a common cause of anaemia (they feed on blood), skin irritation and itchiness. They can also help to transmit certain parasites to your puppy such a tapeworm. **Flea control** is recommended for all household pets. Please note: **DOG PRODUCTS SHOULD NEVER BE USED ON CATS AS THEY CAN CAUSE TOXIC REACTIONS**. Lots of different products are available for flea control and they can often be combined with an intestinal wormer. Be careful if you use flea collars or flea products that are available in the supermarket, as some of these products are generally ineffective and often unsafe. Flea shampoo can assist in removing a heavy burden of fleas but does not eliminate fleas once the hair-coat is dry.

Ticks: Ticks are uncomfortable for your puppy and cause damage to their skin. Ticks feed on your pet's blood and heavy tick infestations can cause anaemia (insufficient red blood cells), they are also responsible for the spread of certain diseases. You should check your pet for ticks every day and gently remove any that you find.

Do not attempt to remove ticks using boiling water or fire. Some products are available that treat both ticks and fleas; and some products can last up to 6 months – these generally need veterinary approval.

Fleas and ticks live in your pet's environment. You should regularly treat their bedding and living area with an appropriate insecticide, as well as vacuum +/- laundry bedding and surfaces. Talk to your veterinarian for information about what products are effective and safe to use.



Neutering: It is strongly recommended that you neuter your puppy. This minimises the risk of certain unwanted behaviours such as roaming, aggression, fights and biting other dogs and humans. It prevents your pet from contributing to the population of unwanted stray animals. Spaying or neutering also helps prevent many life-threatening diseases such as the sexually transmitted disease TVT. Puppies should have this surgery **between 5-6 months of age** but, it is never too late for any adult pet. Neutering involves having the dog or cat undergo a routine surgery, under general anaesthetic. Most pets undergoing this surgery are released to go home with their families the same day. Talk to your vet if you have any concerns or questions about anesthesia and surgery. If you keep your animal for breeding be aware that responsible breeders never turn their dogs out to breed unsupervised.

Dog Licences: If you have a dog, you must have a dog licence. This must be paid before your dog is six months old. Licenced pets must wear a collar with the pet's registration label attached, this makes it possible to identify your pet if they are lost. Dogs have different licence fees depending on their gender and some other criteria. To enquire about getting a dog licence, contact your city council or the Animal Health and Production section of the Ministry of Agriculture. You must renew your dog licence every year. Owners who do not comply with the rules of pet licences can be fined. SPCA Fiji supports levels of licensing which would place a higher levy on unneutered dogs.

Diet: Good nutrition is very important for healthy growth and development. You can buy puppy food that is specially designed to meet the nutritional needs of your growing puppy. You should feed puppy food until your pet reaches 8 – 12 months of age when it can then go onto adult dog food. Alternatively, your puppy can be fed a mixture of cooked meat, calcium supplement and vegetables. Puppies require more regular feeding than dogs and should be fed:

- **3 – 4 small meals a day** between 6 and 12 weeks of age
- **2 - 3 meals a day** when 12 weeks to 6 months of age
- **Daily food split into 2 meals a day** when older than 6 months

Do not feed:

- Dogs should never be fed cooked bones – especially long chicken bones or small pork bones as these can splinter and cause damaged digestive tract or blockages
- Do not feed rotten or spoiled food to dogs – they can get tummy aches and food poisoning just like us.
- Do not feed chocolate, coffee, onions, garlic, grapes, yeast dough, raisins, nuts or alcohol as some can cause illness and others death
- Avoid feeding raw eggs on a daily basis as this can result in a biotin deficiency. Cooked eggs however provide a great source of protein, fats and other nutrients

Housing: Pets should have shelter from the weather available to them at all times. This includes shade from the sun and warm bedding if it is cold. Your pet's home should be elevated off the ground to prevent moisture accumulation from the ground, or rain leaking in. They should have clean fresh water available at all times. Dogs should be restrained to the property by solid fences to prevent them roaming. This decreases the risk of them being hit by cars, fighting, poisoning or becoming lost. Chains, ropes or other ties should not be used continuously as this can cause serious injury to the dog. To tie your dog continuously is cruel and abusive treatment – please do all you can to avoid this.

Socialisation: Puppies should be well socialised with other dogs and people to ensure that they do not develop unwanted behaviours such as aggression. Your puppy will learn from both positive and negative experiences. You should never physically or verbally punish your puppy if it does something you do not like. A stern 'no' is the best way to teach your puppy that the behaviour is not acceptable. Remember they are still learning. Always try to encourage and reward your dog when it does something right. This will help to foster trust and strengthen the bond between you and your pet.

Remember your puppy is a puppy for a short period of time, and soon becomes a dog – you want to establish good habits for both of you.

A well socialized dog is a great companion and neighbour. There are very good resources to help you socializing and training your puppy – two authors to look for are Sophia Yin and Patricia McConnell.

First Aid: The SPCA website is continually updated with first aid instruction for some of the more common situations we come across here in Fiji so please stay tuned to this site. One of the single most important preventives to keep your dog from illness is not to let them roam the footpaths and streets.

