

How To Keep Your Dog In Condition

When you mark your calendar to remind you of the dates you and your children are due for physical check-ups and inoculations, it's a good idea to make sure you aren't forgetting another member of the family. Many people, conscientious about

their own health, may tend to forget that the same careful should have the family dog looking after.

The answers to some common questions about canine health care, offered by the people at Gaines Dog Research Center, may enable

you to make the best use of your veterinarian's services to keep your pet in tip-top shape:

1. Why should I take my dog to the veterinarian if he seems perfectly healthy? Because—as in the case of people—check-ups are a pre-

ventive measure and good health insurance for your pet. The veterinarian is able to determine if your dog has intestinal parasites (worms) for example and detect early symptoms of many conditions which, if neglected, can become serious and require much more time and money to treat to say nothing of adding to the dog's suffering.

2. How often should a dog be taken for his "physical"? The dog that is in normal good health should be checked over at least once a year, although every six months is even better. While he's a puppy, it's a good idea to have an early visit and then at two or three months. If the dog is being treated for a specific condition, he should be taken in as often as your veterinarian advises.

3. Is a canine check-up expensive? Veterinarian's fees for a basic check-up vary from \$3 to \$6 across the country. Of course, any laboratory work, shots or treatment that your dog needs are extra.

4. What does a check-up usually involve? As a rule, the veterinarian will determine your pet's general condition through examination of his eyes, ears, teeth, anal glands and so forth; by palpation of the abdomen, and by taking the dog's temperature and pulse.

5. Will the veterinarian give my dog any shots? Not unless a need for them is indicated by a particular condition that the veterinarian finds, or if the dog is due for a "booster" shot against distemper or canine hepatitis.

He should get these once a year, and also an anti-rabies shot yearly, or as specified by local health regulations. A puppy may get shots against distemper and canine hepatitis, according to the length of time and type of previous vaccination.

6. Should a dog be taken to the veterinarian if he's "off his feed"? Yes. This may be a sign that he's not feeling up to par. In addition, a veterinarian can tell you if your pet is getting a good diet and suggest one if he's not. Like all living things, dogs have certain nutritional requirements and must be properly

fed to keep healthy. Dog foods like the Gaines soft-moist foods, which contain all the nutrients a dog is know to need—in the correct, balanced amounts—take the guesswork out of feeding. An adult dog can live on a variety of diets, but many of these won't keep him in the best of health, and some may even shorten his life by several years. A growing puppy is even less able to stand a poor diet. Another pointer: different breeds do not need different foods, just different amounts, according to age and size.

7. What symptoms call for an immediate visit to the veterinarian? If your usually playful pup suddenly acts sluggish, you can suspect that something is wrong. Runny eyes, nasal discharge, continuous panting, accompanied by difficult breathing, more bowel movements than usual or stools that are black, watery or blood-streaked can all be symptoms of serious disorders. Don't wait until the condition disappears on its own—because it probably won't—and don't rely on experimenting with remedies suggested by well-meaning neighbors or friends. Get the advice of an expert—your veterinarian. Quick action at the first sign of illness in your dog is usually the shortest way to its cure.

8. How can I help my veterinarian help my dog? To make the best of your veterinarian's services don't give vague answers when he inquires about your pet's condition. You should be able to tell him about the dog's actions in detail, his food and water intake and if he's lost weight. Heed what he recommends for your dog's diet, general care and treatment. Chances are you'll turn your veterinarian into man's best friend's best friend.

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