

# Adult Dog Healthcare



Caring for an adult dog is not quite as hard work as a puppy but your loyal companion does require a regular and comprehensive healthcare routine.

This health care sheet provides you with information on a range of items including vaccinations, parasites and their treatment, neutering/spaying of female and male dogs, microchipping, pet health insurance, diet and dental healthcare.

## Vaccinations

### Why should my pet be vaccinated and how does the vaccination work?

Vaccinations are given to prevent your pet contracting a range of well known and feared infections with various viruses and bacteria that may otherwise prove fatal.

### Prevention is better than cure!!!

Vaccination is the way we stimulate an animal's immune system to become resistant, or immune, to particular infections. A vaccination consists of part of a modified or killed virus or bacterium.

It is prepared in such a way that the body's defences recognise it as a threat and react as if it were a real infection by producing antibodies. This process takes time though so the purpose of vaccination is to prepare the immune system so that if ever exposed to the real infection the antibodies are already on hand to start fighting the infection straight away.

The body needs to be reminded of its enemies from time to time as antibody levels decrease over time so to keep these antibodies up to a level that will prevent infection we booster this immunity with a booster vaccination annually. It is very important to keep up to date with your pet's vaccination.

*Please contact us for advice on vaccinations and a health certificate for your pet.*

## What diseases do we vaccinate dogs against and why?

We routinely vaccinate against the following diseases in dogs:

**DISTEMPER VIRUS** – this virus causes chest and gastro-intestinal damage in some dogs exposed to it and often is fatal. It can also cause brain damage in dogs exposed but go on to survive the disease or don't suffer from the more acute signs described

above. This disease is quite uncommon and even rare now as vaccination has had a huge effect on controlling this disease but we need to continue to vaccinate to maintain this effect.

**PARVO VIRUS** – this is seen as a young dog's disease often affecting puppies as young as 8 weeks old up to about 18 months old. This virus causes the dog to effectively shed the entire lining of its intestines and damages any healing areas so that the dog cannot absorb nutrients or water to any normal extent. Bloody diarrhoea, vomiting and extreme depression and dehydration leading to death are often the hallmarks of this disease. Although some dogs survive they may have life-long digestion problems due to the damage done to the intestinal lining during the disease. This is the disease we worry about most in young unvaccinated puppies that are allowed to socialise or go for walks before they are fully vaccinated.

**LEPTOSPIROSIS** – this is a bacterial type disease that we mainly see in autumn time. This disease can cause kidney and liver disease in dogs and some strains are zoonotic meaning they can also affect humans. This disease is carried by rats and presents a definite human and pet health risk. Most dogs suffering from this disease do not recover.

**PARAINFLUENZA** – a viral infection involved with a coughing syndrome and often associated or included in the mixes bag of infectious agents covered by the name 'kennel cough'.

**CANINE ADENOVIRUS** – another virus that can cause liver damage with a usually sorry outcome.

**KENNEL COUGH** – is a name given to a disease characterised by a honking cough, especially at night. The dog is often off its food and pretty miserable. There is not just one infectious agent involved in this disease and often a number of different bacteria and viruses will be present and we vaccinate against one of these called *Bordetella* – a cousin of the whooping cough bug.

Most kennels will insist on vaccination for kennel cough before accepting your dog for kennelling as this is a very infectious disease and if one dog brings it in all the rest go home coughing! Unfortunately for all involved this vaccine needs to be squirted up the nose to be effective **at least 5 days in advance of**

**kennelling** – this creates antibodies in the lining of the nose and throat where they need to be in case they come across this infection. But even if vaccination involves a bit of wrestling it is definitely better than be kept awake all night by your pet coughing – not to mention their distress!

## More Uncommon Diseases that we vaccinate against

**CANINE HERPES VIRUS** – causes ‘fading puppy syndrome’ in very young puppies often between 1-3 weeks of age. One pup will stop suckling and get ‘depressed’ and often die shortly after, quickly followed by another and another.

This is a distressing disease as the pups will often have been very strong up to the point of becoming ill and then just go downhill fast.

We can vaccinate the mother against this disease during pregnancy.

**RABIES** – this viral disease is not seen in Ireland and our Department of Agriculture has very strict rules to keep it that way.

This means with the relatively new idea of bringing your animal abroad we now have an alternative to 6 months in quarantine. A pet passport, of which rabies vaccination and blood testing are part of, means that you can bring your pet on holiday with you as long as you comply with a number of stringent measures. If you are contemplating getting your pet a passport please talk to us as this is a lengthy and costly procedure.

## Parasites and Their Treatment

**REMEMBER YOUR PET IS NEVER TOO POSH TO GET THE ODD FLEA OR HAVE WORMS – UNLESS YOU ARE PREVENTING THEM – PRESUME GUILTY!**

There are two types of parasites - those that live externally on the animal and those that live internally. Both types can be effectively treated but .....

**Prevention is better than cure!!!**

### 1. INTERNAL PARASITES

Worms

There are many types of worms and internal parasites. Most animals, unless strictly wormed during all stages of their life, will have a small worm burden constantly or intermittently. It is not in the worms’ best interest to cause debilitating illness to its very

hospitable host so healthy animals can have worms without any outward signs of such. You will only see worms if your animal is heavily infested; so not seeing them **DOES NOT MEAN** they are not there.

Worms can be fatal in young animals when the number of them present overwhelms what their bodies can put up with or can physically cause blockage of the intestines.

There is also a human health risk associated with dog **roundworms**, especially if the eggs or larvae are unintentionally consumed by humans (especially children). This can happen when hands aren’t washed after handling a pet and eggs are transferred onto human food and then eaten. Larvae then get confused in a different host species and instead of staying in the digestive system like they would in a dog they can ‘wander’ and end up in the heart, brain or eye and may cause significant permanent damage. All pet owners with children must have a very strict worming schedule.

It is very important to worm your pets regularly – usually at three month intervals – with an effective drug to kill roundworms and other internal parasites.

### 2. EXTERNAL PARASITES

**Fleas**, especially with the increasingly warmer temperatures, are becoming a year round occurrence. They are responsible for causing a range of problems in pets.

Fleas are common-place and no pet is above coming home with one every once in a while. Unfortunately one becomes many very quickly and an infestation of not only your pet but your house ensues.

Fleas have a lifecycle rather like a butterfly except the end product, unlike the butterfly, is unfortunately not a welcome visitor.

Adult fleas lay their eggs in the house and favour carpets, upholstery, bedding, skirting boards etc... Which also means that treating your pet is sometimes not enough if the infestation is advanced.

Larvae hatch from these eggs and after a period of hibernation turn into juvenile fleas which also occasionally like to try us out for a meal.

If that is not enough to make you squirm, fleas also carry tapeworms – so if your pet has fleas, they will also likely be infested with tapeworms which occasionally like to make an appearance around the animal’s tail and bottom looking something akin to a crawling rice grain.

Some animals develop an allergic reaction to flea saliva and one bite can set this reaction off resulting in a very itchy, uncomfortable and often scabby or baldy pet.

**Other external parasites** include –

**Ticks** - grey/cream coloured raisin sized insects that attach themselves to the skin by digging their mouth parts deep into your pets' skin to allow constant feeding. These critters feed until they are full with blood and then fall off now full of enough nourishment for a full batch of eggs.

**Lice** - are much smaller and difficult to see, often affect younger animals and cause scratching and are associated with general ill-thrift and bad health.

**Mites** – there are a number of different types of mites seen commonly in Ireland and each one is specially designed to live in a specific area such as ears or skin. These little fellows are small but dig deep into the skin – to cause mange, or ear to cause infections.

**Modern parasitic treatments** are highly effective for both treating and preventing infestations when the correct treatment is used and applied properly.

These treatments are applied easily to the skin in one place – often at the back of the neck and will protect the entire animal for up to 4 weeks.

There are different types of treatments available and the one best suited to your pet can depend on your pet's habits, their surroundings and history.

Please contact us to ask our advice for the treatment best suited to your pet.

## NEUTERING YOUR FEMALE DOG

If there is anything that dogs are innately good at it's getting pregnant. Unfortunately this means that our stray population continues to grow and that a large number of unwanted animals are destroyed every year. If you do not intend to breed from your pet the responsible thing to do is to neuter them. This also has many other health-related advantages listed below.

Neutering a female animal is referred to as "*speying*". Speying or *ovariohysterectomy* involves removal of the womb and ovaries to prevent 'heats' and unwanted pregnancies in a female dog as well as other undesirable diseases, such as those described below.

A female dog will usually have two heats a year.

Other advantages of spaying your female pet are –

### ▪ **False pregnancy prevention**

This occurs in female dogs when, after a heat, the pet's body thinks she is pregnant and can go on to produce milk and even go into labour although there are no pups. This is very distressing for both owner and pet alike.

### ▪ **Pyometra or womb infection**

This is a life-threatening condition in dogs in which the womb gradually fills up with pus which leads to a form of blood poisoning/septicaemia. Death or kidney failure are possible consequences of this disease.

### ▪ **Breast cancer / mammary neoplasia**

Many older female dogs will develop breast cancers, which may be malignant or benign. This condition, which usually requires surgery to remove the mass and reduce the risk of spread, may be life threatening. Speying at a young age, preferably before their first heat, will mean the chances of developing breast cancer will be very low – similar to that of a male dog.

### ▪ **A lot of mouths to feed!**

One unspeyed female dog can have up to 12 puppies in ONE litter!

Not speying your animal may become an expensive choice.

## Any disadvantages to speying my pet?

**Speyed female dogs** need fewer calories than unneutered animals but speying does not mean they automatically put on weight. All animals need enough exercise and should not to be fed excessively and with the correct balance of the two we should maintain their correct body condition. There are plenty of overweight unneutered animals. Speyed females may be at a slight risk of developing urinary incontinence in later life, although this also occurs in unneutered dogs too and studies into this have not produced definite links. This is a rare development later in life and may have developed unrelated to neutering. This often can be managed very simply with medication.

## NEUTERING A MALE DOG

Although **neutering a male dog** may reduce the tendency to wander and be more aggressive, it is often advised because of the positive health benefits it offers.

Neutering removes the possibility of testicular cancer, prostate problems and reduces the incidence of anal adenomas (lumps around the bum) and perineal hernias ( a separation of the muscles near the bum which presents as sudden swelling beside the anus and will need surgical attention as the bladder can get stuck in this artificial pocket) .

It has been found that neutered male dogs will have a longer life expectancy than their unneutered counterparts.

*Please contact us for further information and advice on neutering or spaying your pet.*

## Microchipping

Microchipping your pet means in the unfortunate event of your pet going missing, the chances of having them returned to you are greatly increased.

Collars can be removed or lost, but microchips are a permanent means of identification.



Microchipping is a simple procedure involving the placement of an electronic chip (about the size of a rice grain) under the skin at the back of your pet's neck. Once inserted the chip it is there for life and does not malfunction once checked initially.

Veterinary clinics, dog wardens and animal welfare organisations routinely 'scan' stray animals for microchips. If the animal is microchipped, the chip number appears on the scanner and the owners name and details can be retrieved in minutes. Then all it takes is a phone call to let you know that your pet is well and can be collected.

It is now obligatory that all kennel club registered dogs are microchipped.

## Diet

The saying 'you are what you eat' goes for our canine friends as well as us!

And like us there are lots of variations within a species and within breeds. Dogs come in lots of different shapes, sizes, ages and health states. Diets are often specifically tailored to suit specific needs, be it LIFESTAGE (e.g. kitten, puppy) or medically dictated such as a special kidney friendly diet in an older dog with kidney disease.

Diets are more important than we think and a lot of diseases or health issues can sometimes be wholly or partly managed by dietary change to best suit your pets situation.

Remember that diet is a dynamic situation as your pets needs change as they go through life.

*Please talk to us to get advice on what food is the best for your pet in their particular stage of life.*

## Dental Health Care

Got used to your dogs dog breath? Well just cause its there doesn't mean it's normal. Our awareness of our pets' dental health is increasing all the time with all the available chew sticks etc on the market these days. Although these can be a great help they do not make up for not brushing teeth daily – think of what we would be like!

With pets living longer we are seeing more and more teeth related health issues as not only do teeth cause dental pain and infection they can provide a route for infection to get into the blood stream and seed out in other areas.

Maintaining your pet's teeth is important from a young age – good quality food designed to break in a way that brushes the tooth removing plaque build-up is a good everyday way of helping maintain healthy teeth. Hard food/dry food is best for this purpose specifically a specially formulated tooth friendly diet that does the job described above.

Sometimes regardless of how tooth friendly you have tried to be by the time a dog reaches middle age a dental descale will often be advised – similar to the job we have done at the dentist. Extractions, if necessary, can be carried out at the same time.

Brushing your dogs teeth is something you can get them accustomed to from a young age – there are a range of poultry and meat flavoured toothpastes with easy to use brushes that fit on your finger.

*Please call in to us and request a dental check for your dog.*

## Pet Health Insurance

Having a sick pet is worrying enough. At least with pet insurance you do not have to worry about the money aspect! We recommend taking out pet insurance when your pet is at a young age and healthy as there are age and pre-existing disease limitations.

As veterinary medicine is an evolving science, we are always updating or improving diagnostic and treatment services. Thus the possibilities for treating animals start to mirror what is done in human medicine. It is not unusual these days for a dog to have cataract surgery or a cat to have skin graft.

We always want to do the best for our animals and give them the best and newest treatment options available. However, we do not always want the costs ensued by these cutting edge procedures.

Pet insurance therefore cannot be recommended often enough. Similar to human schemes your pet insurance covers situations when your animal is ill, may need a medical work-up, surgery or specialist referral.

## Other Health Problems

These can range from lumps and bumps to seizures to excessive drinking in dogs. For all illness signs there are a range of possible reasons or diagnoses. If your dog is doing something out of the ordinary or exhibiting strange symptoms please bring them for a check-up to ascertain what the problem might be and the best way to treat it.

### For further information or advice please do not hesitate to contact us.

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#### opening hours

Monday, Wednesday & Friday  
8.30am–6.00pm

Tuesday & Thursday  
8.30am–7.00pm

Saturday  
10.00am–12.00 noon

#### clinic hours

Monday–Friday  
9.00–11.00am

Monday, Wednesday & Friday  
3.00–6.00pm

Tuesday & Thursday  
4.00–7.00pm

Saturday  
10.00am–12.00 noon

*Consultation by appointment only*