



## ADOLESCENT DOGS

It's now six months since your pup's second vaccination and that little bundle of fun is nothing but a distant memory in the face of puberty and the resultant arrival of "Kevin the Teenager". You will already have taken the first step of raising a puppy and had the responsibility of vaccinations, worming and basic training, but the fun does not end there! Adolescents, as they are known, equate to teenage children and need just as much care and attention as your new puppy.

This leaflet will hopefully help you through this formative period and highlight just a few of the key issues which face you as "parents".

### NUTRITION

The chances are that, the once fussy puppy you spent hours tempting to eat when he would rather be chewing your favourite shoes, has now turned into something resembling a Hoover! Unfortunately, the temptation is to overfeed in response to his demands. Let's face it, the recommended quantities of food look poor in comparison to the meals we prepare for ourselves. This is also true of the more fussy feeders, whom we all want to tempt with more visually stimulating foodstuffs and treats. Unfortunately, this can be very harmful to the long term health of your pet.

It is important to realise that the nutritional needs of your pet are very different to your own. Your pet is smaller than you and hence whilst we enjoy a variety of foods, chopping and changing foodstuffs for your pet can cause major digestive upsets.

Incorrect feeding can lead to bone and growth problems and obesity and, let's face it, what teenager likes to be overweight?

Incorrectly fed medium and large breeds of dog are more predisposed to the development of growth related problems. Obesity during this growth stage can put excess strain on immature bones and joints. Fat cells laid down at this time cannot be destroyed and can become a management problem in adult life. In the smaller breeds, obesity can become a major problem.

#### REMEMBER OVERFEEDING WILL NOT PRODUCE A LARGER DOG, JUST AN OVERWEIGHT ONE!

A common misconception is that, the higher the vitamin and mineral content of a food, the better. In reality, your pet requires a specific amount of each individual vitamin and mineral, at each stage of his life, and both excessive and insufficient quantities can be harmful. **If you feed a balanced diet, you will not need to add further supplements.** Diseases such as hip dysphasia, panosteitis and osteochondrosis dissecans are caused by a combination of genetic, dietary and stress/trauma related problems, but feeding a balanced diet can reduce the likelihood of such problems.

If all this sounds rather confusing, don't worry. Many of the well known pet food companies offer a range of well balanced, complete diets designed for your pet's life stage and breed size. When these are fed in the correct quantities, you should see optimal growth and healthy muscle, bone and joint formation.

### FLEAS AND WORMS

Routine flea treatment is a very good habit to get into! No-one wants to give fleas house room, they cause great irritation to your puppy and are partial to biting humans too.

Fleas are often the starting point for skin problems and form a key link in the lifecycle of the tapeworm, another pest your puppy can do without!

Central heating and fitted carpets keep fleas happy and snug all year round, so there's no relaxing even when it's snowing outside. Modern treatments will protect your puppy and your home.

Your puppy will also have outgrown his puppy wormers and will be ready to go onto the big boys' ones. These will protect him from roundworms, (*Toxocara canis* -which is also a human health risk) and tapeworms.

Regular worming with quality treatments is essential to protect your pet and your family. Pet shop remedies may not be fully effective. Our Nurses or your Vet will be happy to advise you.

### EXERCISE

Currently, you are probably worn out and finding you cannot give "Kevin" enough exercise in order to release that endless energy he seems to possess. However, it is important to resist the temptation to spend hours letting him chase balls and run freely, especially with the medium and larger breeds. This is because your puppy's bones and joints are still undergoing development and excessive exercise at this stage of his life could cause stress related bone problems. Until your puppy reaches adulthood, exercise should be given largely on a lead and on a little and often basis.



## NEUTERING

The question of whether to neuter or not is, with many dog owners, one that causes most food for thought.

Neutering is a routine surgical procedure carried out under a general anaesthetic and involves the removal of the testes in the male and the ovaries and uterus in the female. This is normally carried out from six months of age in the male and three months after the first season in the female.

Many owners are concerned that neutering will produce a change in their pet's personality, but this does not seem to be the case. Castrated males are frequently easier to train as they are less distracted. Un-neutered males can become frustrated, as most are not given the opportunity to mate, and the removal of the drive to reproduce seems to make for a more contented pet. It is also true to say that they do not have the same knowledge as humans as to what they are missing! Females on the other hand, do not have to contend with the three week "season" twice a year, a time during which their exercise needs to be restricted and their reproductive drive is high.

The concept of neutering is unnatural of course, however the environment in which dogs live is unnatural compared to the wild, where there is no need to curb the natural urge to reproduce.

From a veterinary standpoint, neutering shows that you, as a caring owner, are taking responsibility towards population control. There are vast numbers of homeless dogs!

Un-neutered dogs have increased health problems with high incidences of testicular tumours, enlarged prostate glands, some anal tumours and retained testicles which can turn cancerous in older dogs. In bitches, there are higher incidences of mammary tumours, pyometras (infected uterus) and, of course, unwanted pregnancies. Any of the above may lead to the necessity of a general anaesthetic in the later stages of life when the risks will be higher than in anaesthetising a younger healthy dog.

## TRAINING

Training classes provide an ideal environment in which to socialise your dog and yourself. They enable you to learn from the experiences of others and interaction with other dogs should produce a well mannered pet as well. It is true to say that a well behaved pet is a happy pet and a happy pet is a healthy one. It is important to find a training class that suits you and it is a good idea to attend two or three as a spectator before you make a decision. Remember, the Barbara Woodhouse technique may suit one person but may not be right for you.

## SUPPLIES FOR YOUR PET

At House and Jackson, we offer free Nurse clinics which exist to provide quality advice throughout your pet's life. We make this commitment because we believe pro-active, positive guidance can help ensure you maintain your pet in the best of health.

We stock a full range of prescription foods and treats, from a selected range of manufacturers which we can trust, and which are not available in pet shops. We believe these provide the best of nutrition in a controlled and economic way. Foods are available to suit all life stages and to provide the correct diet for many clinical conditions.

We also stock a good range of canine supplies, from collars and leads to cleaner for your carpets.

## INSURANCE

It is almost inevitable that your pet, at some time in his life, will require non routine veterinary treatment. Surgical treatments can prove expensive and never come at the right time! It is for this reason that we, at House and Jackson, recommend that you insure your pet. Insuring your pet will provide a financial backup when the need arises, ensuring that important decisions can be based on clinical needs without worry about money. It will also provide cover for things like third party liability, should your pet be involved in an accident.

There are many companies offering pet insurance and we suggest that you shop around, obtaining information and quotations, just as you would be doing if you were insuring your car.

Look in detail at the levels of cover provided, there are real differences between companies. What seems to be the cheapest quote may not be the best policy.

Veterinary medicine is becoming increasingly advanced and the provision of many diagnostic techniques can lead to large bills. Pet insurance is effectively a form of private health care, ensuring that, when the time comes, you can do the very best for your pet.

## MICROCHIPPING

There is a legal requirement to have an identity tag on your dog at all times. Pedigree puppies are expensive but, more importantly, having a tag on the dog's collar will ensure he is returned swiftly to you if he strays.

However, collars and tags can be lost and we recommend micro-chipping as a quick and easy way of identifying your pet **for life**.

This involves the placement of a micro-chip, similar in size to a grain of rice, under your dog's skin in the scruff of his neck. Insertion causes only momentary minor discomfort and gives your pet a permanent identification number. This number is registered free on a national database, which is open 24 hours a day 7 days a week. There is no yearly subscription fee and, in the event that you move house, the address on the database can be changed easily.

Most police stations, veterinary practices and rescue kennels have access to hand held scanners which will detect the microchip and read your pet's unique number, so if your pet ends up in any of these places he can quickly be returned to you.