

Veterinary healthcare guide for your family pet



NORTH CROYDON

VETERINARY CLINIC

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR NEW FAMILY MEMBER!

We have developed this booklet to give you an overview of things you may find helpful when caring for your new pet. The fact that you are reading this booklet means you are well on your way to responsible pet ownership. Understanding your pet's needs and ensuring they are met is the main aim and includes things such as:

- Regular vet health checks including vaccinations, desexing, and microchipping
- Providing correct and high quality nutrition
- Providing daily dental care
- Providing regular parasite prevention/treatment
- Regular bathing and grooming
- Puppy school and obedience training
- Physical exercise and ongoing mental stimulation
- Pet insurance
- Emergencies

VACCINATIONS

A full health check of your pet is performed at every vaccination to ensure your pet is healthy enough to vaccinate. We check their general body condition, eyes and ears, listen to their heart and chest and discuss any concerns you may have at the time. It is our recommendation that all pets are routinely vaccinated against potentially harmful diseases. There is much debate these days on whether to vaccinate or not, and some people have concerns around "over-vaccinating". It is our belief that the risk of vaccination is minimal compared to the risk of disease. As veterinarians, we have seen first-hand the devastating effects of diseases such as Canine Parvovirus, which without the development of a successful vaccine and the compliance of pet owners over the last 30+ years, we would still be witnessing. Currently there are many types and brands of vaccinations available for our pets which each have varying protocols. Our recommendations are based on the type of vaccines we use, in conjunction with best practice guidelines and local knowledge of disease in our area.

DOGS: C5 Vaccination (Distemper, Hepatitis, Canine Parvovirus, Parainfluenza Virus and Bordetella)
Administered at 6-8 weeks of age, 12-14 weeks and 16-18 weeks of age then boosted yearly to maintain strong immunity for life.

C5 vaccines are the minimum requirement for any pet who is admitted to a kennel or boarding facility. If you need to board your pet while you are away please ensure their vaccines are up to date. If your pet is not regularly vaccinated and needs to attend a boarding facility, an initial vaccine is required as well as a booster in 4 weeks' time. **Please note:** Your pet will not have adequate protection until 2 weeks after this booster and may not be allowed to board.

DESEXING

There are many advantages to desexing your family pet and we would always recommend the procedure provided you do not wish to breed. Health benefits associated with desexing your pets include: reduction in the risk of prostate cancers and eliminating the risk of testicular cancer in males as well as reducing some behavioural issues such as decreasing the urge to wander, diminishing aggression and urine marking. In females, we can dramatically reduce the risk of mammary cancers if we desex before their first heat cycle and prevent juvenile pregnancies. Desexing also prevents females from potentially developing a condition called Pyometra (a life-threatening condition affecting the uterus). Some breeders will recommend letting your pet have at least their first heat cycle and in some medical instances this would be our recommendation also, however desexing before any subsequent cycles still has significant benefits. We recommend desexing between 4-6 months of age. This allows us to perform the procedure before females start their first heat cycle and generally before males develop marking tendencies. Males' testicles normally will have descended around this age. The surgery itself is a day procedure. We use the safest anaesthetics and all our surgeries are performed by a qualified veterinary surgeon and monitored closely during and after by trained and qualified veterinary nurses. All pets are given pain relief at the time of surgery and are kept warm and comfortable until discharge that afternoon.

MICROCHIP

All puppies and kittens are legally required to be microchipped by the breeder/shelter prior to sending them to their new home. It is important to ensure that your new pet's microchip has been registered into your name, not the breeders/shelters. It is equally important to update the microchip company should any of your personal details change. A microchip is about the size of a grain of rice and is implanted under the skin between the shoulder blades. A special scanner is required to read the chip. Should your pet go missing, your pet will be electronically linked back to you. Your pet is also required to be registered with the local council from 3 months of age (if you are local to the North Croydon area, this is Maroondah council). Registration forms can be collected from service centres and the council website, pets can also be registered online.

NUTRITION

If you are the proud new owner of a puppy or kitten, their nutritional requirements will differ from that of an adult or senior pet. It is recommended to feed your puppy 2-3 times per day as this can be helpful in making sure they are getting adequate nutrition. Our recommendation is to feed a premium, commercially produced dry food, such as "Hill's Science Diet". Other premium brands include "Royal Canin" and "Advance". All of these brands make specific life stage food, for example "puppy or kitten", "adult" and "senior". The length of time a specific "puppy" or "kitten" food is fed will depend on the breed, but is generally 12 months. The benefit of a premium food is that they are a complete and balanced diet, much more highly concentrated than a supermarket food and contain all the nutrients your pet require. When feeding these foods your pet will absorb more nutrients, therefore less poop to pick up! Home-made or raw food diets are not recommended. There are no known veterinary approved home-made diets recorded for puppies or kittens as they are constantly growing and obtaining the correct amount of nutrients for optimal growth, is a challenge. Pet milk is not recommended once weaned onto solid food and specific pet milk should only ever be fed as a treat occasionally. Your pet should have access to fresh, clean water daily.

LARGE BREED NUTRITION

A large breed puppy is determined by how heavy the puppy will be at adult weight. Any dog that will weigh 25kg or above at adult weight is considered a large breed.

- Small breeds <10kg
- Medium breeds 10-25kg
- Large breeds >25kg

Large breed puppies take approximately 12-15 months to reach adult weight whereas smaller breeds reach adult weight at approximately 10-12 months of age. As a result of their slower growth rate, large breed puppies require a slow release of dietary calcium. If too much calcium is fed during the growth phase their bones will absorb excess calcium and over grow, potentially causing developmental orthopaedic diseases such as Osteochondrosis Disease (OCD). For healthy, normal development it is vital to feed large breed puppies a specific large breed puppy formulated dry food for 12-15 months. Once your puppy is over one year of age you can slowly transition onto an appropriate adult food. A large breed adult food would be recommended as this contains the appropriate amount of amino acids and supplements to enable appropriate joint development and help to prevent Degenerative Joint Disease (DJD) as they age.

DENTAL CARE (start from 6 months of age)

Dogs and cats are like humans in that they have two sets of teeth. Deciduous (baby) teeth that will erupt around 3-4 weeks of age, when they can start weaning onto solid food. Their permanent adult teeth will start erupting around 4-5 months of age. During this "teething" stage you may find they have bad breath, see blood in their mouth or on chewed objects and see teeth sticking out at odd angles. You may or may not see dropped baby teeth as many will get swallowed and pass through the body. Be sure to have some good teething toys for your pup and put any accessible objects you don't want chewed out of reach such as shoes, cords etc. Puppies and kittens will generally have all of their adult teeth by 6 months. At this age you can start adding dental care into your daily routine.

- **Bones** - Bones are a controversial topic in the pet industry. Raw bones can be good for helping to keep our dog's and cat's teeth clean, however they can also cause problems. Bones can cause tooth breakage, choking, intestinal and oesophageal obstructions, constipation, vomiting and diarrhoea. If you decide to feed bones, you can help minimise the risks by never feeding cooked, smoked, cured or frozen bones, always choose raw. Give a bone that is an appropriate size for your pet. Chicken necks are a suitable size for cats and small dogs, provided they are not swallowed whole. In medium to large dogs, you can feed lamb necks. Care should also be taken when feeding bones in a multi-pet household as they can cause dogs to fight resulting in painful and expensive injuries.
- **Dental chews** - There are many dental chews and treats available on the market today. We recommend giving premium dental chews daily that have the seal of acceptance from VOHC - Veterinary Oral Health Council. VOHC exists to recognise products that meet pre-set standards of plaque and calculus (tartar) reduction and prevention in dogs and cats. Dental chews with this acceptance include "OraVet" (dogs only) and "Greenies". These can be purchased through vet clinics and pet retailers.
- **Dental diets** - Hill's make a number of dental diets for both dogs and cats, aimed at different life stages and requirements. The most popular being Hill's T/D dry food. This food is a larger kibble with a fibrous inside that scrubs the tooth's surface when crunched, preventing the build-up of plaque, tartar and gingivitis. This diet is complete and balanced and can be fed to adult dogs and cats from 1 year of age. To receive the best benefit, this food should be fed as a sole diet. All Hill's dental diets have been awarded the VOHC seal of acceptance.
- **Brushing teeth** - This is considered the gold standard of dental care. Dog and cat tooth brushes or finger brushes should be used along with a pet safe tooth paste that is gently abrasive to prevent build-up of plaque and tartar. These tooth pastes come in flavours such as chicken or beef that your pet will love.

Bones, chews and specific dental foods are a good way to keep your pet's teeth clean and healthy. However, if your pet is reluctant to chew you may find your pet suffering from dental disease and decay as they get older. This condition can cause a multitude of problems to your pet's health, as not only will their teeth and gums suffer, but periodontal disease can cause systemic problems affecting the kidneys, heart, lungs and liver. Once the disease progresses to the point where diet alone cannot fix the problem, your pet may require a dental scale. This is a procedure performed under general anaesthesia by a qualified veterinarian and may involve the removal of any rotten or broken teeth, the cleaning and scaling of remaining teeth and a polish to finish. Once your pet has had this procedure we recommend an ongoing dental health program (such as Hill's Prescription T/D) to keep the remaining teeth as healthy as possible.

PARASITE PREVENTION

In Australia, there are 3 main groups of parasites that we recommend regular prevention for, these include: Fleas and Ticks, Heartworm, and Intestinal Worms. Each group and appropriate preventatives are discussed below.

FLEAS

Fleas are very small parasitic insects that infest the skin and coat of our pets. They live in environments such as dirt, sandpits and carpets and are capable of jumping up to 150 times their own length. This easily allows them to jump from the environment to our pets, who then act as a host off which the fleas feed. Fleas are a common cause of skin disease in our pets and cause itching, scaly skin, sores, and even a condition known as flea allergy dermatitis where saliva from a flea bite sets off an allergic reaction in the skin. Fleas are prolific breeders with one female able to lay up to 50 eggs per day. For this reason, we recommend year-round flea prevention on all pets in your household to effectively break the life cycle. There are a range of products available to prevent against and kill fleas. Preventatives come in the form of topical spot-on liquids, tablets or flavoured chews and are given monthly, 3 monthly or 6 monthly depending on the product used.

TICKS

Ticks are small parasites that live in bushy areas mainly in the warmer, more humid months of the year. There are different types of ticks, some more dangerous to our pets than others. All ticks will attach to any warm-blooded creature and detach once they have fed. In our area, we do occasionally see bush ticks on pets, which can be relatively easily removed and shouldn't cause too much harm. The more dangerous variety is the paralysis ticks who inject a toxin as they feed. This toxin is absorbed into the bloodstream and gradually affects the nervous system, leading to paralysis of all muscles, including eventually, the respiratory muscles and ultimately the heart. Signs of paralysis tick include loss of co-ordination, changes in vocal sounds, vomiting, panting/grunting and progressive paralysis. Immediate veterinary attention is required if you suspect your pet may be affected. Paralysis ticks are not common in our area, however they are found in the Gippsland area of Victoria and extend north all the way up the east coast of Australia. Travellers have been known to inadvertently bring them home from holidays or camping trips so pets should always be checked regularly. If you plan on taking your pets on holidays to these areas we advise starting a preventative in the weeks before you leave and continuing treatments while travelling as well as performing daily checks of your pet's coat when travelling in bush areas. Preventatives come in the form of topical spot-on liquids or flavoured chews and are given fortnightly, monthly, 3 monthly or 6 monthly depending on the product used.

HEARTWORM

Heartworm is a parasitic worm that affects the heart and lungs. It is transmitted by mosquitoes, which inject the larval stage of the worm under the pet's skin. These larvae then mature into adult worms in the pet's organs over the next 6 months before migrating to the heart and lungs. Initially, few signs of the disease are seen, but the earliest signs tend to be a shortness of breath or persistent cough. As the disease progresses signs are usually that of heart failure, as the worms interfere with the function of the heart valves causing the heart to work much harder to pump blood and eventually fail. Often the signs are not visible or noticed until it is too late. If left untreated heartworm can be fatal. Thankfully there are very effective and easy to administer preventatives available. As heartworm is transmitted by mosquitoes it is possible for the disease to show up anywhere there are mosquitoes, making our area a potential risk for our pets. Whilst in recent years we have thankfully not seen many cases of heartworm, this was not always the case. Thanks to diligent pet owners complying with recommendations to regularly use preventatives the number of reported cases have declined. However, recent studies have shown heartworm infestations in foxes in areas of Melbourne, so it is always our recommendation to routinely administer preventatives for our pets to ensure this disease does not become prevalent again. Monthly flavoured chews or topical spot-on liquids are a common preventative and are usually combined with flea and intestinal worming. There is also a yearly injection for heartworm prevention which is recommended for those busy dog owners that may forget to give a monthly treatment on time. This injection and can be conveniently timed with your pet's yearly vaccination.

INTESTINAL WORMS

Intestinal worms that we prevent against in our pets include: Roundworm, Whipworm, Hookworm, Lungworm (cats) and Tapeworm. Dogs become infected by ingesting these parasite eggs or larvae. It is important to note that some of these parasites are able to infect humans also, and are especially dangerous to children. Regular preventatives are easy to give and come in forms such as flavoured tablets and chews. Topical spot-on liquid treatments and certain chews are available that often include heartworm and flea preventatives. Take care if using these combined preventatives as most will not include prevention of Tapeworm (a separate tablet can be administered for tapeworm prevention). Intestinal worming schedule: treatment should be given fortnightly

until 12 weeks of age, then monthly until 6 months of age, then 3 monthly for life, unless giving an all in one product that is done monthly.

BATHING & GROOMING

Long hair pets will always require more brushing and maintenance than shorter hair breeds. We recommend bathing pets no more than every 2-4 weeks, to avoid stripping oils from the coat and skin. Spot cleaning with a damp cloth between washes is recommended if your pet gets dirty. When bathing, use warm water and a gentle pet shampoo. Avoid human shampoos and soaps as these are too acidic and can cause skin irritation. 'Dermcare' have a great range of shampoos available for puppies, kittens, adults and sensitive skin breeds. If your pet has broken or irritated skin, always consult the vet before using anything, as they may require a specific medicated shampoo. Take care not to get water in ears and suds in eyes. Be sure to dry your pet thoroughly to the skin, especially young pups and kittens who will struggle to maintain their own body temperature. Professional grooming may be required for long hair, double coated and wool hair breeds to avoid matting which can cause skin irritation leading to skin infections such as hot spots.

TRAINING & MENTAL STIMULATION

Socialisation of our pets is very important to allow them to be relaxed, well-mannered members of our families. For puppies, their socialisation period is between 3-14 weeks of age. During this time their brains are forming neural connections and associations are being formed. Their receptivity to socialisation is at its maximum so we need to take advantage of this time period and give our pups the best chance to form good, positive associations with other pets, people and situations. Limiting their exposure to bad situations during this time is also vital, so it is very important to make sure your pup is socialising in a controlled, positive environment. Puppy school is a great place to start the process, provided your pup has had at least their first vaccination. We recommend our local training organisation "Croydon & District Obedience Dog Club". Although puppy school is a great introductory tool, we recommend to continue on with other obedience classes to prevent unwanted behaviours.

EXERCISE

Exercise on a regular basis is not only good for physical health but also mental health. It allows dogs to become familiar with things in their environment and socialise nicely with other dogs which is crucial to their behavioural development. 30 minutes per day of walking is recommended for most breeds, however active breeds i.e. sheep dogs, may require more than this. Avoid walking on hot days as dogs can over heat, they can only sweat through their paw pads and lose body heat through panting. In the warmer months, exercise in the morning or late evening when the weather is cooler. Hot pavements can also burn your pet's feet. If your dog is showing signs of fatigue, panting, slowing their pace or lagging behind you, allow them to rest. Keep your dog hydrated by offering them some water to drink at regular intervals during exercise. It is important not to over exercise your puppy as this can negatively impact on their musculoskeletal development and this is of particular concern in large and giant breeds.

TOYS & PLAY

There are endless types of toys to suit different styles of play. To prevent your pup from boredom, invest in a variety of different types of toys and rotate them regularly to keep them interested.

- Interactive toys - Provide mental stimulation to keep your dog occupied for long periods of time. These include treat dispensing toys or puzzle toys.
- Tough toys - Great for bully breeds such as staffies as they are durable and last longer than your average toy.
- Dental/chew toys - Good for teething or those dogs that just love to chew.
- Squeaky toys - Great for encouraging play. Plush toys - Soft and cuddly for gentle and indoor play.
- Rope toys - Durable and suited for fetch and tug play.

We recommend "KONG" toys for both dogs and cats of all ages as they are durable and have a great range for different types of play.

PET INSURANCE

There are a multitude of companies offering pet insurance these days. While we don't specifically recommend one company over another, like any insurance be sure to read the fine print and be well aware of what your cover includes, excludes and waiting periods. Pet insurance differs from health insurance in terms of pre-existing conditions. Be advised that anything deemed pre-existing is unlikely to be covered under the policy. For this reason, we advise if you are going to take out a policy on a new pet, be sure to do it as soon as possible. When making a claim with your insurance company, you will be required to fill out a claim form which then needs to be signed by the vet and posted with all relevant history and a finalised invoice. We ask that you have your part of the form completed before you hand it to your vet. We're more than happy to post your claim on your behalf if you provide us with a stamped, addressed envelope. Some companies also offer an online submission service, reducing the amount of paperwork involved in making a claim. If you are interested in pet insurance and wish to find the right policy for you and your pet, please visit: <https://petsure.com.au/findapolicy/>

POISONS & EMERGENCIES

There are many things around our homes that are toxic or dangerous to our pets. We have compiled a list of the ones we see most commonly.

FOODS

- Chocolate
- Onions and garlic
- Nuts
- Grapes/sultanas/raisins
- Fruit stones/pits
- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Fatty foods
- Cooked bones
- Xylitol (artificial sweetener)

GARDEN/HOUSEHOLD

- Lilies (toxic to cats)
- Fertiliser
- Baits - snail/rat (even "pet friendly" is toxic)
- Toadstools/mushrooms
- Compost/garbage
- Batteries
- Cigarettes
- Medications/drugs

If you suspect your pet has had access to any of these items, or has consumed something you are unsure of, please seek veterinary treatment immediately. For any after-hours emergencies, we refer to:

AEC (Animal Emergency Centre) - Mt Waverley Open 24 hours, 7 days a week 37 Blackburn Rd Mount Waverley 3149 Ph. 9803 8122

CONTACT US

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OPENING HOURS

Monday – Friday: 8am – 6pm Saturday: 8:30am – 1pm

Public holidays: CLOSED

Consultation by appointment only - emergencies seen as priority.