



RYEDALE
VETS

Pickering | Kirkbymoorside | Helmsley

PUPPY HEALTHCARE ADVICE GUIDE





Choosing Your Puppy

What should we consider before buying a puppy?

Careful thought should be made before taking on a new puppy because – as the old saying goes – ‘A puppy is for life, not just for Christmas’ (or birthdays, or Easter etc.). You will be responsible for your puppy’s welfare for its whole life, which can be up to 10-14 years! During this time, you will need to make sure they have adequate daily exercise, have a suitable diet, be protected from pain, injury and disease and give them social stimulation every day. The decision to take on a puppy can have significant impacts on your time and finances, but the rewards for investing in this new member of your family can be infinite!

If you feel ready to take on this responsibility you may also want to carefully consider the breed of puppy you buy. Dogs breeds can have many different character traits and come in many different sizes. So it’s best to match up what you want from your puppy and the amount of space you have to accommodate. You may also want to consider the common health problems that can come with particular breeds.



Where should we look to buy our puppy from?

The options for buying a puppy are numerous but you should take time to consider how reputable a seller is. Doing your research to check a breeder has provided an adequate start in life for their puppies is essential. You should always go to see the place where the puppies have been born and raised. This allows you to meet the puppy’s parents (which should give you an idea of the puppy’s adult size and temperament) and check the conditions in which they have been kept. Unfortunately, there are some breeders that operate from ‘puppy farms’ who breed irresponsibly and keep puppies (and their parents) in squalid conditions and selling very unhealthy puppies! It is therefore not a good idea to buy a puppy online and have them delivered to you.

A good breeder will be willing to answer any questions you have and provide evidence of any worming, vaccinations or health tests they or their parents have had. They should also have a good socialisation program to get their puppies used to normal life with their new human family.

How can we ensure we are buying a happy, healthy puppy?

As mentioned above, you should always go to see a puppy and their parents in the environment they have been born and raised in before taking them on. Checking the health of the puppy’s parents is always a good starting point. If you are looking to buy a pedigree breed, the breeder may provide evidence of any advised pre-mating health tests, this could include blood tests, eye tests or x-rays of their hips/elbows.

When looking at the puppies, check out their skin and fur – there should be no dandruff or skin lesions. Their eyes and ears should not have any discharge and be generally clean. They should be bright and active but if you visit soon after feeding or playtime, they may be quite sleepy.

Vaccinating Your Puppy

Why do we give vaccinations?

Vaccinations are injections we give to puppies as a scientifically proven way to protect our loved ones against potentially fatal diseases. They work in the same way as the vaccinations we give to children and are just as important.

How do vaccinations work?

The injection we give contains a very small amount of the disease virus or bacteria which has either been killed or microscopically modified so it cannot harm our puppies. This stimulates the puppy's immune system to build an army of dedicated immune cells that are ready to fight off the real disease should it ever try to infect your loved one.

What do we vaccinate for?

At Ryedale Vets we routinely vaccinate puppies against:

Distemper, Infectious Hepatitis, Parvovirus and Leptospirosis

When should we give vaccinations?

If your puppy is under 10 weeks of age when we start their course of vaccinations, they will need 3 injections. The second injection will be done 2 weeks after the first and the third injection will be 4 weeks after the first.

If your puppy is over 10 weeks of age when we start their course of vaccinations, they will need 2 injections. Their second injection will be 4 weeks after their first.

Should puppies go out for walks before their first course of vaccinations?

Until your puppy completes their course of vaccination injections, they are at risk of contracting the harmful diseases. Please ask our vets about when and where your puppy can go while they are in the initial vaccination course period.

Should we vaccinate against Kennel Cough as well?

Kennel Cough very contagious infection spread between dogs that causes severe coughing. The name is misleading because the disease is not only confined to kennels. It can easily be picked up from meeting infected dogs while out and about. It is advisable for all puppies to have this vaccination to protect them when they're at a vulnerable stage of their life.

The Kennel Cough vaccination does not require an injection – the vet simply drips the harmless vaccination fluid into the puppy's nostrils.

Should we give annual boosters against these diseases as well?

Yes! The vaccines we give are designed to protect your puppy for a certain length of time. To keep your puppy fully protected they will need an annual booster vaccine every year for the rest of their life. Missing these booster vaccines will put your puppy at risk of contracting these devastating diseases.



Worming Your Puppy

How do puppies get worms?

Puppies can pick up worm eggs from their environment, they are microscopic and are often invisible to the naked eye but can be carried into our homes on shoes and clothing. These parasites attach themselves to the lining of your puppy's intestine and steal nutrients from the food your puppy eats. They therefore prevent your puppy from getting all the nutrition they need to grow and thrive. Some worms will invade other parts of your puppy's body and can cause multiple organ problems.

Why should we worm puppies?

Many of the worms found in puppies and dogs can be transferred to people too, which can be especially dangerous for children and the elderly. Worming your dog is an essential part of responsible dog ownership because of the effect worms can have on vulnerable (human) individuals.

Could your puppy have worms if you've never seen worms in your puppy's poo?

Yes! There are many different types of worms your puppy could have, most of them are microscopic so cannot be seen to the naked eye when shed in your puppy's faeces.

How do we get rid of these nasty worms?

Regularly worming your puppy with the best product advised by our vets will kill any worms that may have been picked up by your puppy and reduces the amount of eggs shed into your home and the environment.

When should we worm puppies?

Puppies over 8 weeks old should be wormed monthly until 6 months of age. They should then be wormed every 3 months for the rest of their life.



Puppy Flea and Tick Treatments



Why should we treat puppies against fleas and ticks?

Fleas and ticks are little blood-sucking insects that live in the coat of your puppy (and often on cats too!). Severe infestations can be dangerous for your puppy when so much blood is sucked out by the parasites that not enough is left for your puppy!

Flea bites commonly cause puppies to scratch which can lead to skin infections and perpetual irritation, when your puppy should really be playing and exploring.

Ticks can carry diseases harmful to your puppy's health and your own. Most notably Lyme disease, which can be fatal to humans as well as dogs.

If your puppy isn't scratching, could they still have fleas or ticks?

Yes! Ticks especially don't always cause puppies to scratch and not every dog scratches when they have fleas and ticks.

When should we start treating puppies for fleas and ticks?

Depending on their weight, puppies can be treated from 8 weeks of age to prevent them getting fleas.



What should we treat puppies with to prevent them getting fleas and ticks?

There are a wide range of products available to prevent fleas and ticks getting on to your puppy. Unfortunately, many of the products available from pet shops aren't reliable or effective. At Ryedale Vets we regularly review the products we advise for flea and tick prevention so you know your puppy will always have the best cover against these parasites. These products can usually only be prescribed by a vet.

Toilet Training Your Puppy

How long should it take your puppy to become toilet trained?

Some puppies take a little longer than others to learn not to toilet in the house. The main thing is to be persistent and consistent. If there are lots of people in the house training your puppy it will be worthwhile developing a plan of action for everyone in the house to refer to. This way, everyone trains your puppy the same.

What's the best way to toilet train a puppy?

There are several different ways to toilet train your puppy. We recommend taking your puppy outside where you would like them to toilet 10 minutes after waking up, eating or playing to give them opportunity to toilet. When they toilet outside, give them lots of praise, love and attention to reinforce that they have done the right thing. If you catch them toileting in the house pick them up and put them outside. You should never tell them off for toileting in the house.

Should we tell puppies off for toileting in the house?

Never! Telling them off for toileting in the house does not tell them where you want them to toilet. It will only make them scared to toilet near you. So, you are better off making the training process a positive experience and only rewarding good behaviour.



Settling Your Puppy In

What can we do to make our home friendlier for our new puppy?

Bringing your new puppy home away from their mother and siblings can be a stressful time for them but there are few things you can do to help make the change a more pleasant experience:

- Bringing home a piece of clothing or material that has been in with their mother and siblings can comfort them by having a familiar smell.
- Dog Appeasing Pheromone (or DAP) plug-in diffusers and collars have been proven to reduce stress in young puppies and improve their learning speed as a result. DAP is a natural chemical emitted by mothers when they have a litter of puppies to keep them calm and maternally bonds them. Give us a call or ask one of our vets about how to use the 'Adaptil' (DAP) range.
- Giving your puppy their own space or crate in your house can give them a place to hide if they are scared and can see it as a place of comfort. Spraying the crate with Adaptil (DAP) spray or putting the piece of material that smells like their mother in will help your puppy make this association.

Should we use their crate or bed as a place of punishment?

Never! This will undo all your hard work to make their crate or bed become a place of comfort to them. If you need to exclude your puppy for any reason, try to use another room.



How can we make our puppy confident and happy in new situations?

There is a special window between 8-16 weeks of age where your puppy will be learning at an amazing rate. This is the best time to get your puppy used to new and potentially stressful situations. These might include meeting new people and children, meeting new dogs or cats, being near cars, loud machinery or hoovers, hearing loud bangs or fireworks or going to the dog groomers.

These are just a few but exposing your new puppy to these situations in a controlled manner during this window of time is the best way to prevent phobias later in life. Only take your puppy to public places once they are fully vaccinated and you have been advised it is safe to do so by our vets.

When letting your puppy experience these situations, any interaction should never be forced, if your puppy shows signs of fear then allow them to retreat to a place they find safe. You can always try again at a later time and they will gradually get used to the situation.

There a number of 'noise phobia' CD/DVD or MP3 albums available which you can play while you supervise your puppy. They usually have a number of different loud noises (e.g. machinery or fireworks) to play and so allows you to gradually increase the loudness. So gradual that your puppy will eventually not respond to the loudest of bangs! Again, if your puppy shows signs of fear when playing the noise then you should stop and try again at a later time – next time increasing the loudness more gradually.

Should we go to puppy classes?

Yes, we recommend puppy classes as a good way to expose your puppy to other dogs and are generally good fun! We regularly run Puppy Parties at our Pickering and Helmsley branches.

Feeding Your Puppy

What kind of food should we feed puppies?

There many pet food options for you to feed your puppy. We recommend a complete diet (usually in biscuit or tinned form), designed for puppies. These diets are carefully balanced to give your puppy their exact nutrient requirements.

What if we want to feed an alternative diet, such as a Raw Food Diet?

Some owners and breeders are advocating alternative diets such as Raw Food Diets for pets of all ages. We do not recommend feeding these alternative diets because many have not been analysed to give your puppy the exact nutritional requirements they need. Not giving your puppy all the nutrition, they need can lead to diseases that will affect their health for the rest of their life.

How often should we feed puppies?

Puppies should be fed at least 4 times a day until 12 weeks of age. This is because puppies require a steadier stream of food to keep their energy levels high for all that bounding, playing and chewing! After 12 weeks you can reduce feeding to 3 times per day. From 6 months this can be reduced to 2 times daily or just once, whichever suits your lifestyle best.

How much should we feed puppies?

This will vary greatly depending on the brand of food you chose to feed your puppy. Most brands will usually have a feeding guide on the back of the packet. Some will be based on your puppies expected adult weight. We advise weighing the amount recommended for your puppy to be as accurate as possible. You could also mark a line on a cup corresponding to the amount you need to feed to make feeding time easier.



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What is neutering?

Neutering is the removal of the sex organs from either females (spaying) or males (castration). This prevents them from being able to produce puppies and can prevent some unwanted behaviours.

When can we neuter puppies?

The guidance for the best time to neuter your dog now varies depending on their breed. We will need to examine your puppy before the surgery to make sure they are fit and healthy for the procedure.

How long will the neutering procedure take?

On the day of their procedure, we will usually get you to bring your puppy in to the practice to be admitted with one of our vets or nurses between 8:30am-9:15am (we can also offer transport from our Pickering surgery). Your puppy will have a health check to make sure they are fit for the procedure and you will be asked a few questions about their recent health. They will then be cared for by our nurses with lots of cuddles as we prepare them for their surgery.

We will get you to give us a call in the afternoon (on the same day of the procedure) to arrange a time to collect your puppy.

Neutering Your Puppy

Do puppies have to be kept calm after their surgery?

After their surgery, your puppy will usually have visible stitches in their skin which will need to be kept in for at least 10 days. During this time your puppy should have minimal exercise to reduce the chance of them damaging these stitches. Female puppies will have stitches in their muscles beneath the skin, muscle takes a little longer to heal than skin so female puppies are best kept rested for a further 7 days after their skin stitches are removed (17 days after their procedure).

Does the surgery cause them pain?

Puppies can feel a little woozy or uncomfortable for the first couple of days after their procedure, but this will be minimalised with the range of pain relief medication we can give.

Does neutering puppies make them fat?

As we are taking away a whole organ system that uses a lot of energy when we neuter puppies, their energy requirements will be reduced. After your puppy has been neutered we recommended feeding a diet design for neutered dogs.

Microchipping Your Puppy

Do we need to get our puppy microchipped?

Since the 6th April 2016 the law has stipulated that all dogs over the age of 8 weeks must be microchipped and registered to an owner/keeper. If a dog is found without a microchip the owner/keeper will be given 21 days to comply with the law or risk a fine of up to £500.

Microchipping your puppy is also the best way to get them back to you should they ever become lost, this is why we have always recommended microchipping in dogs.

Whose responsibility is it to keep the microchip details up to date?

It is the owner's/keeper's responsibility to ensure the details registered to the microchip are kept up to date. Failing to do so can also result in a fine. Microchip details can be stored with a number of different microchip companies. At Ryedale Vets we have the ability to scan and read your dog's microchip number, so we can let you know who you need to contact to update the microchip details.

What details will be registered with the microchip?

The details registered to a microchip usually include some of your own details including, name, address and contact telephone numbers or e-mail should anyone need to contact you if your dog is found. They will also take some of your pet's details such as breed, colourings, age, whether they are neutered and any medical conditions that are useful to know about.

How big is a microchip?

About the size of a grain of rice.

Is it painful when the microchip is implanted?

The needle to implant a microchip is slightly larger than a standard vaccinating needle so can cause a little pain, but this usually only lasts a few seconds, after which most puppies are none the wiser.

Do puppies still need a name tag on a collar if they are microchipped?

Yes, the Control of Dogs Order 1992 states that any dog in a public place should wear the name and address of the owner inscribed on the collar or name plate or disc.



Training Your Puppy

When can we start training our puppy?

Puppies can be trained any time from when you collect them (usually after 8 weeks of age). It is important to get them used to the normal smells, noises and activities that go on in human family life – a noisy Hoover or child for example. It is best to introduce them gradually to these things and if signs of fear are being shown then the activity should stop. Gradually build up their exposure over time. CDs or downloads are available from which you can play common noises that could be scary for a young puppy – e.g. cars and fireworks. You can play the tracks at home and increase the loudness over days and weeks to help your puppy get used to those sounds.

It is important not to take your puppy out in public areas until they are fully vaccinated and you have been advised by one of our vets to do so. At Ryedale Vets we offer Puppy Parties which allow your puppy to make friends with other dogs a similar age and learn common doggy etiquette.

What is the best method to train puppies?

We recommend using reward-based training. This means giving your puppy a treat when they behave in the way you'd like them to and repeating this many times. It is not recommended that you shout aggressively at your dog because this can cause fear and aggression from them in return.

What treats should we use for reward-based training?

A treat should be something your puppy loves! This could be a tasty morsel or a favourite toy or just some exuberant praise, each dog is different, and you will soon learn what your puppy responds to best. Using too many high-fat food treats can cause obesity, so why not try mixing in some carrot treats too?

How soon should we give a treat after good behaviour?

For your puppy to link the good behaviour with your chosen treat, the treat needs to be given as soon as the behaviour is performed – ideally within half a second.

What sort of commands should we use?

There are many commands you can use such as 'Sit', 'Stay' or 'Down' but you should always use the same command for each behaviour. Using different commands for the same behaviour can cause confusion and increase the time it takes for your puppy to learn.

How many commands can we teach puppies?

There are a wide range of commands we can teach our puppies; the main thing is to teach one command at a time to avoid confusion.

Should we use punishment gadgets such as water pistols, choke chains or spray/electric collars?

Never, these gadgets don't tell your puppy the behaviour you'd like and just incites fear, which prevents them from learning. Having a fearful puppy can increase the chance of other unwanted behaviours such as aggression.

How long should we train a puppy for each day?

Keep their training sessions short, no more than 30 minutes at a time. Like children, puppies can lose concentration and need time to process what they've been taught with rest and sleep.

