**Caring for your pet**

We all know the saying ‘A dog is man’s best friend’. A dog is a loyal companion who never questions or doubts us. In return for a daily meal and some shelter he will give us unconditional love. We need to make sure we care for these trusted friends.

*"Perhaps there is a language which is not made of words and everything in the world understands it. Perhaps there is a soul hidden in everything and it can always speak, without even making a sound, to another soul." ― Frances Hodgson Burnett*

We should get to know where our local veterinary clinic is so that if our pet is ill we can take him there for treatment. If he is not eating or drinking and lying around he should be taken to the vet or clinic.

# Sterilisation

We all need to be responsible pet owners. Taking your dog to be sterilised from six months of age will prevent the population of stray dogs escalating out of control.

Sterilisation has many spin-offs – improved health, less fighting, cleaner environments, etc.

# Vaccination

There are many potential, fatal diseases which kill dogs if we don’t take adequate measures to vaccinate them as puppies and throughout adulthood. Vaccinating protects our pets from dying from these diseases. Puppies can be vaccinated from six weeks of age. The vaccine is repeated twice to give the puppy full immunity. They are vaccinated against Parvovirus, distemper, Infectious Hepatitis, Parainfluenza and a respiratory disease caused by Adenovirus type-2.

1. Parvovirus is more commonly known as "cat flu" and causes vomiting.
2. Distemper is a virus that affects many body systems.
3. Infectious Hepatitis affects the lymph glands and liver.
4. Parainfluenza and adenovirus both cause respiratory disease.

# Fleas and ticks

Fleas and ticks are parasites commonly found in the environment. They jump onto our pets and can cause irritation to our pets and in some cases disease. Dogs should be treated regularly against ticks and fleas.

Advice can be sought from a veterinarian or a local animal clinic as to which products can be used and how often. We should also deworm our puppies and dogs regularly to prevent them from getting sick and spreading the worms to humans.

# Diet

Dogs should be fed proper balanced meals to keep them healthy. We should also take note that we can cause problems by feeding them the wrong things when we mean to do good. Large breed puppies should be fed a diet for large breed dogs. This diet is formulated with lower protein and calcium levels to slow growth thus reducing the changes of joint and bone problems while growing and later in life. By adding bones, milk or calcium supplement to a large breed puppy’s diet, we are causing problems for him. Feeding bones to dogs can cause problems when they get stuck in their gastro-intestinal tract, and should be avoided. It is important that dogs have clean, fresh water available to them at all times.

# Safety measures

Dogs do not understand traffic or follow our rules. If we take them out it is very wise to have them on a leash so we can keep them out of harms way. We also want to be able to control them from getting into a fight with other dogs. Let us respect and care for these creatures. They take care of us as best as they can, let us do the same for them – all creatures great and small!

# General guidelines

We conclude by supplying a few general guidelines on how to prevent occurrence of animal diseases. Prevention is always better than cure, and following the five steps below will go a long way towards ensuring that our animals will remain happy and healthy.

Feed the animals properly

Ensure proper sanitation

Vaccinate at the right time

Handle the animals in an appropriate manner

Control stress and disturbances