Routine Veterinary Examinations for Your Puppy

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Few things are more important than getting your puppy off to a happy and healthy start. We strongly encourage you to make regular veterinary visits during this important part of your puppy's life. Optimally, the first appointment should be the day you are bringing your new puppy home. Some people think these visits are just for 'shots,' but as you can see in the description of the visits below, these office visits cover a lot more than vaccinations.

We suggest you take this checklist with you when you go to your appointments. Be sure to write down any specific questions you have prior to the exam. Most veterinarians allow extra time for 'puppy visits,' but you may still want to inform the receptionist when you make the appointment that extra time may be needed.

First visit

- General physical exam including weighing your puppy
- Discuss any health concerns
- Inform the veterinarian of your puppy's housing, previous vaccinations and deworming, and any special purposes you have for the dog such as field work, showing, search and rescue, etc.
- Have your puppy checked for parasites, including a fecal exam (you may want to bring a fresh stool sample with you)
- Have your puppy 'dewormed'*
- Discuss heartworm prevention and start your puppy on a preventive
- Discuss vaccinations and have the proper ones given
- Discuss feeding your puppy: how much, how often, what brand, dry or canned
- Discuss any grooming concerns including nails, skin, coat, and ears
- Discuss other daily care such as brushing teeth
- Discuss and start flea and tick control medications if necessary
- Discuss normal puppy behavior, teaching commands, and any behavior problems such as biting at hands; discuss puppy training classes
- Discuss any housetraining concerns
- Discuss introducing your puppy to other pets in your family, and to children

Second visit

- General physical exam including weighing your puppy
- Discuss any health concerns
- Have your puppy checked for internal and external parasites, including a fecal exam (again, you may want to bring a fresh stool sample with you)
- Have your puppy 'dewormed'*
- Adjust the dose of heartworm preventive according to the puppy's new weight
- Discuss vaccinations and have the proper ones given
- Discuss any problems and changes in feeding your puppy
- Discuss any grooming concerns
- Review normal behavior, teaching commands, and any behavior problems including housetraining

Third and subsequent visits

- General physical exam including weighing your puppy
- Discuss any health concerns

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- Discuss spaying or neutering your puppy
- Have your puppy checked for internal and external parasites, including a fecal exam (you may want to bring a fresh stool sample with you)
- Have your puppy 'dewormed'*
- Discuss the need to adjust the dosage of heartworm preventive according to your puppy's new weight
- Discuss vaccinations and have the proper ones given
- Discuss any problems and changes in feeding your puppy
- Discuss any grooming concerns
- Review normal behavior, teaching commands, and any behavior problems including housetraining
- Discuss outside activities, traveling with your puppy, or other concerns

* Even though a fecal exam may be negative, regular deworming is recommended to kill immature forms of the worms. Your heartworm preventive may contain a wormer; discuss this with your veterinarian.

We recommend that as your puppy grows into an adult, he should have an annual exam. Again, these appointments are not just for vaccinations but to evaluate the overall health of your pet and identify any potential problems early in their course.

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