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### **NEW PUPPY HANDOUT**

Congratulations on the acquisition of your new puppy! Owning a dog can be an extremely rewarding experience, but it is also a large responsibility. We hope this handout will give you the information needed to make some good decisions regarding your puppy.

We are grateful that you have chosen Charlottesville Veterinary Hospital for your puppy's health care. If you have questions about your puppy's health, including concerns about behavior, training, internal or external parasites or nutrition, please call us any time. Our entire professional staff is willing and happy to help you.

When you bring a new puppy into your home there will be a period of adjustment. Your goal is to help your puppy bond to its new family, and to minimize the stress associated with leaving its mother, littermates, and former home. Most puppies, especially those obtained before 12 weeks of age, will form attachments almost immediately with their new family and other pets in the new home, especially if there are positive experiences in the first few weeks.

Dogs are a highly social "group-living" species. In the past, we talked about dogs living in "packs" with a hierarchy/dominance structure like wolves. We now know that wild dogs live more in "family" structures, where individuals develop relationships with each other group members, and dominance does not control most activity.. When puppies enter our homes our family becomes their new social group. It is essential that new owners take a leadership role over the puppy and provide consistent guidelines for appropriate and desirable behavior from the beginning. Allowing behaviors that are pushy, disobedient or inappropriate often lead to problems that become increasingly difficult to correct. The goal is to encourage desirable behavior by the proper use and timing of rewards such as food and praise. Rough punishment or physical techniques often lead to fear, anxiety and exacerbation of undesirable behavior and are not recommended.

### **When is the best time to begin training my puppy?**

You will be training your puppy from the moment they enter your home! Like human babies, puppies start learning about the world around them from birth, and good breeders encourage handling and socialization from an early age.

In the past formal dog training has been delayed until 6 months of age. We now know that starting training earlier is much preferred, as older puppies have often begun to solidify undesirable behaviors. Puppies have short attention spans, so training sessions should be brief, but repeated multiple times each day. Puppies can be taught to 'sit', 'down', and 'stand' using a method called food-lure training. We use food treats to entice the dog to follow its nose into the proper positions for 'sit', 'down', 'stand', and 'stay'.

Many local trainers now offer "kindergarten" for puppies as young as 8 weeks. In addition to being tons of fun, you and your puppy will both learn a lot about basic training and appropriate social and play behavior. Training should always use methods that rely on positive reinforcement and gentle teaching

### **What should I do if my puppy misbehaves?**

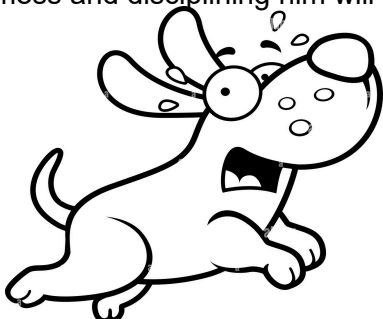
Undesirable behaviors must be prevented, or corrected in the act. Allowing the puppy, even once to perform an unwanted behavior such as entering a restricted room, jumping up, mounting or jumping on the couch will serve to reward and encourage the repetition of the behavior.

There will be times when your new puppy misbehaves. How you respond to the puppy will often influence later interactions. Young puppies are very impressionable. Harsh physical reprimands are contraindicated. They only serve to frighten the puppy and perhaps make them hand shy. We want young puppies to look toward a human hand as something pleasant that brings comfort, food and affection. Most puppies can be easily interrupted from undesirable behavior with vocal intonation and loud noises. It is equally important to redirect the puppy to the correct behavior after you interrupt the unwanted behavior. Remember that corrections must take place while the behavior is occurring, not afterward.

If you catch your puppy misbehaving, try distracting them with a loud noise such as clapping your hands or a loud "uh-uh". Puppies will often be startled and temporarily stop the behavior. At that time you should redirect the puppy to a more appropriate task and reinforce with an immediate praise and a small food treat if possible.

The most important thing that you can do to avoid undesirable behavior is to supervise your puppy. Unsupervised puppies will chew and destroy objects as part of their natural curiosity and play. Rather than finding yourself with the need to reprimand your puppy, keep your puppy on a leash (even in the house!) to avoid bad behaviors.

Most importantly, if you find something that your puppy has chewed but you did not catch him in the act, simply clean it up and vow to supervise your puppy better in the future. . Remember that you need to punish the behavior you wish to change at the time it occurs. Showing your puppy the mess and disciplining him will not be helpful, and may lead to confusion, fear and anxiety.



### **What must I do to provide for my puppy's needs?**

Chewing, play, exercise, exploration, feeding, social contact and elimination are basic requirements of all puppies. By providing appropriate outlets for each of these needs, few problems are likely to emerge. Puppies should be given chew toys that interest them and occupy their time. There are many toys available where food can be "hidden" and the puppy needs to "work" for their reward. When supervised, the owner can allow the puppy to investigate and explore its new environment and can direct the puppy to the appropriate chew toys (and away from inappropriate areas). Play, exercise, affection, training, and handling must all be part of the daily routine. New tasks, new routines, new people and new forms of handling can be associated with rewards to ensure success. And, of course, the puppy will need to be provided with an acceptable area for elimination, and will need guidance until it learns to use this area.



### **How do I house train my puppy?**

Puppies have a strong urge to eliminate after sleeping, playing, feeding and drinking. Take your puppy to its selected elimination area within 30 minutes of each of these activities. In addition, although some puppies can control themselves through the entire night, most puppies need to eliminate every 3 to 4 hours during the daytime. With each passing month, you can expect your puppy to control itself a little longer between elimination times. The puppy should be taken to its elimination area, given a word or two of verbal encouragement (e.g. 'Go Potty') and as soon as elimination is completed, lavishly praised and patted. A small tasty food treat can also be given when the puppy eliminates in the right spot. This teaches the puppy the proper place to eliminate, and that elimination in that location is associated with rewards. Some puppies also learn to eliminate when they hear the cue words ('Go Potty').

If you take your puppy to the elimination site and your puppy is only interested in playing and investigating the environment, after about 10 minutes take the puppy indoors and strictly supervise until you can try again approximately each half hour. Always accompany your puppy outdoors, so that you can be certain that it has eliminated. Be certain to reward elimination immediately upon completion and not when the puppy comes back indoors.

When indoors, your puppy must be supervised so that you can see when it needs to eliminate and immediately take it outdoors to its elimination area. One of the best techniques is to leave a remote lead attached. Should pre-elimination signs (circling, squatting, sneaking-off, heading to the door) occur, immediately take the dog to its elimination site, give the cue words, and reward the puppy when it eliminates. If the puppy begins to eliminate indoors you must be supervising so that you can immediately interrupt the behavior, such as with a verbal reprimand or shaker can. Then take the puppy outdoors to complete elimination at the proper site. Rather than use punishment to deter undesirable elimination, the goal is to train the puppy where to eliminate

through supervision and rewards. Watch the puppy closely for signs it needs to eliminate and soon the puppy will learn to exhibit these signs to get your attention that it needs to go outdoors. When you are not available to supervise, the puppy should be confined to its confinement area, preferably a crate. Be certain that your puppy has eliminated, and has had sufficient play and exercise before any lengthy confinement. If the confinement area is small enough, most puppies will have sufficient control to keep this area clean. This means that when you come to release the puppy from confinement, it must be taken immediately to its elimination area. Puppies will generally avoid soiling their crate if they are used to their crates as a sleeping or play area. However, puppies that are anxious or distressed about being confined to the crate are likely to soil. In addition, if the area is too large the puppy may soil in a portion of the confinement area. If the puppy needs to be left for longer than it can control itself, it should be confined to a small room or pen where paper is spread over the floor for elimination except for a corner with the puppy's bed and feeding area. Once the puppy starts to limit its elimination to some selected areas of the paper, unused areas can be taken up. For owners that intend to continue to use paper for training, the puppy should be supervised when released from confinement, and returned to the paper (and reinforced) for elimination.

### **What is socialization?**

Socialization is the process during which the puppy develops relationships with people and other animals, as well as becomes accustomed to various situations in its environment. While socialization takes place throughout the first year of life, especially important times are from 3 - 12 weeks of age, and again from 6 - 8 months of age. These are times where it is especially important for your puppy to have positive interactions with people and other animals, be exposed to a variety of environments and situations, and for desirable behavior to be positively reinforced.

Knowing this, we encourage you to expose your puppy to as many people, animals and situations as early as possible. ( This may be different from previous recommendations to keep your puppy away from other dogs until they have had all of their puppy vaccines). Remember to encourage social contact and reinforce good behavior again during the 6-8 month period.

### **When should my puppy be vaccinated?**

There are many fatal infectious diseases of dogs. Fortunately, we have the ability to prevent several of these by vaccinating your pet.

We now divide vaccinations into Core Vaccines, that every dog should have, and Lifestyle Vaccines, that your dog may need depending on their lifestyle and activities.


#### **Core Vaccines**

**Distemper Vaccine** - A distemper vaccine protects your dog against several common viral diseases, including canine distemper, parainfluenza and parvo. This vaccine is recommended at 8, 12 and 16 weeks of age. After the puppy series, it is recommended at 1 year and 2 years of age, and every 3 years thereafter.



**Rabies Vaccine-** We recommend and the law requires a rabies vaccine for all dogs. The first vaccine is given at 14 - 16 weeks of age. It is repeated at one year and then every 3 years.

### Lifestyle Vaccines



**Kennel Cough, or Bordetella Vaccine** - Kennel cough is a contagious upper respiratory infection of dogs. It is spread through the air and we sometimes see outbreaks in kennels, daycare facilities, dog parks or anywhere that dogs come in contact with other dogs. Your puppy should receive a kennel cough vaccine if a trip to a boarding kennel or groomer is likely or if it will be placed in a puppy training class. The Bordetella vaccine is available as an injection and as an oral vaccine. The injectable vaccine requires a series of 2 vaccines the first year, and both vaccines require boosters every 6 - 12 months.

**Lyme Disease Vaccine** - Lyme Disease is caused by *Borrelia Burgdorferi* and is spread through the bite of the deer tick. Central Virginia is now a Lyme endemic area, and many dogs test positive for this infection. Luckily, clinical disease develops in only 10 - 15% of positive dogs, which means that many infected dogs are never sick. In those that get sick, fever and joint pain are most common. In rare cases, dogs can develop a fatal form of kidney disease. This serious complication is most common in labrador and golden retrievers. The decision of whether or not to vaccinate your dog will be based on your dog's breed, lifestyle and level of tick exposure.

**Leptospirosis Vaccine** - Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that can be harbored in wild animals and spread in their urine. Dogs can contract the disease by direct contact with wild animals or contaminated water sources. Leptospirosis is not especially common, but outbreaks have occurred in our area. This infection can cause severe liver and kidney disease, and can be passed from animals to people. Our veterinarians recommend this vaccine for dogs that walk in fields or woods, or have contact with farm animals.

**Canine Influenza** - Canine Influenza is a serious upper respiratory infection of dogs. Although it is not common, serious outbreaks can occur. Your veterinarian may recommend this vaccine if your dog goes to dog shows, trials or boards frequently.

### **Do all puppies have worms?**

Intestinal parasites are very common in puppies. Puppies can become infected with parasites before they are born, through their mother's milk or from direct contact with infected soil or stool. Microscopic examination of a stool sample will help identify the presence of intestinal parasites. We recommend this exam for all puppies. In some cases, broad spectrum deworming is recommended despite a negative finding on fecal exam. Since infected puppies do not pass worm eggs every day, false negative tests can occur. In rare cases, internal parasites can be transmitted to humans. Since dogs remain susceptible to re-infection with intestinal parasites, periodic fecal testing and deworming is recommended throughout your dog's life.

Tapeworms are a common intestinal parasite of dogs, and have a different life cycle than the other intestinal parasites. Dogs and puppies can become infected with tapeworms from ingesting fleas (grooming themselves) or rodents (hunting) which are the intermediate hosts of the common tapeworm. Dogs infected with tapeworms will pass small segments of the worms in their stool. The segments are white in color and look like grains of rice. They are about 1/8 inch (3 mm) long and may be seen crawling on the surface of the stool. They may also stick to the hair under the tail. If that occurs, they will dry out, shrink to about half their size, and become golden in color. Tapeworm infections sometimes require a different dewormer than other intestinal parasites. Please notify us if you see these parasites in your puppy's stool.

### **How important are heartworms?**

Heartworms are serious parasites, especially in warm and humid climates like ours. Heartworms are transmitted by the bite of mosquitoes, migrate through the tissues and eventually become adult worms that live in the heart and surrounding blood vessels. Left untreated, heartworm disease can cause heart damage, heart failure or even death. Fortunately, we have drugs that will protect your dog from heartworms. These drugs are very safe and effective if given regularly. We can help you choose the best product for your pet's needs and lifestyle.

Heartworm preventatives are dosed according to your dog's weight. As the weight increases, the dosage should also increase. We recommend year round heartworm prevention for all dogs.

### **There are lots of choices of dog foods. What should I feed my puppy?**

Diet is extremely important during the growing months of a dog's life. Options include dry, canned, frozen, raw and homemade. For most puppies, we recommend premium brand puppy food for the first 12 to 18 months of age, depending on its breed and size. Low cost or generic brands of dog food often contain large amounts of fillers, which offer little nutrition and can cause dietary reactions or allergies. We recommend that you only buy food that has been certified by an independent organization such as AAFCO as complete, balanced and meets accepted nutritional requirements. Once you find a food that your dog likes, we recommend that you keep feeding the same food, rather than changing from one food to another. Dogs do not mind eating the same food every day, and feeding different foods can cause GI upset and make treatment for food allergies and other conditions more complicated.



We do not recommend that you feed your dog people food. Feeding your dog from the table may encourage undesirable behavior and it is a common cause of GI upset and obesity in dogs. It is better to use high quality dog treats or fruits and vegetables such as carrots, green beans, bananas or apples. (Do not ever feed grapes or raisins, as they can be toxic to dogs).

If you are interested in feeding a homemade, raw or frozen diet, please ask us for specific advice on these diets.

We do **NOT** recommend feeding a grain free diet. This is due to a potential link between grain free diets and heart disease in dogs.

### **How often should I feed my puppy?**

We recommend meal feeding for puppies and adult dogs. Puppies should be fed three times daily until six months of age, then two meals daily for life. Your dog or puppy should be allowed access to food for 15 - 30 minutes. What is not eaten should be picked up and offered again at the next meal time. Always use a measuring cup to feed your dog. Most growing puppies require about 8 oz of food per 10# of body weight each day. Adult dogs require much less food; often 8 oz of food for every 20 - 30 # of body weight each day. Vitamins and supplements are usually not necessary if your puppy is fed a complete and balanced diet.

### **What can be done about fleas and ticks on my puppy?**

Fleas and ticks are common external (skin) parasites in Virginia. Besides causing skin problems, fleas and ticks can transmit diseases such as Lyme disease and others. In general the topical and oral flea and tick control products that we have today are safer and more effective than the shampoos, sprays and dips of the past. However, there are many generic and over the counter products that are ineffective or even dangerous for puppies. We recommend the prescription products that we carry at the clinic or through our online pharmacy.



### **Why should I have my female dog spayed?**

We recommend spaying (also called ovariectomy, removal of ovaries and uterus) for all female dogs that will not be used for breeding. In addition to preventing the inconvenience of heat cycles and unplanned pregnancies, spaying a dog before 2 years of age greatly decreases the incidence of breast (mammary) cancer later in life. It also prevents potentially life threatening uterine infections that are common in older unspayed female dogs.

### **Why should I have my male dog neutered?**

We recommend neutering (also called castration; removal of testicles) for all male dogs that will not be used for breeding. For most dogs, neutering helps to prevent undesirable behaviors such as roaming and aggression toward other male dogs. In addition, neutered dogs cannot develop testicular cancer, and are much less likely to suffer from enlargement, infection or cancer of the prostate gland. Historically, we have recommended this surgery at 6 months of age. Current research now supports later neutering for some breeds of dogs.

### **Are there any emergency tips that I should know?**

There are several emergency situations that are common. The following recommendations could be valuable for you to know.

In any emergency situation, keep the pet as quiet as possible and try to conserve heat by covering it with bedding or newspapers. If necessary, apply the **A, B, C** of first aid:

- A**     **Airway**
- B**     **Breathing**
- C**     **Cardiac function**

**Airway** – Anything that obstructs the airway prevents oxygen entering the lungs. Do your best to clear the mouth and throat of any obstruction such as vomitus, saliva or foreign bodies such as grass, sticks or balls. Be careful; your pet may bite you in panic.

**Breathing** – If your dog is unconscious and does not appear to be breathing, try gently pumping the chest with the palm of your hand, at the same time feeling just behind the elbow to detect a heartbeat or pulse. Close the muzzle with your hand and blow into the nostrils. This is best accomplished by covering the pet's nose with your mouth. Be careful. Injured pets may bite you out of fear. If you are unsure about the health or vaccination status of the injured pet, avoid contact with bodily fluids and blood.

**Cardiac function** – If you are unable to detect a heartbeat or pulse or if the dog appears weak and slow, try pressing on the chest with your palm. Five chest compressions followed by one to two deep breaths is a simple form of animal cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR).



### **Specific first aid:**

#### **Blood loss**

Once you have checked A, B, C above and if the bleeding is severe, try to stop it. If bleeding is from a cut pad or paw, apply a dressing using a piece of bandage or clothing. If the bleeding persists and is soaking through the bandage, this is a medical emergency. Most bleeding wounds will require medical or surgical treatment. If the wounds are treated within four hours, they can often be sutured. Deep cuts treated after four hours have increased risk of infection and complication.

#### **Burns and scalds**

Cool the burned area with cold water as quickly as possible. Cover the burned area with damp towels. If the injury is due to a caustic substance, rinse with cold water for fifteen minutes and contact your veterinarian.

#### **Eye injuries**

Injuries to the eye are always very painful. If a foreign body (grass awn, stick, etc.) can be seen, it may be possible to remove it by gently rinsing the eye with eye wash or contact saline solution. Seek veterinary advice as soon as possible.

#### **Seizures**

Seizures can be due to many causes. These range from eclampsia (milk fever) to epilepsy. If due to eclampsia, remove the puppies from the mother immediately. All dogs that are seizing or have had a recent seizure should be kept in a dark, quiet, confined area until medical help can be sought. Contact your veterinarian immediately.

#### **Heat stroke**

This most commonly occurs in hot weather when dogs are left in cars without adequate ventilation. Body temperature rises dramatically. Clinical signs are excessive panting and obvious distress



quickly followed by coma and death. Reduce the pet's body temperature as quickly as possible using cool water and transport the dog to the veterinarian while it is still wet. Keep the car windows open. Evaporation will help reduce body temperature. Avoid using ice or ice water because this may drop the temperature too quickly and cause additional complications.