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**Dog Book**  
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# **How to Increase the Life of Your Dog**

by XXXXXXXX

# **A Dog's Prayer**

**by Beth Norman Harris**

Treat me kindly, my beloved master, for no heart in all the world is more grateful for kindness than the loving heart of me. Do not break my spirit with a stick, for though I should lick your hand between the blows, your patience and understanding will more quickly teach me the things you would have me do.

Speak to me often, for your voice is the world's sweetest music, as you must know by the fierce wagging of my tail when your footstep falls upon my waiting ear.

When it is cold and wet, please take me inside, for I am now a domesticated animal, no longer used to bitter elements. And I ask no greater glory than the privilege of sitting at your feet beside the hearth.

Though had you no home, I would rather follow you through ice and snow than rest upon the softest pillow in the warmest home in all the land, for you are my god and I am your devoted worshipper.

Keep my pan filled with fresh water for although I should not reproach you were it dry, I cannot tell you when I suffer thirst. Feed me clean food, that I might stay well, to romp and play and do your bidding, to walk by your side, and stand ready, willing and able to protect you with my life should your life be in danger.

And, beloved master, should the great master see fit to deprive me of my health or sight, do not turn me away from you. Rather hold me gently in your arms as skilled hands grant me the merciful boon of eternal rest --- and I will leave you knowing with the last breath I drew, my fate was ever safest in your hands.

## **Introduction: For the Love of Dogs!**

There's no denying it: you love your dog. From the first time you looked into his soulful doggy eyes, you knew this was going to be a beautiful relationship! Dogs are truly man's best friend; they're good-natured, faithful, eager to please... and they love us, faults and all. My name is David Loftus, and I'm a dog lover, just like you. In fact, I have such a great appreciation for these beautiful, intelligent animals that I've devoted my life to helping find homes for sheltered dogs so that they may know the blissful existence of a well-kept pet.

Some sobering facts about this country's canine population:

***Approximately 55% of dogs and puppies entering shelters are killed, based on reports from 1,038 facilities across America.***

Why would someone give up their loyal and loving canine companion? There are many reasons families must place their pets in shelters, including changes of location and/or lifestyle, problems caring for an older or sickly dog, and the inability to control a dog that's naughty or troublesome. Many people drop their unwanted dogs off at pet shelters, with the false belief that someone will come along and rescue them. More often than not, no one ever does.

Can a dog owner be better prepared to face the issues that come with being a pet owner? Is it possible avoid drastic measures at the expense of the poor animal? Each situation is different, but yes, in many instances, lack of knowledge on the owner's part is often the source of the problem. A little discipline on your part can go a long way in raising a dog who's well-behaved, healthy, and destined for a long and happy life. What's the key to being a more responsible dog owner? Pet education, training, and positive action.

***The maximum life span of a dog is estimated to be about 27 years. Yet, the reality is that in our society their average lifespan is only about 13 years.***

And while 13 years is the "average" life span, many more dogs never even make it to old age. What are some typical causes of a dog's early passing? Poor health, mistreatment, lack of medical care, accidents resulting from an owner's negligence, dog theft. Again, circumstances vary and some things are simply beyond our control... but if you know the facts early on, there are simple changes you can make that will help keep your dog healthy, out of harm's way, and most importantly... *alive*.

As a long-time dog owner and animal advocate, there were more than enough reasons for me to write this book. One reason is the people I've met over the course of my lifetime; good people who have loved dogs and lost dogs, and would have given anything to have their most puzzling questions about dogs answered in detail. Another reason is my own experience as a dog owner. It's taken me years to learn what I know now. Like any of us, I made mistakes along the way and had to say goodbye before I was ready. Now that I'm educated and able to offer the best care possible for my dogs, I'd love to share this knowledge with you. Dog owner to dog owner... I can provide the information you need to make sound decisions on behalf of your furry pal.

If you're like me, you cherish your dog as much as any other family member... and what wouldn't you do to keep that sweet pooch happy and content, sharing your best moments, living to a ripe, old age? Dogs will be dogs, with their quirky, mischievous, and sometimes very demanding doggy ways, but if we're going to have them as pets, we must face the fact that they're depending on us to live. Don't we

owe it to them as their caregivers to provide the best life we possibly can? I believe we do... and that's why I'm offering you this book; a valuable source of information that will help you increase the life of your dog through preventive measures, proper care and training. It's my sincere wish that you get as much out of it as I have! And believe me, your dog will thank you.

When you enhance your dog's life, you enhance *your* life with your dog. In this book, we'll discuss six basic ways you can help your dog to have a healthier, more joyous existence: nutrition, exercise, safety, health and hygiene, birth control, and emotional well-being. I'll provide answers to your most common questions, offer tips and hints, and present the framework for proper dog care in the long term. Ultimately, it's up to you what choices you make for your dog over the course of his time with you. This guide is meant to be a helpful and reliable reference.

## **Nutrition: Dog Food for Thought.**

Imagine this: your older dog's been acting funny lately. He seems awfully tired... snuffling wearily about, sleeping through most of the day... he's just not his usual, spry self! "Well, he's getting up there," you think. But what about those accidents he's been having on the rug? He was always so well-behaved! And it seems you just can't fill his water bowl fast enough. Finally, you take him to the vet... only to learn that your old friend has diabetes. The test itself cost a pretty penny, and the treatments, which will last the rest of his life, won't be cheap, either. Looks like you've got some pretty tough decisions to make. The kids are going to be upset. This is their family pet, the buddy they grew up with. How will you ever break the sad news?

Now imagine this: you have the power to reverse time! After hearing this unfortunate and costly diagnosis, you get the chance to go back and do it all over. You can learn ways to prevent the decline of your dog's health; what and how often to feed him, which supplements you can give to ensure he's in tip-top shape... and of course, what not to feed him. Do you take this opportunity to "do it all over, and this time, do it right?" Do you take steps toward helping your dog live a longer, healthier life? Why, of course you do!

As the old adage goes, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." That's as true of your dog's nutritional well-being as it is of anything else. Just like people, dogs require a balanced diet to keep their bodies healthy and functioning properly. Just like people, dogs who eat the wrong foods can develop serious health issues such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and even cancer. A dog who requires extensive medical treatment can become quite the financial burden... and this, sadly, may force some owners to prematurely put an end to their dear pets' lives. But it doesn't have to be this way!

Just a small monthly investment in your dog's nutritional health can mean little to no medical complications later... and that means two things: saving money in the long run, and prolonging the life of your precious pooch.

## **Mealtime Q&A**

### ***What type of food should I feed my dog?***

With so many brands and varieties on the market, it's hard to know which dog food is the healthy yet economical choice. You may be tempted to buy that 40-pound bag of kibble for \$10, but is commercial dog food all that it's cracked up to be? What about those cans of Alpo that Granny used to feed her beagle (didn't he spend his later years upchucking on the livingroom rug)? Is wet better than dry? How about the growing trend of serving a dog supermarket cuts of meat and other whole foods?

Because a dog is a carnivorous animal with a short intestine designed for quick digestion, he's probably best suited for "feasts of flesh" like the ones his wolf ancestors dined on. But let's be realistic. Few pet owners are willing to add Rover's weekly meat consumption to the grocery budget. So which is it? Wet? Dry? A combination of both? That's ultimately for you to decide, but in this section I'll do my best to present the facts, uncover the myths, and let you know the brands of dog food I trust for my own dogs.

### ***Does wetter mean better? Or is dry worth a try?***

One might assume a can of wet dog food contains more meat, but unless you're buying a top-of-the-line gourmet food, it's not likely. While it may smell tasty and even do a great imitation of Dinty Moore Beef Stew, commercial-grade canned dog food is the bottom of the barrel. Moist dog food is deceptively meat-like for a reason: they make it that way so dogs will eat it!

Your average, mid-priced can of moist dog food is made with beef by-products, which, to put it bluntly, is slaughterhouse remnants--animal flesh that wasn't fit for humans to eat. (If your dog only knew the things that went on at the meat packing plant... he might just beg to be put on a strict vegetarian diet!) Cheaper brands fill their dog food cans with mostly water and something called meat meal. What's meat meal? It's meat by-products with all the moisture and nutrients sucked out, ground into a powder. Add water, preservatives, colors and artificial flavors, spray it with fat for a tempting aroma, and voila... you've got dog food. Think about that the next time somebody dares you to sample a can of Purina.

Dry dog food is grain-based as opposed to meat meal or meat by-product based, which is partially why it's dry. The other reason is that they don't add water, as you will tell from the loud gnashing sounds your dog makes as he attempts to chew a mouthful of it. I don't recommend the low-end brands of dry dog food, for the simple fact that they're not well-fortified. The typical bag of kibble sold on your grocer's shelf is a tempting melange of all the grain waste this country's cereal companies had no other use for when they were making the Special K and Cornflakes you munch on before heading off to work each day... plus preservatives and flavor additives to make it palatable. Not much better than wet dog food, except that dry has two things going for it: 1) the fiber in it keeps his digestive tract in fine form, and 2) it's better for your dog's teeth.

### ***Wait! Why is dry dog food better for my dog's teeth?***

In addition to its suspect ingredients and doubtful nutritional value, moist dog food does nothing for a dog's teeth, and in fact may increase plaque and promote tooth decay. Dry food, on the other hand, does a nice job of naturally cleaning your canine's choppers as he crunches away and breaks down tartar while giving himself an invigorating gum massage. Cleaner teeth and healthy gums means no more doggy breath, and more importantly, less of a chance for gum disease and other secondary infections that could develop later on. So if you can coax your dog into eating dry food, by all means do so, but do take care to choose a top-of-the-line brand (we'll discuss which brands are the best in more detail in a moment).

Okay: so far we've talked about wet dog food and the reasons why most brands are nutritionally empty. We've discussed the same problem with run-of-the-mill dry dog foods. What am I getting at? Whether it's wet or dry; health-wise, cheap dog food is about on the same nutritional level as a McDonald's cheeseburger. Why? 1) It's poorly processed, and therefore empty, 2) It's nutritionally unbalanced, therefore impossible to digest, and 3) It contains harmful chemicals and preservatives to improve the taste, which can wreak havoc on the body. What's the result? Just like the person who eats cheap, processed junkfood every day, the dog who spends his life ingesting a bag of budget kibble or imitation meat in a can WILL develop health problems. Poor metabolism, skin allergies, obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancer are just a few reasons to consider a better brand of food for your pal.

The simple answer, whether you decide on wet or dry, is to ***pay a little more for a higher-quality brand of dog food.***

### ***Why is higher-priced dog food better?***

There is a major difference between the high-end and low-end brands. Higher-priced dog food is manufactured using a "recipe"- that is, set, measured amounts of each ingredient that must be maintained for consistency each time the food is made. That recipe is in place to assure proper fat-to-protein ratios needed for your dog's body to assimilate the nutrients in his meals. If your dog's body is using his food, he's eating less... and that means that over time, you're buying less dog food.

Economy dog food does not follow a "recipe" of set ingredients; it has only a nutritional minimum requirement that must be met, which means the amount of each ingredient can vary from batch to batch. So if your dog's got a fussy tummy, expect gastrointestinal trouble ahead, as well as a slew of other health problems that come with being undernourished.

Remember that overprocessed meat meal we talked about earlier? Meat meal is considered "protein" by the majority of dog food companies... but it's protein that's hard to digest - a dog food "filler" that's virtually useless! A nutritionally-superior dog food will be made with digestible protein- a higher-grade of protein, that, unlike rendered meat meal, your dog's body will be able to process and use. Ask your vet what brand he would recommend that contains good things, as well as minimal preservatives and other "suspect" ingredients that could harm your dog's health down the road. If you select a high-quality brand of dry dog food, you can be sure your dog is getting the vitamins, minerals and nutrients he needs to stay healthy and fit. And a dog who stays healthy and fit lives a long, happy life.

***FACT: Ol' Roy is the country's most popular brand of dog food... and also, the worst one for your dog's health!***

### **What brand of dog food do veterinarians typically recommend?**

Which dog food is nutritionally superior? I feed my own dogs **Hill's Science Diet**. It's the top choice among veterinarians, and as far as I'm concerned, one of the best health decisions you can make for your dog. Furthermore, it's quite tasty. My dogs have told me so.

Not only is Hill's Science Diet nutritionally-balanced, but Hill's also offers a full line of performance-based formulas for dogs with special dietary needs such as diabetes and obesity. Hill's employs a world staff of scientists and pet dieticians who are devoted to developing new, superior-quality dog foods that are both tasty and nutritious. I've toured the plant and I can honestly say that I'm as pleased with the food as I am with the team of terrific folks who work there. Hill's actually houses a full "staff" of live-in dogs and cats who help put their products to the test. Hill's animals are well cared for, properly exercised, and provided with roomy living quarters. And of course- they enjoy the finest in pet cuisine!

One of the most encouraging side effects of Hill's Science Diet in my own dogs was their change in bowel movement frequency. As soon as I switched them from their old brand of dog food to Hill's, I noticed that my dogs needed less "potty time" over the course of a day. Why? Like humans, dogs' bodies expel what's consumed and not used- and if you're feeding your dog a poor-quality dog food, of course his body isn't going to use it, and that means more doggy waste management for you. Not only are my dogs' bowel habits letting me know that their food is being well-received and utilized by their bodies, but since I began feeding it to them, they're more alert and energetic than ever.

My second choices in dog food that provides optimal nutritional benefits are **Iams** and **Eukanuba**. Both of these brands offer exceptional quality and multiple choices for dogs with special dietary needs. Yes, all three of my recommended brands are slightly higher in price than the standard "economy" bag of dog food, but if you consider your dog a member of the family like I do, you know that his health comes first. What good is a budget-priced dog food if it means expensive trips to the vet hospital in your pet's later years? Of course, if you know of another high-performance dog food that's trusted by vets and animal experts, by all means use that brand. It is through trial and error that we're able to assess the needs of our animal friends.

### **What dog food ingredients should I look for?**

Good question! When shopping for a brand of dog food, be on the lookout for the following ingredients which are beneficial to your dog's health and will help him live a longer life.

**Antioxidants.** This is a combination of Vitamins A, C and E. Antioxidants are amazing immune system boosters - not just for your dog, but for you, too (although I wouldn't recommend eating your dog's food).

**High-quality protein.** This is protein that your dog's body will be able to digest. High-quality protein helps your dog's body build muscle as well as keeps his bones healthy and strong.

**Essential fatty acids.** These are the good fats; the kind your dog's body needs to maintain a healthy nervous system and immune system. Essential fatty acids also keep his skin in great condition and his coat thick and shiny.

**Carnitine.** Helps build lean muscle and keeps your dog's heart in great shape. Carnitine also assists in converting fat to energy.

**Digestible carbohydrates.** Smart pet food companies know that dog's bodies can't always metabolize carbohydrates (remember that short intestine?). This special brand of carbs is easily digested by dogs and used by their bodies as fuel for energy.

**Tocopherols.** The new, safer alternative to dangerous preservatives. Tocopherols are Vitamin E-based and used to keep your dog's food fresh and tasty.

**Vitamins and minerals.** Reputable dog food companies like Hill's have spent years studying nutrition for dogs - and they know what vitamin combinations are needed to keep your dog's body functioning at peak performance.

**Dental protection.** Dog food with added dental protection contains added calcium and other minerals help maintain healthy teeth. Dental protective food also reduces plaque and tartar buildup to keep your dog's teeth clean and his breath smelling sweet and fresh.

### ***What are those weird-sounding ingredients listed in my dog's food that aren't in my food?***

There are plenty of things in dog food that you'd never find in human food. That's because commercial dog food was originally created so we could make use of all those animal parts that weren't fit for people to eat. This may sound like a bad or disgusting trick to play on a dog, but think about it this way. Would you ever consider tearing up a large animal carcass so you could get at the delectable organs and chomp away on those bones? You most certainly would not... but your dog would, in a heartbeat!

Now, it's not that animal by-products are nutritionally lacking in themselves. Wild dogs, coyotes and wolves consume every part of the animal they hunt for food - including organs and tendons. Organs and tendons are good for them! The problem with commercial dog food is not the animal parts themselves, but the way they're processed. A freshly slaughtered animal is loaded with nutrients that your dog will thrive on. Rendered meat that's been processed to death is not. So for your dog's sake, look into finding a reputable dog food maker that doesn't over-process its food, and then stick with that brand.

For your general knowledge, here's a brief explanation of all those mysterious ingredients you've seen on your dog food label.

**Meat (or Meat-based).** It's always encouraging to see the word "meat", standing alone in the list of ingredients. "Meat" simply refers to clean animal flesh, including organs, tendons and blood vessels. If you read that your dog food contains meat, you can rest assured that you've purchased one of the better brands on the market.

**Meat meal.** Meat meal is powdered meat - meat which has been rendered in meat processing plants, so that the solids, water-soluble and fat-soluble materials are separated from each other. Most of the water is removed from meat meal, and bacterial contaminants are also destroyed in the rendering process. Unfortunately, rendering meat also destroys much of the protein and enzymes needed for your dog's health.

**Meat By-Products.** Meat by-products are non-rendered parts of slaughtered animals that are deemed not consumable by humans. These include bones; organs such as heart, liver and kidney; and connective tissue, including tendons. Hooves and hair are NOT considered edible by any species, and are not used in the production of your dog food.

**Poultry By-Products.** Same as meat by-products, but from fowl. Also includes feet and heads.

**Bone meal.** A dried, processed powder made from ground up bones. Any food which is highly processed is stripped of its vital nutrients due to high temperatures, so even though "bone meal" sounds like a great nutritional supplement, it's no replacement for real meat bones which contain the calcium and minerals dogs need to stay healthy.

**Tallow.** Hard, white fat that's difficult to digest. Ever get a random "crunchy thing" in your hamburger? That's not a tooth! It's tallow. I don't recommend eating it, or feeding it to your dog.

**Animal Digest.** Contrary to what one might think, animal digest is NOT feces! It's chemically broken-down animal tissue, and shall not include horns, hair, feathers or beaks. Nutritional value of "animal digest?" Likely, nil.

**Whey.** The fluid that remains when the coagulum is separated from milk.

**Soybean Meal.** Ground flakes of hulled soybeans that occur by way of a solvent extraction process.

**Wheat/Oat/Corn Bran.** The coarse outer covering of the grain kernel after it's been separated through commercial milling.

### ***Should I be concerned about preservatives?***

Absolutely! Just like people, dogs can develop health problems from eating harmful food additives and artificial ingredients. Beware the following preservatives which are potentially dangerous for both you and your dog's health: **BHT (butylated hydroxytoluene), BHA (butylated hydroxyanisole), ethoxyquin, sodium nitrate.**

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

Your dog's main goal in life is to keep from starving; this is what has been programmed into his brain since puppyhood, when he got a crash course in Survival of the Fittest at his mother's breast! That's why, if you leave a grand buffet within his reach, he will eat ALL of it immediately. And that's why you must serve him single-size portions of food. Feed your dog twice a day; once in the morning, and once in the evening. Ration out his portions as indicated on the label of his dog food, or according to what his vet recommends.

Unlike their feline counterparts, dogs do not know what it is to graze or pick at their meal. Once you put down that bowl of kibble, consider it gone... "wolfed down," much in the style of his distant cousins of the wild. Do not leave the bag of dry dog food within reaching distance of his mouth and

think he'll just "take what he needs when he needs it." If you do, expect to come home to the empty bag and your bloated dog lying beside it, making some strange, anguished noises.

### ***How do I go about switching brands of dog food?***

Dogs have delicate digestive systems, so any sudden and drastic change in diet will likely bring about stomach upset. To avoid such unpleasantness, make the switchover gradually. Start with a combination of about 20% new food, and 80% old food. In two days, increase to 40% new food, 60% old food. Do this every few days until your dog is totally weaned off his old brand of dog food and happily adjusted to his new diet. It took me about ten days to make the change for my own dogs. If you have any trouble; i.e. your dog is refusing meals or just taking a few picky bites and leaving the rest, don't you fret. Your dog will not starve to death. Just keep on offering the new food, and in time your pal will come to realize that this is what's for dinner and he's just going to have to eat it and like it.

### ***Can I feed my dog a combination of wet and dry food?***

Yes, you can. Many dogs who don't care for dry food can tolerate it better with some wet food mixed in. Another option is to add a little warm water to his kibble to make a "gravy" that he'll look forward to lapping up!

### ***What kind of treats can he have?***

Any crunchy, high-fiber, low-protein doggy snack is the perfect snack for your pooch. I give my dogs **Breath-A-Licious** treats by **Dancing Paws**. They're low-fat, tasty, and good for dogs. Breath-A-Licious treats contain sodium tripolyphosphate to help eliminate tartar buildup on your dog's teeth, and a special blend of natural ingredients such as chlorophyll, parsley, peppermint, dill and fennel to soothe his tummy and aid in digestion. For more information about Breath-A-Licious, visit [www.dancingpaws.com](http://www.dancingpaws.com).

### ***What about bones?***

It's no secret that dogs love bones more than anything. But be careful about what type of bones you give your furry fella. A dog should *never* be allowed to have chicken bones. The bones of fowl are small and splinter easily. Your dog might choke on them, or worse, they could become lodged in his intestine and cause internal bleeding.

Dogs enjoy chomping on a nice, thick, meaty bone because their bodies crave the calcium. Even so: today's top brands of dog foods already contain calcium and other minerals and vital nutrients. So, while it's nice to bring home a special treat from the butcher every now and then, it's not necessary to have a steady supply of real bones on hand. Doggie treats in the shape of bones are just as exciting for your dog!

### ***Should I give my dog vitamins?***

It's not imperative that you give your vitamins when he's still young. However, by the time he's a senior, he should definitely be taking a daily multi-vitamin supplement. Vitamins will keep your older dog's system healthy and strong, help him fight off diseases, and retain his youthful vigor while

maintaining bone strength. I give my own dogs **Dancing Paws Daily Multi-Vitamin for Dogs** (see [www.dancingpaws.com](http://www.dancingpaws.com)). Whether you choose this brand or another that your vet recommends, never give your dog more vitamin pills than the recommended dosage. Also, avoid combining different types of vitamins, unless your vet specifies that you do so. Some vitamins, when overingested, can inhibit the effectiveness of other vitamins and have harmful effects on your dog's system. Check with your vet to find out what vitamins your dog needs and how often he should take them.

## **Obesity: A growing problem in dogs**

Picture this: it's a gorgeous day out. You decide to take your pup, Barkley, out for a romp in the dog park. For the first ten minutes, Barkley's unstoppable... chasing after anything that moves. But then you notice how hard he's panting. That big old belly is heaving up and down... man, Barkley is pretty tuckered out. He's eyeing a cute poodle, but there's no way with that blubber butt on him, he's beating Willy the Weimeraner to the goods!

Does this remind you of your dog? Uh-oh... sounds like somebody's not getting enough hours on the doggy treadmill! Is your dog part of the growing population of obese canines? If so: maybe it's time for a calorie cutback.

**FACT: 25-40% of dogs are obese, or likely to become obese.**

The reason? Too much food intake, and not enough exercise. Other, less common reasons include medical conditions such as diabetes mellitus and hypothyroidism. If your dog is getting on in years and seems to be dealing with a weight problem and/or is more lethargic than usual, bring him in for a vet check-up ASAP. Your vet will be able to assess any underlying conditions as well as recommend a diet and exercise program that's suited for his individual needs.

To tell if your dog is overweight, assess his build carefully. Stand him up and do a once-over of his body. Check for the following to ensure he's the proper weight:

1. When looking down at him from above, you should notice that his form tapers in at the waist.
2. When viewing him from the side, make sure his stomach slopes upward as it gets closer to his tail.
3. When running your hands over his body from front to back, you should be able to feel his ribs, and the bones in the base of his tail.

Is your dog a pudgy pup? It may be time for a strict weight-maintenance or weight-loss program! For dogs who are gaining weight, I recommend **Hill's Science Diet Light Adult**. You can view their special diet Feeding Guide at [www.hillspet.com](http://www.hillspet.com).

**Key Benefits of Hill's Science Diet Light Adult Dog Food** (taken from [www.hillspet.com](http://www.hillspet.com))

Light Adult is a low-fat, low-calorie food, specially formulated for dogs that are prone to gaining excess weight

Controls weight to help keep dogs lean and healthy

Low fat, low calorie, increased fiber

Has 30% less fat and 19% fewer calories than Science Diet Adult Original dry dog food.

Unique antioxidant blend helps dogs stay healthy and live long

High carnitine to build lean muscle and help turn fat into energy

Light Adult is available in two kibble sizes – Original and Small Bites

Daily dental protection helps clean teeth and freshen breath

Naturally preserved

Tastes great – money-back guarantee

## Five Possible Reasons Why Your Dog Is Overweight

**1. He's not getting enough exercise.** Sure, lots of dogs are chubby because they eat too much, but did you ever consider that the real problem is lack of exercise? By nature, your dog is the farthest thing from a couch potato; why, if he had his way, he'd be tearing around all day and night... chasing cars, accosting the mailman, showing the neighborhood cats who's boss! Just take a look at his build; he's one big muscle (even if it is underneath a layer of fat!). Thanks to a speedy metabolism, just a few days of exercise will jump-start his fat-burning capability. And as you know from the way he's always peeping at the front door looking hopeful, he'd be absolutely ecstatic for the opportunity to spend some time outdoors with his beloved master!

So what are you waiting for? Get moving! Wake up an hour early and head out for a morning stroll together. Or, instead of throwing yourself on the sofa when you come home, devote your evening to a little trot around the block with your buddy. You don't have to sign him up for the 5K Doggie Run; just a brisk walk around the neighborhood is a fine way to get back into the habit of being physically active. Not only will your dog slim down, but you might even drop a few pounds, too.

**2. He's eating too many table scraps.** I confess; when it comes to my best buddy, I have my weak moments just like you. I see those woebegone eyes peering at me, and it takes everything I have not to fix him a plate, tie a bib on him and prop him up in a chair across from me at the diningroom table!

But no matter how cute he looks, feeding a dog table scraps is a big no-no. Your dog gets the nutrients he needs from food that's specially formulated to meet his dietary needs. Start giving him people food, and watch him pack on the pounds. The bigger he gets, the more prone to health problems he'll become. Not to mention, a dog's tummy is a delicate thing. Although he may enjoy them, his system can't handle rich, creamy sauces, greasy french fries and spicy burritos. So do your best to keep his table food intake to a minimum. If you have to, put him in another part of the house while you're having your meals. I know it'll be hard at first, but don't you want your pal slim, trim, and hanging out with you for at least another ten or fifteen years? Of course you do!

**3. He's a garbage-picker.** Does this scene sound familiar? You come home from a day out, and there's your friend, his tail wagging a joyful greeting... and then suddenly, he gets a guilty look and runs off to cower behind the couch. You walk into the kitchen, and what do you find? It looks like a hand grenade went off in the garbage pail! There are wrappers and sticky globs all over the floor... eggshells, fruit peels and coffee grounds strewn about... not to mention the stench... of both rotting food and the foulness that is your dog's backside after what he just ingested!

Garbage-raiding dogs are not only a terrible nuisance, but they're also usually hefty hounds, too. When it comes to snacking, the same rule applies to dogs as it does to humans; eat garbage, and you'll gain weight. Do your dog (and yourself) a favor. Stow that trash out of sight where he can't get his paws on it.

**4. He's getting fed by more than one conscientious family member.** Blessed is the dog who lives in a house of over-zealous dog owners! In some homes, the dog's lucky if he gets fed at all. In others, he gets six meals a day instead of two because everyone assumes that they're the only one feeding him. Meanwhile, Fido has been practicing his best "hungry" face while hovering around the dog bowl.

Stop wasting money on dog food and contributing to your pup's obesity problem! Establish a feeding schedule in your household, and stick to it. Decide who will feed the dog on which days; or, post a dry-erase board where people can jot down the dog's eating status on their way out. Be sure to include the date and other specifics, or your board will just be another source of confusion! "March 13: fed Fido dinner at 6:00 pm. -Amy." There, see how easy that was?

**5. He's a sneaky snacker.** Next time you're about to yell at your brother for polishing off that batch of cookies you just made, take a look around for the real guilty party... the one with crumbs on his whiskers who's passing gas in the corner. Lots of dogs will swipe your leftovers if they think they won't get caught... and others don't even care about getting caught! Some nose their way into the bread drawer; others "counter-surf" when backs are turned... and many a naughty pup has scavenged an entire roast beef off the counter as Grandma's bending over to take the casserole out of the oven.

Don't let your dog eat you out of house and home! Do your best to keep food locked in the pantry or refrigerator as opposed to lying out on the counter. If you're busy cooking a big meal, now's a great time for another family or household member to take ol' pudgy paws outside for that exercise he needs so badly!

## Exercise Your Pup

Remember when you first got your dog? You were so excited; you were going to be the best dog owner ever! You had big plans for you and your pal... a daily jog around the neighborhood, summer camping trips... he was going to be the motivating force behind your new fitness routine! But uh-oh, look at you now. Come home from work, let Ralph out for a whole ten minutes, and then it's crack open a beer and throw yourself on the couch while Ralph stares at you with that worried look. It's no wonder your dog's got a pot belly to match yours!

Don't let laziness rule your life! Regular exercise is by far the best way for you and your dog to maintain good health. Slip on your running shoes, grab the leash, and head out for a day of fresh air and fun in the sun. Whether it's a jog around the nearest pond, hiking in the hills, a game of backyard frisbee or a stroll down to the corner coffee shop and back, just 20 minutes of exercise a day is enough for you and your canine chum to get back on the fitness track.

## Five Reasons to Exercise with Your Dog

**1. He'll behave better.** Your dog is pretty excitable, isn't he... kind of like a hyperactive child! So, if you don't give him an outlet for his pent-up energy, he'll take it out on your belongings. He doesn't mean to be destructive or naughty, and he isn't trying to get back at you for leaving him alone all day.

It's just that he's precocious and a bit frantic at times. Think of the jittery person who's always tapping his toes, shaking his leg and nibbling on his fingernails. Your dog feels the same way as that guy. If no one takes him out to release his pent-up feelings, he'll grow nervous and begin to chew and scratch things. Since he lives in your house, those things will probably be yours.

You won't believe the difference in your dog's behavior that a regular exercise routine will make. Not only will the daily outing transform him from whimpery to winsome, but he won't be nearly as likely to chew on your comforter, slobber on your shoelaces or wreck your recliner. Instead, he'll be pleasantly tuckered out and content to relax with his own happy memories of all the things he saw, sniffed and tasted on his venture out into the world.

**2. It's good for his muscles and cardiovascular system.** You look forward to a lifetime of happiness with your pal, right? Well, the best way to ensure this is to keep him in top physical condition. Moping around the house all day is doing nothing for your dog's body, and it's also wearing away at his spirit. With each day that he remains inactive, his muscles are becoming flaccid and weak. Do you want your dog to be known as a weakling? Of course not! Just like Hans and Franz, you want to "pump him up!"

Since your dog can't hit the gym when he's feeling out of shape, you'll have to take the initiative and bring him out for a run. With just a few weeks of regular exercise, he'll go from flabby to fit! His heart will grow stronger, his endurance will increase, and overall he'll be a more vibrant, healthy animal. And if you're right there frolicking along with him, you may even find yourself looking trimmer, too.

**3. It will ease his worries.** You think you've got troubles? Take a look at that furrowed brow on the face of your precious pooch. That is one stressed-out doggy! Does he need a prescription for Puppy Prozac? No... he just needs to know that you'll be there to feed him, take him out to do his business, play with him and bring him on walks every day. Yes, you heard me... *every day*. Your dog spends his every waking moment worrying and waiting for you to attend to his needs. If he's feeling lonely, he can't let tell you, "Hey I'm going to meet up with my buddies for a beer, don't wait up for me." If he's restless or stressed, he can't take off for a few hours to go jogging around the neighborhood.

Exercising with your dog is a great way to show him that he's your pal and to ease his troubled doggy mind while helping him expel energy. A dog who's out of doors catching a scent on the wind, feeling the cool air ruffling his fur, galloping across wide open spaces and splashing through puddles has not a care in the world. And a dog without worries feels pretty doggone good!

**4. It will help maintain his proper weight.** We talked about obesity in the last section of this book. A good percentage of obese dogs owe their weight problems to lack of exercise. If your dog is packing the paunch, you might notice that he's less mobile than he used to be; perhaps balancing on his hind legs has become a challenge, or maybe he has trouble hopping up into the car. Obesity in dogs can lead to other health problems down the road, like hip displasia, diabetes and heart trouble. Do your dog a favor and help him to kick those extra pounds.

Working out with your dog is by far the best way to keep him within his ideal weight range without having to regulate his calorie intake. A dog's body is built for vigorous exercise and wired to burn energy. His muscles are still strong under that whale blubber, so just a few sessions of activity will melt away the pounds and put him on the fast-track to fitness. Have you ever seen a fat animal in the wild? Of course you haven't; because the world's creatures are quick, agile, and constantly on the move. They need to be, so that they can make a swift getaway when faced with sudden danger. Your dog might be relatively safe in your care and therefore may never have to run like a cheetah... but even so, he deserves to feel fit and able!

**5. It can help prevent arthritis.** Just like people, some dogs develop arthritis as they grow older. Arthritis is a painful stiffening of the joints, the cause of which remains a mystery. A dog's struggle with arthritis is as painful for his owner to see as it is for the dog himself. One way to relieve the pain of arthritis is regular exercise to help lubricate the joints and build strength in the surrounding supportive muscles.

If your older dog shows signs of arthritis, such as a slow and pained gait or trouble getting into a seated or lying position, bring him in for a physical. Your vet will be able to offer suggestions on what kind of moderate exercise may be able to alleviate his condition. Is your dog still in his youth? Now is the time to keep him physically fit so as to avoid arthritis and other ailments in his later years.

## **Exercise Routines**

Your dog needs enough exercise to keep him slim and trim and toned. His ribs should be just slightly visible. You will know if your dog isn't getting enough exercise; he'll tell you! Dogs who don't get the energy-release they need will take it out on your stuff. They don't mean to do this; it's just that they're restless and bored. If you get home from work to find your scarf chewed to shreds and your slipper in bits, he's probably getting stir-crazy! It's not his fault; so refrain from calling him a bad boy and sending him away. Instead, give him an outlet for his abundant energy. Exercise your dog!

## **Leash Walking**

At the very minimum, take your dog for a 20-30 minute walk every day. Don't forget to put on his leash before you go! Having your dog leashed at all times will enable you to steer him away from a potentially harmful situation. Your dog might be a good, smart boy, but you never know when trouble is lurking about. Even if your dog is usually mindful of cars, it only takes a second for him to become distracted and dash out into traffic.

Leash walking is a great way for your dog to tone his muscles and burn off energy while being taught socialization skills. He'll look forward to your daily routine, where he can get out into the world and have a fine time sniffing about, peeing on every fire hydrant, tree and mailbox he sees, and maybe even cavorting with a dog buddy or two from the neighborhood. Ahh, this is the stuff that doggy dreams are made of!

Always make sure your dog is up-to-date on his vaccines before taking him out to explore the world. Like a toddler, he'll put just about anything in his mouth, including other dogs' feces, which often carries disease. And speaking of fecal matter, before you hit the pavement, bring along a pooper scooper. It's your responsibility as a dog owner to clean up after your pet. If you don't, you can expect to hear about it from unhappy neighbors... and maybe even find a not-so-nice gift bagged on your doorstep!

While walking is better than nothing, it's still not enough exercise for a high-energy dog. If you have a hyper hound on your hands, you'll want to explore other ways to run him ragged. Are you the sporty, outdoorsy type? Terrific! If not, that's okay too... there are always the kind of games where your dog goes tearing around while you just stand there! Either way, spending quality time with your dog is a terrific way to keep him active, fit and around for a long time.

## **Jog With Your Dog**

Blue skies and cool breezes are the perfect reason to get out there and work some cardio into your routine- not only for you, but for your little dog, too. The best times to head out for a jog with your dog are when it's cool out- mornings and evenings in the spring and summer, and just about anytime in the fall. Of course, you can bring Fido for a winter romp too, but cold weather exercise is another matter entirely and deserving of its own section (see Winter Activities).

If you're just getting back into exercise, you're probably not ready for strenuous activity and neither is your dog - so on your first couple of times out, take care not to overdo it. Warm up with a ten-minute walk, work your way up to a slow jog for a mile or so, and follow with a walking cool-down. Your dog should be able to trot along beside you without overexerting himself. Even if you're a cardio machine and have been active for a long time, you should never force your dog to run fast for long distances. Dogs are suited for short spurts of activity and they tire quickly. So do pace yourselves.

If you usually jog on a cement road or paved track, be sure that your dog has a grassy path that he can run on alongside of you. The pads of dogs' feet do not take well to pavement pounding, and he doesn't have shock absorbers like the ones that came with your Nikes.

Never take your dog out running in hot weather. Imagine how he'd feel at high noon in July, with the sun beating down on his fur as he struggles along to catch up with you and tries not to trip over his tongue as he gasps for air. Dogs don't have an easy time keeping cool like we do. They're far more susceptible to heatstroke. Dogs perspire through the pads of their feet, and by panting. If you see your dog panting heavily and looking like he might pass out, take him someplace where he can cool off and get a drink of clean water.

## **Rollerblade With Your Dog**

If you're a pro rollerblader, why not take your pooch along next time? Bring his leash and a backpack with water and doggy treats, and it's off you go. You can rollerblade on one of the local bike paths, cruise the nature trail at the nearest park or recreation center, or skate along on a nearby country road or neighborhood block that's virtually traffic-free.

Rollerblade at a leisurely pace. Your dog should be able to trot along beside you and not have to work to catch up. If he's running, you'd better slow down. Dogs tire easily; they're just not fit for long-distance marathons. Keep a close eye on your dog for signs of fatigue- excessive panting, labored effort to catch up. If your pup looks peaked, stop immediately. Lead him to a cool, shaded area and rehydrate him with the water from your backpack. While you're at it, take a couple of swigs for yourself.

Are you still a little shaky on the skates? If so, now is NOT the time to bring your dog with you. Imagine wobbling along like a newborn colt with your dog on the leash. If he suddenly catches a whiff of dachhund from 300 yards away, you can bet your backside will soon know the feeling of sliding gravel. Yowwwza!

## **Go Swimming**

Swimming is one of the best ways to give your dog a total-body workout. It's a no-impact exercise that will tone his muscles and strengthen his lungs and heart without putting wear and tear on his bones and joints. Swimming is an ideal activity for older dogs with arthritis or hip displasia.

You don't need to be a pro swimmer to take your dog for a dip, although if you're not that great of a swimmer yourself, you should probably bring along someone who is, in case of an emergency involving either you or your dog. Water safety first!

Bring your dog to the nearest lake, pond or river and he'll have a blast, doggy paddling and splashing around. He'll prefer to do a few laps for about 5 to 10 minutes and then rest for a bit. Don't force him to stay in the water for longer than he's comfortable. He'll tell you when he's ready to come out. Keep a dish of fresh water nearby so he can take a drink when he's thirsty. You never know what kind of organisms are living in that pondwater!

There are special doggy pools that don't contain chlorine, where he can swim with other dogs if he's the friendly, sociable type. Wherever you go, make sure there is a ramp or gradual downgrade into the water so that your pal will be able to get in and out easily. He can't climb ladders or jump up onto docks like you can... and you wouldn't want him to panic or hurt himself trying to get back to you on dry land.

Some dogs are better swimmers than others. A few dogs are even afraid of the water! If you're concerned about your dog's ability to swim, you can purchase a doggy lifejacket for him to wear, with a cord that you can keep hold of and tow him in with if things get out of control. Never throw your dog into the water, assuming that he'll enjoy and just naturally be a good swimmer. Some dogs take to it right away, and others never feel quite right about swimming. Dogs are a lot like people that way!

## **Play Fetch (or Catch)!**

Fetch is ideal for dog owners whose idea of "exercise" is to just stand there! You can even hold a beer in one hand while you throw the stick with the other. Exuberant and eager to please, your dog is always up for a fetch. It's the perfect game to exercise his brain and his body at the same time.

You can play fetch with just about anything- a stick you find on the lawn, a rubber Kong toy, a partially deflated soccer ball, a squeaky toy shaped like a hotdog, your ex husband's old golf shoes. Wizz the object as far as you can, and watch your buddy tear off in hot pursuit. While he's dashing after his prey, you can talk on your cell phone, do a little sun-worshipping, file your nails... whatever! See, I told you this game was fun.

A fenced-in yard is the perfect area to play fetch and other outdoor games with your pup. If you don't have a fence, you might venture over to the nearest ball field or beach that allows dogs, where there's lots of wide-open space to run without meeting up with trouble. Avoid playing in areas where cars frequently go by, as the ball or stick may go off course and into the street with your dog following.

Some dogs are natural retrievers and will dutifully bring back whatever you throw for an instant fetch replay, while others are more inclined to prance around with the object in their mouths. If your dog is the latter type, you can keep the game going by uttering the commands, "Sit!" and "Drop it!" It may take some doggie-treat reinforcement to teach him what these words mean, but once this happens, look out! Your dog will come to expect the fetch routine every time you step outside with him. Oblige him the privilege whenever you can; after all, it's good for his body and spirit, and such a small thing that he'll love you for in a big, big way.

### **Take Him Hiking**

Are you a nature buff? Why not head for the hills with your little pal! Hiking is a great way for man and dog to bond while discovering the wonders of the wilderness and burning calories, too. Plan a day trip, or even an overnight camping weekend if you're a hard-core nature enthusiast. Pack some food and supplies, throw Lucky in the backseat and you're off to forage the great outdoors!

Whether you plan to hike for a couple of hours or a couple of days, always stock up with supplies before you leave. What to bring:

- Enough water for both you and your buddy
- A dish or other container for him to drink out of
- Insect spray to protect from ticks and mosquitoes
- Doggie snacks (or a small bag of kibble if you're planning a lengthy outing)
- People snacks
- A first aid kit - tweezers, scissors gauze pads, adhesive, Neosporin
- Your dog's leash
- Cell phone
- Standard camping gear if you plan to stay the night

If you've never taken your dog hiking before, expect him to pretty much lose his mind with excitement. The nature trail is a delicious array of sights, sounds, tastes and smells. Your dog will hear the call of the wild in the chatter of a hundred chipmunks, the flap of a mighty heron's wings, and the whispery song of a cricket chorus at dusk. He'll salivate on the trail of a deer scent, scuffle about in the mossy underbrush, and take a delightful dip in a meandering stream.

A word of caution: before you go hiking with your pup, make sure he's up-to-date on his shots- especially rabies and Lyme's disease. Heaven forbid, if your dog encounters a rabid animal and gets bitten, at least if he's had his shot you know he'll eventually be okay. Equally important is the Lyme vaccine. The woods of North America are loaded with deer ticks just biding their time up in the trees, waiting for something furry like your dog to come by so they can feast on his blood. Lyme disease is extremely debilitating and can lead to serious complications if left untreated, so don't put your dog at risk. Don't put yourself at risk, either! Bring a can of insect repellent and wear tight, protective clothing and head wear.

Choose a hiking trail that's well-maintained. There are tons of state parks all over the country who do a fine job of keeping their paths clear and easily walkable, as well as patrol them regularly. If you know of one that's a popular tourist attraction, make that your favorite hiking spot. Avoid taking your dog into deserted, unfamiliar terrain where the overgrowth is thick and unmanaged, and two of you could find yourselves seriously lost. Do not take your dog trekking through privately-owned woods, or anywhere there's been recent reports of bear sightings.

If yours is not a well-trained dog, be sure to not only carry his leash but keep him attached to the other end of it. As much as you might be tempted to just let Rocky go rocketing down the path, you don't know what lies beyond those hills. Your unsuspecting, overly-excited pal could meet up with anything from an unfriendly raccoon, to startled campers, to a pair of gun-toting hunters who mistake him for a deer. If you're worried that your dog blends into the background a little too well, get him a reflective collar so he can be spotted easily.

Don't let your dog drink from standing puddles. Water that collects after a rainfall and remains stagnant harbors bacteria and parasites that could make your dog very ill. Carry a bottle of water and your dog's dish in your backpack so that you can help him quench his thirst every so often. If he happens to come across an animal carcass in his travels, don't let him eat it or carry it around with him.

If you're out for many hours and/or it's summertime, pay close attention to your dog to make sure he isn't overexerting himself. He'll be too excited and distracted by the wonders of the wilderness to realize he's exhausted or overheated. If it's a warm day, check him periodically for the following: heavy panting, excessive salivation, pale gums, dull eyes. An easy way to tell if he's dehydrated is to lightly pinch the loose flesh on his back. When you release it, the skin should pop back into place normally. If it remains pinched, your dog needs water. Give him a good, long drink immediately and escort him to a shaded spot where he can rest.

When you get home after your hiking excursion, check your pup's paws for cuts, scrapes and puncture wounds. Thoroughly examine his body for fleas and ticks. If he went swimming in a river or pond, rinse him well with fresh, clean water. Finally, take him inside for a great big, hearty meal. One of the best things about going hiking with your dog is coming home!

## Winter Activities

Get through those long, dreary winter months with regular outdoor activity that keeps your spirits up, your blood circulating and your dog's tail wagging with excitement. Even though it's cold outside, the sun reflecting off the snow-covered ground will make for some incredibly bright days. This winter, step outside with your dog for about 20 minutes or so, on every sunny day that you can. What are some fun winter games you can play with your pooch?

**Snowball Catch.** Dogs absolutely adore snow, and yours will have a fantastic time tunneling through powdery snowdrifts as he dives after snowballs that you throw for him. Better still, bring along a buddy and the two of you can toss snowballs back and forth to each other while your dog runs back and forth trying to intercept them. Whatever you do, don't throw snowballs AT your dog, as that's just not playing fair. After all, he doesn't have opposable thumbs and can't make his own arsenal of snowballs to throw back at you!

**Find the Treat.** Snow makes for great digging fun, and if you bury a few treats around the yard, your dog will delight in sniffing them out for an instant reward! If you've still got that third playmate handy, he can make sure the dog sits and stays still while you plant those treats in various hiding spots. After you're done hiding the goods, command your dog to "Find the Treat!" and watch him sleuth out the prize. Of course, it helps if the first couple of times you make sure your dog is watching you hide the treats, so he can get the idea of what he's supposed to do. Once he masters the game, you can hide them where he's not looking, and even replace the treat with a stick for him to go after.

**Snowbank Slip 'n Slide.** Dogs don't need a sled to go sliding down hills of snow (although you might want to bring one along for your own enjoyment)! Bundle up tightly, and bring your dog to a nice, hilly area where there's no danger of sliding into traffic or dangerous terrain. Climb up the snowy banks, and have a blast sledding or tobogganing while your pal goes down on his belly or rump.

**Sled-pull.** If your dog is of a moderate build and you have young children, you can teach him to pull them along on their sled. Make sure that both ends of the sled rope are attached to his collar and that the weight isn't too much for him to handle. NEVER tie a rope directly around your dog's neck, as he could easily choke himself. Above all, don't force your dog to pull the sled. Some dogs really take to this activity while others are not so keen on it. The goal is to have fun together.

**Hide and Seek.** Winter snowbanks make for great spots where you can hide and Rover can come and seek you out. A fenced-in yard is an ideal hide-and-seek playground. There will be enough mounds of snow to make the game interesting, but at the same time you don't have to worry about anyone getting lost. (This game is called hide-and-seek after all, not search-and-rescue!)

No matter what your winter activity of choice, you'll want to protect your dog from the elements as best you can. Here are some winter safety tips:

1. Bring along a thermos of fresh, tepid water to keep your dog from eating snow when he gets thirsty. Even if it doesn't look dirty, you never know what's falling out of those clouds.
2. Avoid going out on blustery days or in severe weather of any kind.
3. Check your dog's paws periodically for icicles and balls of hard snow.
4. If your dog is sensitive to the cold, get him a warm doggie sweater or coat to wear.

5. Keep your dog leashed when walking in unfamiliar areas; you wouldn't want him to lose his way, especially in frigid weather.
6. Never leave your dog chained outside when the temperature is below freezing. This is not a proper method of "exercising" him; it's just plain cruel.
7. Never try to lure your dog out onto an icy lake or pond, no matter who tells you it's "frozen solid."
8. When it's cold, keep outdoor activity sessions with your dog to no more than 20 or 30 minutes tops.
9. For pooches with delicate paws, look into a pair of rubber booties which will protect the pads of your dog's feet in frigid weather.
10. Watch for signs of hypothermia in your dog such as shivering, confusion and wrapping himself in a ball. If this occurs, get him someplace warm right away, wrap him with blankets and feed him some meat or fat and a bit of warm broth.

## **Safety**

Your dog's instincts are not attuned to the things you consider small hazards. Sure, his nose knows when another dog's been sniffing around your pant leg, and he can predict when someone's coming to the door long before you have a clue. But he's not aware of immediate dangers in the human environment.

Out in the wild, there are no knick-knacks to knock over with a swinging tail. There are no speeding cars to lean an inquisitive head out of and get scratched by tree branches. And there are certainly no strange little bottles containing mysterious morsels that might be fun to taste but are actually bad for him. So, it's really no surprise that when it comes to safety, your dog can use a helping hand. This book is about increasing the life of your dog, and one of the best ways to do that is by keeping him out of harm's way.

Ever find yourself in this situation? You're scheduled for an all-day outing. You say goodbye to Sukey and she wags a lazy farewell from her spot on the couch. Hours later, you return to find Sukey in the same exact place... only this time, the livingroom is in shambles. Your antique lamp has been smashed to pieces, that roll of film you meant to get developed is in ribbons all over the room, and the glass of orange soda you left on the coffee table is now seeping into the rug. You're starting to feel quite stressed, and the reason is because your house doesn't pass Dog Safety Inspection. Is this any way to live?

No, it isn't. But the good news is, accidents like the one I just described can easily be avoided in the future. How? Well, you could get rid of your dog! But a better idea might be to get rid of the offending objects that pose a threat to your dog's safety. Whether it's inside the home, around the neighborhood, in the car or on vacation, there are myriad opportunities for your dog to get caught up in a dangerous situation and seriously injure himself. Ensure that he lives a long and happy existence by actively ensuring his safety no matter where the two of you roam.

## **Safe at Home**

Plenty of folks baby-proof their homes in an effort to keep Junior from accidentally hurting himself. But did you ever consider that it's just as important to doggie-proof your home? In many ways, your dog

is like a small toddler- full of energy, ever-curious, and quick to make a move when you least expect it. Can anyone really blame him for getting into precarious situations when you're not looking?

**A place for everything, and everything in its place.** Rearrange your home so that all "dangerous" items are far out of Rover's roving reach. Once you've eliminated every safety threat, resolve to keep your house in a permanent dog-proofed state. Make it a regular practice, upon exiting the room or your house, to tidy up any messes and rid the area of any breakables, small objects, poisonous substances or electric appliances your dog could hurt himself with. Once you get into the habit, it'll become like second nature... and you'll save yourself a ton of hassle and worry in the long run.

What's the most effective way to doggy-proof your home? Survey the entire house "from the dog's point of view." Get down on your hands and knees and take a good look at your surroundings. What things are on eye-level of your pet that he might try to sniff, taste, nibble on, scratch, fall into, get stuck behind, or knock over?

**When dog-proofing your home, beware of and eliminate/relocate the following hazards:**

Ripped or frayed rugs that you dog might be tempted to chew on  
Dangling electrical cords  
Plants that are poisonous to dogs (see Poison Control for Pooches)  
Knick-knacks and breakables that are within reach of a wagging tail  
Small spaces that your dog could crawl into and get stuck in  
Frayed and/or exposed wires  
Cleaning products  
Small objects that could pose a choking hazard  
Bags of other pet food such as bird seed or cat food  
Cat litter boxes  
Open toilet bowls  
Sharp objects he could inadvertently back into (for example, a cactus plant)

**Gate him off.** If you'd prefer your dog not wander into rooms like the basement, office or formal sitting area of your home, set up safety gates to block off open entrances. You can buy a safety gate at any store that sells baby goods such as Walmart or Babies"R"Us. *Spring-loaded gates* can be easily transported from one doorway to the next, depending which area is "off limits" for the time being. Unfortunately, they're not the most reliable. A persistent pup will often find a way to "break on through to the other side" of a spring-loaded safety gate, as they're quite easy to dislodge. *Screw-in gates* are more difficult for dogs to get past, but installation is more permanent. That's something to consider, especially if you rent and are trying to keep wear and tear to a minimum. A *Dutch door* is a whimsical alternative to the standard baby gate; that is, if you're willing to modify your home for your pet.

**No dogs allowed in the garage.** You'll want to dog-proof your garage as well; or at the very least, prevent your dog from venturing in there. Garages are filled with all kinds of curious-looking objects that pose a major threat to your dog's safety.

Many homes have attached garages that are accessible from the inside of the house. If you're planning a project and you know you'll be in and out of the garage for several hours, put your dog in another room or gate him temporarily. On the chance he does venture into the garage unexpectedly, be especially careful to keep hazardous objects and poisons out of reach.

**When dog-proofing your garage, beware of and eliminate/relocate the following:**

engine parts  
machinery  
electrical appliances  
dangling wires  
pesticides  
gasoline  
motor oil  
antifreeze  
cleaning products

That's pretty much everything that you keep in the garage, isn't it. This simply reinforces the importance of keeping the garage off-limits! To your dog, that stray bucket of car wash solution left on the garage floor looks like a thirst-quenching drink. And that old rubber gasket looks like a nifty chew toy. Don't be negligent! Ensure your dog a long and happy life by keeping him far away from harmful substances and dangerous objects.

## **Yard Hazards**

Another area which is cause for concern is your backyard. Sure, having a big yard for your dog to romp and play in is a wonderful thing! But just like the inside of any home, the outside often harbors dangers to your dog's safety. A fence may serve as some protection, but if the area is littered with hazardous objects, the fence won't do all that much good.

### **Eliminate the following hazards in your backyard:**

**Stray building materials.** Lots of folks start projects in their yards which will remain ongoing for some time. If you're in the process of building a structure such as a deck, Florida room or gazebo, there will probably be an area of your yard that's cluttered up with wood slats, tools and such, for several months. Your dog can't differentiate between a hammer and a rawhide bone. At the end of the work day, put away all stray tools as well as any objects with points or sharp edges that your dog could somehow hurt himself with. Also, be mindful of dropped or scattered nails and screws that may result in an injured paw (or a foot, like yours!).

**The swimming pool.** True story: a friend of mine let his dog out to use the bathroom. When the dog didn't come back after several minutes, he ventured outside to discover the dog IN the pool, tangled in the pool liner and struggling wildly to get out. NEVER leave your dog unattended by the side of the pool, even if the cover is in place. Also: when swimming with your dog, prevent him from taking gulps of chlorinated water. You can easily set out a pan of fresh drinking water to help him quench his thirst instead.

**Open sheds or "junk garages".** People who live in more rural areas often accumulate old machinery, tools, furniture and other "collectibles" that they store in stand-alone garages or sheds. The tool shed is no place for a dog. Keep your pup from injuring himself or getting trapped behind one of the many dangerous large objects in there by closing and locking up whenever you can. If your shed has an open entranceway but no door, consider installing one just to be safe. Never let Spot roam about the shed, even if you're in there tooling around. There's always the chance that you'll become absorbed in a complicated task and forget to mind him. Or worse: on your way out, you may not see him hiding behind all that junk, and accidentally lock him in there indefinitely!

**Pesticide-treated gardens and lawns.** We all know those little flags people post to warn others that their property has been treated with pesticides. Those warning flags are there for a good reason:

pesticides are poisons, and pretty strong ones at that. Not only are the chemicals we spray on our lawns and gardens harmful to us, but they're harmful to our pets as well. If you spray your lawn for pests, be sure to keep your dog from walking where the application was done, until the chemical company deems that it's safe to come in direct contact with the grass again.

**Gardening tools, fertilizers and spray cans.** Sure, your dog likes digging, but that doesn't mean he has a use for the shovel you left propped against the side of the house. Gardening's great, but please be kind to your pooch. Tidy up after you're done hoeing and sowing and seeding and mowing. You'd feel terrible if your little buddy was out having a romp and suddenly met up with a rake lying upturned in the grass. The same goes for fertilizer bags, plant spray solutions and other substances you use to make your garden grow. Store them someplace where Jake can't go sniffing and tasting.

**Poison ivy and sticker bushes.** Your dog might not be able to catch poison ivy, but you'll be scratching like a hound if he comes in contact with it and then rubs up against you. Keep your backyard clear of poison ivy, poison sumac and poison oak. While you're at it, pull out those nasty sticker bushes that give Barney an ouch on his fanny when he accidentally ventures too close.

### **Poison Control for Pooches**

Whether you're puttering about the house, frolicking in the yard or trucking along in the family car, you should be aware of these less-commonly-known poisons that can be fatal to your dog if he accidentally ingests them.

### **Chocolate**

Keep your buddy away from the Easter basket! As tasty as that little cocoa bunny may be, it contains *theobromine*- a substance in chocolate which causes restlessness and excitability in your pets and can result in death, even in small amounts. If for some reason your dog finds his way into the candy jar, Halloween bags or pan of brownies you left on top of the stove, GET HIM TO A VET IMMEDIATELY. Your vet will be able to assess just how much chocolate your dog ingested and what steps he can take to prevent toxic poisoning.

### **Poisonous Plants**

Azalea, oleander, mistletoe, sago palm, Easter lily and yewplant are all plants that can be fatal if a dog were to ingest them. If you decorate your house with any of these types of plants, take care to move them to a place where your curious pup can't get at them. If they grow in your yard, keep your dog from roaming about unattended, as he may use this opportunity to start nibbling on things. Better still: if you have a dog, don't make such plants part of your landscape!

### **Pennies**

Did you know? Pennies contain a high concentration of zinc which can be poisonous to your dog if he eats them. Sure, we're all guilty of just tossing those pesky pennies around... but for Spot's sake, think about making some change for the better! Get yourself a big can or jug and start coin collecting. Once you do it you'll be on a (penny) roll... and your dog's life will be all the richer for it.

## Mothballs

Mothballs contain a substance called *naphthalene* or *paradichlorobenzene*, which sounds scary because it is! It kills moths and it will kill your dog. Even if your dog ate just one or two of these, he'd be as good as done. So, if you must use mothballs, take care to store the opened container well out of his reach, as well as keep the mothball-treated clothing packed safely away in the attic or other enclosed storage area. A better moth solution: cedar wood blocks, which protect your clothes because the natural scent deters the little sweater-eating critters.

## Batteries

If you're like me, you probably still haven't figured out what to do with those old dead batteries. Well, for starters, keep them away from Fido! Batteries, even used ones, are harmful to your dog because of their extreme alkaline or acidic content. In fact, they're so dangerous that we aren't even supposed to bury them with the rest of the garbage in the landfills. Knowing this should be a good enough reason to keep your puppy from chewing on them!

Other household items that can poison your dog: automatic dishwasher detergents, potpourri, homemade Play-Doh, fabric softener sheets, coffee grounds, cigarettes, and alcoholic beverages. Goodness, would you have ever thought that so many 'seemingly harmless' things could put your dog's safety at risk? That's why it's so important to keep your dog's surroundings clean and clutter-free!

For your own convenience as well as your dog's safety, write down the phone number of your vet and display it someplace where it's clearly visible to everyone in the household, such as near the telephone or on the refrigerator. If your dog ever gets into a sticky situation, you or whomever is caring for your pet will be able to make that call in a hurry.

## Safe Trip: Traveling With Your Dog

Isn't riding in the car with your dog just the best? He's always an excited passenger, up for adventure on the open road. He's always getting people in other cars to smile at the two of you, because he smiles at them first. And he'll never criticize your driving... he's just happy to be along for the ride!

Whether you're taking your dog for a quick trip down the road to grandma's, or gearing him up for a weekend escapade, there are always things you can do to ensure a safe trip.

**1. Bring along food and water.** You may think you'll only be gone for a few hours, but you never know where you'll end up, whether intentionally or by accident-- so it's always a wise idea to grab a few bottles of water, his bowl, and some doggy snacks.

**2. Never leave him loose in the back of your pickup truck.** You've probably seen tons of folks cruising along in their pickups with their dogs loose in back... but just because they do it, doesn't make it right. What if you hit a bump and sent poor Rover flying into traffic?

**3. If you do tie him into your truck, keep him on a short leash.** You may think it's kinder to leave Rosco some room to move about, but what happens if you're in an accident and he goes flying

over the side and ends up getting hanged by his own leash? That would be a horror to end all horrors... so make sure he's tied in tight!

**4. Get him a doggy seatbelt for the car.** You wear one... why shouldn't your dog? Remember, your pal is on four spindly legs and has no real way of bracing himself in a collision. If heaven forbid you're ever in an accident, a dog seatbelt can save your dog's life. To find out more, visit <http://www.sitstay.com> for dog safety harnesses that will help him ride in comfort and style.

**5. Give your pup a potty break!** You know what a strain long car trips can put on your bladder. If you plan to stop at the HoJo's for a refreshment/bathroom break, don't forget that Charlie could probably use one, too. Make stops every two hours and give him a few moments to stretch, move about and relieve himself before resuming your journey.

**6. NEVER leave him unattended in the car, even with the window cracked.** Consider this: your car is an oven on wheels. You know how quickly the temperature can escalate in there... even on a sunny day in winter. Remember that while you don't care much for the heat, your dog is even less equipped to handle it. So be kind to your canine companion and never shut him in a hot car all by himself.

A final word about safe travel with your dog. Being safe means obeying laws and rules that will keep you and your pooch out of trouble. Be sure to walk him in a properly designated area and to clean up after him when he's finished doing his business. If you need lodging for the night, look into places that accept pets either in the room with you, or in a special pet kennel on the premises. When you always obey the rules... you'll keep both you and Rover out of the dog house!

## **Micro-Chip Identification: Ensuring a Safe Return**

Although most dog owners don't like to think about it, there is always the possibility that your dear four-legged friend could end up lost or stolen one day. You might be the most conscientious parent-of-a-pooch in the world... taking him along wherever you go, always keeping him on the leash, never leaving him alone in the car or tied outside. Even still, the potential exists for your dog to go missing.

A natural disaster or personal crisis can occur at any time and part you and your dog unexpectedly. Fires, earthquakes, floods, burglaries and accidents are all an unpleasant fact of life. In such alarming situations, people often become confused and disoriented. A pet can easily be forgotten, may run away in fear, and soon become lost.

As safe as we try to make it, our world is never completely free of peril. Because of this, you should never take for granted that your dog will always be by your side.

Here are some statistics about missing dogs, from the American Humane Association:

**Only about 17% of lost dogs ever make it home to see their original owners again.**

**Almost 20 million pets are euthanized every year because their owners can't be found.**

Such disheartening news demands action for change... from both animal advocates and dog owners alike. But what can you do to keep your dog from becoming a statistic, other than watching him like a hawk at all times?

**Get him at least one form of pet identification, but preferably more.**

## **Pet Identification Q&A:**

**Why should I have my dog ID'ed?** Well, for starters, your dog can't speak. So as much as he might be trying, he can't tell whomever finds him, "My name is Jo Jo and I belong to Mary Hutchison of Spotswood, New Jersey." All he can do is sit there and look pitiful! Get your dog ID'ed so that if you're ever separated, whoever finds him will be able to identify you as his owner right away.

**What types of identification can I choose from?** The oldest and most well-known form is the *dog identification tag*. You've seen that little silver bone-shaped tag so many dogs wear on their collars. Sure, it's a cute necklace... but it's also a clear way of identifying his registered name and owner. The other two types of Doggy ID are tattoos, and micro-chipping.

**Isn't a dog tag still the best form of dog identification?** No, but it's the oldest known, and therefore, the most popular. Dog tags are better than no identification at all, but think about this: what if your dog is involved in some sort of accident, motor vehicle or other? What if he ends up lost in the woods? Dog tags can be scratched off, torn off or otherwise damaged, once again making your dog impossible to locate. How heartbroken would you be if your dog was missing and someone found your dog tag... but it wasn't attached to your dog?

### **What about tattoos?**

Another form of pet identification is the *tattoo*: a series of identification numbers etched in permanent tattoo ink on the back of your dog's leg. While the tattoo is certainly better than just a dog tag, the chance always remains that the tattoo will go undetected by the animal shelter worker. How might someone not see the tattoo? Imagine this unpleasant scene.

Your dog's been missing for some time. He's lonely, starving and terrified. Along comes a rescue team to pick him up. Of course, your horrified hound has no way of knowing that these people are friends and not foes. He snarls and snaps as they lure him into the rescue van, and he's just as uncooperative when they bring him for his first examination at the shelter's vet center. With all this struggling going on, the tattoo goes unnoticed beneath a matted or mangy coat. For this reason, folks have sought a more reliable alternative. This now comes in the form of micro-chipping.

### **What exactly is micro-chipping?**

By now, you've probably heard about *micro-chipping*; the internal tracking device that works as permanent identification for your pets. Though no bigger than a grain of rice, the micro-chip has enough electronic memory to store an identification number that's been assigned to your dog. The chip is placed into a tiny capsule that's imbedded into the loose skin between your dog's shoulder blades. Meanwhile, the number that was assigned to your dog gets entered into an international database where information about your dog's name, owner and location is kept. The micro-chip can't be lost or stolen, and remains intact for your dog's entire lifetime.

**Won't it hurt my dog to have a micro-chip implanted in him?** The implantation process is so quick and painless that your dog will probably not even know it happened. Your vet will use a syringe to inject the tiny information capsule just beneath the surface of his skin, in the area between his shoulder blades. It will be similar to getting a vaccine, but with far less soreness at the point of injection.

**That's disgusting! Won't my dog's body reject a micro-chip?** Micro-chips cause no harm to a dog's body. They don't give off weird radiation or anything else that might be of concern. Micro-chips remain "inactive" for the majority of their existence under his skin, except for the rare occasion when the micro-chip scanner is passed over your dog's back for a brief moment. A micro-chip will not "migrate" to another part of your dog's body thanks to its patented sheath that's used to promote bonding with your dog's skin tissue.

**What if the animal shelter that finds my dog doesn't use micro-chip scanning technology?** Before you get your dog micro-chipped, ask your local animal shelters and veterinarian if they use micro-chip readers to identify found pets. If not, encourage them to look into this growing technology that's already widely used in Canada and the UK. The three major micro-chip suppliers offer vets and animal shelters micro-chip readers for free, or for an extremely low fee. With your support, we can encourage animal welfare centers to promote this highly effective form of pet identification. The more widespread its use, the more likely that micro-chipping will aid in the return of a lost pet to its original owner.

**Is micro-chipping expensive?** Not at all. Micro-chipping costs between \$25 and \$40. That's a one-time fee that will provide identification security for the lifetime of your pet. You may even be offered a reduced rate if you're bringing Fido to the vet's for his yearly checkup and/or boosters. Additional charges include a fee for entering your information into the international database, which is no more than \$20, and a small fee for updating your contact information in the event of a move.

No one wants to think about their pet being lost or stolen, but it happens every day. Your best defense? Increase the likelihood that your dog will be found, by arming him with at least one form of identification. Of course, if you feel that one form is not enough, by all means have him tagged, tattooed and micro-chipped. The more ways he can be identified, the easier it will be to return him to you in the event you're separated. And if he's returned to you, you'll be able to ensure that your pup will never go missing again!

## **Health and Hygiene**

You've raised your dog from a pup. You feed him, take care of him and give him love every single day. When you're not with him, you miss him like heck. That kind of makes him your baby, doesn't it! (That, and the fact that he looks just like you... just kidding!)

Just like a real baby or child, your dog deserves the best medical care and preventive treatment that money can buy. He requires vaccinations to remain disease-free, dental care to keep his teeth healthy, and cures for whatever else ails him. You want him around, growing old with you and/or your children, don't you? Of course you do. That's why it's so important to find a good veterinarian who will be there to support you throughout your pet's life- with expert medical care and sound advice to offer in matters of your dog's health.

## **Vet Care: What to Look For**

Lots of folks are picky about their vet, and for good reason. You don't want some insensitive clod messing around with your precious pooch, especially if he or she is in a fragile state due to illness or injury. It goes without saying that your vet should be a certified expert in the field of animal medicine. But it's also just as important to find a veterinarian who truly loves animals, and who will be sensitive to the needs of both you and your dog. If you feel unsure about your vet for any reason, it's worth investigating your options to find a new vet who you really like!

### **What should you look for when choosing a vet?**

**1. Someone who is understanding, yet impartial.** There will be times in your pet's life where you'll have to make tough and costly decisions on his behalf. Your vet should be an understanding pillar of strength and support; someone who can empathise during such trying times, without pushing you into anything you're not ready for or comfortable with.

**2. A vet who practices preventive medicine.** The best veterinarians practice and encourage preventive medicine... routine checkups, treatments and follow-ups that can nip a small health problem in the bud before it becomes a big (and expensive) one down the road.

**3. Someone who can put your dog at ease.** A really good vet will have a calm, soothing demeanor, and a way with animals that is truly magical to see! Gentle hands, a comforting tone of voice... all of these things will help your pet feel calm and secure in your vet's care. Oh yes: and of course, your vet should have a way with humans, too.

**4. An office full of employees who truly love animals.** It's wonderful to bring your dog in for a vet checkup and be greeted with big smiles, belly rubs and a good scratch behind the ears (for your dog- not you, silly)! With repeated visits, your dog will grow to love the friendly folks at the vet's office, and the experience will become pleasant rather than stressful.

**5. Someone who will listen.** As with any doctor, your vet should approach the matter of your dog's health with open ears and an open mind. Each situation is unique, and new practices and procedures evolve every day. Maybe you've read about a treatment that your vet has yet to mention? You should feel comfortable approaching your doggie's doctor with ideas, questions and concerns.

### **Vaccinations: Doing Shots**

Shots. All those trips to the vet's office. All those vaccination bills. That mournful expression in Max's eyes every time he feels that "little prick". You may begin to wonder, "Is all of this really necessary?" The answer is: yes! and no.

Vaccinations do play an important part in the preventive healthcare of your pet. There are nasty doggie diseases out there, and for some of these, vaccination is your pooch's only real protection, as there may be no cure once the disease is contracted. After initial vaccination, many types require a schedule of follow-up shots, or boosters, to maintain a safe level of immunity.

Here are a few of the most common distressing, even fatal illnesses you can prevent with some timely injections:

**Canine parvovirus:** This is a viral disease which is highly contagious and can cause severe diarrhea and vomiting. Puppies are especially at risk, and if contracted, parvovirus can kill a pup in just two to three days after the onset of symptoms.

**Rabies:** This disease is NO JOKE! It is caused by a virus that attacks the brain, and it is always FATAL. That means, once symptoms are displayed, there's no cure, so that ounce of prevention is all you've got! It is spread to animals and humans by bites from infected animals. Vaccination against rabies is required for dogs by law.

**Canine distemper:** Along with parvovirus, canine distemper is the leading killer of puppies. It is a highly contagious viral disease spread through direct or indirect contact with nose and eye discharge of infected dogs. Symptoms resemble a bad cold progressing to vomiting and diarrhea, and muscle twitching and seizures.

**Lyme Disease:** Also called Borreliosis, this bacterial infection is primarily spread by carrier tick bites. A dog with Lyme disease will display symptoms like fever, lethargy, depression, muscle stiffness and lack of appetite. The infection can lead to lameness due to severe muscle and/or joint pain.

**Canine Adenovirus Type 2, Parainfluenza, and Bordetella:** This "complex" of viral and bacterial infections is responsible for "kennel cough" in dogs. Symptoms include a dry, hacking cough and runny nose and eyes.

So, it's pretty clear, given what's out there, that vaccinations to prevent certain illnesses are a good thing. The issue becomes cloudy, however, when discussing protocol.

## Vaccination Success

Over the last 20 years vaccinations have generally been started in puppies at about 6-8 weeks of age, when the natural immunity inherited from the mother may start wearing off. A series of shots will then be given every three to four weeks, and boosters are administered every year after that.

On one hand, in the last 20 years few could deny that vaccinations as they are administered now have been quite effective. I mean, when was the last time anyone's seen Old Yeller limping down the street, foaming at the mouth, requiring the talents of the local sharp-shooter, Atticus Finch, to protect the panicking townspeople? I'm mixing my movie metaphors, but the point is these films with rabid dog scenes are set in decades past, and since then, rabies, and other diseases like parvovirus and distemper, have been successfully prevented in vaccinated American pets.

## Vaccination Concerns Leading to New Trends

In recent years, the current trends in canine immunization and boosters have come under much scrutiny. With new vaccines becoming available with increasing frequency, and with more and more vaccines being given in combination within a single injection, many pet owners and veterinary professionals are becoming concerned over the possibility of over-vaccination, particularly with regard to annual boosters, a problem with potential negative outcomes of its own.

To address this issue, the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA), in 2003 issued recommendations using available scientific evidence, as well as the clinical experience and expert opinions of a wide variety of animal health professionals. While not a protocol to be followed exclusively, these recommendations offer guidelines for veterinarians setting up individualized vaccination schedules for pets on a case-by-case basis.

### **New AAHA Recommendations**

Basically, the AAHA recommends that vets follow **all previous recommendations for puppy vaccinations**, but to **place vaccines for adult dog boosters into two categories: core (recommended) and noncore (optional)**.

**Core vaccines** would be administered **every three years**. (There is some evidence that suggests core diseases could be covered for 5 years or more with these vaccines, so three years was given as a compromise, a “better safe than sorry” approach). They cover the most severe and common illnesses.

1. Rabies
2. Canine parvovirus
3. Canine parainfluenza virus (in combination with other kennel cough- causing viruses)
4. Distemper

**Noncore vaccines** cover diseases which are not as common or severe, and may have at one time been given to most dogs, perhaps unnecessarily. The new guidelines suggest that noncore vaccines should be given on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration factors like the age and health of the dog, or his likely exposure to the infectious agent. For instance, you may not have to give a vaccine or boosters for Lyme Disease if your pet stays in your apartment and ventures out only for walks on concrete city sidewalks. Or, if ol’ Max is of advanced age, the risks of some vaccinations may outweigh the benefits. Under these recommendations dogs would receive appropriate noncore boosters annually.

**Finally, the AAHA listed three vaccines that it feels should not be administered at all.**

1. Giardia- the vaccine for this disease does not prevent infection
2. Canine adenovirus type 1 (hepatitis)- the vaccine for this disease can cause visual impairment in dogs, and type 1 of this disease is covered with the type 2 vaccine, which is usually given in combination with the vaccine for parainfluenza.
3. Corona virus- according to the AAHA, corona virus does not commonly occur, and when seen is self-limiting.

Since these recommendations are not intended to be “set in stone”, and since canine vaccination is obviously a nuanced issue (read: confusing and complex!), **it is wise to discuss with your vet the rationale behind your dog’s vaccination schedule and follow his or her recommendations** based on your dog, his health, and his environment.

### **Doggy Dental Health**

Your pooch was blessed with jaws of steel and a glorious set of sharp, gleaming choppers. These are a gift from his canine ancestors who used them to gnash up the bones and sinew of animals they hunted

for their meals. Today's dogs don't have to work their jaws quite so hard... but they can still be seen sporting that great, big toothy grin!

Do your pal a favor that will last a lifetime: invest in a good dental plan for the long term. Recent studies have shown that diseased gums lead to other, more complicated health problems due to bacteria build-up in the mouth that eventually makes its way to the organs, where it wreaks real and irreversible havoc. Don't let your dog's teeth be a clear and present danger to the rest of him! Get Fido into that dentist's chair for his yearly or bi-annual checkup and cleaning.

## Dental Q&A

Everything you ever wanted to know about Mugsley's mouthful o' molars.

### 1. How many teeth does my dog have?

If your dog is still a young pup, he'll have 28 baby teeth, which will eventually begin to fall out at around 13 weeks and be replaced by a full set of adult teeth. The adult dog's tooth count is 42 all together; 20 on top and 22 in the lower jaw. (You can attempt to take inventory of your dog's teeth, but we don't recommend it!)

### 2. What's the best way to keep his teeth from falling out?

Start with a good dental hygiene program at home, from the time that he's just a young dog with a full set of shiny, new teeth. Feed him dry food that he can crunch and munch, to help break up plaque that forms into tartar that can't be removed. Get him used to a daily tooth-brushing (we'll talk more in-depth about this in a moment). Give him a few crunchy treats every day such as **Breath-A-Licious** or **Greenies Treats** for dogs which help to eliminate plaque buildup leading to periodontal disease. Speak to your vet about when a good time is to start scheduling regular dental checkups.

### 3. What's the difference between tartar and plaque?

Good question; I'm glad you asked! *Plaque* is that oogy stuff that builds up on teeth after a full day of eating, drinking and breathing - and in your dog's case, tasting things that do not belong in the mouth! Plaque is actually a combination of saliva, food particles, bacteria and epithelial cells.

*Tartar* is something to eat with fish and chips. (No it's not- I just wanted to see if you were paying attention!) Tartar results after plaque is left to accumulate on the teeth. After just two days without brushing or other means of removal, the plaque along the gumline hardens into mineral deposits, or calculus- which is better known as tartar. We all know the infamous catch-phrase, "*tartar build-up.*" It's that thing that all the toothpaste companies are busy fighting tooth and nail, and for good reason. Tartar rots your gums away and makes your teeth fall out! And guess what, it does the same thing to your dog's teeth, too.

### 4. So what if my pooch has a little something growing on his teeth?

If you love your dog and want him around for many more years, you should make it your business to provide him with good dental care. Believe the hype: plaque and tartar are the evil duo that will destroy his teeth and gums. Not only will this give him some serious doggy breath, but if left

untreated for years, periodontal disease will erode his gumline and cause dangerous bacteria to seep into his system and potentially damage his organs. So, get thee to a dentist with thy dog!

### **5. If my dog is diagnosed with periodontal disease, is it... too late?**

Periodontal disease gets worse over time. The longer you put off treating it, the more grave of a state your dog's mouth will be in. Sure, you can wait until Clyde is an old and weary mutt with about four teeth left in his head, before getting him a good dental plan. But what good is a dental plan without any teeth?

Your vet can't reverse the damage caused by periodontal disease... but he CAN halt its progression. The sooner the better, if you want to save yourself a lot of money on doggy dental work. *Start taking care of those choppers today.*

### **6. Do dogs get cavities?**

Unless you share your Halloween candy with Cocoa, he'll probably never have cavities. But if he does happen to develop the rare but not impossible canine cary (fancy word for cavity), your dentist will drill and fill in much the same way that he takes care of the cavities in your mouth.

### **7. How can I tell if my dog has a toothache or other dental problem?**

Excess drooling, pawing at the mouth, difficulty chewing his food (which can result in vomiting), and chattering teeth; these are all signs to get your pal to a periodontist immediately. Another obvious but frequently ignored sign is if your dog has a chronic case of halitosis. While your dog's breath may not always smell like roses, his panting shouldn't wilt your geraniums. Bad breath is a sign of bacteria growth in the mouth, and that's a reason to see a qualified dental expert.

### **8. Do I need to find a special doggy dentist in addition to my vet?**

Luckily, veterinarians are fully qualified to perform dental work on pets. So if you currently use a vet who you're really happy with, rest assured he'll be knowledgeable in the field of dog dentistry and able to perform all the necessary procedures to keep your dog's teeth healthy and his mouth disease-free. Please see the section entitled: **Your Dog and the Dentist: Learn the Drill** for more information.

### **9. How can I reduce the number of dentist visits and procedures over the course of my dog's life?**

Start brushing her teeth while she's still young and they're in good condition. If your dog's teeth are not so new and you still haven't implemented a dental hygiene plan, that's okay. There's still time to make a change for the better! First things first: have her pearly whites (or faded yellows) professionally cleaned and polished. Then spend a few dollars on a doggy dental care kit, and introduce Bella to her new best friend: the toothbrush!

## **Teeth Cleaning 101**

Your dog's dental health is so important for his total well-being... and for guaranteeing him a long and happy life. So don't give him the brush-off! Make tooth cleaning a daily ritual that your dog will look forward to as something the two of you do together.

To start, you'll have to get your doggy used to you fumbling around in his mouth. Ease him into it with a total-body pat-down; a chassis inspection that ideally should be performed on him each day. Have him sit while you examine his body to make sure everything is in working order and there aren't any weird objects or critters lodged in unexpected places. Run your hands over his back and sides. Lift each paw and check the pads of his feet and between his toes. Gently lift his ears and peek inside. (If you see something peeking back at you, run away quickly!)

When you get to his mouth, approach with caution. Gently pull his lips back for a view of that magnificent gumline. Your dog's teeth should be cushioned snugly by a set of pink gums. A healthy gumline is naturally bumpy... so if your dog's gums appear straight rather than wavy, inflamed and/or cover most of the tooth surface, that's a sign of trouble ahead. When WAS the last time you were in for a checkup?

If your dog is getting, well, long in the tooth, it's probably a good idea to take him for a dental workup at the vet's office before you officially start your daily dental hygiene routine at home. Either way, discuss dental hygiene with your vet before beginning a daily toothcare regimen.

Okay: it's time to introduce your pal to "tooth brushing a la human." You can purchase a dog toothbrush at your local Petsmart or other pet store. Try the traditional people-style brush with a handle, or if you're sure you won't lose a hand in his mouth, go for the rubber finger cap toothbrush that fits right over the tip of your index finger. Buy special dog toothpaste which comes in delightful flavors that appeal to dogs, like beef and chicken and the ever-popular cat flavor (joke). You can also brush his teeth with a salt water solution. Whatever you do... do NOT brush your dog's teeth with people toothpaste. He can't be taught to spit like a human, and people toothpaste is most definitely harmful if swallowed.

Offer your dog a little taste of the special dog toothpaste to get him used to it. Let him take a few licks and nibbles of the toothbrush. When he's finished sampling the goods, nudge the brush into his mouth. Brush in circular motions along and under the gum line, paying extra attention to the upper molars in back. This is where plaque accumulates the most rapidly. Go from back to front, and be patient! This is a new and strange sensation for your dog, and he may even try to play a little tug of war with the toothbrush since you're at the other end of it. Don't expect a miracle the first time you try to brush your dog's teeth. Next time should be a bit easier, and the time after that even moreso.

Train your dog to associate tooth-brushing with fun times. Talk to him and make it fun! When he's all finished and showing off those freshly buffed fangs of his, give him a crunchy treat that also does double-duty as a plaque controller. Take him out for his daily walk. Tell him what a good boy he is! In time, he'll grow to accept toothbrushing as just another pleasant ritual in his doggy day.

## **Your Dog and the Dentist: Learn the Drill**

As we discussed earlier, a licensed veterinarian is fully qualified to perform dental work on your dog. If you think it's time to bring Fifi in to get those choppers checked, here are some things you should know before you go.

While "late is better than never," sooner is better than later, at least when it comes to your dog's dental health. Dental disease gets worse over time, and the longer you wait, the more damage that will have to be taken care of and the more expensive your vet bill will be.

Your dog probably won't need much work done on his teeth when he's still young... so your vet won't do much more than open his mouth and take a look at what's going on in there. But as he ages, dental disease can set in, especially if you don't brush his teeth (which you should be). So check him periodically for signs of mouth/tooth decay, bleeding gums, or abscesses. If you see or smell anything unusual, he'll need to go in for a cleaning and polishing, or "prophy," which is vetspeak for *prophylaxis*.

Unfortunately, "spit," "rinse", and "open wide" are not part of your dog's limited vocabulary, and that spit sucker thing is likely to terrify him... so, for everyone's convenience and peace of mind, your veterinarian will anesthetize your dog before doing any complicated procedures on his teeth.

Anesthesia is not without risks; therefore, your vet will require several precautionary tests before putting your dog under. This may seem rather tedious to you; but if you want to prolong your dog's life, you really should be taking care of his teeth. This may mean a few dental cleanings in his older years which DO require anesthesia to be conducted properly and safely. The good news is, the more you practice regular brushing and plaque control in the form of crunchy bones and such, the less cleanings and dental work your dog will require... so hopefully you can keep those vet bills down.

**Expect the vet to perform the following precautionary tests to determine if anesthesia is a safe option.**

- Basic blood tests including red and white blood cell count
- Kidney and liver evaluation
- Possibly a heart function test, if your vet detects a heart murmur
- Possibly a urinalysis if there is reason to suspect kidney disease

The above testing will require one or possibly more trips to the vet, as well as several days of waiting time before the lab results come back. Just like your family doctor, your dog's vet wants to give you as thorough an evaluation as possible so he can determine the correct diagnosis and proper and complete treatment for your dog's teeth and for his health in general.

Assuming your dog passes his health exam and lab testing with flying colors, your next scheduled appointment will be for the cleaning and dental work itself. Time to tackle that tartar!

**The dental procedure may involve some if not all of the following:**

- Anesthetic administration
- X-rays
- General examination
- Tooth extractions
- Tartar removal
- Polishing

The procedure may be as brief as 20 minutes, if your dog has mostly healthy teeth, but may take an hour or longer for more extensive work in the case of diseased teeth and other problems. If your vet

detects slow recovery from the anesthesia, he may require an overnight stay. Your vet should keep you informed every step of the way during your dog's dental procedure, and alert you to any unexpected outcomes.

You generally won't be expected to provide any special care after you take your pet home from his dental appointment, unless of course your dog has had major surgery and/or tooth extractions. In such a case, he may require the feeding of softer food or administering of antibiotics for a little while. Your dog's vet will inform you of what if any additional care if any is needed, and whether or not your pup will require a follow-up exam.

As mentioned earlier in this section: start taking care of your dog's teeth now, and you won't have to worry about costly extensive dental treatments down the road. A brief recap of how you can help:

- Get into the habit of regularly brushing your dog's teeth while they're still in good condition.
  
- Feed him hard, crunchy food and special snacks that will aid in plaque removal.
  
- Examine his mouth regularly for signs of tooth problems or dental disease- redness, swelling, abnormal gumline, difficulty chewing.
  
- Take your pup in for regular dental checkups and cleanings; typically, once a year if he's young, and bi-annually if he's a senior dog.
  
- Make sure that any dental problems are treated promptly by a certified veterinarian.

In short: take care of your dog's teeth, and ensure him a long and healthy life!

## **Parasites**

*Itch, itch. Scratch, scratch, scratch.* Does that sound familiar? Hopefully not, but if it does you might be one of the millions of people whose dog has fleas, mites or other miniscule cretins leeching upon him.

Your dog is soft, huggable and lovable... except for one little problem. His tendency to attract filthy little beasts who make their home in his fur and feed off his blood! Fleas, ticks, lice, mites... and of course, intestinal parasites. These are the things that will plague your pooch throughout his lifetime. They're disgusting, and you don't want them anywhere near you or your belongings. Am I right? So, what to do when Rocky comes home another bad case of cooties? Well for starters, keep him out of your livingroom and far away from that down comforter! Fleas and other pests are all too happy to drop in unexpectedly, and think nothing of making themselves at home in *your* home, for an indefinite amount of time. How rude!

Your helpless hound is counting on you to be the Provider and Protector... and that means warding off creepy little invaders that cause him itching and suffering. See those sad eyes of his? He's thinking of the last time a calvalcade of critters launched an attack on him. Not only do fleas and ticks make him wildly unpopular with the female dogs of the neighborhood, but if left untreated, they can also lead to

uncomfortable skin conditions and the spread of disease. Help a poor dog out, and do your best to keep fleas, ticks, worms and other parasites away. You want a Mighty Dog... not a Mitey Dog!

## **Classification of Dog Parasites**

There are five major classifications of parasites that will pester your dog incessantly if you don't take the proper precautions against them. These are: **fleas, ticks, lice, mites, and worms.**

### **Fleas**

These tiny insects use their long, powerful legs to catapult onto your dog's body, where they burrow into his fur, live off his blood, and raise families of thousands. Many dogs develop a sensitivity to flea saliva, which the flea injects into your dog's skin as a way to prevent his blood from coagulating and thereby ensure a plentiful meal. If this is the case with your pup, you'll see him scratch, scratch, scratching away.

Whether or not your dog has an allergy to fleas, they're without a doubt an annoying pest that's tough to eradicate. Once your dog has contracted fleas, they will quickly spread to any area where he is a frequent visitor- his bedding, his doghouse, your carpet and furniture, and possibly your clothing and bedding as well. No one wants to spray or bomb their home with harmful pesticides, but if you don't take preventive measures against fleas on your dog, that's pretty much your only option to be rid of them. So do yourself a favor and get a flea repellent for that pup of yours!

### **Fleas and Disease**

The most common complication of fleas on your dog is tapeworms in his stool. Yes, it is foul, but as it is with parasites, one often hosts the other, and many a flea has been host to a tapeworm who then made his way into your dog's intestinal tract. Just another great reason to keep those fleas off your dog. The other reason is anemia. Animals that thrive on your dog's blood literally suck the life out of him... so if fleas have been preying upon your pooch, he may show signs of anemia, such as extreme fatigue. Get him to the vet for a thorough examination and inquire about what vitamins and supplements you can give to restore your dog back to a healthy, energetic state.

### **How to Tell if Your Dog Has Fleas**

The most obvious sign of fleas on your dog is constant scratching and irritation of the skin. You may notice pink welts on his belly that eventually crust over; these are flea bites. Another way to check him for fleas is to have him stand on a few pieces of white paper while you comb through his fur. If you see little black flecks on the paper that look a lot like ground pepper, you've got yourself a flea situation. The little flecks are "flea dirt," and when you moisten them with water they'll turn dark red because they contain blood... the blood of your poor dog that those nasty fleas have been feasting on!

### **Flea Prevention**

Ask your vet what methods he recommends to repel fleas. In the old days, most everyone put a flea collar and/or used flea powder on their dog. Some had their dogs "dipped" in a flea repellent bath.

Today there are more sophisticated options in addition to the traditional methods... some of which are all-natural and environmentally friendly, and others which are chemical-based and afford extended protection with minimal application.

**IGRs** (insect growth regulators) kill flea eggs and flea larvae, and are available in both collar and spray form as well as oral medication. **Sentinel®** is one product that does double duty as both a flea repellent and heartworm protection, and only requires one application per month.

**Adulticides** kill the actual flea and can be purchased as both spot-on and oral products. **Frontline®** is one brand that is applied to your dog's shoulder blade area, where it is absorbed and distributed throughout his system. When fleas come in contact with his skin that's been treated with **Frontline®** or a similar insecticide, they die instantly.

### **Flea Control in Your Home**

Hopefully, you'll take the proper precautions to keep fleas at bay, so you'll never know the unpleasantness of a flea-ridden home. But if you do happen to find fleas, you'll need to act quickly to avoid infestation. First and foremost, give your vet a call and ask him the best method of de-flea-ing your dog and your home. Treat your carpets, furniture, dog bed, and areas outside your home where your dog is frequently found, with an approved flea treatment. Thoroughly vacuum every inch of carpet, and your mattresses if you think there may be a problem there as well. And don't forget to apply flea repellent to the inside of your vacuum! Although it does a great job of sucking up those creepy little creatures, your warm and cozy vacuum serves as the perfect flea-breeding incubator, which can mean reinfestation later.

### **Ticks**

Once thought of as a mere harmless but annoying pest, ticks are of growing concern for their Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Lyme Disease-carrying ability. There are two types of ticks: dog ticks and deer ticks, neither of which discriminate when choosing between a dog or a deer for a host. Dog ticks are larger than deer ticks and are generally not known to harbor bacteria; even so, both types of ticks should be avoided. Tick infestation causes anemia which must be treated with iron and other vitamin supplements. If anemia is a concern, consult with your veterinarian about possible remedies.

Ticks are a despicable lot of parasitic bloodsuckers. They bide their time in wooded areas, stay close to ground level and wait for an unsuspecting mammal to shuffle on by so they can descend upon him and sink those nasty little teeth in for a long meal of blood, blood and more blood. Once a tick has embedded itself into your dog, it will hang on indefinitely, taking in copious amounts of blood until it is bloated and gorged. If you find a corn kernel-like object hanging from your dog's ear or elsewhere on his body that turns out to have legs, it's probably a tick that's been feasting for hours. Remove it immediately (see *Tick Removal* below), check your dog thoroughly for more ticks, and then call your veterinarian for further direction and advice.

### **Check Your Dog Regularly for Ticks**

If you live in or near a wooded area, perform a routine tick check on your dog. As a good dog owner who's been looking out for your dog's best interests and ensuring him a happy life, you should already be familiar with the "chassis inspection." If not, now is as good a time as any to get familiar with it. Have your dog sit down in front of you and run your hands all over his body. Check his ears and the

undersides of his paws. Don't forget those out of sight areas like his belly and the place where his leg bends into his body. He won't like these intrusions at first, but if you're gentle and speak to him softly in that special voice reserved only for him, your dog will eventually grow to tolerate the tick inspection and may even enjoy it.

## Tick Removal

If the tick is well-embedded into your dog's flesh, use a tweezer to grip it firmly, as close to the skin as possible. You want to remove the entire tick without leaving the embedded head behind (I know-disgusting, but necessary). If you take some skin along with the tick, that's okay- it's more important to get the head out than than fret over a little lost skin. If you find that the head has remained imbedded and you can't remove it, keep a close eye on the area. Your dog's immune system will likely create a small site of infection around the head as a way to dislodge it. That's perfectly normal; it's just his body doing its thing to ward off disease.

Once the tick is out, save it in a jar and send it off to school with your little ones for show and tell. Just kidding about the show and tell.... but you really should hold the tick captive in a jar if you can. You'll have it as a specimen to show your vet "just in case" your dog starts exhibiting signs of Lyme disease.

## Complications of a Tick Bite

The best way to ensure your dog a long and happy life is to keep him free of disease. Ticks pose the threat of disease - not just mild illness, but serious, debilitating diseases such as Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (prevalent in the western United States), Lyme Disease (prevalent in the Northeastern US), and other less commonly known bacteria-bourne illnesses that can lead to serious complications including paralysis and death.

True Story: A friend of mine took his dogs for a 4-mile jog through a wooded rural area. The dogs of course loved every minute of it... but within hours of having ventured out, one dog, a black lab mix named Greta, was "walking funny" and favoring a leg. In a day or two, Greta, usually spry and spunky, had become weak and listless... refusing her food and barely able to even make it outside to do her business. The owner brought her in to the vet; and sure enough, Greta tested positive for Lyme Disease. Thankfully, she was given antibiotic to treat the illness, and within a few weeks she was her old, energetic self again.

The moral of this story: like Greta's owner, you can choose not practice tick prevention, thereby engaging your dog in a little "Russian Roulette" each time a tick bites... or you can do the smart thing, which is keep him tick-free and consequently, disease-free.

## Tick Control

Many of the same products that afford protection against fleas also repel ticks, particularly the "spot on" applications such as **Frontline®**, mentioned earlier, that can be applied to the skin between your dog's shoulder blades once a month for maximum protection. Ticks can also be controlled with the traditional flea prevention methods such as dipping, bathing, spraying and powdering.

Talk to your vet about which tick repellent is right for you, as he has access to your dog's medical history and can offer advice based on prior health records.

## Lice and Mites

Lice and mites are two pests that, although not life-threatening to your dog, are just as disgusting as any other parasite, cause him great discomfort, and are therefore deserving of their own brief section in this book.

*Lice* are tiny parasites that live in your dog's skin and suck his blood. These are not the same kind of lice that the school nurse checks human children for, but they're plenty itchy and your dog deserves to be rid of them.

*Mites* are tiny, crab-like parasites that live in and around your dog's ears and feed on tissue fluids and debris. They're highly contagious, spreading easily from one dog to the next, until every dog in the house is giving you an earful about his "earritating" condition!

### **Signs of Lice**

Check your dog for lice every so often by running your fingers through his coat. If you see little translucent, whitish clumps that cling to his fur, he probably has lice. These sticky bits are lice eggs, or "*nits*"... soon to hatch more grotesque little bloodsucking beasts and make your poor dog scratch like mad.

### **Signs of Ear Mites:**

- Irritation and scratching
- Increased earwax
- Thick, black crusty ear discharge

Test for ear mites by running a cotton swab along the outside of your dog's ears. Hold the cotton swab up to the light and look at it closely. If you see what looks like dust particles moving around, it's probably ear mites.

### **Treatment for Lice or Mites**

You can buy an over-the-counter lice treatment or ear mite wash at any pet store, but you'll want to check with your vet first to see what he recommends. Whatever you do, don't let those mangy pests get out of control!

## **Worms**

Of all the parasites a dog can catch, worms take home first prize for Most Disgusting. Nobody wants to imagine little worms crawling around in their dog's digestive system, but it's a fairly common ailment that's easily passed from dog to dog. So if he does happen to contract them, tell your furry fella not to feel ashamed of his worms! They're easily prevented and controlled with medication that your vet routinely prescribes to hundreds of pooches just like him.

*Roundworms* are the most common type of worm, especially in unvaccinated puppies who may just be getting into that exploratory stage, which of course involves exploring other dogs' feces. Regardless of your dog's age, you'll know he's contracted roundworms if his stools look like spaghetti. Other signs include vomiting and diarrhea. If your dog displays any of these symptoms, bring him in to the vet's office for a worm diagnosis and treatment. In the future, roundworms can be avoided with a worm preventative that your vet will recommend.

*Hookworms* find their way to your dog's digestive tract through the pads of his feet and the skin of his belly. He can easily pick them up by way of infected soil. Once infected with hookworms, your dog will pass dark or bloody stools, an indication that the hookworms are sucking blood from his intestinal tract. If left untreated, hookworms cause anemia in your poor pooch, so bring him into the vet ASAP for a deworming and preventative against future hookworm episodes.

*Tapeworms* are passed through fecalmatter and flea larvae, and easily spread from dogs to humans through direct contact. They're easily visible in your dog's waste, so while it may seem a vile practice, take an extra long look at your dog's poop every now and then to check for tapeworms. While they are harmless to your dog, tapeworms are hazardous to humans. If your dog has them, they should be treated promptly.

*Heartworms* can KILL your dog! They're transmitted through mosquitoes and are lethal if left untreated. These parasites make their way to your dog's heart, where they live and grow until heart functions are totally blocked, leading to heart failure and death. Symptoms of heartworms in your dog are coughing, labored breathing, weight loss and fainting. If you suspect heartworm, prevent your dog from exercising and get him to a vet immediately. Your dog's doctor will determine what stage the disease has progressed to, and recommend treatment accordingly. If caught early, your dog may only require medicine injections and aspirin. If the disease is in advanced stages, he may require treatment for heart failure. It's wise to protect your dog against heartworm with a routine vaccination, and as an added precaution, guard him against mosquitoes with an insect repellent recommended by your vet.