Looking After Your Pet
Good Advice From Your Vet
Your Pet’s Health Professional

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Lovingly looking after your pet...

Lovenmypet.ie
Your Vet - Your Pet’s Health Professional
My pet

Name
Date of birth
Sex  M  F  Cat  Dog
Tick if/when neutered or spayed
Breed
Description
Microchip number

Microchip registration label
Microchip registration confirmed?
  Yes  No
If yes which database
Company  Policy number  Renewal date

Pet insurance

Owner’s details
Name
Address
Tel. No.  Mobile
E-mail

New owner’s details/other contact
Name
Address
Tel. No.
Mobile
E-mail
My pet’s first year:
Primary vaccinations & health assessment

Record of primary vaccination

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First Year check-list

2nd Vaccination - appointment date/time: ________________________________

Food - recommended food type: __________________________________________

Neutering - advised approximate age/date: ________________________________

Neutering - appointment date/time: _____________________________________

Pet Health Insurance - recommended?: _________________________________

Worm/Flea Control - next dose due: _____________________________________

Adolescent Health Check - appointment date/time: _________________________

1st Annual Health Assessment & Vaccination - date/time: ________________

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**Record of vaccination**

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Introduction

You’ve carefully considered all that is involved in having a pet and you’ve decided to get just the right one for you and your circumstances. Fantastic - you’ll have a great time and will derive immense pleasure from this wonderful relationship. Now learn in more detail how to care for the pet you love to the best of your ability to ensure a long, happy and healthy life.

Caring for your pet properly is quite simple: all you have to do is have some common sense. Don’t spoil your pet TOO much, be considerate of your neighbours (no late night barking!), have plenty of fun and follow the **Ten Commandments of Responsible Pet Ownership** as espoused by the veterinary profession’s “pet vets” - the Veterinary Ireland Companion Animal Society.

For much more information on keeping your pet healthier and happier for longer please visit…

**www.lovemypet.ie**
The 10 Commandments of Responsible Pet Ownership

1. Annual Health Assessment and Vaccinations
2. Feed the Right Food
3. Neuter at 5-7 Months
4. Pet Health Insurance
5. Prevent Fleas and Worms
6. Train Your Pet Well
7. Microchip Identification
8. Dental Care is Vital
9. Keep Slim, Fit ‘n’ Mobile
10. Have Fun!
Annual Health Assessment and Vaccinations

Key Points

- All Puppies & Kittens should be vaccinated - the diseases we can vaccinate against can kill!
- Pets need regular booster vaccinations which can be done at the Annual Health Assessment
- The Annual Health Assessment allows us to find small problems before they turn into big, serious and expensive ones!
- No reputable boarding establishment will take your dog or cat if their vaccinations have lapsed
- Remember to ask your vet about Kennel Cough vaccination if your dog is going to kennels

Just like your car’s NCT, an **Annual Health Assessment** is essential for your pet. Pets get older more quickly than we do and although average life expectancy differs from dogs to cats and breed to breed, on average one pet year equals about seven human years! So a thorough check every year is a good idea.

Our aim is to pick up small problems - which you may not even have noticed - before they get a chance to turn into big ones. These include signs of early heart problems, arthritis, tumours or dental disease. Plenty can be done about these conditions if we pick them up early, but if left untreated any or all of these could cause pain, discomfort, infirmity and even premature death. Early diagnosis of a condition is generally the key to a successful outcome!
Another key procedure at each annual check is **vaccination** which keeps your pet safe from a range of often fatal diseases. Not so long ago, before widespread vaccination was the norm, diseases like distemper and feline leukaemia killed thousands of pets each year.

When it comes to your pet’s health and well-being, **prevention is better than cure** - so regular checkups and vaccinations make sense.

Here are some of the commonest questions about vaccination and your pet.

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**Vaccinations Q & A**

**Why do I need to vaccinate my pet?**

In the days before widespread vaccination, thousands of animals died an often slow and painful death from diseases that are easily preventable nowadays. Vaccination will protect your pet from illnesses like leptospirosis, parvovirus, distemper and hepatitis in dogs or feline panleukopaenia and the Feline Leukaemia Virus in cats. Vaccination is the biggest success of modern veterinary medicine and, because it will prevent your pet dying from many of these potentially fatal diseases, it is the cornerstone of responsible pet ownership.

Now that most pets are vaccinated thankfully we vets see fewer and fewer animals affected by these diseases, and this explains why it is so vital your pet is vaccinated, and protection kept up to date by regular ‘boosters’.

**At what age can my pet be vaccinated?**

Puppies and kittens need to receive a course of at least 2 injections to ensure they are fully protected.

Depending on the brand of vaccine used, as well as species and breed, the first injection of the full vaccination course can be given at 6-9 weeks of age followed by a second injection 2-4 weeks later. Your pet has to be at least this age before the vaccines will be effective so there is no point in giving the vaccines any earlier. We will discuss the exact timing of when we can give the vaccines with you but we like to get them done as early as possible.
Then what is needed in the years after the first vaccinations?
Because the immunity your pet gets from their first vaccinations does not last for life we need to administer regular booster vaccinations to ensure your pet continues to be fully protected. We do these at the same time as the Annual Health Assessment.

Just like humans, the older your pet is the more common it is for ailments to occur. So, older pets still need their vaccinations - indeed, the older the pet the more important they are seen every year, if not more often, for a health assessment.

Are the vaccines safe?
Yes they are. As with any drug there is always the possibility of some side effects but they are very rare. Put into context, the risk of death from not vaccinating is far, far higher than any potential risk from administering the vaccines.

What is needed for my pet to go into a kennels or cattery?
No reputable boarding kennels and catteries will admit your pet without an up to date certificate of vaccination. In addition to the core vaccines that all pets should have, dogs will also require ‘Kennel Cough’ vaccination before they can go into kennels. Kennel Cough is similar to Whooping Cough in humans and while generally not fatal it is very infectious in locations where dogs share an airspace (such as kennels and dogs shows) and can take a very long time to resolve.

If your kennels or cattery do not insist on seeing your vaccination certificate every time you take your pet there - be very wary.
It means they are potentially letting in unvaccinated pets, thus leaving your pet at a higher risk of contracting disease. They must ask to see your pet’s vaccination certificate and check that he or she has been vaccinated within the last 12 months - simply asking you if your pet is vaccinated is not good enough.
2 Feed the Right Food

Key Points

- Our nurses & vets will advise you on what’s best for your pet - that’s why we’re here, to help and advise
- In general, even a high quality dry food works out less expensive per day than tins or pouches and is better for your pets teeth
- Different life stages and breeds have different nutritional requirements
- Be very careful with the amount and type of food you give to a ‘large breed’ puppy - too much can lead to serious joint problems. Ask us
- If your pet is on the portly side, talk to us about a diet which provides all the nutrients your pet needs while helping with weight loss
- There are special therapeutic diets available for the nutritional management of pets with certain medical problems such as kidney failure, recurrent tummy problems, bladder stones etc

The phrase ‘you are what you eat’ applies just as much to your pet as it does to you.

So, it’s essential that you choose carefully when deciding what to feed your pet, particularly during the growth phase. Depending on your dog’s eventual adult size it could be anything from 10 months to 3 years, and 12 months for a cat, before it is fully grown. What your pet needs is different during weaning, growth, adulthood and with increasing age. They may also have specific needs and different medical conditions may develop which require a special diet to be fed. There are even diets available for individual breeds which take into account the most common potential health problems that these breeds are expected to encounter later in life.

A Labrador puppy will have different needs to a Yorkshire Terrier puppy, and those needs will change significantly over the years. The needs of a 10 year old cat or dog are very different from a 3 month old! And, for example, the right diet at the right time can almost double the amount of time a pet with kidney problems has to enjoy a happy life!

Don’t forget what we recommend for your pet is what we feed our own pets too! Our recommendation will be a complete, balanced diet, made with top quality ingredients and added nutrients to meet your pet’s individual needs - to make sure that your growing pet develops strong teeth and bones, muscles and a healthy immune and digestive system.
Dry or Wet Food?

As your pet’s nutritionist we recommend a high quality, tailored nutrition dry food which has many health benefits for your pet and is easy and convenient to feed. These diets are tailored to your pet’s individual needs, taking into account their age, lifestyle, size and even their breed! Just one bag of dry food can last you for many weeks and can often work out at a lower cost per day when compared with feeding a wet food.

That’s not to say there isn’t a role for tins and pouches but as vets we tend to use these foods in special situations - post-surgery convalescence for example, when pets have different needs. A tin or pouch of food is usually about 80% water which makes it an expensive way to feed your pet.

So, what’s best?

Our choice - and what we feed our own pets - is a tailored nutrition dry food made with high quality ingredients. These foods are both extremely palatable and highly digestible meaning that your pet will enjoy eating their food and the end result is less poo, of a better consistency that is so much easier to poop scoop or remove from the litter tray. Lovely, eh?!

Sounds good - but expensive?

Believe it or not, depending on what you are currently feeding your pet, you may be very pleasantly surprised! Ask us for a ‘price per day’ comparison - as it will often work out a lot cheaper to feed a high quality dry food than tins or pouches!
How much should I feed my pet and how often?

The amount will depend on the exact food, your pet’s ideal weight (you feed for the weight they should be, not necessarily the weight they are!) and will also vary depending on their individual requirements. For example a 30kg German Shepherd will require more than an 8kg terrier - but a 20kg active Border Collie may need more than a sedentary 40kg Labrador. We will be able to give you advice on your pet’s target weight and on how much of what food to feed. Please ask - we will be delighted to answer all your feeding questions.

Puppies and kittens need to be fed 3-4 times daily when very young but as they get older twice a day is fine. They don’t need milk or any other supplements - just the correct amount of the correct food, formulated for growing youngsters and free access to water. In particular you have to be very careful what you feed larger breed puppies. They need a completely different balance of nutrients compared to smaller dogs, to ensure their joints and bones don’t ‘grow too fast’ or they gain too much weight too quickly. Again please ask us for advice because it is very important that you stick to the recommended feeding guidelines as your puppy grows.

Older pets also need a different balance of nutrients to support them as they get older - they should move on to a ‘senior’ or ‘mature’ diet from as early as five years of age. And if your dog or cat is a bit too cuddly, it’s not a case of just feeding them less of their normal food - again, talk to us, because we have a range of diets which reduce the calorie content but still provide all the right, balanced nutrients.

As a bonus, they not only taste great, but their formulation helps make your pet feel full, so he or she will be content and not look for extras.

So, in summary...

What you feed your pet is your decision, but our advice is simple - just feed the best! Do the right thing, and feed your pet the best food you can. Our answer is one of the diets we recommend - and which we feed our own pets. Food’s not just about opening the can and watching it go down, it’s about long-term good health, and supporting your pet’s nutritional needs throughout his or her life.
Neuter at 5-7 Months

Key Points

- Neuter at 5-7 months of age i.e. before sexual maturity
- Dogs and cats do not ‘have to have’ a season or a litter - this is a myth
- Neutering early can prevent many medical problems and cancers
- Recovery from the surgery is generally rapid and uneventful
- Monitor their weight after the operation and ideally feed them a diet specifically for neutered pets

Having your pet neutered is an essential requirement of responsible pet ownership and is a normal procedure for your pet to undergo.

Neutering will of course prevent unwanted puppies and kittens - many thousands of unwanted animals are put to sleep every year in Ireland. It will also reduce the risk of serious illnesses and cancers and may make your pet less prone to aggression and other unfavourable characteristics. Trust us when we say it will make your life substantially easier in the long run and your pet’s life healthier, more comfortable and longer.

What does the procedure involve? Will it be painful and is it risky?

The operation involves a day in hospital and a general anaesthetic. In males the procedure involves removal of the testicles and in females, the removal of the womb and ovaries. This is done through a small incision requiring only a few stitches which are taken out 10 days later (male cats don’t need stitches at all). Sometimes ‘under the skin’ sutures can be used, so there are no skin stitches visible. These sutures do not need to be removed - they simply dissolve. Of course we use pain relief to keep your pet comfortable and pain free during and after the surgery. Very occasionally a pet will require some extra pain relief once the initial pain medications wear off and we will go through all this with you on discharging your pet after the operation.

The risk from the surgery is minimal and recovery is usually rapid and uneventful with the patient up and walking within 20-30 minutes of the operation. Complications are rare but we keep an eye out for these, and you will be asked to bring your cat or dog for a check-up a few days after the surgery.
What do I have to do in the days after the operation?
On going home your pet may be a little quiet the evening of the operation but by the next day they are generally back to normal. You will need to ensure they do not lick at their surgical site - a ‘lampshade’ collar, which we can provide, can be useful to prevent your pet licking. You can take your dog for a walk on the lead, but don’t let him or her off-lead until 10 days after the operation or as specifically advised. Keep your cat indoors until the stitches are out.

What about the down-sides of neutering, like behaviour changes or becoming overweight?
In our opinion there ARE no down sides to having your pet neutered. The stories of detrimental behaviour changes are a myth - you will notice hardly any difference in your pet, except perhaps a decreased tendency towards aggression and dominance. Indeed most animals will remain more ‘pet-like’ when neutered so any behavioural changes are going to be positive, not negative.

However, the changes in the levels of sex hormones due to neutering may slow down your pet’s metabolism. In other words, your pet will burn off less energy in their normal day-to-day activities and thus may need fewer calories to maintain their normal weight.

Any animal - and this includes humans - puts on weight when they take in more calories (energy) than they expend. So while neutering can increase the chances of weight gain this is easily addressed through diet - not just feeding less of the same, but talk to us about keeping an eye on your pet’s weight after the operation and how feeding a diet specifically for neutered pets can help prevent this weight gain.

**DOGS**

Females should be spayed before their first heat. The risk of a non-neutered female dog developing mammary tumours (‘breast cancer’) during her life drops from 70% to 0.5% if neutered before the first heat.

That aside, the idea that it is somehow ‘better’ for them to have at least one heat or even a litter of pups is a complete myth! Getting your bitch spayed at 5-7 months of age is the biggest favour you can do her for her future health and longevity.
Males should be castrated before they reach sexual maturity, which is about 5-7 months of age. As well as preventing them roaming and reducing any dominant or aggressive behavioural tendencies, neutering also reduces the incidence of some tumours and other uro-genital problems later in life. Neutering may also stop them cocking their legs on everything (including our waiting room chairs!) and being a tad over-friendly with your pillows or your leg… or Mrs. O’Brien’s leg next door!

**Cats**

Neutering should be done at 5-7 months of age which is just before they reach sexual maturity.

**Females** (‘Queens’) will reproduce at 7-8 months so you can easily get caught out and end up with a litter of kittens. **Males** (‘Toms’) will start to get big and begin spraying your house at around this age as well so unless you want a big stinking cat who’ll get into all sorts of scraps and be out looking for love all night then get him neutered early! Getting your tom cat neutered early is a particularly responsible element of cat ownership - because you don’t want him fathering kittens with the neighbouring cats…

Sexual contact, and the fighting associated with sexual aggression and territorial behaviour of entire cats, will expose your pet to diseases such as Feline AIDS and the Feline Leukaemia Virus as well as potentially serious injuries such as cat bites. These can be deadly, worse than dog bites in many ways, and should never be ignored.

Ireland has a huge problem with unwanted kittens, which are either put to sleep or continue to produce more and more kittens, just adding to the problem. When you also consider that **neutered cats will on average live several years longer than un-neutered cats** it is clear that getting your cat neutered is the kindest and most socially responsible course of action.
Pet Health Insurance

Key Points

- Pet Health Insurance will cover veterinary costs for illness and injuries your pet may suffer from, and is relatively cheap to take out.
- With modern veterinary care pets are surviving serious illness and injuries that would have resulted in death not long ago. Bear in mind that this treatment can be very expensive.
- Take out your pet health insurance early so that your pet is fully covered and has no ‘pre-existing’ conditions that will be excluded from cover.
- Check if your policy has ‘cover for life’ as well as other important benefits. Look beyond just comparing premium costs, and be aware of the limited cover offered by ‘accident only’ policies.
- Ask if your policy allows for direct payments to your vet if required.

If you have a pet, there is one ‘must have’ - pet health insurance. It is a fact that **1 in 3 pets will require unexpected veterinary attention every year**.

Knowing that if your pet does need veterinary attention he or she can have the very best treatment available without having to consider the cost provides great peace of mind. Costs for surgery or other treatment can be considerable, and having a good pet insurance policy in place means that all you need to worry about is your pet’s recovery, rather than how you will pay for it - or even if you can afford it in the first place.

**So, the day you get your new pet, get on the phone or the internet, and get a good health insurance policy in place.**

**But my pet is healthy - why do I need insurance?**

By their very nature, illness and injuries are unexpected, and pet health insurance is your way of ensuring that when (not if) your pet does need veterinary care all you will have to worry about is your pet getting better, rather than the size of the vet’s bill. Blood tests, radiology, MRI scans, chemotherapy, joint replacement surgery, intensive care hospitalisation and referral to specialists are all available to ensure your pet receives every chance of recovering from conditions that only a few years ago would have resulted in death or euthanasia - but they come at a price, and that’s why health insurance is so essential for pets. Whilst they are the ‘big’ things that we know will cost a lot, even seemingly simple things can be expensive. For example, to successfully treat a case of vomiting or diarrhoea could end up costing quite a penny!
What will my insurance cover?
This depends on the policy you take out but in general your insurance will cover all illnesses or injuries your pet may suffer from. It may also cover 3rd party liability, the actual monetary value of a pedigree pet should they unfortunately die, costs of advertising and reward to assist in recovery of a lost pet, boarding kennels or cattery fees if you have to go to hospital and possibly holiday cancellation costs if you have to stay at home to look after your unwell pet.

What will my insurance NOT cover?
Again this depends on your policy but in general it will not cover the cost of ‘routine’ procedures such as vaccinations, neutering, maintenance food and flea/worm medications - these are not ‘risks’ that can be insured against. Dental care is often not covered - you need to check this with your insurance company.

Your insurance will also not cover a ‘pre-existing’ condition - these are any conditions which occurred before you took out your policy. For example, if your pet had a skin condition before you took out the policy, then your insurance will not cover any further incidences of skin conditions. You can still take out insurance though, and it will cover everything else that might affect your pet apart from the pre-existing condition. We can go over your pet’s history with you to give you an idea of what may be seen as a pre-existing condition that may be excluded from cover, but this is why it is so important to take out your pet’s insurance policy as soon as you can - so that there is no pre-existing condition that will not be covered.

Depending on your policy there will probably be an ‘excess’ which you will have to pay per episode - the insurance company will cover your costs except for a set amount, or ‘excess’. The amount of the excess varies with policies and can rise once pets go over a certain age. Also there may be a ‘ceiling’ or maximum amount covered in any one policy year. This varies with policies but in general for veterinary fees it is a relatively high figure of several thousand Euro and would only very rarely be breached. You will have to pay any further fees once this ceiling is reached.

Are all policies the same? What should I look for?
No, just like human health insurance all policies are not the same. While we can guide you on what to look out for we cannot advise on which policy you should take out. You should read through the terms and conditions of the policies you are considering and in particular pay attention to the ‘What we do not pay for’ or ‘What is not covered’ section.
Also look beyond comparing just the costs of different policies - while one may look a little cheaper it may be because it does not cover as much and in the long run may end up costing you more!

It is very important to consider if the policy has ‘cover for life’. In other words the policy will cover a condition for the life of the pet as long as you keep your premium payments up to date. Think about the situation if your pet gets a condition such as arthritis, diabetes, or a recurrent skin condition, all of which will require lifelong treatment. If your policy stops paying out after a certain period of time, or once a financial ceiling has been reached, then you will be faced with the cost of this after that. The few Euro extra spent on the better policy may well be very well spent!

The same applies to ‘Accident Only’ policies - the cover offered by these is very limited. Most problems we see pets with are in fact illnesses and would not be covered by an ‘accident only’ policy.

Can I change insurers?

Yes, of course you can. However be aware that unlike in the human health insurance market, your new insurer will not cover any pre-existing conditions. Changing insurer to save a small amount in premiums may result in having no ongoing cover for conditions seen in earlier life that were and would have been covered by your ‘first’ insurer. If though you do want to consider changing we can go over your pet’s medical history with you and forward it on to your prospective new insurer so you can seek clarification on what conditions would not be covered. Also you will need to ask your prospective new insurer if they will offer you a quote as this may depend on previous claims history.

How much does it cost?

The cost depends on your pet’s species and breed and will vary depending on the company offering the policy. Dogs cost more than cats; it will be more expensive for pedigree pets and certain ‘select’ breed dogs will cost a little more again. Some insurers will offer discounts for microchipped pets, for insuring multiple pets and for persons over a certain age. On the other hand some insurers will increase your premium if you have had claims, whilst others currently may not. These are all questions to ask and you can generally get quick online quotes from the various insurers. Get some quotes, but be sure to compare like with like!
Key Points

- Some worms can be fatal to your pet and some worms can affect humans, particularly children
- It’s much better to prevent fleas and worms than wait for your pet to get them
- If your pet gets fleas you may have to treat the house as well to kill all the eggs and larvae
- Puppies and kittens have to be wormed very regularly from an early age; older animals also need regular treatment
- A large range of the most effective products are available from your vet or from a pharmacy with a veterinary prescription
- We can produce a personalised worming & flea control schedule for your pet (overleaf) - please ask

Worming

Nearly all puppies and kittens will have worms - they get them from their mother and/or when very young. Left untreated these will make your pet unwell, result in poor weight gain and at worst can cause death from balls of worms blocking the intestine. Therefore puppies and kittens should be wormed every 2 weeks until 12 weeks of age, then every month until 6 months of age. After this age you should worm your pet regularly.

There are many types of worms which can affect your pet. Some can be fatal, and some can affect humans, particularly children - although it is very rare, children’s eyesight can be affected. A risk like this is just not worth taking, and regular worming with an effective product recommended by your vet is the best way to minimise any risks.

Vets are increasingly concerned by canine lungworm (Angiostrongylus vasorum) which dogs contract from eating slugs and snails - a lot of dogs do this although you may not notice it! This worm can make dogs cough, but can also cause bleeding disorders, with dogs presenting bleeding from the mouth and nostril - nasty and potentially life threatening.

We will give you the best advice on which products to use and how often depending on you and your pet’s individual circumstances. This may mean worming your pet up to once a month with a product effective against certain types of roundworms.
Many of the most effective worm treatments are only available from your pet’s vet or from a pharmacy with a veterinary prescription. Worm treatments available from supermarkets or pet stores may not be particularly effective, so before deciding to buy any of these treatments please ask us for advice on which works the best.

**Flea treatment and prevention**

Fleas are not nice and it’s best to prevent your pet getting them rather than wait for an infestation before treatment. Indeed, if your pet gets fleas so does your house - for every one live flea you see on your pet there could be 100 eggs and larvae around the house, waiting to hatch! So as well as treating your pet you’ll also need to treat your house.

However, flea prevention is very simple. You can apply a ‘spot-on’ treatment which will act against fleas for 1-2 months depending both on the brand and how much your pet likes swimming. ‘Spot-on’ treatments are small tubes of liquid which are applied to the skin between the shoulder blades and provide cover against fleas for 1-2 months. There are also spray products available which are very effective, but many owners and pets prefer the ‘spot-on’ treatments because they are quick and easy to use.

With flea treatments it is usually the ‘prescription only’ medications available from your pet’s vet or from pharmacies with a veterinary prescription that are most effective. You can of course buy ‘flea treatments’ in many guises from pet shops or supermarkets, but they may not work as well. Also, the shop staff may not be able to advise you on what treatment is right for your pet, but we can!

If in doubt about which is best to use for your individual circumstances your vet or the veterinary nurses will be more than happy to advise you.
## Prevent Fleas and Worms (continued)

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Can I train my kitten?

Unfortunately, cats tend to train us rather than the other way round! Cats are great pets but they’re so, so different from dogs! They just won’t listen to us and they’ll make up their own mind as to what they want (and don’t want) to do. They have a different kind of, ahem, intelligence. A baby kitten will learn to use a litter tray in about 5 minutes; a puppy can be having ‘accidents’ for weeks! One thing though - a kitten’s normal play-behaviour is to play-bite and scratch. Don’t encourage this; it can get a bit too much especially if there are children in the house. Just say no and put your kitten down when he or she starts to play like that.

In summary: cats are great but you’ll (probably) never make yours sit!

Training your puppy

Responsible ownership involves having a well-trained dog and this training should start as soon as your puppy comes home for the first time.

Puppies are continuously learning from the moment their eyes are open and responsible breeders will ensure that the elements of training have commenced long before you acquire the puppy at 6-8 weeks of age. Remember training is not some formal process but should occur all the time you are together with your dog.

Training and socialisation are intermixed, a well socialised dog is invariably a well trained dog and vice versa. Thus puppies should be socialised. They should be handled by family members and strangers as soon as possible and then be introduced to other dogs, preferably to puppies, as soon as their vaccination programme allows.

Are you relaxed & interested yet?

It is better to train your dog once he’s run off some steam, which means he can focus better and be more alert. If you are using treats to train him, do your training before meals so that he is hungrier and keener to work for his reward.

Remember though, the top tip is to reward the behaviour you want and ignore the behaviour you don’t want.

More information on how to train your pet is available on:

www.lovemypet.ie
Microchip Identification

Key Points

- Microchip identification is the most effective method for permanent identification of your pet
- It is safe, practical, effective, and excellent value for money
- A microchip can be implanted at any stage and only takes a few seconds
- Ensure your pet’s microchip is correctly registered to you on a reunification database - without this the microchip is useless
- If in any doubt, we can help make sure your registration details are correct

Microchip identification is a highly effective way of reuniting owners with lost or straying pets. Although a collar with a tag is a great help, they can fall off or be removed - a microchip inserted by your vet means your pet will be logged on a nationwide register, so if he or she is lost or found a simple scan with a hand-held reader means he or she can be returned to you.

What is a microchip and how is it inserted?

A pet ID microchip is about the size of a small grain of rice. Each chip carries a unique 15 digit number which can be ‘read’ by a special microchip scanner which all vets, dog pounds and animal sanctuaries will have.

Under sterile conditions, the chip is injected under the skin at the base of the neck. This only takes an instant - for your pet it will feel much the same as having a vaccination injection. It can be done at a specific appointment but we also often do it when pets come in for their Annual Health Assessment & Vaccination or when the pet is being neutered. It can be done at any age and it’s never too late to have it done.

How does the system work?

After the microchip is inserted its unique number and your contact details are registered on a reunification database. This can be done online or by post. Once this is done your pet’s microchip number will relate to you so that whoever scans the chip and searches the database can find you and let you know where your pet is.

If your pet is found and taken to a vet, animal sanctuary, dog pound etc they will be scanned for a chip. If a chip is found then you should get a call within a few minutes. If there is no chip you may never see your pet again and there is a chance he or she may be put to sleep if a new home cannot be found.
Finally, make sure that if you change your contact details or move house, you contact the database to update your details. The actual microchip is only half the equation - having the chip correctly registered is the other half, without this the chip means nothing. It’s like having a passport with no picture. No good!

**My puppy was microchipped before I bought him - why is this and do I need to do anything?**

All pedigree puppies have to be microchipped for Irish Kennel Club registration. This is usually done by the breeder when the puppies are about 6 weeks old before they can be sold with pedigree papers.

The chip itself will work perfectly well but the chip may remain registered to the breeder if you have not completed the change of ownership form. As a result if your dog gets lost and is brought to a dog pound or vets they will not be able to track you down via the microchip number as it is not registered to you.

**So if your dog was microchipped before you got him/her, make sure the microchip is correctly registered to you.**

You can do this by returning the IKC change of ownership form with the required fee and/or registering on one of the other approved reunification databases - we have registration forms available for purchase. If you wish to breed with your pedigree dog then you have to have him or her registered to you with the Irish Kennel Club.

If in doubt ask us - we can help you check the databases to see if your pet’s chip is registered correctly to you and if not we can help you put it right.
Pet Passport Scheme

You never have to leave your friend at home again!

DID YOU KNOW … you can bring your pets to and from the EU (and many other countries around the world) on holidays without the need for quarantine!

To do this you will need to have your pet microchipped (if not already done) and have a valid Pet Passport. Your vet can help arrange the passport for you.

After that the rules for travel between Ireland and other countries vary, and are subject to change, so for the most up to date information just ask us and we will be delighted to help. Alternatively the Department of Agriculture website will have this information available.

However, in general, for travel to other EU and ‘low risk’ non-EU countries and home again, your pet will need to be vaccinated against rabies prior to travel and the vaccine will have to be up to date.

Additionally for dogs, before travelling back into Ireland from mainland EU, your dog will need to be seen by a vet 1-5 days prior to your scheduled arrival time back into Ireland to be given a tapeworm treatment, and this will need to be recorded on their passport. This is to prevent entry of a specific tapeworm (*Echinococcus multilocularis*) into Ireland that is widespread in certain parts of Europe and, whilst harmless to dogs, can infect humans causing serious illness and even death.

If you want to come into Ireland from certain other ‘high risk’ non-EU countries then your pet will also need to have a blood test after the rabies vaccination to ensure the vaccine has been effective and can then only travel back to Ireland after a certain period of time has passed since the date of the blood test. Again the most up to date information regarding these requirements and time frames are available on the Department of Agriculture website.

It is also important to bear in mind that there are several serious diseases of pets in other countries that we do not have in Ireland such as heart-worm, Leishmania, Ehrlichia etc. When abroad it is important to administer to your pet the correct preventative treatments for these potentially fatal diseases, and to be aware of what symptoms to look out for. Please ask your vet for this information or alternatively consult with a local vet in your destination who will be familiar with the best practice for that region.
Dental Care is Vital

Key Points

- Look for any of the tell-tale signs and if you spot them go to the vet!
- Cats and small dogs are particularly prone to severe dental disease
- Feeding a specially produced dry food reduces the incidence of dental disease
- A full dental check is performed at the Annual Health Assessment
- If we recommend to have your pet’s teeth cleaned - heed that advice, it will save money in the long run

Dental Disease can, quite simply, cause your pet severe pain and discomfort and may even shorten their life due to organ failure as a result of the constant bacterial attack on the liver, heart and kidneys from chronic gum infections.

It is estimated that 80% of pets over three years old will have some degree of dental or periodontal disease and by older age many pets will be in dire need of treatment to prevent pain, discomfort and premature death from undiagnosed and untreated dental disease.

The good news is that the dry dog foods we recommend are produced using a special process called longitudinal extrusion which means your pet is actually ‘brushing’ their teeth while they eat! They also have ingredients that prevent the build-up of tartar just like our own toothpaste does. These specially produced foods, along with preventative care will ensure your pet keeps their teeth in excellent condition. Your pet’s teeth will be checked at the Annual Health Assessment & Vaccination and we may recommend you come in for a nurse dental check in the intervening 6 months.

If we notice any tartar, gingivitis, periodontitis etc we will advise you on the best course of treatment. This will often include admitting your pet into the practice for a ‘dental’ to get things back to the way they should be. A dental entails general anaesthesia (they bite when awake!) and removal of all the tartar and other ‘gunge’ from your pet’s teeth with an ultrasonic descaler - just like in a human dentist’s.

Once this is done each tooth and its roots are examined individually and if required the tooth can be removed. Unlike in humans, if there is any doubt we often remove the tooth. Your pet will manage very well without the tooth whereas with it they may have more problems and require further treatment. Finally the teeth are polished to smooth out any microscopic imperfections and help reduce the build-up of further tartar.
Dental Care is Vital (continued)

In general this is a day procedure and is done routinely. For older animals we will discuss doing pre-anaesthetic blood tests to ensure the risks are minimised.

In short, do not underestimate the importance of looking after your pet’s teeth. Prevention is better than cure - so daily brushing is the gold standard, but a high quality dry food and watchfulness will make sure that you spot any problems early.

**Signs of Dental Problems**

- Bad breath - one of the first signs of dental disease
- A yellowish-brown crust of tartar on the teeth near the gum line
- Red and swollen gums
- Pain or bleeding when your pet eats or something touches the mouth or gums
- Decreased appetite, weight loss or difficulty eating
Keep Slim, Fit ‘n’ Mobile!

Weight Control: Key Points

- Know your pet’s ideal weight - ask us for our opinion, we have plenty of experience of what ‘normal’ is - better than any chart or book
- Weigh your pet at least twice a year - we can do it for you on our veterinary weighing scales, there is no charge of course
- You should be able feel your pet’s ribs and perhaps see the last few. If you can’t feel them - your pet is overweight!
- There is only one reason for being overweight - too much food and not enough exercise!
- There is only one way to lose weight - eat less and exercise more!
- There are low calorie diets available to help your pet to lose weight while providing all the nutrients they need - ask the nurses
- Rarely pets have endocrine or ‘glandular’ conditions which can predispose to being overweight - we can test for these if suspicious and most are readily treatable

It’s very easy for some pets to end up overweight. It creeps up; they look cute and cuddly, and are delighted whenever you offer food. Of course they are - they’re simple creatures, they love their grub, they are programmed to eat whenever food presents itself (they may have only eaten a few times a week in the wild after all) and the poor dears know no better! But you do!! Be the brains of the outfit, restrict their diet to what they need and if they are overweight there is only ONE reason - they are eating more than they are burning off. Simple as that.

Very rarely dogs can have a disease which predisposes them to weight gain such as an underactive thyroid gland (which, by the way, is easily diagnosed and treated) but in general if more goes in than goes out then it stays on as fat - just like us. There is no other way for it to get there!

In very rare cases of obesity and where no underlying medical reason is found the vet will discuss with you the use of certain medications & supplements which can act to block absorption of fat in the intestine and/or decrease the appetite.

So if your pet is putting on weight, reduce what you are feeding them and increase their exercise. Your dog will much prefer an extra walk and run than a few biscuits, while your cat will love chasing a (pretend) mouse on a piece of string or a laser pointer on a wall.
A slim pet will live a longer, happier life and run less risk of developing problems such as diabetes mellitus, arthritis and cardiovascular disease. Much the same as us!

If your pet does need to lose weight, come and see the nurses. They will advise you of your pet’s ideal weight, and how much of what diet to feed to ensure your pet loses weight effectively. We will be delighted to see you regularly for weigh-ins and may even reward you if the weight keeps dropping. Just one word of caution - cats and dogs shouldn’t lose weight too quickly, so take advantage of the advice the nurses have to offer.

Weightwatchers for pets does exist - right here in the vets!

**Arthritis and Mobility: Key Points**
- Arthritis is probably the most common ailment affecting the older pet
- Do not ignore signs of slowing up or stiffness - there is a lot that can be done to help
- Keeping slim is the best prevention against arthritis; feeding the right type and amount of food as a puppy can also make a big difference in later life
- There are pets alive and having a great time running around thanks to the modern arthritis medications and treatments available
- We often take x-rays to gauge the severity of the problem and to help make a decision as to what is the best course of treatment

**Keeping mobile as time ticks on: Arthritis in pets, the silent epidemic**
As your pet gets older you may notice them slowing up a little or appearing stiff. DO NOT IGNORE THIS. Don’t just put it down to old age. This is the classic symptom of the onset of arthritis which is a very common complaint in pets as they get on a bit.

In cats you may see them slowing up but also they may appear to be doing less grooming, may appear grumpy and just off form. It’s a bit different than we see in dogs and a bit different than you may expect. A cat getting grumpy or looking dishevelled and unkempt as he/she gets older is often due to the chronic pain associated with arthritis.
These pets are in pain - they just don’t show it and vocalise it in the same way as we do. It is much better to get them treatment rather than ignoring it and accepting it as ‘just one of those things’.

Thankfully there are many very effective and safe treatments available for these pets ranging from supplements like we can get in health food stores, anti-inflammatory pain killers and courses of injections to help reverse the changes in the joints. There are also some special therapeutic diets that can help a lot. Most pets with arthritis will have to remain on treatment for life - but without this treatment their life would be much shorter and considerably more painful.

**Dogs with severely affected hips and elbows can undergo joint replacement surgery and continue to live when they would otherwise have been in agony or had to be put to sleep. This life-saving surgery is a wonderful development but it can be very expensive. This is where your pet insurance comes in!**

If you notice your pet slowing down, getting grumpy or looking a bit unkempt, come in and see us as soon as you can. The sooner these symptoms are spotted and treated the better, and there are many, many pets enjoying life thanks to the great treatments now available.
If you’ve got this far, you must love your pet, so you

A Dog is…

- A true family friend but dependent on owner for companionship and exercise
- Active and talkative (yes, that can mean ‘yappy’!)
- Loyal and fun

Dogs are generally happy with the simple things in life. They love walks and runs in the park, in the woods, in the field. Most love chasing a ball or other toy, splashing in and out of water, getting in the mud and making a mess. They’re loyal, obedient (if you train them) and full of fun.

From the first day they enter your life all nervous and trembling until the sad day they depart, they will love you above anyone else, no matter what, no matter when.

They’ll do tricks because they want to please you, they’ll slobber on you, (and take some training to remember shoes are not toys and the kitchen floor is not the toilet)! They need to be walked, but then again you need the walk so that’s fine.

And you will find yourself suddenly meeting and having chats about doggie ‘escapades’ with folks at work, dog-lovers in the park, random bystanders…
deserve to have many years of fun with your new best friend

A Cat is…

- Resourceful and independent - a loving owner is a luxury, not a necessity
- Asleep over 12 hours a day
- Eager to play games & share life with those they like

Cats love themselves and their comfort. They’ll give you joy by purring, by welcoming you home, by acting as a furry hot water bottle asleep on your lap. If in the bedroom, they make good alarm clocks …if you like alarm clocks that paw you and stare at you closely as you awake.

They’ll make you feel great because they have, after careful consideration & comparison with alternative residences, and much deliberation with the local Feline Accommodation Advisory Committee, decided to allow you to live in their house and let you think you are their ‘owner’. Little do you know!

They may occasionally present you with a (possibly still alive) bird, mouse, or creepy-crawly, to show you they are deadly, effective hunters and to check out your ability to handle live prey. You are reminded that you are truly honoured and privileged to be allowed to live with them!
Your Pet’s Growth

Your vet will enter the appropriate weight scale for your pet’s breed and regularly assess weight over your pet’s life.

Your pet’s ideal weight is between [ ] and [ ] Kg

| Monthly Weight in Kg | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | 52 | 53 | 54 | 55 | 56 | 57 | 58 | 59 | 60 | 61 | 62 | 63 | 64 | 65 | 66 | 67 | 68 | 69 | 70 | 71 | 72 | 73 | 74 | 75 | 76 | 77 | 78 | 79 | 80 |
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The Body Condition Score Chart is a simple method of ensuring your adult pet is kept in optimal condition. This chart is for guidance only.