

Important Dog Care Topics

Fleas and Ticks

It is important especially during our warm season March – November, to daily inspect your dog for fleas and ticks. Special flea combs with fine teeth are available. Drop the fleas and ticks into a glass of water with a drop of dishwashing liquid in it. This kills them, and you do not squish the bugs and touch their blood. There are several very effective methods of flea and tick control that your veterinarian can advise you on including monthly drops between the shoulders of dogs, or a pill. That cost is about \$10 per monthly application.

Heartworm

This parasite lives in the heart and is passed from dog to dog by mosquitoes. Heartworm infections can be fatal, and the cost of healing your dog is much more than the cost of the preventive medicine. Have your dog tested each Spring at the vet office, about a \$20 blood test that will detect infections from the previous year. After the test the vet may prescribe the once a month pill to prevent heartworm, about \$10 per month. In Alabama and other warm 'winter states' heartworm preventive is advised year round.

Exercise

Dogs need exercise to stay healthy; burn calories, stimulate their minds, and avoid boredom. Supervised fun and games will satisfy many of your pet's instinctual urges to dig, herd, chew, retrieve and chase and you will thereby avoid destructive behaviors.

Individual exercise needs vary based on breed or breed mix, sex, age and level of health – and just a couple of walks around the block every day and ten minutes in the backyard probably won't cut it. If your dog is a 6- to 18-month adolescent, or if he is an active breed or mixed-breed from the sporting, herding, hound or terrier groups, his requirements will be relatively high.

If you are not able to let your pet run free during exercise periods, use a collar and leash. There are many kinds of collars/leashes including walking harness' for dogs that try to 'tow their human'. A walking harness is about \$20. Be sure to keep the collar snug during exercise (only) so your dog can not 'back up' and slip out of the collar. If your dog does get loose, run the other direction from which he is going, and call him. Chasing after a dog rarely works, but reversing your direction while excitedly calling 'Here Fluffy', is more effective. It seems like a game.

Crate Training and Housebreaking

Consider crate training your dog. This gives your pet its own space within the home. It provides a nice bed with washable bedding you can wash often. Crate training also helps with housebreaking as most pets do not want to use the bathroom in their bed area. Start housebreaking your dog by taking him out every twenty minutes to potty, then move up to thirty minutes and gradually increase the time as the dog learns 'indoor manners'. Some people lay newspaper out for the potty area, and remove paper area as the dog learns; ie make the potty area smaller.

*Do take your dog to vet when you first get him, then go annually for follow up checkups and rabies booster. It is much cheaper to keep your pet healthy than to ignore his needs and go through expense/training a new pet. FYI: Chocolate and grapes are poison to dogs.

For more information on these and other topics go to <http://www.aspca.org/>