



New Puppy Information Guide

Core Vaccines (Essential Protection)

Core vaccines protect against diseases that are common in our area and, in some cases, can be transmitted to humans. For more information on these diseases, please visit: [Common Infectious Canine Diseases](#)

For more information on these vaccines (excluding the rattlesnake and influenza vaccines), please visit: [Canine Vaccine Information](#)

Vaccine Considerations

Vaccines administered by owners (such as those purchased from feed stores) can be recorded in the medical record; however, they are not recommended due to uncertainty in storage, handling, and administration, which may affect efficacy. Vaccines administered by a licensed veterinarian often include manufacturer-backed support, which may assist with treatment costs if a vaccinated pet contracts the disease it was intended to prevent.

DAPP (Distemper, Adenovirus, Parainfluenza, Parvovirus)

This vaccine series begins at 8 weeks of age and is repeated every 3–4 weeks until the puppy is at least 16 weeks old. Parvovirus is one of the most serious diseases we vaccinate against. It causes severe vomiting and diarrhea and can be fatal if not treated. It is endemic to our area, meaning unvaccinated dogs are at high risk of exposure. Puppies are not considered fully protected until two weeks after their final vaccine. Until then, they should avoid dog parks and areas where dogs of unknown vaccination status may have been. After the initial series, the vaccine is boosted at 1 year and then every 3 years.

Rabies

Rabies vaccination is required by law. In Nevada, it can be given as early as 12 weeks of age. Rabies is a fatal disease that can be transmitted to humans, and there is no treatment once infection occurs. The first vaccine is valid for 1 year, and subsequent boosters are given every 3 years. The City of Fernley requires pets to be registered with proof of rabies vaccination.

Lifestyle Vaccines (Based on Risk and Exposure)

These vaccines are recommended depending on your dog's environment and activities.

Bordetella (Kennel Cough)

Recommended for dogs that will be exposed to other dogs in settings such as boarding facilities, grooming salons, or dog parks. We use an oral vaccine, which has been shown to be effective. It can be given as early as 8 weeks of age and is typically administered during the puppy series. It is boosted annually, though some facilities require it within 6 months.

Canine Influenza

Recommended for dogs in high-contact environments. (dog parks, grooming and boarding facilities). The initial series is given at 16 and 20 weeks of age. Dogs older than 16 weeks receiving it for the first time require two doses 3–4 weeks apart. Annual boosters are required. For more information on this vaccine, please visit:

[Canine Influenza Vaccine Detailer](#)

Leptospirosis (Lepto)

Recommended for dogs with access to standing water or environments with wildlife or livestock. This bacterial disease can cause kidney and liver damage and can be transmitted to humans. The initial series is given at 12 and 16 weeks of age. Dogs older than 16 weeks receiving it for the first time require two doses 3–4 weeks apart. Annual boosters are required.

Rattlesnake Vaccine

Recommended in Nevada due to the presence of multiple rattlesnake species. Even after your dog is vaccinated against rattlesnake venom, he or she should be taken to a veterinarian for evaluation and care as soon as possible following snakebite. Dogs receiving it for the first time require an initial vaccine and booster 3–4 weeks later, followed by annual boosters, ideally administered about 30 days prior to rattlesnake season (March). Owners should also be aware of the nearest veterinary facility that carries antivenom. For more information on this vaccine, please visit: [Canine Rattlesnake Vaccine Information](#)

Deworming and Intestinal Parasite Screening

We recommend routine deworming for roundworms and hookworms, which are common in our area. If not already completed, a broad-spectrum dewormer will be given at the first visit. Owners should monitor for visible worms in the stool. If present, treatment should be repeated 14 days after the initial dose. Some intestinal parasites can be transmitted to humans, particularly children and immunocompromised individuals.

Annual fecal testing is recommended to screen for parasites that may not be visible to the naked eye. Testing is also advised if your pet shows symptoms such as weight loss, poor growth, diarrhea, or loose stool. Samples should be:

- Approximately the size of a large grape and less than 24 hours old
- Refrigerated until submission

Gloves should be used during collection, followed by thorough handwashing. Fecal collection containers are available upon request at no cost. For more information on parasites, please visit: [Roundworms & Hookworms Information](#)

Heartworm Prevention

Heartworms are transmitted by mosquitoes and live within the heart and surrounding blood vessels. If left untreated, infection can be fatal. Although historically a lower-risk area, the incidence in our region has increased due to the movement of infected dogs. Mosquito activity in our area lasts for approximately 10 months of the year, creating a prolonged exposure risk.

Prevention is strongly recommended and is far safer and less costly than treatment. We offer a monthly chewable preventative (Heartgard). Puppies under 6 months of age can begin prevention without prior testing. Dogs older than 6 months require a simple blood test prior to starting prevention. This medication also provides protection against certain intestinal parasites.

Annual heartworm testing is recommended. When prevention is purchased through a reputable source and testing is kept current, manufacturers may provide financial assistance for treatment in the rare case of product failure.

For more information on heartworm prevention, please visit:

- [Nexgard Plus Information](#)
- [Heartgard Plus Information](#)

Flea and Tick Prevention

Fleas are not highly prevalent in our immediate area but can be introduced through travel or contact with affected animals. Ticks are present locally.

Preventative options include monthly oral medications (such as Nexgard) and topical treatments (such as Frontline). Prevention is especially recommended for pets traveling to areas with higher parasite prevalence. For more information on flea and tick prevention, please visit: [Nexgard Information](#)

Basic Puppy Care

Pet Insurance

Pet insurance can be a valuable tool in helping manage the cost of unexpected veterinary care, such as accidents or illnesses. While not required, many pet owners find it provides peace of mind and allows for more flexibility when making medical decisions. Plans and coverage can vary widely, so we recommend researching different providers and selecting a policy that best fits your needs and budget. Compare Policy options on: <https://www.pawlicy.com/>

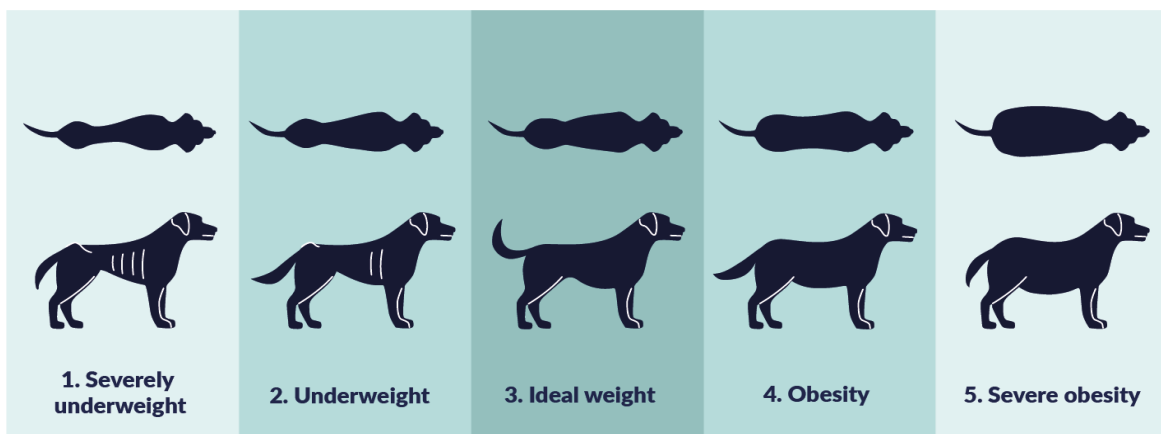
Nutrition

Your puppy should be fed a diet appropriate for their age, breed size, and lifestyle. Look for diets with an AAFCO (Association of American Feed Control Officials) statement, which ensures the food is complete and nutritionally balanced. We recommend:

- Hill's Healthy Advantage Puppy
- Purina ProPlan Puppy

Helpful guidelines:

- Feed puppy food until about 12 months of age (may vary by breed)
- Avoid using human food as a primary diet
- Keep your puppy lean—this supports a longer, healthier life and reduces risk of disease
- Monitor body condition (see picture below_ and adjust portions as needed)
- You can use part of their daily kibble as training treats to avoid excess calorie intake



Microchipping

We strongly recommend microchipping all pets as a permanent form of identification. This can be done as early as 8 weeks of age, and many owners choose to have it placed at the time of spay or neuter for added comfort.

A microchip is not a GPS tracker and cannot track your pet's location. Instead, it contains a unique identification number. If your pet is ever lost and brought to a veterinary clinic, animal shelter, or animal control facility, they can be scanned for a microchip. The identification number is then used to contact the microchip company, which provides your contact information so you can be reunited with your pet.

It is extremely important to keep your contact information current with the microchip company, as this is the only way they can reach you if your pet is found.

Dental Care

Starting dental care early helps prevent dental disease later in life and keeps your puppy comfortable as they grow. Daily brushing is ideal and can help reduce plaque buildup, gum disease, tooth loss, and painful infections.

Building Positive Associations

The first step is helping your puppy become comfortable with having their mouth touched. Start by placing something tasty, such as broth or another pet-safe treat, on your finger and allowing your puppy to lick it off while gently touching along the gums and teeth.

Keep sessions short, calm, and positive so your puppy begins associating mouth handling with rewards and praise.

Introducing Texture

Once your puppy is comfortable with finger handling, you can begin using gauze wrapped around your finger to gently rub the teeth and gums in a circular motion. Continue praising your puppy throughout the process.

As your puppy becomes more comfortable, you can transition to a soft toothbrush or finger brush designed for pets.

Choosing the Right Toothpaste

Only use toothpaste made specifically for pets. Human toothpaste can upset your puppy's stomach and may contain ingredients that are toxic to dogs.

Pet-safe toothpaste is available in flavors many dogs enjoy, helping make brushing easier over time.

Time to Brush

Begin by brushing only a few teeth at a time, especially the large canine teeth in the front of the mouth. As your puppy becomes more comfortable, slowly increase the number of teeth brushed during each session.

You do not need to scrub aggressively, as the toothpaste itself helps break down plaque and bacteria.

Don't Forget the Back Teeth

The back molars are where tartar buildup and dental disease most commonly occur. Gently lifting the lips can help access these teeth more easily.

Annual dental examinations are recommended, and professional dental cleanings may be needed as your pet ages.

Nail Care

Getting your puppy comfortable with nail trims early can make lifelong nail care much less stressful for both you and your pet. Most puppies require nail trims approximately every 4–6 weeks, though this may vary depending on activity level and how quickly the nails grow.

Building Positive Associations

Start by helping your puppy become comfortable with having their feet touched. Choose a calm, quiet time and gently handle the paws for a few seconds at a time while offering treats and praise.

Once your puppy is comfortable with paw handling, begin gently touching the toes and nails. Keeping these interactions short and positive helps build trust and confidence.

Introducing Nail Trimmers

Allow your puppy to investigate the nail clippers at their own pace. Pair the clippers with treats, praise, or playtime to create positive associations.

You can also help desensitize your puppy to the sound of the clippers by clipping something nearby, such as an uncooked spaghetti noodle, while rewarding calm behavior.

Clipping the Nails

When your puppy is relaxed, gently hold the paw and trim only the sharp tip of the nail. Avoid cutting into the “quick,” which contains blood vessels and nerves and can be painful if injured.

It is often best to start slowly:

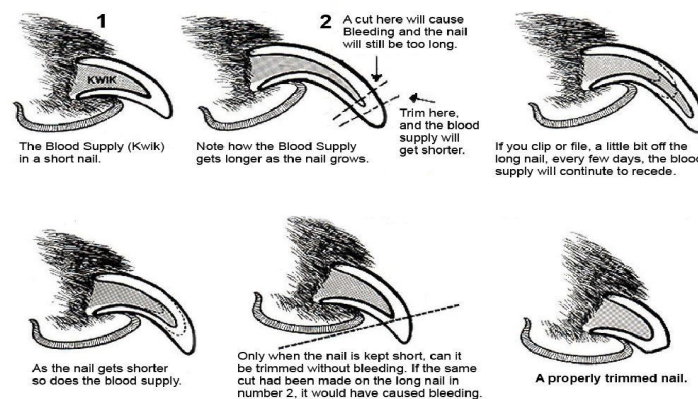
- Trim only a few nails at a time
- Stop if your puppy becomes stressed
- Reward generously afterward with treats or praise

With consistency and patience, most puppies become much more tolerant of nail trims over time.

Helpful tips:

- A second person may help provide treats or gentle distraction
- Keep sessions calm and positive
- Never rush the process
- If needed, your veterinary clinic can perform nail trims for you

How to Trim Your Dog’s Nails



Spay & Neuter

We generally recommend:

- Spaying females at around 6 months of age
- Neutering males at around 8 months of age

Timing may vary depending on your pet's breed, size, and lifestyle, as growth and development differ between dogs. Waiting until this stage allows your pet's body to benefit from natural hormones that support proper growth and development.

Why Spay or Neuter?

These procedures provide both health and behavioral benefits, including:

- Preventing unwanted pregnancies
- Reducing or eliminating the risk of certain cancers
- Preventing serious infections, such as uterine infections in females
- Helping reduce hormone-driven behaviors

What to Expect During Surgery

Your pet's safety is our top priority. During surgical procedures:

- Advanced monitoring equipment is used to track heart rate, blood pressure, oxygen levels, and temperature
- A trained team member is dedicated to monitoring your pet throughout anesthesia
- IV fluids are administered in most cases to support circulation and recovery
- A trained recovery assistant closely monitors your pet until they are awake and comfortable

Spay Procedure (Females)

The spay procedure involves a small incision made over the abdomen, through which the ovaries and uterus are removed. Benefits include:

- Preventing unwanted pregnancy
- Eliminating the risk of uterine infections
- Reducing the risk of certain cancers

Typical healing time is approximately 2 weeks.

Neuter Procedure (Males)

The neuter procedure involves a small incision made in front of the testicles, through which both testicles are removed. Benefits include:

- Eliminating the risk of testicular cancer
- Reducing the risk of prostate disease later in life
- Helping decrease certain hormone-driven behaviors

Typical healing time is approximately 2 weeks.

Basic Training & Behavior

Mouthing & Biting

Using their mouth during play is normal puppy behavior, but it is important to teach appropriate interactions early. Puppy teeth are extremely sharp, and behaviors that seem harmless as a puppy can become more problematic as the dog grows.

What to Avoid

- Do not use your hands as toys
- Avoid games that encourage biting at your body
- Avoid giving attention during biting behavior, even negative attention

What to Do Instead

Provide appropriate outlets for chewing and play:

- Toys
- Chews
- Structured play sessions

Encourage calm behavior and redirect biting toward acceptable items whenever possible.

If Your Puppy Starts Biting

Immediately stop interaction and remove your attention. Picking your puppy up, pushing them away, or scolding may still provide attention and unintentionally reinforce the behavior. Helpful strategies:

- Redirect to a toy
- Practice simple commands such as “sit” or “down”
- Reward calm behavior
- Carry kibble or toys to redirect attention during problem moments

Common Situations

If your puppy becomes mouthy:

- During petting → redirect with treats
- While walking → stop moving and redirect with a toy or kibble
- When overtired → provide rest and quiet time

Overstimulated or overtired puppies are much more likely to become mouthy.

Potty Training

House training takes consistency, patience, and routine. Most puppies take anywhere from 2 months up to a year to become fully reliable.

General guideline: A puppy can typically hold their bladder for about 1 hour per month of age
(Example: a 3-month-old puppy ≈ 3 hours)

Set your puppy up for success:

- Take your puppy outside:
 - Immediately after waking up
 - Every 2 hours while awake
 - After eating, drinking, or play
- Most puppies need to go within 20 minutes after eating
- Keep a consistent feeding schedule to help regulate potty timing
- Pick up water about 2 hours before bedtime to reduce nighttime accidents

When outside:

- Take your puppy to the same potty area each time
- Use a leash to help them stay focused
- Wait quietly until they go

- Immediately reward with praise, treats, or play

Inside the home:

- Supervise closely or limit space using gates, pens, or a leash
- Watch for signs they need to go:
 - Sniffing, circling, restlessness
 - Whining, scratching at the door

If accidents happen:

- If caught in the act: calmly interrupt and take them outside
- If found later: do not punish (they won't understand why)
- Clean thoroughly with an enzymatic cleaner to prevent repeat accidents

Socialization

Socialization is one of the most important parts of raising a confident, well-adjusted puppy.

The most important socialization window occurs during the first 3 months of life, though learning and exposure should continue beyond that age.

Positive Exposure

Focus on calm, controlled experiences involving:

- New people
- Sounds
- Environments
- Handling
- Other vaccinated, well-behaved dogs

Puppy Classes

Structured puppy classes can be an excellent introduction to socialization while still providing a more controlled environment.

Many classes require vaccines prior to attendance. Check with local trainers, humane societies, or pet stores for recommendations and requirements.

Meeting New People

Allow your puppy to approach new people at their own pace. Helpful tips:

- Avoid forcing interaction
- Have new people toss treats
- Sitting down may appear less intimidating to shy puppies

Safe Socialization

Recommended options:

- Controlled playdates
- Visits to family or friends' homes
- Positive veterinary clinic visits

Avoid Dog Parks

Dog parks are generally not recommended for young puppies due to:

- Risk of disease exposure
- Unpredictable dog interactions

- Potential for injury or fear-based experiences

Your Veterinary Clinic as a Socialization Tool

Veterinary visits can become excellent positive experiences when paired with treats, praise, and calm handling.

Helping your puppy become comfortable with:

- Paw handling
- Ear exams
- Tooth checks
- Gentle restraint

...will make future veterinary visits significantly less stressful for everyone involved.

Crate Training

Crate training can be a valuable tool for:

- Potty training
- Preventing destructive behavior
- Keeping your puppy safe when unsupervised
- Easier travel and boarding later in life

When introduced properly, the crate should become a safe and comfortable space for your puppy.

Choosing the Right Crate

The crate should:

- Be large enough for your puppy to stand and turn around comfortably
- Not be so large that your puppy can eliminate in one area and sleep in another

For safety:

- Collars should not be worn in the crate due to strangulation risk

Many owners prefer plastic airline-style crates because they are secure and easy to clean.

Setting Up the Crate

Helpful setup tips:

- Place the crate in a commonly used area of the home
- Provide safe bedding
- Use caution with toys due to chewing risks
- Avoid leaving food or water bowls inside the crate

Puppies often prefer being near their family, though some may settle better in quieter areas. Your puppy's behavior will help guide what works best.

Introducing the Crate

The crate should never be used as punishment. To build positive associations:

- Toss treats or kibble into the crate
- Allow your puppy to explore freely
- Feed meals in the crate
- Pair crate entry with cue words such as "crate" or "kennel"

Begin with short periods of confinement during calm or sleepy times and gradually increase duration over time.

Important Tips

- Release your puppy when they are calm, not barking
- Some whining is normal at first
- Crate training is often a gradual process that requires patience

Signs of Panic

If your puppy consistently shows signs of severe distress, discontinue crate training and contact your veterinarian or a certified trainer.

Signs may include:

- Excessive drooling
- Attempting to escape
- Self-injury
- Destructive behavior
- Panic vocalization
- Elimination caused by anxiety

The Big Picture

Your puppy doesn't need perfection—they need consistency and positive experiences.

Focus on:

- Routine
- Positive reinforcement
- Gradual exposure to new things

And remember, if you ever have questions or feel unsure, we're here to help guide you.