



ST. FRANCIS
ANIMAL HOSPITAL

Congratulations on your new puppy/dog!

AND WELCOME TO THE ST. FRANCIS ANIMAL HOSPITAL FAMILY

We are so happy to have you join us. Your pet is a new family member for you, and we will do our best to help you keep your new pet as healthy as possible now and always. Most new pet owners find themselves overwhelmed with information. It seems everyone has a friend, family member, breeder or internet who wants to offer advice and wisdom. We have put together a (hopefully concise) packet of information to help you navigate some of the most common questions.

MEET OUR DOCTORS:

Dr. Amy Rossmiller
Dr. Alice Van Maastricht
Dr. Becky Moss
Dr. Marta Kelly



VACCINES

Every vaccine schedule will be tailored to the individual puppy or dog's needs and risks. These will be discussed with you at your pet's wellness check-up. Until your puppy is fully vaccinated it is best to avoid high risk environments like dog parks. While it is important to socialize your puppy, it is best to do this with dogs you know are vaccinated in a controlled environment. Generally speaking, the vaccine schedule and description of vaccines follows.



Distemper Vaccine (DHP)

The canine distemper vaccine or DHP (distemper, adenoma, parvovirus) vaccine is a core vaccine that every puppy receives. The series starts at about 8 weeks of age. The puppy then gets a booster vaccination every 3-4 weeks until they are older than 16 weeks of age. Usually, this means we see these kiddos every month! After the initial puppy series, the dogs get a booster at 1 year of age, and then every 3 years thereafter.

- Distemper is an often fatal viral infection of dogs that causes a variety of symptoms such as congestion/runny nose, diarrhea, vomiting and seizures.
- Adenoma virus (also called hepatitis) is a viral infection of dogs that may cause severe liver infection
- Parvovirus is an often fatal viral infection of dogs that can cause severe vomiting and diarrhea.



Bordetella (available nasal delivered or as an injectable vaccination)

Bordetella is a bacterial infection that causes about 15% of cases of “Kennel Cough,” a dry hacking cough that can last up to 4 weeks. This vaccine is highly recommended for any pet that is boarded at a kennel, gets groomed regularly, goes to dog shows, goes to obedience classes, goes to doggy daycare or goes to the dog park. This vaccine is boosted annually.

Parainfluenza

Parainfluenza is a highly infectious virus that can also contribute to/cause “Kennel Cough”. This organism can be part of the DHP vaccine as DHP-P or is sometimes bundled into the Bordetella vaccine.

Leptospirosis

Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection in dogs (and people) that causes a potentially fatal infection/failure of the liver and kidney organ systems. This bacteria lives in stagnant pools of water and is naturally carried by wild mammals. Deer, raccoon, opossum and potentially even city rats transmit the bacteria in their urine, contaminating these pools of water when they void. This vaccine is often combined with DHP in a 4-1 vaccine (meaning, 4 protections and only 1 shot!) There are many different types of leptospira strains (called serovars). The vaccine covers 5 of them. Initially there are 2 vaccinations given 3 weeks apart, then it is boosted annually.

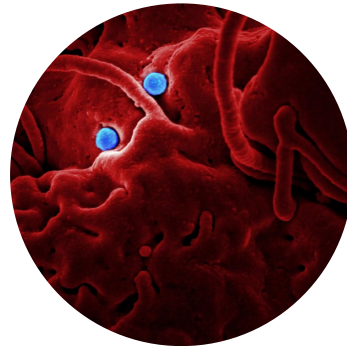
Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is caused by a bacteria called borrelia, affecting both dogs and people. Lyme disease is spread by the deer tick. The lyme vaccine is recommended for dogs that spend time in the woods or fields (camping, hiking, trail walks, hunting, up north recreation). Initially, there are 2 vaccinations, given 3 weeks apart, followed by annual boosters.

Rabies

Rabies is a fatal viral disease that affects all mammals (including people!). The disease is contracted through bite wounds. Due to the serious nature of this disease and the human health hazard it presents, vaccination is required by Wisconsin state law. The initial vaccine is usually given between 4 and 5 months of age, boosted at 1 year and then boosted every 3 years after that.

A note on vaccine reactions: Although rare- any vaccination has the potential to cause vaccine reaction. After all, the point of a vaccine is to induce an immune response! Signs of an acute vaccine reaction include fever, lethargy, pain, swelling at the injection site, vomiting or diarrhea. If you feel your pet is showing any of these symptoms, please call immediately to speak with a doctor for advice.



PARASITES AND PARASITE CONTROL

Dogs can be subject to a myriad of parasites. The following are the most common or important ones that we see.

Heartworms

The heartworm is a blood parasite of dogs and cats that is transmitted via mosquitos. Heartworm disease is debilitating and potentially fatal. The adult worms are slender and long, often measuring up to 14 inches in length. These yucky worms normally live in the right side of the dog or cat's heart where they block/obstruct the flow of blood out of the heart and into the lungs. They can cause significant damage and inflammation to both heart and lungs. If left untreated the dog or cat develops congestive heart failure and death may result. Symptoms of infection are usually not noticed until the infection has reached a serious stage, hence the need for early diagnosis and prevention.

Heartworm disease is usually diagnosed by testing positive on a heartworm screening test. If the disease is caught early, before the heart has been damaged, it can be cured with appropriate therapy. The therapy is costly and risky to the dog.

It can take up to 6 months from the time a mosquito bites a dog, injecting the microscopic heartworm larvae (babies) into the dog's bloodstream, for a heartworm to develop into a full size worm, that is detectable via testing. Hopefully you can see why heartworm prevention is sooo important! It is safer and more economical to prevent this disease (via heartworm preventatives; see below.), than to treat it.

Intestinal Parasites:

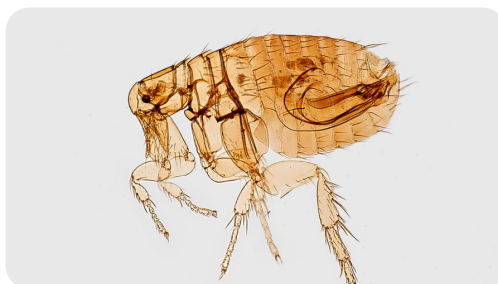
Some parasites can be seen grossly (without a microscope) and some are very small and require assistance to detect them. Intestinal parasites are very common in puppies, contracted from the mother in utero or via milk. Alternatively, the pup can contract these worms by walking in a contaminated area. Collectively or individually, parasites can cause vomiting, diarrhea, weight loss and general unthriftiness and sometimes anemia. Some common culprits:

- Roundworms- long and spaghetti like; curling into C shapes.
- Hookworms- rarely seen in the stool grossly.
- Tapeworms- small white, rice like segments that appear in the stool or around the anus.
- Whipworms- rarely seen in the stool grossly
- Coccidia- microscopic.
- Giardia- microscopic. Very common in dogs! Often dogs can be silent carriers. This is a major reason to check stool samples every year.

Ectoparasites

These are the bugs (ticks/fleas/mites) that want to live on your dog's body.

- Ticks- the most well known tick is the deer tick, but there are many other types of ticks that carry MANY other diseases other than lyme, including but not limited to anaplasmosis, rocky mountain spotted fever and ehrlichiosis to name a few.
- Fleas- tiny jumping bugs that are most commonly a biting nuisance are a problem all year round , but even more so in the warmer months of April through November. They can carry diseases such as cat scratch fever and can trigger allergic skin conditions.
- Mites- a microscopic bug that is spread via direct contact with other infested animals. These parasites cause itching, discomfort and poor coat condition.





HEARTWORM AND FLEA/TICK PREVENTATIVES

Given that you have just learned about all the creepy crawlies that have the potential to move in on your pet and into your home, let's now learn about how to STOP them. The choices here have become numerous. You have topical options, over the counter options, chewable options, collar options and long acting injection options. SO MANY! So overwhelming. Let us help simplify this for you:

- Interceptor Plus Monthly chews- the most comprehensive preventative, covering heartworms, rounds, whips, hooks and tapes.
- Credelio monthly chews- fleas, ticks and a couple mites.

But given the diverse needs of our dogs and pets, one size does not necessarily fit all. If there is a product that you already love- talk to us about it and we can discuss what makes the most sense for you and your pet. Generally speaking, we do NOT recommend over the counter brands, as their safety and efficacy is questionable. You will find better, safer and more reliable results with a veterinary approved and dispensed medication. Talk to your vet about any alternatives or questions you may have. We can help!

Testing for heartworm disease as well as lyme disease and 2 other tick borne infections is recommended annually. This test is called an Accuplex 4 and is a “4 in 1” test. This screening test detects heartworms, anaplasma, lyme and ehrlichia bacteria. Early detection of these organisms can help us to identify potential problems before they start!



FOOD SELECTION AND NUTRITION

Here again, choices are numerous. The science of food is ever evolving in the pet food industry. One important point in recent years is the current research into Grain Free foods. It has come to light that a very specific type of heart disease, called dilated cardiomyopathy is being seen increasingly more often in atypical breeds.



Preliminary research identified boutique style, exotic protein, grain free foods as having much higher associations with this type of heart disease. The scientists that study this condition and it's food association believe that it has to do with a deficiency in the essential amino acid taurine. What we don't yet know is what it is about these foods that causes the taurine deficiency. While the situation is ever evolving, at this point we suggest all puppies and dogs be offered a food that contains grains. This runs counter to what you may see in the pet food stores, as the pet food market has not yet caught up with the medicine. (Though it is getting there!)

Food selection and diet choice can be confusing and overwhelming. The options are myriad and the optimal diet for each pet varies. The Tufts University Veterinary School has an excellent website dedicated to pet nutrition! Check out vetnutrition.tufts.edu for more information on reading pet food labels and how to select the best foods for your pet.



SPAY AND NEUTER



It is recommended to have your female pet spayed (the uterus and ovaries are surgically removed) and your male pet neutered (the testicles are removed). This surgical sterilization process makes them healthier, happier and more comfortable in your home. The benefits of spay/neuter are numerous and well documented, and include decreased risk of certain cancers, elimination of uterine infections in females, elimination of prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) in males, and decreasing male on male aggression. This process also prevents unwanted matings and breeding from occurring, which keeps us from contributing to pet overpopulation!

Historically the ideal time to spay or neuter your dog was thought to be at about 6 months of age. This science is also evolving. There are studies that show leaving dogs intact longer (e.g. delaying surgery until they have reached sexual maturity at 12 months of age) has some protective benefit on musculoskeletal development (lower risk of ACL injuries and possibly lowered risk of hip dysplasia). However, the benefits of this protection need to be weighed against the probability of unwanted matings, increased risk of bleeding during surgery for females and increased risk of mammary cancer in females after 1 or 2 heat cycles. Timing to neuter/spay is a conversation that you can have with your veterinarian and you can decide the best course of action for your dog.



DENTAL CARE

Healthy teeth and gums are important to your pet's overall health. Animals with diseased teeth and gums are prone to other serious problems such as heart, liver, and kidney disease. Brushing and regular dental exams should be started at an early age to promote a long and healthy life.

As with humans, puppies lose their baby teeth as their adult teeth come in. On average this occurs around five or six months of age. Occasionally a baby tooth may be pushed aside when the adult tooth comes in. The retained tooth should be extracted to ensure plenty of room for the adult teeth and prevent additional plaque build up in this area.

It is important to train your puppy at a young age to allow for care of his or her teeth. You should regularly handle your puppy's mouth in order for him to become accustomed to future teeth brushing. Once your puppy's baby teeth have been replaced by adult teeth, we recommend beginning a regular brushing schedule. Try to brush your pet's teeth at least 2-3 times a week (although daily is ideal!). Regular home dental care will greatly help to prevent bad breath, gingivitis, plaque formation and premature tooth loss. It will also help prevent the need for anesthetic dental cleaning procedures.



GROOMING

The frequency with which you bathe your dog is personal preference. However, the more frequently you bathe your dog, the milder the shampoo should be. It is important to use shampoo that is specifically made for dogs to avoid drying out his or her skin. RINSE WELL! Residual shampoo will dry out their young and growing skin. It is also important to protect the ears with cotton balls while bathing to prevent ear infections. If you are washing the face- the eyes should be avoided.

Your dog needs his or her nails trimmed regularly! The goal is to never have your dog's nails hit the floor. No clicking. Long or overgrown nails can contribute to gait changes/abnormalities and exacerbate orthopedic diseases as they get older. Touch your puppy's feet and get them used to handling. This will make nail trims much easier as they get older. If you find that you are unable to trim your dog's nails at home, we are able to trim them here at the clinic or provide tips on how to be more successful.

Periodic cleaning of your dog's ears may also be necessary. Ear cleaning is especially important in dogs with floppy ears or dogs with excessive hair in the ear canals, dogs with allergies and dogs that go swimming. It is best to use a veterinary ear cleanser for this purpose.



TRAINING

Your efforts in training your dog will go a long way towards increasing the pleasure you have in sharing your home with your pet. It is strongly recommended that every puppy be enrolled in an obedience class. These classes are not only invaluable in training YOU to train your puppy on how to behave but are also great for socialization. Please let us know if you need any recommendations on trainers or training classes.

Remember: *reward the things you like, ignore the things you don't like...*

The work you put in while your puppy is young will pay off in years to come. The things that you teach your tiny puppy will stay with them the rest of their life. Remember to consider whether the things that you think are cute when they are small will still be tolerable as they grow. It is easier to teach appropriate behavior now than it is to try to unteach inappropriate behaviors later.

EXERCISE

An appropriate amount of exercise is crucial to any dog's life, but especially a puppy. You will want to make sure that you limit running on concrete until your puppy's growth plates close. Obviously a tired puppy is a happy one- so if you want to "wear them out" please do it on grassy areas. Get your puppy out into the world to be socialized and experience as much as possible. This too will prevent behavior problems as your dog ages.



PET INSURANCE

One good way to ensure that you are able to care for the emergency and routine needs of your pets is to consider pet insurance. This is a growing industry offering a variety of options. Insurance for pets is similar to human health insurance in some ways, but different in others. Generally with pet insurance, you are responsible for paying the initial bills involved with care. The insurance companies then reimburse your out of pocket expenses to varying degrees. Please see the attached table/hand out outlining pet insurance comparisons. There are many variations in what services are covered and to what degree.



FINAL WORD

We are so happy that you found your way to our clinic. Now and always we are here to help you through the joyful as well as the stressful times in your pet's journey through sickness and health. We hope that the information provided here helps you to start on the path to wellness with your pet. If you have any questions or concerns, please call us.



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