

**Owning dogs is great fun and very rewarding, but it is a big responsibility and a long-term commitment.
Did you know dogs live on average 10-16 years?**

Providing for all your dog's needs is the best way of ensuring their physical and mental wellbeing, resulting in a long, healthy life. Here are some guidelines for offering your dog the best care:



Provide a suitable and stimulating living environment



Dogs should not be left for longer than 4 hours. If you work full time and are going to be out of the house for long periods of the day, it may not be the best time to get a dog. *(You could also look into getting a professional dog walker to take your dog out during the day).*

Dogs need somewhere comfy and cosy to sleep. It's a good idea to provide a variety of options; a bed on the floor, the sofa and your bed are all great options. Some dogs will feel safer in an enclosed space, so it's a good idea to provide a crate, they can then take themselves off for a snooze. When your dog is on their bed or in their crate they should never be disturbed. If you have children, it's important that they understand not to pester the dog when they are sleeping.

Providing access to a safe and secure outdoor space is vital for them as it allows them somewhere to go to the toilet and somewhere to explore and sniff. Some dogs can jump over fences or squeeze under gates so make sure everything is secure and ready before bringing your dog home.

Is your property rented? If so, we will need to see permission from your landlord that you are allowed to keep dogs.



Preserve their health by protecting them from pain, injury, and disease



It is important to register your dog at a vet and take them for annual health checks.

They need annual vaccinations to protect against leptospirosis and kennel cough and three yearly vaccinations against distemper, parvovirus, and canine hepatitis.

Dogs need regular protection against parasites. They require monthly flea prevention and will need worming every few months.

It is a good idea to carry out regular health checks at home. Ensure their eyes, nose and mouth are clean and free from discharge. Check their ears to see if they are clean. Brush their coat to check for any lumps and bumps and ensure their skin is healthy with no wounds or flakiness.

You will need to clean your dog's teeth daily, either with toothpaste or a dental chew.

Monitoring their toilet habits is another good way to keep an eye on their health. If they are struggling to toilet or are toileting in inappropriate places it may be a good idea to have a vet check-up.

If you ever have any concerns, please speak to your vet.



Provide a nutritious diet and fresh water



There is a huge variety of dog food available on the market and it can be a bit of a minefield. We recommend feeding a mix of wet and dry food. Food should ideally be grain free with a high meat content. We feed Nature Diet wet food and Barking Heads dry biscuits.

When feeding we suggest using activity feeders instead of bowls as this makes mealtimes more interesting and uses their brains more. It also makes food last a bit longer. There are lots to choose from: Kongs, puzzle feeders, snuffle mats, licky mats etc. Try to provide a variety of different ones to keep your dog stimulated. They should provide a challenge but not be too difficult or frustrating.

You can also use your dog's feed allowance to help with training or during playtime and walks.

Healthy, natural chews are good for dogs as they help keep their teeth clean and can help to reduce stress by releasing calming hormones. Avoid products containing rawhide as they contain chemicals that can be harmful for your dog.

Dogs must be provided with clean, fresh water at all times. Large, ceramic bowls are often ideal as they are too heavy to tip over.



Promote natural behaviour and provide appropriate companionship



Dogs need plenty of exercise and it's a good idea to research different breeds of dogs as they all have different traits and energy requirements. Some will need hours of walking, multiple times a day with lots of variety. Other breeds will be more content with shorter, easy walks. All dogs love to sniff so it's a good idea to let them have time on every walk to go on a "sniffari" – let them wander at their own pace, either off lead or on a long line, to have a good sniff of their surroundings.

Going on walks can also be a great time for your dog to say hello to other doggy pals. But remember, not all dogs want to say hello to each other and it's important to listen to your dog as well as others when out and about.

Teaching your dogs cue words and tricks is a great way to bond with them and keep your dog's mind active. Start with basics such as sit, down and stay. You can then progress onto other things such as paw, leave it, and spin. Remember to always reward your dog and never punish them.

Provide a variety of toys for your dog to play with; tug toys, balls, cuddly toys are all great. Playing with your dog is another excellent way to bond with your dog and it can also be used for training. Hide their favourite toy and see if they can find it. See if your dog will leave their toy and retrieve it on command. See if your dog will swap a toy for another one. We don't recommend playing repetitive fetch with your dog. Many dogs can easily become fixated on a ball and the action of running and suddenly stopping puts stress on their joints, causing long term damage. It's also not a good idea to encourage your dog to play with sticks. They can splinter and cause injury to their mouth or get lodged in crevices causing pain and possible infection.