

Getting your puppy off to a good start

Whether you're a first time dog owner, or you've had dogs in the past, we have all the information you need to ensure you and your puppy get off to a good start.

Vaccinations

Just like us, puppies and adult dogs have vaccinations against common life-threatening diseases to ensure they stay as healthy as possible and avoid preventable diseases throughout their life. Since the Covid pandemic, we are all used to the idea of vaccines to build up immunity and having boosters to keep that those immunity levels up. It's just the same for dogs. Puppies generally start having their primary vaccination course from 8 weeks of age. Some breeders or rescue centres may have start your puppy's injections prior to you collecting them.



The core vaccinations are against:

- **Distemper (D)**
- **Hepatitis (H)**
- **Parvovirus (P)**
- **Leptospirosis (L4)**
- **Parainfluenza and Bordetella (Kennel Cough) (KC)**

The usual schedule is as follows:

8 weeks: DHP + L4

10 weeks: DHP +/- KC

12 weeks: L4

An optional third Parvovirus vaccination can be given at 16 weeks of age to ensure adequate cover is provided. This is recommended in certain geographical areas and certain breeds, particularly black and tan breeds, like Rottweilers.

Kennel Cough is a highly contagious airborne infection that can be spread by any dog on a walk but it is in higher prevalence where lots of dogs are in close proximity such as puppy classes, boarding kennels or doggy dog care. Most establishments would insist that a dog is vaccinated against Kennel Cough prior to going in to their care.

Annual booster vaccinations are recommended; a full health check will be given at the same time.

When can my puppy go out?

The guidelines state that puppies can start going out for walks in low risk areas a week after their second vaccination. Until then, they should stay in your own enclosed garden. They can mix with other dogs if you know they are fully vaccinated, as meeting other dogs is important for their socialisation. We would advise to avoid areas such as farms, stables and water courses, until a week after their second L4 vaccine as leptospirosis (Weil's disease) is spread by rats and rats are more prevalent in those places.

Microchipping

It is a legal requirement for puppies to be microchipped by 8 weeks old, therefore they should already be chipped by the time they come to live with you. You just need to make sure their microchip details and proof of ownership is transferred over to you.

Microchips are the size of a grain of rice and are quick and easy to implant. They provide permanent identification of your puppy and allow a much higher chance of a lost or stolen pet being reunited with their rightful owner.



Insurance

Pet insurance is highly recommended to cover the costs of vets' bills in the unfortunate event that your dog becomes unwell or has an accident. Just as we would insure our cars and homes, it is wise as a minimum to insure your dog for 3rd party liability in case they cause an accident (e.g. by running in to the path of a car), attack another dog or bite a person.

Pet insurance covers unexpected costs and complementary therapies, and avoids having to make difficult financial decisions about the treatment of your pet, unless you know you have the ability to pay the bill in full.

There are several different types of cover and premiums. Please ask a member of the Claro Hill team for advice. We can also offer a voucher for 4 weeks free insurance to get you started.

Parasite control

Fleas, ticks and worms are an all-year round problem that can not only affect your pet but also affect you and your family.

Based on the lifestyle your puppy is likely to have and environmental factors at home, we will create a tailor-made plan for parasite control for your dog. Questions we need to answer for example are;

- are they raw fed?

- do you go to areas where there are more ticks, e.g. Scotland, the Lakes and the moors?
- do you have children?
- do you have cats?
- do they eat grass and slugs or snails?
- would you prefer to remember to medicate once a month or once a quarter?
- will your dog eat tablets or would you prefer a spot-on products?

Regardless of which product you go for, we recommend monthly “weigh and worm” appointments with our nurses. Not only to make sure we have the right product for their current weight, but also to make sure that they get used to coming to the vets without having an injection or anything scary done. It’s a great opportunity for training and socialisation. They will soon realise it’s also about fussing them and getting lots of tasty treats.

Pet Health Plans

The Pet Health Plan (PHP) at Claro Hill Vets includes all of your puppy’s primary vaccination course, their microchip (if not already done) and parasite control for the full year. In addition to all of this, they get UNLIMITED consultations with the vets, as well as nurse consults, which can be utilised for nail clipping and emptying anal glands, amongst other things.

The monthly plan helps to spread the cost evenly throughout the year and you will make big savings on it too.

Nutrition

A good quality, balanced diet is essential from day 1 to ensure correct growth and development of your puppy. Complete diets contain all of the nutrients your puppy needs.

Feeding a high quality complete food is the easiest way to ensure optimum nutrition.

Puppy’s tummies are only small so we would recommend feeding four small meals a day at 8 weeks of age, then gradually weaning this down to one or two meals a day by adolescence. Weighing or measuring out the dry food also allows you to monitor their appetite if they are ever unwell.

Our preferred diet choice is Hills Vet Essentials. Please ask one of our team members for advice on the best diet and nutrition for your puppy, the Hills loyalty scheme and a £10 voucher off your first bag of food.



Neutering

Neutering advice would be given on an individual basis as there is no “one size fits all” with dogs. Recommendations will be tailored to your dog’s needs, based on the most up-to-date research. Generally, it can be performed safely from 6 months of age, but it doesn’t have to be. For certain breeds, we would advise waiting until they are full grown, which would be 12-18 months depending on the breed.

Bitches (female dogs) can be spayed either before or after their first season, and significantly reduces the risk of mammary tumours (depending on when it is performed) and also removes the risk of a potentially life-threatening pyometra (infection of the uterus). In bitches, we perform an ovariohysterectomy via a surgical approach. Please ask us if you would like more information about laparoscopic ovariectomies (lap spays).

Castrating males would be decided on an individual basis, dependent on the breed, temperament and other environmental factors. While neutering can have a protective effect for certain conditions (for example benign prostatic hyperplasia and testicular tumours), it has also been shown that there is a higher incidence of some diseases in neutered dogs, (for example prostatic carcinoma, cruciate ligament disease and intervertebral disc disease).

We would always discuss the pros and cons of neutering with you depending on your dog’s age, breed and temperament.

To book in for your puppy in for a health check and vaccinations, please call us on 01423 228080 or visit www.clarohillvets.co.uk.

The vaccinations are also included in our Pet Health Plans for puppies.

