

## Health Care

As mentioned above, it is very important that all dogs have regular veterinary check-ups. Your veterinarian will be able to ensure that your puppy has all of its vaccinations in a timely manner. The following is a general veterinary care schedule by age of dog.

### Vaccination Schedule.

8-9 weeks old

- 🐕 #1 Vaccination
  - Distemper combo (with Parvo)
  - Coronavirus vaccine
  - Bordatella intranasal vaccine
- 🐕 Intestinal Parasites (worm) exam/ FECAL
- 🐕 Heartworm preventative

11-12 weeks old

- 🐕 #2 Vaccination (boosters)
  - Distemper combo
  - Coronavirus
  - Lyme Disease Vaccine

- 🐕 Intestinal Parasite Re-check

15-16 weeks old

- 🐕 #3 Vaccination (boosters)
  - Distemper combo
  - Lyme Disease Vaccination
  - Intestinal Parasite Re-Check

16-24 weeks old

- 🐕 Rabies Vaccine

24 months- Spaying

24 Months- Neutering

24-28 months old

- 🐕 Penn Hip / OFA
- 🐕 Elbows/Shoulders X-rayed
- 🐕 Thyroid Screening

## Daily Grooming.

Daily grooming is essential and an often over-looked part of the equation for a growing puppy/dog. Most grooming exercises are naturally aversive to many puppies, and we need to make sure that they learn to actively enjoy it, even seek it out on their own. Using **classical conditioning**, we pair all grooming exercises with something that is very special to the dog. This may be a special toy or treat that they never have access to EXCEPT for grooming times. For novice dogs or puppies, we begin the process very slowly, never forcing anything onto the dog. The important thing here is not a complete grooming, but slowly incorporating the grooming setting and materials with “the best thing in the world” for the dog. Below, all grooming activities are broken down into small pieces. These exercises should be started as soon as possible (i.e., as soon as you get your puppy). Never proceed to the next step if the dog is uncomfortable with the previous step. It is not essential that all steps be completed in one sitting – these exercises are meant to be progressed through over sessions, not within sessions. At first, the dog will be consuming a large amount of treats during these exercises (adjust feedings as necessary), but slowly, we will give a treat only at the end of the entire grooming session. Be aware that dogs are not good at generalizing, so if you try these exercises in a different location or a different person than usual, you will need to start from the beginning. These exercises should be completed for at least 10 minutes once a day.

1. Brushing Coat. Brushing the coat will allow you to inspect for signs of irritation or rash. Contact your veterinarian if you notice anything suspicious. Have the special toy or treat handy for this exercise. Gently brush your empty hand over the dogs head – click and give special toy or treat. Continue at this stage until the dog actively enjoys head-petting. Then begin pets all the way down the back, over tail, and down each leg, each followed by a click and treat. Pick up one paw – click and treat. Continue this step with all paws until there is no discomfort. Next, pick up brush and present to dog. Click and treat anytime the dog looks at or sniffs the brush. Using the BACK of the brush, make one swipe over back of head – click and treat. Then, one swipe with the BACK of the brush down the entire back – click and treat. Down each leg and over tail. Next, do the same thing using the FRONT of the brush. Be sure that the dog is getting PLENTY of treat access and DO NOT be afraid to back up a few steps at any sign of discomfort.

2. Ear Cleaning. Begin by lifting up each ear and clicking/treating after each. Then begin lifting the ear and poking one finger inside – click and treat. Have the ear cleaning solution bottle nearby – click and treat any looking or sniffing at the bottle. Pick up the bottle and place close to ear – click and treat. Present cotton to dog – click and treat any looking or sniffing. Place cotton gently in each ear – click and treat. Next, squirt ear cleaner in ear – click and treat. Rub ear with cleaner inside – dogs usually enjoy this, but you can click and treat anyway. Then clean out ear with cotton – click and treat. Ears should be cleaned about once a week (or whenever the ear looks dirty), but daily Practice Ear Cleanings will prevent any negative associations being made with ear cleaning time. Check ears for discharge, unpleasant odor or particles. Watch for any excessive scratching or shaking of the head as this may indicate a problem. Notify your veterinarian if you notice redness or swelling in the ears.

3. Nail Trimming. To begin, pick up one paw at a time – click and treat. Squeeze paws (one toe at a time) like you are going to trim nails – click and treat. Pick up the nail trimmers – click and treat for looks or sniffs. Pick up one paw and place trimmer close to it – click and treat. Touch trimmer to nail – click and treat. Do this for all feet and nails. Begin by barely taking off the tips of the nails. Nail trims generally need to be done about once a week to once every two weeks. Between actual trims, it is best to give “Pretend Trims” to avoid any negative association being made for nail trimming time. Any “quicking” (cutting into the nerve and blood vessel of the nail) will result in pain, bleeding, and a likely fear of future nail trims (see illustration for more information). Be sure to have Syptic Powder near by in the case of an accidental quicking (this will shrink the blood vessels and stop the bleeding). Nails need to be tended to regularly. The excess growth of nails can lead to distorted posture, cuts into the skin, and nail breakage. Frequent trims will reduce the length of the dog’s quicks.

4. Toothbrushing. Prime tooth brushing by inserting your fingers into the dogs mouth – click and treat. Then begin rubbing your fingers over the dogs’ gumline – click and treat. Present the toothbrush and click/treat for looking or sniffing. It helps if you add some paste to the brush – dogs tend to enjoy the taste of it. In the beginning, the dog may want to lick off the toothpaste or chew the toothbrush – let them! Very slowly begin to lift lips and brush the teeth. It is essential that this is a positive experience for them! A dog’s teeth need to be brushed at least once a day. They can get gingivitis and this disease can create many other health problems. Never use human toothpaste – it can make dogs very sick.

5. Bathing. Dogs should have baths about twice a month. Avoid getting water in their ears, as it may cause infections. With Golden Retrievers, it is important to check the coat for mats and detangle them before bathing. Present the dog to the bathing setting with all materials present – give lots of praise and treats. Have the dog JUMP ON to the bathing area (if it is a tub). You may need a separate chair or stool as a step so that the dog can JUMP ON. Give lots of treats as the dog simply stays in the bathing area. Attach a leash to the dog and the tub – click and treat. Click and treat for sniffing or looking at the shampoo bottle or hose. Turn on water, but do not wet dog – click and treat . Wet one part of the dog at a time – click and treat. Extinguish all escape behaviors by not allowing escape. If you notice escape behaviors, go back a few steps. Wash one leg – click and treat. Follow this slow progression until you are able to bathe the entire dog with no escape or stress behaviors. If drying with a blow dryer, use small, treat-intense steps. You may begin with the dryer off near the dog – click and treat. Then turn it on at a distance away from the dog – click and treat. Gradually move the dryer nearer to the dog until the dog is comfortable with the blow dryer. Begin by short bursts of the blow dryer on the dog’s coat – click and treat. Gradually extend the time the dryer contacts the dog’s coat until the dog is comfortable.

### **Feeding.**

It is important for the growth and health of the puppy/dog that he/she be fed a high quality dog food. Be sure that if you must change foods, you do so slowly. An abrupt change in diet can cause diarrhea, vomiting and stomach upset. When changing foods, mix the foods with most of the familiar food at first, then gradually reduce the portion that is the familiar food over the next few days.

Puppies **between eight weeks and six months** should be fed 3 times a day. If you are gone during the day, you can feed one meal before you leave, another as soon as you get home, and the last one shortly before bedtime. Sample schedule for three feedings per day:

Breakfast	Mid Day	Dinner
6:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	9:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.

As for the amount to feed per meal, this will vary from dog to dog. Consult a veterinarian in order to determine the correct amount to feed the puppy/dog you are raising.

**Do not overfeed!** Too much food can result in a loose stool and obesity and it is critical to keep the puppy/dog from gaining too much weight too fast. Gaining weight too fast can impact the way his/her bones grow and can interfere with training.

Only leave the food dish down for 10-15 minutes at each feeding, then take it up. Don't put the food down again until the next scheduled mealtime. If he/she refuses to eat, do not feel sorry for him/her; he/she won't starve him/herself. There is no need to be alarmed if the puppy/dog is not eating unless there are other symptoms indicating he/she is sick.

At **six months** of age, he/she will go to two feedings a day. You can do this over a period of days, by slowly decreasing the amount of his/her third meal. Many of the clients have found that their dogs perform better if he/she eats two meals a day. Sample schedule for two feedings per day:

Breakfast	Dinner
6:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Providing a "window" for feeding times, as in the sample schedules above, while the puppy/dog is in training will prevent him/her requiring a rigid feeding schedule when he/she becomes a service dog. The puppy/dog must be flexible in this regard as clients work and home schedules often vary.

Many breeders, particularly of larger breeds, take their puppies off puppy food at six months of age. This will vary from breed to breed. Dogs that grow fast are prone to skeletal problems that can be brought on by rapid growth. Check with your veterinarian to see if this is something that might need to be done for the puppy/dog you are raising.

After feeding the puppy/dog, kennel him/her for at least 30 – 60 minutes. Jumping, playing or running immediately after eating can result in stomach torsion, which can result in death.

Take him/her outside to eliminate immediately after removing him/her from the kennel.

If the puppy/dog's stools are somewhat loose, feeding him/her too much food can cause this. Try reducing the amount you feed him/her for a couple of days to see if that solves the problem. Always consult the veterinarian if you have any concerns.

Training while feeding. It is important to begin early prevention of food guarding during meal times. To do this, begin placing your hands into the bowl while the dog eats. At any sign of aggression, take the food bowl away for about one minute, then try again. It is also essential that feeding times are preceded by obedience (the dog may NEVER get a free meal, treat, toy, etc). Before setting down the food bowl, have the dog sit. Place the bowl in front of the dog, but do not allow them to eat until you say EAT. If they go for the bowl, say NO and quickly remove the bowl for about 30 seconds. Then try again.

### **Treats**

Feed the puppy/dog hard dog biscuits as treats. Hard biscuits help control tartar build up on the puppy/dog's teeth. During official training times, I recommend using something that is about the size of a raisin and palatable. Look for special training treats at pet stores or cut up chicken hot dogs and microwave them for a few seconds. Never feed the puppy/dog rawhide, pig's ears, cow hooves, etc. Remember: dogs should never get FREE treats – always require obedience before a treat is granted.

### **Never feed the puppy/dog table scraps!!!**

### **Water**

**The minimum daily water requirement** for a dog is: One (1) ounce of water per one (1) pound of body weight (i.e., a 25 pound dog should have a minimum of 25 ounces of water available to drink per day). Please remember to provide an opportunity for the dog to drink as much fresh water as he/she desires at least one a day – choose a time when you are available to take him/her outside to eliminate as needed. Do not be alarmed if the dog regurgitates after drinking immediately following playtime or when overheated.

**Exercise.** This is the most important factor toward healthy growth. Young puppies (8-12 weeks) should be prevented from romping too hard or jumping on and off objects. Their bones and joints are still growing and forming, and too much trauma at a young age can cause health problems later. Walks, playing fetch and tug (see Games Section), and access to other dogs (dog parks) are great forms of exercise. Do not run with young dogs.