

Responsible Dog Ownership

A fluffy white puppy is walking towards the camera on a gravel path. The puppy has soft, white fur and floppy ears. The background is a blurred green lawn and a concrete curb.

If you are thinking of getting a dog, you have to remember that this is a life-time commitment. Preparing yourself for the responsibilities of dog ownership is the beginning of a happy and rewarding time sharing your home with a pet.

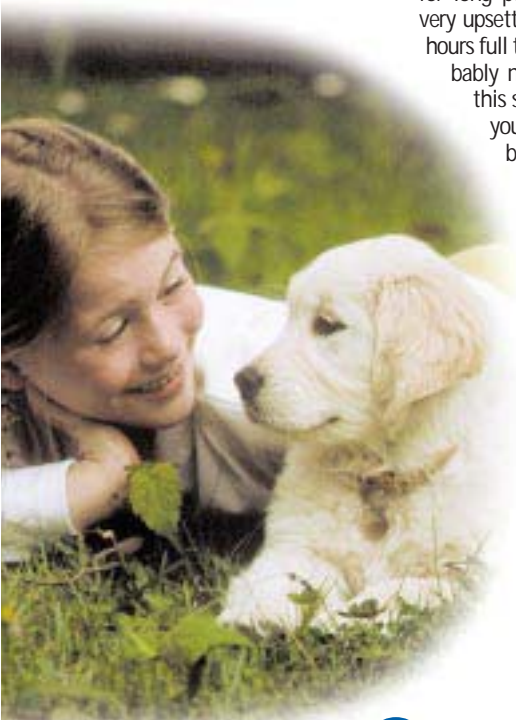
But what are the considerations? What are the needs of this partnership? As this is a partnership and not a one way relationship you have to consider whether you are suited to your chosen pet and vice versa

Owner's needs

Look carefully at what you would want from a dog, and what you could give.

● *Lifestyle*

Dogs, like small children, need time and attention. They like to be loved, and leaving them alone for long periods of time can be very upsetting. If you work long hours full time, then a dog is probably not the pet for you at this stage in your career. If you have just had a new baby, or have very small children, again consider carefully about whether this is a good time to have another new family member.



● *Home size*

Have you a large house and garden that would suit a boisterous, energetic Collie? Are you the sedentary type who lives in a small flat, where maybe a small lap dog would be ideal? Dogs can vary in size from the chipper Chihuahua to the massive Mastiff.

Pet's needs

● *Time*

The PDSA estimates that a dog will need about 5 hours a day of your time and undivided attention. That would include routine 'maintenance' such as grooming, dental care and feeding as well as play.

● *Money*

Dogs will cost you money as well as time. Not only is there the 'one off' items, such as buying the dog, beds, leads and collars, but there is the regular expenses such as food. Again, the amount eaten depends on the breed and the activity.

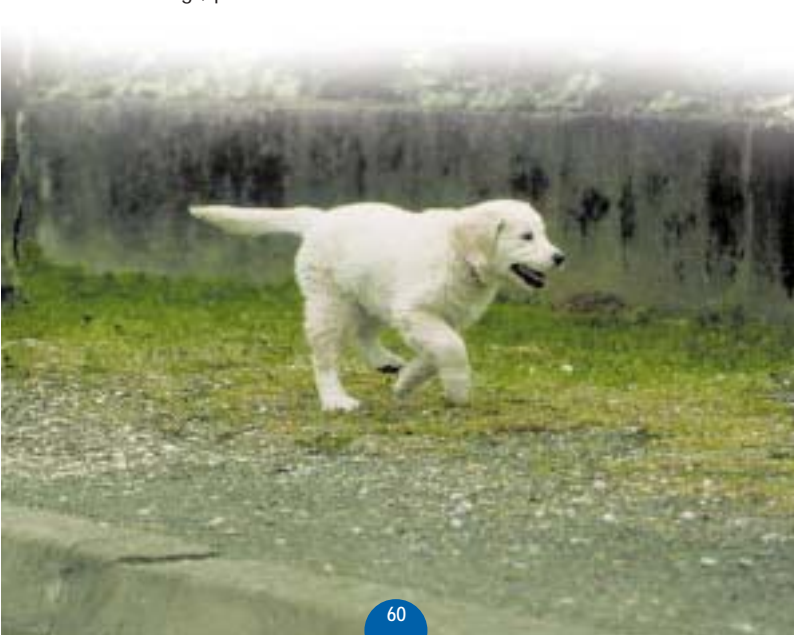


● Exercise

Again, this varies according to the breed, but it is vitally important. It helps the owner keep fit as well. When out for their exercise, dogs should be on a lead in a built up area, and only released when you are absolutely sure your dog is safe. You also have to make sure that your pet is not a danger to other dogs, pedestrians or the

actual dog walker. When your dog is out, they will probably want to go to the toilet. As a responsible pet owner, it is vital that you remove the solid waste from the pavement, or train your dog to use the gutter as their lavatory.

Now you have chosen the type of dog that you feel you can get along with, what is the next stage?



Pet arrival

The best time to take on a new dog is when you have time and there is not too much going on in the household. This is one of the factors why Christmas is not a good time to get a new dog. Two weeks of care and attention initially will pay off in the end, and if you have older school-aged children, the school holidays are a good time to get that new family member.

● Choosing a vet

You are also going to need to register your pet with the vet you have chosen to look after your new pet. Make an appointment as soon as you can for a check up, and the vet can then devise a care programme for your dog.

● The essential veterinary care involves

A Vaccination Programme

This varies according to past history and age of your dog. Prevention of infectious diseases through vaccinations is an essential part of caring for your dog.

Neutering Programme

Getting your female dog neutered, unless you are intending to breed from your dog with absolute certainty of good homes for the pups, is essential. The average number of offspring produced by a dog is between 4 and 6 pups per litter, though it can be many more. Neutering a male dog will decrease the tendency to roam and be aggressive.

● Parasite Prevention Care Programme

A regular worming, flea and other ectoparasite control programme can be suggested by your vet.

Keep the telephone number of your veterinary practice by the phone, together with a pencil and paper to note down any instructions.

Holidays

● Preparing for a holiday has to be done well in advance. Are you taking your pet with you, and if so have you checked out the hotel? Are you putting your dog in a kennel? If so, find out what vaccinations may be necessary and book a place well in advance – good kennels get booked up very quickly. Are you getting a house sitter? Check out the references, and make sure all eventualities are covered. If you are planning to take your pet abroad, remember that you need to meet certain conditions (Pet Travel Scheme).

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Useful PDSA numbers:

Veterinary Service Enquiries
0800 731 2502

Petsurance
0800 980 6000

Donations
0800 019 9166

Best Friends (regular giving)
0800 019 9155

Volunteering Centre
0800 854 194

For further information on the work of the PDSA, please contact the PR Department, PDSA, Whitechapel Way, Priorslee, Telford, Shropshire TF2 9PQ
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When Should Your Puppy Have a Veterinary Check?

Your puppy's first booster is due a year after the initial course, at approximately 15 months of age. However, a veterinary check at 7 to 10 months is advisable. Small adjustments to the daily routine at this time, may help to prevent problems becoming established later in life. Things to Consider:

Behaviour and Training

Mistakes in your puppy's education can lead to long term behavioural problems.

Feeding

Adapting the feeding program as your puppy grows helps to prevent developmental growth problems, particularly important in large breed dogs.

Dentition

As your puppy ages, the deciduous teeth (milk teeth) will fall out. Any remaining milk teeth need to be removed to prevent long term damage to the permanent teeth.

Puberty

Generally, between 6 and 12 months your puppy will go through puberty. Neutering both dogs and bitches at an early age is proven to reduce their chance of having certain types of cancers later in life.

External Parasites

More trips outside means more risk of infestation with fleas and ticks. Ensure your puppy is treated with an effective product for both, such as Frontline®.

Worming

Don't forget worming preparations do not have lasting activity - you must regularly worm your dog.