



# Care guide: Dogs



Rescue. Protect. Lead.



Whether you have already welcomed your new dog into your home or are about to adopt a dog, we wanted to share some top tips for offering the best care. Providing for your dog's needs is the best way of ensuring their physical and mental wellbeing, so here are our team's recommendations:



#### PROVIDE A SUITABLE LIVING ENVIRONMENT

- Have a safe space for the dog in your home that is quiet, away from people and other pets, especially when you first take them home.
- Always have somewhere comfy and secure for your dog to sleep and rest (e.g. a bed, den or crate).
- Keep your dog on a lead out on walks until you are confident with their recall. A long line can be used to allow them to have some more freedom and to keep them safe while you develop their recall skills. Secure dog runs are also a great place to visit.
- If you have a garden, make sure garden gates are kept closed and that there are no gaps in fences.
- Clean up after your dog goes to the toilet (outdoors and any indoor accidents) to prevent unpleasant odours, and remember it is an offence to not pick up after your dog in public space.
- In warm weather, be careful when you exercise your dog and never leave them in a car on a warm day. Dogs can overheat quickly which can cause heatstroke or cardiac arrest, which can be fatal.
- In cold weather or during the winter, some dogs may need to wear a coat to keep warm and cosy. Make sure your dog is visible if walking in the dark by using a high-visibility reflective coat or flashing collar, and make sure to wash your dog's paws and legs after walking on gritted pavements.
- Take particular care during the firework season and provide safe spaces in your home for your dog and keep curtains closed to reduce the sound and light from nearby fireworks. If you go outside, make sure to keep your dog on a lead during this time to prevent them from running off if they get a fright.
- Be considerate of your dog over seasonal holiday times as our homes can often become busier, routines can be different, and there can be new, unfamiliar hazards in your home. Your dog may be curious about your decorations or food which may be dangerous to your dog so make sure any hazards are out of reach, and always make sure the dog has a safe and quiet space to go to if they need to sleep, or rest or hide.



### LOOK AFTER THEIR PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Make sure to register your dog with a vet as soon as possible and take them for their annual health checks.
- Be mindful each day to look out for any indications of pain or symptoms of illness. If you're unsure or find something out of the ordinary, reach out to your veterinarian for advice.
- Ensure your dog is kept up to date with vaccinations to protect against serious, and in some cases fatal, diseases.
- Keep up to date with flea, worm and tick treatment.
- Be aware of potential hazards like toxic plants, foods or cleaning products that are unsafe for dogs and make sure to keep them out of reach.
- Depending on the dog's coat length, they may require daily or frequent brushing to prevent matting and to make sure their coat stays healthy.
- Keep your dog's teeth clean by using a special dog toothbrush or dental chew.
- Every dog requires different amounts of exercise, depending on health, age and breed, however most will need to walk several times a day. If you're uncertain about how much exercise to give your dog, please ask our team and they can advise you.
- Providing the right amount of exercise will help keep nails the right length, however some dogs may need their nails clipped. Visiting a dog groomer can be the best option if you are worried about doing this yourself.
- Monitor your dog's toilet habits. Stress and change may cause upset tummies that often are resolved when your dog settles, but if you notice anything unusual, get in touch with your vet to be sure it's not something more serious.
- Whilst we hope your dog doesn't experience emergencies, it is important to be prepared if they do. Make sure to seek immediate veterinary attention if there is an emergency. Here are some symptoms to watch out for:

- ! Your dog's toilet habits have changed, and they have reduced or stopped peeing or poeing or have excessive diarrhoea.
- ! If your dog isn't eating or has shown a change in thirst levels.
- ! If your dog has eaten something they shouldn't have. Certain objects such as toys, strings, and any foreign object can become stuck in the intestinal tract and cause serious problems.
- ! If they have eaten anything poisonous. Here are a few poisonous items for dogs to look out for: chocolate, caffeine, rat poison, slug pellets, herbicides, grapes and raisins, lilies, antifreeze and drugs such as aspirin and vitamin D.
- ! If your dog has collapsed or has a seizure.
- ! If there is any change to your dog's breathing such as showing an increased effort in breathing or is breathing rapidly.
- ! If your dog has experienced trauma and/or is bleeding excessively.
- ! If your dog is showing signs of pain and is not moving, hunched up, hiding away or is yelping.
- ! If your dog is showing signs of heatstroke, such as vomiting, shaking, bright red or pale gums.
- ! If your dog's stomach appears bloated and they seem in pain or are lethargic.





### PROVIDE THE RIGHT DIET

- Our team will advise you of any dietary requirements for your dog and what they are currently being fed.
- We recommend you continue to feed your dog the same type of food as what they were fed at the centre when you first take them home, and if you want to change this, do so gradually overtime to prevent upsetting their stomach.
- Dogs generally prefer several meals throughout the day, rather than one large meal.
- Always ensure there is clean, fresh water available. This includes if your dog spends time in a crate, even during the night.
- Dogs love a treat! They can be useful to help build a bond with your dog and to support their training. Make sure to follow the instructions on the packet and avoid overfeeding them, as this could upset their stomach. If you want an alternative, you can also use your dog's normal food which can also be used during training or for walks.
- If your dog eats too quickly, there are some great products that you can use to make food-time more interesting and slow them down. Some examples include: kongs, puzzle feeders, snuffle or licky mats.
- Your vet will be able to advise what is a healthy weight for your dog. If you notice an increase or decrease in weight, it may be that you need to adjust the amount you're feeding your dog, however if there are any drastic changes, speak to your vet for advice.



### PROMOTE NATURAL BEHAVIOURS

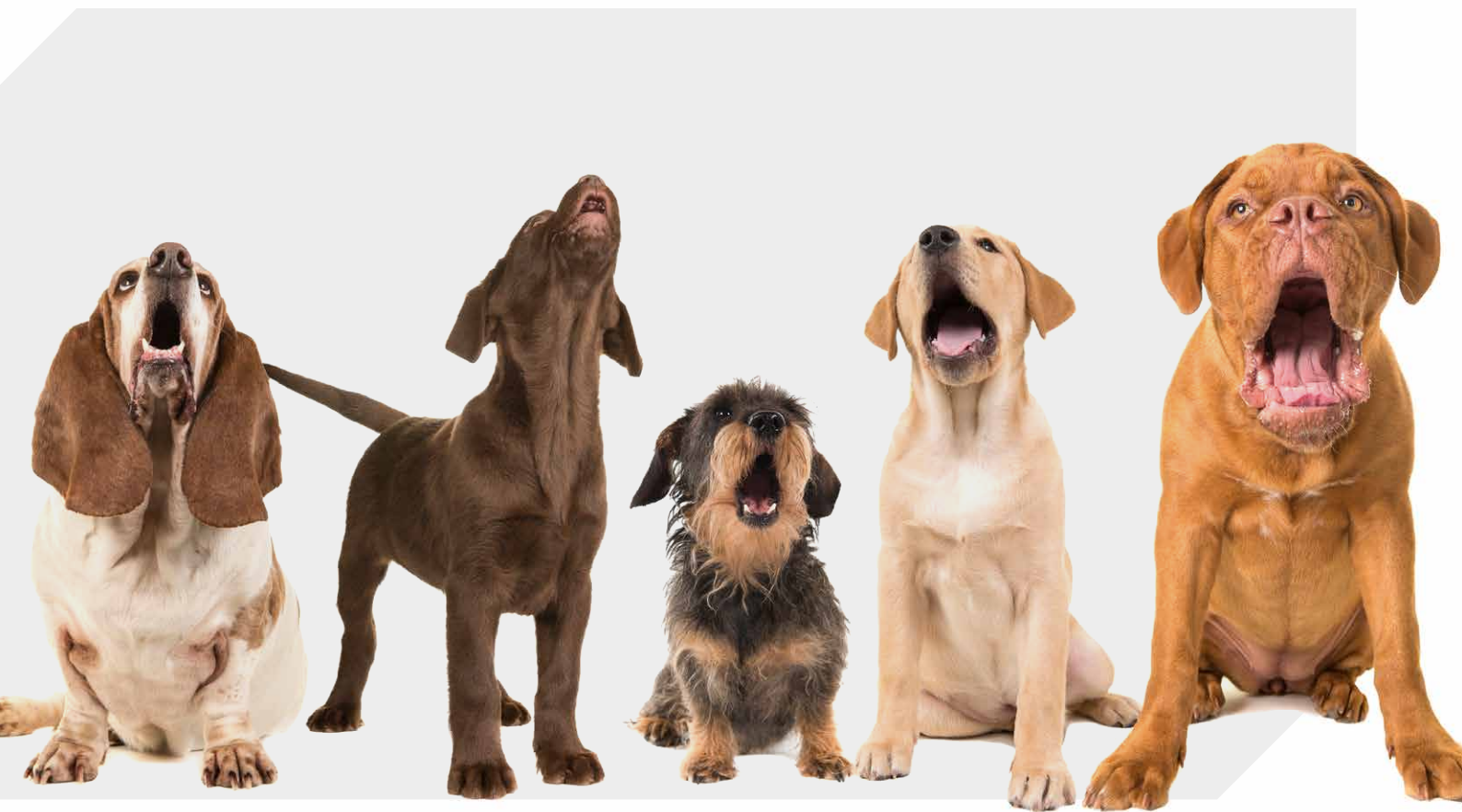
- All dogs love to sniff! Sniffing is a great source of mental stimulation for dogs so make sure to let them sniff about on your walks, and if you're looking to create some mental stimulation for them at home, you can hide toys and treats around your home and garden for your dog to find.
- Play with your dog and try out different types of toys. Playing with your dog can be a good way to build a bond! Always make sure toys are safe for the size and breed of dog and keep an eye out in case they get damaged.
- Give your dog space and allow them time alone to sleep and rest. On average, dogs should sleep 12 – 14 hours a day. If you have children, make sure they know not to disturb a dog if it is resting or sleeping.
- If you already have dogs or cats living with you, our team will provide guidance with how to safely introduce the animals together. If you have other types of animals, such as rabbits, hamsters or other small animals, make sure they are kept safe away from the dog and their enclosures are secure.
- Patience is key when your dog gets used to new things in your home. Some dogs are scared of noisy items such as the Hoover, the tv or even the dishwasher. Be patient with your dog as they get comfortable in their new home.
- Out of the home, there's a lot going on and this can be overwhelming for some dogs. Carefully and slowly build up new experiences for your dog, and where appropriate, carefully introduce your dog to other dogs and people out on walks. Whilst you're out on walks, do respect if your dog, other dogs, or other people don't want to engage.
- Another great way to bond with your dog is to teach them tricks and how to behave in different situations.  
**This will also help you learn more about your dog. It is important to never punish your dog, and only use positive reinforcement techniques such as praise and treats.**





### STAY IN TUNE WITH THEIR MENTAL STATE

- Dogs are sentient beings and are capable of feeling a huge range of emotions.
- Learn to read your dog's body language as it is key in telling you if they are happy or not. Sometimes signs can be subtle so make sure to look for how they're behaving and changes in their body language, including their eyes, ears, tails, mouth and body. Remember, a waggy tail doesn't always mean a happy dog.
- If you need behavioural support and want to understand your dog more, we recommend looking at the Animal Behaviour and Training Council Practitioner register to find someone who can support you. This is covered by most pet insurance, so make sure to check before you take out your policy.



We hope you and your dog have had a good adoption experience and are looking forward to your future together. Our team will always be there to support you if you need more advice or further support. Keep in touch with our team as we love to hear about successful adoptions and know how both of you are getting along.

**For further advice on how best to take care of your dog, please visit our website:**

[www.scottishspca.org/advice/dogs/](http://www.scottishspca.org/advice/dogs/)