

Dog and Puppy Care



“Congratulations on adopting a dog or puppy from the SPCA. Dogs bring enormous joy into our lives and we wish you many years of happiness together.”

This guide has been developed to help answer some common questions about settling your new dog or puppy into your home. If you have any other questions or concerns after adoption, please call your local SPCA and they will be happy to assist. There is also further information about dog and puppy care on our website: www.rnzspca.org.nz



Pet insurance

The SPCA highly recommends buying pet insurance to cover the costs of unexpected illnesses and pet emergencies. When your dog or cat is sick or injured, it's a stressful time. Vet care can be expensive and you want what's best for your pet. We recommend Southern Cross Pet Insurance – they offer a great range of insurance plans and it's a brand you can trust. Go online to www.southerncrosspet.co.nz for more information.

Preparing for your new dog

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You will need some basic supplies before bringing your new dog home. Many SPCA centres have pet stores where you can purchase most of these items.

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When you buy from the SPCA, you receive quality products and expert advice. You also help support other animals in need as all revenue directly supports the SPCA.



The journey home

Taking your new dog home is exciting, but a car journey might be a completely new experience for your dog or puppy. Dogs should be restrained by a safety harness or travel in a crate, regardless of size. If the dog is young or small they may sit on a passenger's lap in the back seat but should still be restrained by a harness. Make sure you have an old towel or blanket in case they are nervous and urinate or vomit. Using a towel or old jumper with your scent on it can help your dog to bond with you.

Dog shopping list

- ☒ Food and water bowls
- ☐ Food
- ☐ Dog brush
- ☐ Dog shampoo
- ☐ Collar and lead
- ☐ Toys – e.g. a chew toy, a ball
- ☐ Flea and worm treatment
- ☐ Sunscreen if your dog has a white or pink nose
- ☐ A bed, kennel or crate
- ☐ Registration tag
- ☐ Poo bags
- ☐ Play pen or baby gate (for puppies)

Essential information on arriving home

Set up your dog's space

- Set up a space with a bed, crate or blankets
- Provide water, toys and a feeding area
- Keep puppies in one room for the first day or two (a tiled bathroom or laundry is ideal)
- Ensure the room is secure, warm and well-ventilated

Dog-proof your house

- Remove hanging wires, cords or electrical cables that your dog could chew or get tangled in
- If you don't want something chewed, put it away
- Remove breakable items
- Keep toilet lids closed to prevent drinking or falling in

Explore the house slowly

- A small house can seem big to a new puppy
- Do NOT allow your dog/puppy to have free roam of all areas in the house
- Only allow your dog in certain areas
- Explore the house slowly, using a lead initially

Take your dog outside

- Take your dog to the garden on a lead for short, regular visits
- Supervise your dog outside for the first week or two
- Watch your dog to identify hazards in the garden
- Dog-proof your fencing – ensure they can't get under or over the fence. Remove climbable objects near the fence
- Praise your dog when they toilet outside

Meet the family

- A new environment and new people can be overwhelming
- Ask family and friends to keep the house calm and quiet
- Don't force attention on your dog – let them come to you
- Avoid everyone cuddling or playing with your dog at once

Supervise children

- Always supervise young children with your dog
- Teach children to handle and approach your dog properly. Visit www.dogsafety.govt.nz for information

- Don't let children play tug-of-war games with your dog
- Keep children away from dogs when they are eating, sleeping or in a crate

Introduce other pets

- Keep other pets away from your dog for the first day or two
- Read the essential advice in this booklet on introducing other pets



FAQs

Can I change my dog's name?

Yes. Make sure they are familiar with their name before you take them to an off lead park. Teach the new name by associating it with a reward, like a food treat or praise.

Can my dog sleep outside?

Puppies should not sleep outside as they get cold easily. They are used to sleeping with their littermates so may get lonely and distressed.

Dogs can sleep outside in a warm, well-ventilated and cosy shelter with plenty of access to fresh, clean water. However, the SPCA recommends allowing your dog to sleep inside as dogs are part of the family.

We do not recommend chaining or tethering a dog as this causes distress and injuries. It can also lead to behavioural issues as the dog cannot escape from perceived danger.

If a shelter or kennel is provided, it should be placed in a quiet area away from high traffic areas and neighbourhood distractions.

Should we have a vet yet?

You should find a local vet early in case your dog becomes ill suddenly. Check local websites or get recommendations from other dog owners.

When can we go for walks?

Once your dog/puppy is fully vaccinated, you can go for walks. Practise walking on the lead in the back yard. Do not let your dog off lead until you know it will come when you call. Only let your dog off lead in permitted areas.

Why is it important to socialise a puppy?

A socialised puppy turns into a well-adjusted, friendly dog. Visit our website for more information about socialisation.

Settling in - advice and tips



Toilet training

You will need to teach your dog/puppy where to toilet. Frequent visits to the garden and praise when they toilet outside will be enough for most dogs. Puppies will need a little extra help.

- ❶ Watch for signs your puppy needs to toilet (sniffing, circling) – if so, take them outside immediately.
- ❷ Puppies have limited bladder control, so need a toilet break after eating, drinking, sleeping or playing. Take them to the toilet last thing at night and first thing in the morning and regularly throughout the day. Use the lead to take them outside.
- ❸ Be prepared for a few accidents. Do not punish your puppy – this will only slow down the toilet training.
- ❹ If you find your puppy toileting inside, wait until they have finished and take your puppy and the ‘accident’ outside in a paper towel. Put the paper towel in the toileting area, let your puppy sniff it, then praise your puppy.
- ❺ Praise your puppy when they toilet in the right spot. If a sudden change in toileting habits occurs,

take your dog/puppy to your vet immediately as they may be ill.

Crate training

Crates are collapsible metal or plastic pens with many benefits. They are useful for restricting a new dog’s/puppy’s access to the house when you are out (but only for an hour or two), sleeping, for some ‘time out’ or when you have visitors.

Crate training at night can help with toilet training, as dogs prefer not to toilet where they sleep. They are also good for dogs with separation anxiety.

Crates are a safe way of transporting your dog and for taking your dog on holiday. It becomes a familiar, cosy environment that you can set up anywhere and have your dog feel at home.

Some SPCAs and pet stores stock crates for dogs of all sizes. Crates and crate training should be a positive experience for your dog. You can read more about crate training on our website.

Food and water

Feed your dog premium dry food

Dogs need a premium food for energy and health. SPCA recommends a quality dry biscuit. Biscuits might help to keep your dog's teeth healthy and are more nutrient-dense than soft foods. Premium food is available at the SPCA and most vet clinics. Dogs need some variety in their diet – discuss options with your vet.

Water

Your dog should have easy access to fresh, clean water at all times, inside and outside.

Foods to avoid

- Cat food is not suitable for dogs
- Human food has salt, sugar, or additives that can be harmful, fattening or cause severe reactions
- Cooked bones can splinter and get stuck in the throat or gut. Only provide uncooked bones (e.g. lamb brisket, chicken carcass) and always supervise when eating
- Do not give your dog milk as most are lactose intolerant and will get diarrhoea

Choose food for the age of your dog

Puppies need high-energy puppy food for bone growth and a healthy immune system. After 12 months, most dogs need an adult dog food for healthy weight and nutrition maintenance. Larger dog breeds may need puppy food until 18 months (discuss with your vet). Dogs over seven years old need a senior diet with reduced calories, lower proteins and elements to support bone structure.

Introducing a new food

Introduce any new food gradually over one or two weeks to avoid stomach upsets. Mix new biscuits in with the old, slowly changing the proportions.

How much and how often?

Puppies need to be fed more regularly to provide regular nutrition for growth. See the daily feeding guide on the packet for amounts.

- Feed puppies under six months three times a day
- Feed puppies between six and 12 months twice a day
- Feed adult dogs once or twice a day

Meeting resident dogs



If you already have a dog, you will have brought it to the SPCA to meet the new dog/puppy. They will be a little familiar and will have started to work out how they will interact.

Here are some guidelines to help at home

- ❶ Set up a separate area or crate for your new dog/puppy with water and bed. This will prevent negative interactions at night or when unsupervised.
- ❷ Let your new dog/puppy explore the house and garden on a lead with you there to correct unwanted behaviour and let them become familiar with the area without being frightened.
- ❸ Introduce your dogs with both on a lead at first in a neutral area (such as outside) and let them sniff and interact. Stay relaxed, as your behaviour will influence how the dogs react.
- ❹ Release both dogs from their leads once they appear relaxed. Monitor but don't interfere as they get to know each other.
- ❺ If there is aggression, such as excessive snapping or snarling, they may need intervention from their leader (you). Discuss with us or your vet the best way to handle this. Separate them carefully and give them time to settle before introducing them again.
- ❻ Only introduce toys once your dogs are getting along and you can supervise them.
- ❼ Keep feeding bowls apart or in separate areas to begin with and always supervise feeding. You could start by feeding on a lead, so you have control if one dog finishes first. Always use separate bowls.
- ❽ Give your existing dog plenty of attention. The new dog/puppy has disrupted their life. Keep the existing routine the same.

CAUTION

If introductions don't go well, seek professional advice immediately. The longer the problem continues, the harder it can be to resolve. Most conflicts can be resolved with professional guidance.

Meeting resident cats/kittens

This takes time and care. A dog can seriously injure or kill a cat, even if only playing. Some dogs have a high prey drive and should not be left alone with a cat until you are confident they are not a threat. Dogs usually want to chase and play with cats, and cats usually become afraid and defensive.

Don't introduce your cat and dog/puppy face-to-face immediately.

Let them sniff each other's bedding and toys to get used to each other while feeling safe. Feed them on opposite sides of a closed door, so they associate something enjoyable with each other's smells. Gradually move the dishes closer until your pets eat calmly on either side of the door. Then try a face-to-face introduction.

Hold a controlled face-to-face meeting

- 1 Put your dog's/puppy's lead on and have them sit or lie down and stay. Have a second person offer your cat some special food.
- 2 The cat and the dog should be on opposite sides of the room. Muzzle your dog if you have concerns about initial aggression towards your cat.

- 3 Allow your cat freedom to explore the room. Keep rewarding your dog/puppy for calm behaviour (e.g. with praise and food treats) to reinforce appropriate behaviours around the cat. If your cat runs away or becomes aggressive, you're progressing too fast. Go back to previous steps. Never do introductions with your cat in a cage.

- 4 Lots of short visits are better than a few long visits. Do this until both pets are tolerating each other's presence without fear, excitement or aggression.

Never allow the dog/puppy to chase, as once this starts it changes from play to hunting.

Ensure your cat has an escape route and a place to hide. Cats like to be able to climb higher than your dog. Until you're certain your cat will be safe, keep them separated when you aren't home.

Teach your dog that chasing or rough play is unacceptable. Reward your dog for good behaviour.

If your dog is always punished and 'good things' never happen in the cat's presence, it may redirect aggression toward the cat.

Dog training and care

In multi-dog households always supervise dogs with treats or toys.

Exercise

Exercise is important. Unless they are injured or ill, dogs need exercise every day – rain or shine.

Walking on a lead – this is just as important as running off lead. It teaches your dog/puppy to stay by your side and pay attention to you. Practise walking at different paces, about turns, sudden stops and commands to sit.

Off lead – before letting your dog/puppy run off lead it is important they know the command ‘come’.

Use a long line at first if you are unsure if your dog will return. Add some structure into off lead runs. Call your dog to you and release them regularly so you have control and work on their recall. Do this in a safe area away from busy roads.

Fetch – Make your dog/puppy sit before you throw a ball. Praise your dog for returning and releasing the ball. If your dog becomes possessive over toys, find a spot without other dogs and work on this

issue at home. Try a Frisbee instead of a ball for variety. We do not recommend throwing sticks as these can injure dogs.

Play

Play is also good for dogs – it makes them happy and exercises their brains. Always play using toys, not your hands or feet, and do not rough play with your dog/puppy.

Treat balls are a great entertainer. Remove the amount you put in the treat ball from your dog’s next meal.

Paddling pools are great to cool off in summer and for water play.

Frozen treats can entertain your dog/puppy in summer. Freeze liquid meat stock in an ice cream container. Remove the lid for a giant ice block.

Toy variety means your dog doesn’t get bored.

Basic commands

To develop a good relationship with your dog/puppy, it is important to teach them some skills that will help them live harmoniously in



your home. Learning how to train your dog will improve your life and theirs, strengthen the human-animal bond, and ensure your dog's safety – and it can be a lot of fun.

If you would like a well-mannered dog, teaching your dog/puppy a few basic commands can help a lot. It is really useful for your dog to 'sit' or 'lie down' to help your dog control their impulses, and help you control your dog. If your dog is sitting, it can not do other things such as jumping up, begging at the table or running up to greet your visitors.

Dogs are keen to learn, and the key to success is good, clear communication. Your dog/puppy needs to understand how you'd like them to behave. You do this by rewarding behaviours you like with

food, praise and pats. Do not reward behaviours you don't like. However you would like your dog to behave, be consistent – that goes for all the members of your family.

Training tips

- Aim for at least two short sessions per day
- Keep sessions short and sweet – just 5 to 10 minutes each
- Only work on one thing in each session (e.g. 'sit' or 'go to bed')
- Be patient – training your dog/puppy will take time and effort but it can be a great deal of fun for you and for them. With patience and persistence, you and your dog can accomplish great things
- Use real rewards – be sure to reward your dog/puppy with things they truly find rewarding. Some dogs will happily work for dry kibble, small pieces of chicken or cheese, playing with a ball or a chance to run off lead at the dog park
- Praise – use lots of verbal and physical praise to reward your dog/puppy for good behaviour
- Training options – there are many people who can assist you with dog training, including the SPCA, your vet, dog trainers and training clubs



Dog training and care

Managing behaviour when you're not home

Some dogs/puppies get separation anxiety. It can be caused by your daily comings and goings, or changes that mean your dog is at home alone more often.

It can result in excessive barking or destructive behaviour. Your dog/puppy may chew itself excessively or toilet in the house. It is not done to annoy you – your dog is expressing anxiety and a need for help.

Reducing separation anxiety

- Encourage your dog/puppy not to follow you constantly. Put them in the garden and shut the door, or use a screen so they can see you but feel safe alone
- Start by making short departures of just a few minutes and then returning calmly. Build up to longer departures
- Keep departures and arrivals calm. Do not rush to greet your dog or make a fuss when you leave. Simply leave, and when you return ignore your dog until it is settled and not seeking attention
- Crate training can be helpful in reducing separation anxiety. Once trained properly your dog will associate the crate with relaxation

Encouraging acceptable behaviour

Consistency by ALL family members in managing behaviour is key. Teaching your dog acceptable alternative behaviour will work best.

For example, when puppies play, they use their mouths, so may bite or 'mouth' your hand. This is a difficult behaviour to change. Offer acceptable objects such as toys instead. This is good for children to learn. Scratch behind the ears with one hand and offer the toy with the other.

Discouraging unacceptable behaviour

Teach your dog/puppy that unwanted behaviour results in unpleasant consequences, such as no attention or social interaction. Remember even if you push your dog away, they are still getting attention.

For example, if your dog/puppy jumps up when they want attention:

- Turn away and ignore them or say 'off'
- Continue to turn away until all four paws are on the ground, then quietly praise. If your dog/puppy knows the 'sit' command, give the command, then quietly praise when sitting
- If your dog begins to jump while you're praising, simply turn away again



- Your dog/puppy will realise you remove attention when they jump up, but give attention when they sit. Always reward good behaviour. Be careful not to ignore the dog/puppy when they come and sit politely, waiting for attention

What not to do

Never tap, slap, or hit your dog/puppy. This can create many problems, such as 'hand-shyness', fear biting, or a dog that is distressed and afraid of you.

Children, dogs and puppies

It's very difficult for children under eight to practice behaviour management. Children's first reaction to being nipped or mouthed is to push them away. The dog/puppy might interpret this as play and repeat the behaviour. Adults should closely monitor all interactions between their children and dogs.

YOUR LEGAL OBLIGATIONS TO CARE FOR YOUR DOG

As a dog owner, you have many legal obligations. Below is a summary of some of these.

The Animal Welfare Act 1999 requires you to provide:

- Proper and sufficient food and water
- Adequate shelter
- The opportunity to display normal patterns of behaviour
- Protection from, and rapid diagnosis of, any significant injury or distress, and appropriate vet treatment
- Protection from distress and pain

The Dog Control Act 1996 requires your dog to be under control so it does not:

- Cause a nuisance (e.g. barking or fouling)
- Cause damage to property
- Injure, endanger or cause distress to people, stock, poultry, animals or wildlife

When on your property your dog must be:

- Under the direct control of a person, or
- Confined so it cannot leave the property. Fences must be tall enough to contain your dog and should not have holes or gaps (especially hedges)

For detailed information, please refer to your council's website and the Code of Welfare for Dogs. The full code is accessible on the Ministry for Primary Industries website.

Dog health advice

Vaccinations

Vaccinations against disease are critical throughout your dog's life. SPCA gives most initial vaccinations and a health card recording them. Check this for the due date of future vaccinations and arrange with your vet.

Young puppies may not have completed all vaccinations. We will alert you to this. Your puppy needs to be fully vaccinated before you take them off your property.

VACCINATION FOR LEPTOSPIROSIS

Leptospirosis (Lepto) is a bacterial infection which can cause serious illness in dogs. It is the #1 infectious cause of acute renal (kidney) failure in dogs.

It is transmitted between dogs and people by contacting infected urine or water. Pets contract it through infected urine, water, bite wounds and eating infected tissue. It can also be transmitted through breeding.

SPCA does NOT routinely vaccinate against Lepto due to limited resources. We strongly encourage you to discuss this vaccine with your vet.

Fleas

Fleas can cause your dog discomfort with painful itchy patches. Fleas can spread to your home and family. If your dog has fleas they will be itching and scratching and you may see fleas or flea dirt in their coat.

Worms

Dogs can get worms. Many live in the gut and can cause malnutrition and even anemia. Young puppies can die from severe cases. Some types of worms can spread to humans. Cleaning up your dog's faeces and general good hygiene help prevent this.

It can be difficult to detect if your dog has worms. Symptoms include tiredness, a dull coat, diarrhoea or bloody stools, weight loss, a pot-bellied appearance or 'scooting' their bottom along the ground.

Flea and worm treatment

Regular treatments will help keep your dog free of fleas and worms. Check your dog's health card for treatment dates. The SPCA and your vet have safe, effective flea and worm treatments.

Grooming

Regular grooming is a good way to calmly interact with your dog/puppy and help detect health concerns. Even dogs with short coats need regular grooming and most dogs need their nails clipped. It is good to start this from a young age.

Regular vet visits

Contact your vet if you are concerned about the health of your dog/puppy. Take your dog for a check-up at least once a year. This can be done at vaccination time to ensure early detection of problems.

NEVER give a dog human medicine such as Panadol or Aspirin as these can be harmful or even fatal.

Microchip and registration

All SPCA dogs/puppies are microchipped and registered. It is ESSENTIAL to keep these details up-to-date if you move house or your contact numbers change. Your dog must be registered every year.

At the SPCA we receive many lost dogs that we cannot reunite with their owners because the microchip and registration details are not updated.

Update your microchip details at
www.animalregister.co.nz

Remember to also update your
registration details with
your local council.



SPCA New Zealand
PO Box 15349, New Lynn, Auckland 0640
www.rnzspca.org.nz **E:** info@rnzspca.org.nz
P: +64 9 827 6094 **F:** +64 9 827 0784

 facebook.com/RoyalNZSPCA