

Dog Care

Take the time to research the species or breed you are purchasing well before bringing it home. This way you can be positive your choice of pet will be appropriate for your lifestyle and you will be thoroughly prepared for its arrival.

Purchasing a pet should never be an impulsive decision. Shelters receive thousands of unwanted and abandoned animals each year, these are often the result of an ill-considered decision.



Housing

All dogs need a place where they can feel secure and safe like the den they would have had in the wild. A sheltered area out of the rain and cold is essential. They will need access to fresh water and a place to toilet.

Responsibilities will need to be allocated. Your dog will feel more settled if there are regular patterns in place. If you have a puppy you may want to proof your house for chewing and lots of activity. Make sure your yard is escape proof!

Dogs should be provided with a clean, comfortable and safe environment.

If your dog sleeps outside, the area:

- must be escape-proof (fenced in)
- include sheltered areas
- contain a warm, dry, draught-free kennel.

Identification

In NSW, you are legally required to have your pet microchipped and registered. Costs for registration vary according to whether your dog is desexed or not. Check with Council for [further details](#). If you move, it is important to update your details with Council. It is also a good idea to have a tag on your dog's collar with your contact details.

Veterinary Care

Your dog will require annual visits to the vet for vaccinations and general health checks. Taking your dog to the vet once a year is equivalent to you visiting the doctor once every 5 years. However, it's also important to treat your dog at home regularly for worms and fleas.

Dogs are very social animals and that is why they make such good pets. Being a pack animal, they thrive on plenty of company whether it be the family, another dog or other playmate

Minimum health care should include regular worming, heart worm prevention, flea control and teeth cleaning. There are lots of products and some dry foods that clean teeth. Any changes in eating, drinking, urination, defecation or weight loss or gain should be checked out with a visit to the vet. These days there are treatments available for many problems ranging from diabetes to arthritis.

Breed Concerns

Since humans domesticated dogs we have selected them for different purposes, leading to the development of breeds. When choosing a specific breed it is important to look at what the breed was developed for e.g. the working breeds such as Cattle Dogs, Kelpies and Border Collies are extremely active and intelligent which is not suited well to being alone in a yard all day. Breeds that have been selected for fighting are more likely to fight. Many breeds have inherited health problems which may need veterinary intervention or management and so costs will be incurred.

All breeds have breed societies so it is wise to find out about a breed's characteristics before you acquire one to make sure the pet is appropriate to your lifestyle. Remember that pets can live well over 10 years so it is a long term commitment. A crossbreed dog may be more robust and have the best of the breeds.

Nutrition

Feeding a balanced diet appropriate to your dog's age and lifestyle is fundamental to the health of your dog. Dogs love meat but they are not carnivores, they are omnivores and can live on both vegetable and meat based diets. Meat alone is not balanced in nutrients, roughage, vitamins or minerals. Often the easiest, cheapest and most convenient way of ensuring correct nutrition is to feed complete balanced products prepared by good pet food manufacturers.

Feed your dog a high quality premium commercial food that is appropriate for the life stage and health status of your dog. You can offer some natural foods occasionally to provide some variety. Natural food may include:

- fresh raw meat
- raw meaty bones
- vegetables

Choose human-grade raw meat and raw meaty bones because pet meat/pet mince/pet rolls and bone products can contain preservatives that can be detrimental to the dog's health (e.g. sulphite preservative induced thiamine deficiency can be fatal). However avoid sausages, sausage meat and cooked manufactured meats as they can contain sulphites.

Most brands these days have a range of 'lifestyle foods' ie. foods with nutrition levels aimed at the specific age or activity of the dog, with feeding guides on the packaging. Generally younger and very active dogs should be fed at least twice daily. Aged dogs also often benefit from smaller more frequent feeds.



Home cooked diets can be prepared but this should be done in consultation with your local Vet or a pet nutrition guide to ensure it is completely balanced and provides everything your pet needs in the correct ratios. Part of getting it right is to monitor your dog's body condition, or amount of body fat. You should be able to easily feel the ribs, but not see them in a puppy or dog that is in ideal condition.

Bathing and Grooming

Dogs should be bathed when necessary using a shampoo specifically prepared for dogs. Regular grooming is essential. If you establish this habit early in your dog's life:

- grooming will be an enjoyable activity
- provide bonding time
- become part of a routine.

Training

Puppies have a 'critical socialisation period' between about 3-17 weeks old. 'Puppy Preschool' classes are recommended, as is taking your dog to [off leash dog exercise areas](#) to socialise with other dogs (but only after he/she has been fully vaccinated).

Training is important as it:

- provides mental stimulation
- keeps your dog happy
- if combined with exercise, tires your dog out.

Training should always be based on positive reinforcement and kindness:

- reward good behaviour with a pat on the head, a food treat or a pleasant tone
- ignore 'unwanted' behaviour.

Further Information

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