

Responsible Dog Ownership

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There are many aspects of responsible dog ownership. When you bring a dog or puppy home, you have now committed yourself to being that canine's caretaker, and they will look to you for all of their needs. In this article, the basic needs of all dogs will be discussed, as well as different ways dogs are housed.



All dogs need access to fresh, clean water at all times. Their water bowl should be refilled as needed and the water should be changed every day. If your dog is kept outdoors, make sure that they are not able to tip their water bowl over. Water bowls can be secured to a fence or tree with a double end snap and screw eye.

All dogs need to be fed the appropriate food for their age and activity level. There are many types of food on the market today which include dry and moist food as well as food for senior dogs, puppies, large breed dogs and overweight dogs. If you are unsure of the kind and amount to feed, please check with your veterinarian.

All dogs need a shelter and there are lots of ways to house a dog, both indoors and outdoors. Dogs that live primarily indoors have their owner's home as their shelter. If your dog does not roam free through the house, common alternatives are crating and gating. If using a crate indoors, the crate should be big enough for the dog to comfortably stand at its full height, turn around freely and stretch out when lying down. If using a gate (such as a baby gate) to keep your dog in a particular room, be sure the gate is secure and won't collapse to avoid any injury to your dog.

Dogs that live primarily outdoors need to have a shelter provided for them to protect them from the elements, such as rain, sleet, snow and heat. In the winter, your dog will require warmth and to be kept dry. In the summer, your dog will need protection from the sun and heat. Outdoor dog shelters should be windproof and rainproof, and have at least three sides. The shelter should be large enough for the dog to comfortably stand at its full height, turn around freely and stretch out when lying down. The shelter should

be small enough that the dog's body heat will warm the space in the winter. To keep the interior of the shelter warm, the entrance to the shelter should be protected with either a flap or off set door. Bedding (such as straw or soft wood chips) could also be added to increase the warmth. The bedding should be changed regularly and always be dry. In the summer, the shelter should be placed in the shade with the entrance facing away from the sun.

If you keep your dog in a pen outside, make sure that your dog has adequate room in the pen. If multiple dogs are kept in a pen, make sure they are compatible, and all are spayed and neutered.

If your dog is tethered, their collar must be fitted properly. You should be able to fit two fingers snugly between your pet and the collar. It should not be too loose that your dog could slip out of the collar and roam free. Make a daily check of your pet's collar to make sure that it is not too loose or too tight. A buckle-type collar is recommended. The area that your pet has access to while tethered must be clean and free of things in which they could become entangled. You always want your dog to be able to move freely while on its tether.



Tethered Dogs



- **Properly-fitted collars or harnesses**
- **Chain or runner that is a minimum of 10 feet long**
- **Make sure chain doesn't exceed 10% of dog's total weight**
- **Use swivel hardware to prevent tangles**
- **Dog must be able to move about freely and lay down comfortably**
- **The area should be safe and clear of any obstructions**

All dogs require preventative veterinary care, and should start by being spayed or neutered. All dogs are required to be vaccinated for rabies and kept current on their rabies vaccination. All dogs should also have a yearly physical exam, year-round heartworm prevention, intestinal parasite prevention, and flea and tick prevention. Other preventative care, including vaccinations, may be recommended by your veterinarian based on your dog's age and lifestyle. Your veterinarian is the best person to assess the needs of your dog and tailor a preventative care plan for your pet.



Preventative Veterinary Care



- **Spay or Neuter**
- **Rabies Vaccine**
- **Other Vaccines as recommended**
- **Heartworm Prevention**
- **Intestinal Parasite Prevention**
- **Flea and Tick Prevention**
- **Yearly Physical Exam**

Grooming is needed for all dogs. The breed of dog will determine how much grooming is required. All dogs need to have their nails trimmed on a regular basis. If you own a dog that requires regular grooming and brushing, such as a Shih Tzu, this must be worked into your schedule for them. If some breeds are not groomed regularly, they will develop mats, or tufts of tangled hair, which can be extremely painful. If you are unsure of the grooming requirements for your dog, visit a groomer and ask for their recommendations.

Exercise and enrichment is needed by all dogs whether they live indoors or outdoors. Exercise keeps dogs healthy, mentally stimulated, not bored, fit and trim. Tethered and penned dogs should be allowed off of their tether a minimum of twice a day for exercise. Going for a walk, playing ball, playing Frisbee, training and lots of other activities can be forms of exercise. Training requires your dog to focus on you and the more time you spend training your dog, the better behaved and responsive they will be. Enrichment includes activities where dogs try to figure out how something works. For example, put a treat in a ball and let the dog figure out how to get the treat. If dogs do not receive the exercise and enrichment they need, they will get bored, which could lead to undesired behaviors.

Finally, all dogs want to be loved. They are excited when you come home and aim to please you. A good scratch behind the ears, some petting or just being able to sit near you is all that your dog asks... dog kisses are optional.