



Train-A-Pit Obedience

How to be a Responsi-Bull Pit bull Owner

Health Care

There are so many choices to make in caring for your dog that it's hard to know what basic guidelines you should be following when making decisions on their health care. In reading this document, it's important to know that this is to provide you with as a basic guide and not a diagnostics tool. Please seek veterinary advice if your dog develops any symptoms you are concerned about.

One of the very basic needs a dog has is to be protected against transmissible diseases. Beginning at around 6-8 weeks of age, and given every three weeks until the puppy reaches 16 weeks of age; dogs should receive a 5-way vaccine that includes Distemper, Parvovirus, Adenovirus, Hepatitis, and Parainfluenza. Vaccines that include Leptospirosis and Corona are neither necessary nor advisable as they can cause allergy responses. Bordetella is only necessary in the event you will be boarding your dog. Given with the last - way vaccine, a Rabies vaccine should also be administered. If you have an older unvaccinated dog, you will want to vaccinate with a 5-way vaccine twice three weeks apart. In both cases, a booster vaccine of both Rabies and 5-way should be given one year later and then every 3 years following that.

Another basic need is to protect your dog against pests such as fleas, ticks, and worms. Almost all puppies are born with roundworms and/or hookworms unfortunately, so all puppies should be treated with a wormer at their first vaccine and then again in 10 days. The Pacific Northwest does not have a problem with ticks but we do have lots of fleas. If your dog carries around fleas they will most likely contract tapeworms too! It is so much easier to treat for fleas before it becomes an infestation and you then have to treat your dog for tapeworms too. There are many products on the market that you can safely and effectively treat your dog for fleas such as Advantage, Frontline, and Program to name a few. It is VERY important to only use the products specifically made for dogs on your dog and cats on your cats!! Flea treatment should be given as soon as the weather warms, generally in May, and throughout the summer and into fall when the weather cools again, generally October.

Don't forget their pearly whites! Dogs have teeth, and just as we need to protect our own teeth against decay, our dogs have dental needs to. The easiest way to help your dogs stay healthy is to provide lots of hard chew treats to eat. Not only will you provide your dog with mental stimulation, but the treats will also scrape all the plaque and build up off their teeth. Another option is using a toothbrush. They now make a specialized doggie toothbrushes and toothpaste that some dogs even like. If you begin to notice your dog having a hard time chewing their food, bad smelling breath, or swelling at the jaw line there could be real problems so take your dog to the vet as soon as possible.

Now that we have covered pests and diseases, it's important to remember the other hazards

Transporting your dog in a vehicle needs to be safe for you and them. The easiest solution is to always put them in a crate when they travel. Another great solution is behind a car barrier that confines their movement to a certain area of the car but doesn't allow them to jump in your lap unannounced. If you

have a smaller vehicle a great solution is doggie seatbelts, specialized harnesses that hook right into the human seatbelt and protect them in collisions and restrict their movement. Please never transport your dog in the open bed of a pickup. Dogs don't understand they may injure themselves if they jump (and they often do). A better choice is a doggie seatbelt securing them inside the cab. If they must ride in the back, secure a crate with tie downs in the back and transport them there. This will both prevent them from jumping out, and also give them protection from the weather.

Dogs love to chew so remember to doggie proof your home. I always tell my son that if its on the floor, its fair game! Rope toys can be fun, but never leave your dog unattended with one as they can choke or ingest bits of the string and this can be fatal. Rawhide bones are also a choking hazard, so if you are going to leave treats you're your dog while away find something like bully sticks, pig twists or the like that will break off in small pieces. I can't tell you how many times I have pulled large pieces of rawhide out a choking dog's throat! Electric cords are a huge hazard and very attractive to dogs because of their pliability. Wrap cords around table legs or lamps, run them under furniture, or staple them to the wall.

Besides choking hazards you must also think of other things in your dog's environment that can be potentially fatal. There are many common household foods and products that can be poisonous to dogs; chocolate, grapes/raisins, onions, xylitol (artificial sweetener), macadamia nuts, garlic, alcohol, anti-freeze for your car, raw potatoes, broccoli, yeast dough and rat/insect poison. This is just a sample of the products that can be poisonous. Please remember that because it's safe for you to eat does not mean that the same is true for your dog. If ever in question your local poison control center often can answer basic information about your pets also. Another option is the ASPCA call center specifically for pets at 888-426-4435 (there is a fee).

Let's not forget spaying and neutering. Besides the obvious impact of reducing the unwanted pet population, there are health benefits too. Females that are unsprayed or more likely to get uterine cancer, breast cancer, and infected uteruses'. Males that go unneutered are more likely to get testicular cancer and prostate cancer. The number one dog found dead on the side of the road are unneutered males. Neuter them and they will want to stay home.

So how do you provide health care for your dog in an affordable way? There are more options now than ever before. If you have someone train you, you can give your dogs their vaccines yourself. Vaccines can be found on the internet, at feed stores, and some local pets stores. Rabies vaccines need to be administered by a licensed veterinarian. Another great option for affordable vaccines are clinics offered by Petco, Petsmart and some local humane societies and rescue groups.

In the Puget Sound area there are many affordable low cost spay and neuter clinics that will also offer vaccines, microchips and worming. In the Tacoma area Coalition: Humane is very affordable. For basic vet care, a great low cost option is Vets for Less in Federal Way. Not only do they offer spay/neuter and vaccines, but many other routine vet care at a very affordable price.