

**Congratulations on your new dog!** A new dog is an exciting addition to the family. That said, the first days or even weeks with a new pet is a big adjustment period. Before you bring your new dog home, make sure you are able and willing to provide the basics—water, nutritious food, shelter and bedding, vet care, exercise, and mental stimulation. This guide will help you with what to expect and will share information and tips on how to make the adjustment a smooth one for you and your new family member!



## Health

- Your dog will require vaccinations annually. Confirm what vaccinations your dog has had before bringing her home and schedule an appointment with the USPCA vet for any upcoming vaccinations that are due.
- It is extremely important to neuter or spay your dog before he or she becomes sexually mature (at approximately 6 months old). This will help you avoid challenging behaviour, e.g. territorial spraying, howling, running away, mounting, as well as, unwanted litters and the risk of certain cancers.
- It is important to take any signs of illness seriously and act quickly. If she develops diarrhoea or vomiting, immediately call the clinic. You should also seek immediate veterinary advice if she doesn't eat for more than 24 hours.
- Establish and maintain a strict de-worming, flea care and tick management routine. De-worming for your dog can be done every 3 months. Most flea and tick management are applied topically or orally on a monthly basis. Speak to the vet about the options available.
- On hot days help your dog not to overheat. Ensure they have access to shade, fresh water, and save games and walks for the cooler part of the day.



## Feeding

- Your dog may be underweight when you first bring her home. To help get her weight on track, you can supplement her meals with extra protein and fat like chicken liver and raw eggs. Resist the temptation to overfeed her, as this could stretch her stomach and lead to health complications. Instead, feed her moderate amounts spaced into 3-4 meals a day. Speak to the USPCA vet if your dog continues to have difficulty gaining weight. When your dog has reached a healthy weight, you can decrease feedings to a meal, twice a day.
- Your dog should be fed puppy food until she is about 12 months old. Then, you can begin transitioning to adult dog food. You can find balanced dry puppy and dog food options in Kampala grocery stores. If you want to cook for your dog you can find balanced recipes online. If cooking for your dog make sure you are providing supplements too, including fatty acids, calcium, and other minerals.
- Certain foods can make your dog very unwell. Cat food is not a substitute for dog food. It does not have the proper balance of nutrients and can be hard on the kidneys and liver. Other common foods to avoid include chocolate, onions, grapes, cow's milk, avocado and maize on the cob. See <https://www.caninejournal.com/foods-not-to-feed-dog/#cooked-bones>. Never give cooked bones, especially chicken bones, to your dog as they can cause serious damage when splintered as a result of chewing.
- Ensure fresh water is always available. When toilet training you may wish to remove it during the night to prevent accidents.



## Socialisation, behaviour & training

- After the first few days your dog will start to come out of her shell. You may see some changes in her personality. Be patient while she learns the rules of your household, and expect there to be accidents, annoyances, and miscommunication.
- It is important to set boundaries from the start. Try to teach her in ways that will set your dog up for success, and treat her with lots of praise when she behaves the way you like.
- Basic behaviour training, such as sit, lay down, and stay is a great first step toward helping you communicate with your dog. You can work with your dog multiple times per day, but keep training sessions short, no more than 10 mins per session.
- Be mindful when introducing your dog to new people, dogs, sights, sounds and experiences. It's up to you to step in if your dog becomes overwhelmed.
- If you already have a dog, you will need to do an introduction before bringing your new dog home. Ideally, the first time your dogs meet, they should do so on neutral territory such as on a street or in friend's garden. Begin by walking the dogs side by side together. Keep walking forward with the dogs until they relax and get a chance to smell one another. This will help communicate that they are now part of the same pack.
- Puppies and dogs require lots of stimulation. Introduce simple toys, play catch, and/or go for plenty of walks. Simple stimulation ideas include hiding food inside a toilet roll wrapped in newspaper or playing hide and seek. Walks alone can be great sources of stimulation and exercise. Switch up your route often to keep walks fun and interesting! For more ideas, search 'dog enrichment'.
- If you keep a dog for security, you should not lock her up all day. If you do, your dog will soon become depressed, anxious and show other signs of stress. She needs water and space to eliminate. She will protect you and your home better if she's able to roam and knows her territory.
- Many of USPCA's rescues have never lived in a home and are not housebroken. Establish a bathroom routine right away, [http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/dogs/tips/housetraining\\_puppies.html](http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/dogs/tips/housetraining_puppies.html) for tips. Never punish your dog for accidents in the house as this could lead to her hiding from you when she eliminates. Instead, if you catch her, interrupt her by picking her up or leading her outside immediately. Give lots of praise when she potties outside.
- Never hit your dog, which can cause her to be afraid of you or the situation she is in. It is much more effective to reward positive behaviour with treats and praise. Always be patient!

## Keeping clean and fresh



- Brush your dog once a week to remove debris and maintain a healthy coat.
- Bathe your dog once every 3-4 weeks in warm (not hot) water using dog safe shampoo. Dry thoroughly after washing. A good rule of thumb is to wash when they appear dirty or have an unpleasant odour. Be careful not to over wash your dog, as this could strip healthy oils and irritate the skin.
- Your dog will have a full set of adult teeth by 6-7 months old. Establish a dental care routine as early as possible. Tooth brushing, when carried out regularly using a soft brush/ finger tooth brush and dog safe toothpaste, is the most effective method of maintaining healthy teeth and gums and fresh breath. If your dog does not tolerate tooth brushing, you can provide dental chew sticks or whole uncooked carrots to chew on.

Within a week or two, your dog will have settled into her new home and her new routine. Some will take a little longer. Very few are unable to adjust at all. In most cases the dog will be a well-adjusted member of the family within a month. In fact, you will probably have trouble remembering when she wasn't part of the family!