

Pet CARE



Choosing the Right Vet

Having a qualified health provider for your pet is a critical component to responsible ownership. Your vet can provide annual checkups, emergency services and even grooming services to keep your family pet healthy and happy.

Choosing the perfect veterinarian for your pet may seem like a daunting task. You will be putting your trust in your veterinarian's experience to determine the cause and treatment for discomfort or serious medical issues. Fortunately, there are many resources at your disposal when you begin your search.

AAHA ACCREDITATION

Finding a veterinarian office that is accredited by the American Animal Hospital Association means finding an office that is committed to providing the safest and highest quality care. To become accredited, your vet's office must meet up to 900 standards in different areas.

Some of these areas include emergency services (including surgery and anesthesia), diagnostics, exceptional record keeping and pain management.

An AAHA-accredited animal hospital will lay out a detailed evaluation of services and medical equipment. The AAHA then monitors the hospital to ensure its practice meets predetermined standards.

SCHEDULE A MEETING

It's important to let your pet warm up



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to your vet before any medical attention is required. Plan a meeting where both you and your pet can visit the facility and meet with the doctors and staff.

This will allow your pet to become comfortable with the ones who will be administering medical assistance when the time comes.

This meeting also is a good time for you to gain comfortability with staff members. Take a tour of the facility. Ensure the office is clean and all equipment appears to be up to date. Take

notice of the other animals' comfort level. Is the kennel area kept clean or does it seem cluttered?

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Asking questions is the best way to become familiar with your veterinarian's practices. The AAHA has laid out some basic questions you should ask.

- What is the telephone policy? Your vet's office should have experts who can offer professional medical advice over the phone. They should be able to

determine if your pet requires medical attention by listening to different symptoms.

- What is their emergency response? Find out how soon your vet will be able to see your pet after an emergency. The answer should be "immediately."

- Do they have a large group of specialists available? Your office should have staff available to provide attention to a wide array of medical issues your pet could encounter.

Vaccines For Your Pet

Just like humans, pets are able to receive vaccines to prevent illness. Vaccines have been considered as one of the most effective ways to keep your pet in peak health. Talk to your veterinarian to determine which vaccines will be the most beneficial to your pet.

Vaccines are used to prepare your pet's immune system to fight incoming diseases. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals reports that these vaccines use an antigen to trick your pet's immune system into believing a disease is present. An antigen is a toxin that creates a response from an immune system without causing an actual disease. This prepares your pet's body to recognize and fight off an actual attack of this simulated disease.

WHEN TO VACCINATE

You will need to talk to your pet's primary veterinarian to determine the best time to vaccinate. There are different variables that will determine the frequency. These variables include the type of vaccine, your pet's age, medical history and its lifestyle.

Puppies and kittens receive most of the antibodies they need to fight off disease from their mother's milk. This means once your pet has been weaned from nursing, it is time to consult a vet and begin vaccines to replace the antibodies they are no longer receiving.

TYPES OF VACCINES

There are certain vaccines that most states require by law. For instance, almost all states require a mandatory rabies



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vaccine. Some require the vaccine to be administered annually, while some require it every three years. Consult with your vet to determine the requirements of your state's law.

A case of parvovirus can be deadly for a new puppy. It is

recommended to begin your puppy on the anti-parvovirus vaccine between six and eight weeks of age. Other common vaccines for dogs include distemper and canine hepatitis. Cats also are commonly given rabies shots as well as feline leukemia vaccines.

RISKS OF VACCINATING

Giving your pet a vaccination will mildly stimulate its immune system. This may make your pet become a bit sluggish or even cause a slight fever. This is normal, but you can relieve any worry by scheduling a visit with your

vet.

The ASPCA states that in most cases, the risks of side effects are much smaller than the risk of the actual disease. Be upfront and clear with your vet about your pet's medical history before beginning vaccinations.

Spaying and Neutering

A pet that has been spayed or neutered will gain many medical and behavioral benefits. It also is a way to do your part in lowering the pet homelessness crisis. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals reports there are millions of healthy cats and dogs euthanized each year due to not finding homes.

It is recommended to spay or neuter your pet at an early age, before potentially negative behavioral habits can be established.

It may seem overwhelming to put your pet through a major surgery at such a young age, but you actually will be providing it with a path to live a longer, healthier life.

BENEFITS

Spaying or neutering can lessen risks of common diseases in your pet. According to the ASPCA, cases of breast tumors are cancerous in 50 percent of female dogs and 90 percent of female cats. Spaying before your pet's first round of heat occurs provides a huge advantage in protection of these diseases.

A neutered male pet will be less likely to feel the need to mark his territory than a non-neutered male. This will lessen the risk of messes on your furniture and other household items.

Additionally, your male pet also will be less likely to try to wander off from his home. If your male pet has not been neutered, he will likely try all he can to find a mate. This puts him at risk of traffic injuries and fights with other animals.



MYTHS

There are a lot of misconceptions around about spaying or neutering your pet. Here are some of the most common myths:

- Your pet will become overweight. The truth is your pet will become overweight by overfeeding and lack of exercise, not neutering.
- Surgery is risky. Of course,

anytime anesthesia is required, there is a slight chance of things going the wrong way. However, neutering is one of the most common procedures performed by veterinarians.

- It's too expensive. While the initial procedure may seem expensive, there are many low- or no-cost spay or neuter clinics. Visit the ASPCA's website to locate clinics in your area.

How to Find a Lost Pet

Losing a pet can be a scary experience. It may cause anxiety and leave you thinking unclearly. Do your best to keep a level head and develop a plan to bring your pet back home.

BE PREPARED

The best way to bring your lost pet home is to let people know that he has a home. You can do so through effective preparation.

Identification tags are incredibly inexpensive and can be a key component in rescuing your pet. This tag should feature your pet's name, your phone number and any other contact information you feel comfortable sharing.

Talk to your vet about microchipping your pet. This chip helps shelter, animal control and veterinarian's office workers find a lost pet's owner.

A microchip may cost a bit more than an ID tag but is one of the most effective ways to find a lost pet.

TELL THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Word of mouth also should be a key part of your mission. Alerting the neighborhood in which your pet went missing will cause many people to be on the lookout. Having a large number of people aware of your missing pet will give you an advantage in recovery.

There are different ways you can choose to alert the

public of your missing pet. Utilizing social media accounts is a great way of getting your message out to the masses. Look for a spot in your local newspaper's advertising section that is dedicated to a lost-and-found for your community.

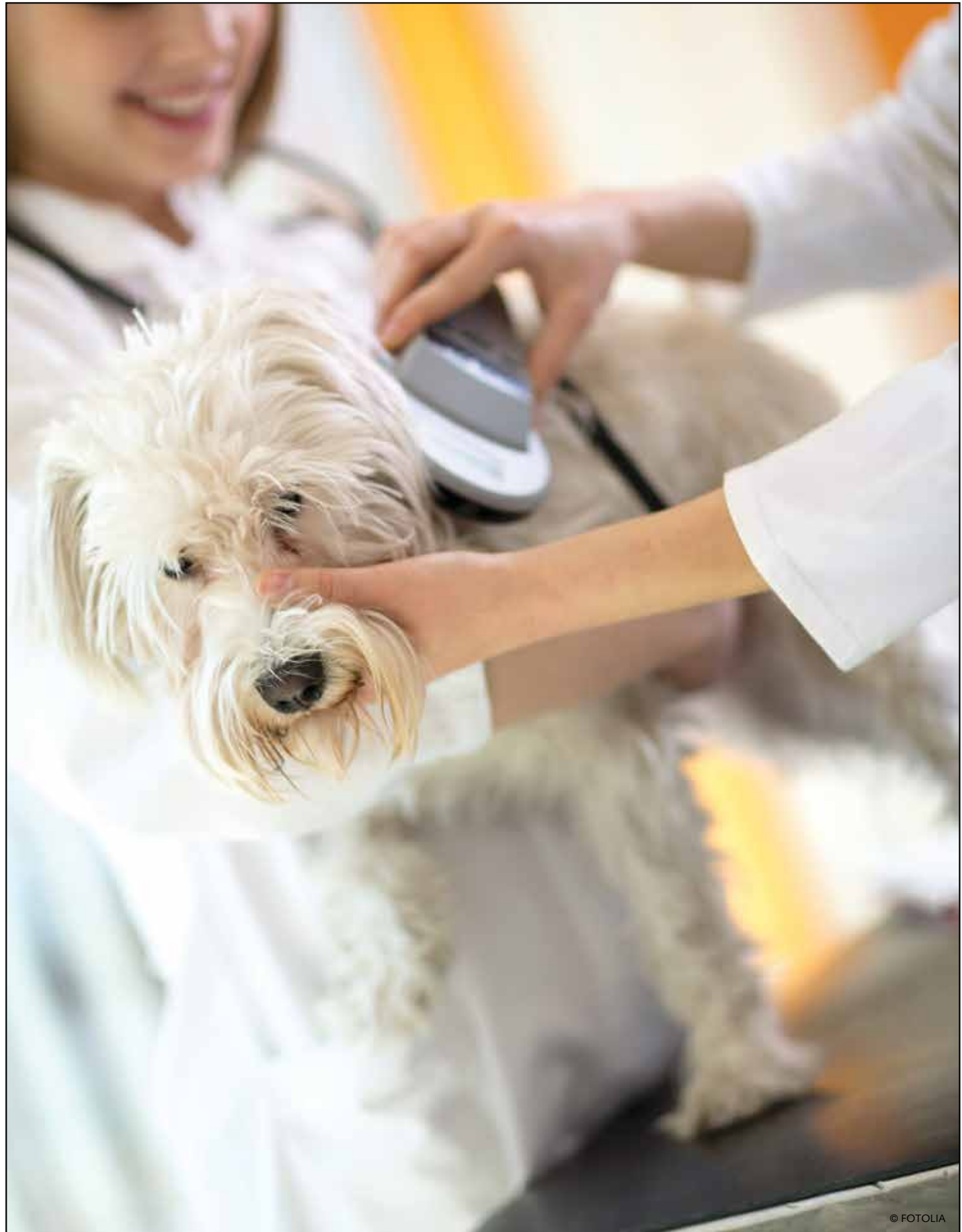
The old-fashioned flyer is another way to get your message to a large group of people. Your flyer should contain your pet's picture, age, breed and any distinguishing features that will make it easy to identify.

Post these flyers in high-traffic areas, such as grocery stores and community centers once you obtain the required permission.

CALL LOCAL SHELTERS

If your pet has been missing for several days, it is possible that a local shelter already has it in its custody. Call your local shelters to see if any of their recent drop-offs match your description. You can always go there in person to check for yourself.

It is a good idea to provide shelters with a picture of your missing pet as soon as you realize he or she is missing. By doing this, you will be contacted if your pet does happen to be picked up.



Emergency Care

There may come a time when your pet needs emergency medical care. Becoming prepared before it happens will give you an edge in saving your pet's life.

Your pet is a curious creature. It is likely that it will one day find itself in a situation that requires your immediate attention. Pets face dangers of ingesting substances that may be toxic, traffic accidents and altercations with other animals. Do your part and learn who to call and how to react to different circumstances before they happen.

FIRST AID AT HOME

When an animal is wounded, the first step is to examine the extent of injury. There may be steps you can take to stabilize your pet at home before a ride to the veterinarian. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has laid out guidelines on how to treat your pet at home.

- **External bleeding:** The best way to alleviate external bleeding is to elevate the wound and apply pressure. This should cause the bleeding to slow down.

- **Choking.** If your pet is choking, insert your fingers in its mouth and see if you can



remove the blockage. Be careful when putting your fingers in your pet's mouth, especially when it is distressed by choking.

- **Heimlich Maneuver.** Sometimes the lodged object may be too far in to remove it by hand. If so, perform sharp abdominal thrusts until the object is in reach to dislodge it by hand.

HAVE A PLAN

You and your vet need to have a discussion about emergency situation protocol. Find out if the office offers a 24-hour service. If not, inquire about the hospital they use to refer emergency situations after regular office hours. Keep the emergency hospital's contact information readily available.

Most pet owners know their pets well enough to determine that something is amiss with them. Even if your vet doesn't perform treatment after hours, they should have an experienced person on call to take your phone call. These emergency operators will be able to determine if your pet is in need of immediate attention or if it can wait until reg-

ular office hours.

Of course, there are definite emergencies that require attention without a call. Some may include an experience with trauma such as a traffic incident. Bloody stool, seizures, a swollen abdomen or suspicions your pet has ingested a toxic substance should be considered immediate attention emergencies.

Saving on Pet Care Costs

Healthcare for your pet can be a major expense. Veterinarians use sophisticated medical technology to ensure a long, healthy life for your four-legged family member. This type of treatment comes at a cost.

Keeping your pet healthy with regular checkups can be effective in preventing emergency visits and higher bills. As a pet owner you are responsible for keeping your pet safe and healthy. Preventive maintenance is one of the best ways to avoid costly appointments.

REGULAR CHECK-UPS

An annual check-up can make the difference in preventing serious illnesses or forking over big bucks to treat an illness. Keep in mind that it is much cheaper to protect your pet from common illnesses than is to treat an infection.

It is also risky to withhold your pet from its check-ups. These appointments can catch health issues in your pet before they become a real problem.

During these check-ups, it is likely your pet will receive its annual vaccines. While some vaccines are optional, be sure to get your vet's opinion on which shots should be administered. Depending on your pet's medical history, your vet can recommend which vaccines are most important.

FLEA AND TICK PREVENTION

Parasites are a serious danger to your pets. They can cause medical problems

that range from discomfort to life-threatening blood loss. Preventing fleas and ticks is as easy as applying a topical ointment or giving your pet a pill once a month. Purchasing these medicines in bulk will be considerably less expensive than purchasing them monthly.

Talk to your vet about which type of medicine will be the most effective in preventing parasites among your pets.

Discuss any potential side effects that may come with the different types of medicines.

PET HEALTH INSURANCE

For Americans, health insurance is now required by law. You may be overwhelmed by the cost of health insurance for your family. Luckily, health insurance for your pet is much more affordable and can help you save

money on preventive maintenance and emergency situations.

According to Pet Insurance Quotes, the average American will pay \$41 per month for a pet insurance plan in 2016. This premium may be higher or lower depending on the coverage selected, your pet's age and its medical history. Having an insured pet will lessen the amount of stress you will already feel during an emergency situation.



Caring for Your Senior Pet

Though you may not want to accept it, you will likely one day find yourself with an aging pet. As your pet ages, the attention to its needs will increase. This may mean more frequent visits to the veterinarian or putting your pet on a special diet. It's important to give your senior pet the special attention it needs.

With today's improved veterinary care, pets are living longer than ever before, so it's important to prepare yourself – and your budget – to care for age-related conditions associated to your aging pet.

HEALTH CONDITION IN SENIOR PETS

Animals become susceptible to the same diseases as people as they age. Some common diseases that may affect your pet include arthritis, obesity, cancer and dental issues.

If you notice your pet is slowing down in its older age, the problem may be arthritis. Common signs will include trouble with walking up and down stairs or discomfort when attempting to sleep.

Your pet may not feel up to being quite as active as it once was, meaning weight gain will typically set in. Obesity is a likely cause of diabetes or heart disease in your pet.

BASIC NEEDS

As your pet ages, its needs will change. You will be faced with different issues that were not present when your pet was in the prime of its life.

Weather conditions will need to be taken into account more carefully. As your pet ages, it experiences changes in its metabolism. This change will make it more sen-



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sitive to extreme heat or cold conditions. Regulate outdoor visits during these times.

Your pet's exercise also should be moderated. It will still need a certain level of activity to lower the risk of heart disease and obesity, but

overdoing it in extreme conditions can be counterproductive.

BEHAVIORAL CHANGES

Your pet may show changes that will require medical attention. The American Veterinary

Medical Association has laid out a few warning signs that you can look for, including a decrease in appetite or thirst. This issue may be a sign of stomach or pancreas issues.

Older pets can become disoriented. Your vet can deter-

mine if it is a case of cognitive dysfunction. This condition is similar to Alzheimer's.

Slow healing wounds also should be taken seriously. This could mean your pet's immune system is off track and may be a sign of cancer.