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Ruff Beginnings

Dog Care Info

Background

Experts say that dogs were domesticated between 12,000 and 25,000 years ago—and that all dogs evolved from the wolf. Since then, humans have selectively bred more than 400 breeds, ranging in size from four-pound teacup poodles to Irish wolfhounds, whose three-foot stature earns them the title of tallest canine. But the most popular pooches are non-pedigree—the one-of-a-kind dogs known as mixed-breeds.

Cost

The annual cost of a small dog—including food, veterinary care, toys and license—is approximately \$420. Make that \$620 for a medium dog and \$780 for a large dog. This figure doesn't include capital expenses for spay/neuter surgery, collar and leash, carrier and crate.

Note: Make sure you have all your supplies (see our checklist) before you bring your dog home.

Basic Care

Feeding

- Puppies 8 to 12 weeks old need four meals a day.
- Feed puppies three to six months old three meals a day.
- Feed puppies six months to one year two meals a day.
- When your dog reaches his first birthday, one meal a day is usually enough, but we still recommend two meals a day if possible.
- For some dogs, including larger canines or those prone to bloat, it's necessary to feed two smaller meals.

Premium-quality dry food (Science-Diet) provides a well-balanced diet for adult dogs and may be mixed with water, or canned food. Puppies should be fed a high-quality, brand-name puppy food (Science-Diet). Please limit "people food," however, because it can result in vitamin and mineral imbalances, bone and teeth problems and may cause very picky eating

habits and obesity. Clean, fresh water should be available at all times, and be sure to wash food and water dishes frequently (At least once a week).

Exercise

Dogs need exercise to burn calories, stimulate their minds, and keep healthy. Exercise also tends to help dogs avoid boredom, which can lead to destructive behaviors. Supervised fun and games will satisfy many of your pet's instinctual urges to dig, herd, chew, retrieve and chase.

Individual exercise needs vary based on breed or breed mix, sex, age and level of health—but a couple of walks around the block every day and ten minutes in the backyard probably won't cut it. If your dog is a 6- to 18-month adolescent, or if she is an active breed or mixed-breed from the sporting, herding, hound or terrier groups, his/her requirements will be relatively high.

Grooming

You can help keep your dog clean and reduce shedding with frequent brushing. Check for fleas and ticks often. Most dogs don't need to be bathed more than once a month. Before bathing, comb or cut out all mats from the coat. Carefully rinse all soap out of the coat, or the dirt will stick to soap residue and could cause a skin irritation.

Handling

Small dogs, sometimes referred to as "lap dogs," are the easiest to handle. To carry a puppy or small dog, place one hand under the dog's chest, with either your forearm or other hand supporting the hind legs and rump. Never attempt to lift or grab your puppy or small dog by the forelegs, tail or back of the neck. If you do have to lift a large dog, lift from the underside, supporting his chest with one arm and his rear end with the other.

Housing

Your pet needs a warm, quiet place to rest, away from all drafts and off the floor. A training crate is ideal. You may wish to buy a dog bed or place a clean blanket or pillow inside the crate or in a quiet place in your home. Wash the dog's bedding often. If your dog will be spending any length of time outdoors, be sure they have access to shade and plenty of cool water in hot weather, and a warm, dry, covered shelter when it's cold.

Licensing and Identification

Follow your community's licensing regulations. Be sure to attach the license to your dog's collar. This, along with an ID tag and implanted microchip or tattoo, can help secure your dog's return should he/she become lost.

Behavior Information

Training

A well-behaved companion canine is a joy. But left untrained, your dog can cause nothing but trouble. Teaching your dog the basics—"Sit," "Stay," "Come," "Down," "Heel," "Off" and "Leave it"—will improve your relationship with both your dog and your neighbors. If you have a puppy, start teaching him/her their manners as soon as possible! Use little bits of food as a lure and reward. Puppies can be enrolled in obedience courses when they have been adequately vaccinated. Petsmart and Petco both offer obedience classes, contact them for further information. You should always keep your puppy or dog on a leash. A dog who is disobedient or aggressive is not ready to play with others.

Health

Your dog should see the veterinarian for a full check-up, shots and a heartworm blood test every year, and immediately if he is sick or injured.

Dental Health

While many of us may object to our pet's bad breath, we should pay attention to what it may be telling us. Bad breath is most commonly an indication that your dog is in need of a dental check up. Dental plaque caused by bacteria results in a foul smell that requires professional treatment. After a professional cleaning, the teeth and gums may be maintained in a healthy state by brushing the teeth regularly, feeding a specially formulated dental diet and treats, and avoiding table scraps. Your veterinarian can give you more tips on minimizing dental disease and bad breath. You can clean your canine's teeth with a dog toothpaste once or twice a week. Use a child's soft toothbrush, a gauze pad or a piece of nylon pantyhose stretched over your finger. Some dogs are prone to periodontal

disease, a pocket of infection between the tooth and the gum. This painful condition can result in tooth loss and spread infection to the rest of the body. Veterinarians can clean the teeth as a regular part of your dog's health program.

Bad Breath

While bad breath caused by dental disease may not be too serious if caught early enough, some odors may be indicative of fairly serious, chronic problems. Liver or intestinal diseases may cause foul breath, whereas a sweet, fruity smell may be indicative of diabetes. If your dog's breath smells like ammonia or urine, kidney disease is a possibility. Any time you notice your pet has bad breath accompanied by other signs of ill health, such as loss of appetite, vomiting, weight loss, depression, excessive drinking or urinating, schedule a visit to the veterinarian.

Fleas and Ticks

Daily inspections of your dog for fleas and ticks is extremely important. Use a flea comb to find and remove fleas. There are several new methods of flea and tick control. Speak to your veterinarian about these and other options.

Heartworm

This parasite lives in the heart and is passed from dog to dog by mosquitoes. Heartworm infections can be fatal. Your dog should have a blood test for heartworm every year—this is crucial for detecting infections from the previous year. A once-a-month pill (such as Heartguard- available through your veterinarian) will protect your dog.

Medicines and Poisons

Never give your dog medication that has not been prescribed by a veterinarian. For example, did you know that one regular-strength ibuprofen tablet can cause stomach ulcers in a ten-pound dog? Keep rat poison and other rodenticides away from your pet. If you suspect that your animal has ingested a poisonous substance, call your veterinarian immediately.

Spaying and Neutering

Females should be spayed—the removal of the ovaries and uterus—and males neutered—removal of the testicles—by six months of age. Spaying before maturity significantly reduces the risk of breast cancer, a common and frequently fatal disease of older female dogs. Spaying also eliminates the risk of an infected uterus, a very serious problem in older females that requires surgery and intensive medical care. Neutering males prevents testicular and prostate diseases, some hernias and certain types of aggression.

Vaccinations

- Puppies need to be vaccinated discuss a vaccination schedule with your veterinarian.
- Adult dogs need to be vaccinated once a year.
- If you have an unvaccinated dog older than four or five months, he will most likely need a series of two vaccinations given two to three weeks apart, followed by a yearly vaccination.
- Do not walk your puppy or unvaccinated dog outside or let him/her walk or sit on the floor of an animal hospital until several days after her final vaccination.
- Florida law says that all dogs of the appropriate age must have a rabies vaccination.

Worms

Dogs are commonly exposed to worms and possible infestation. Microscopic eggs produced by intestinal worms are passed in an infected dog's feces. Most puppies, even from healthy mothers in good homes, carry roundworms or hookworms. The key to treatment is correct diagnosis. This will ensure that the medication is effective against the parasite your pet has. A dewormer that eliminates roundworms, for example, will not kill tapeworms. Your veterinarian can best determine the culprit—and prescribe the appropriate medication.

Dog Supply Checklist

- Premium-quality dog food and treats
(We feed and recommend Science-Diet)
- Food dish
- Water bowl
- Toys, toys and more toys, including safe chew toys
(Nylabones are great- NO RAWHIDES)
- Brush & comb for grooming, including flea comb
- Collar with license and ID tag
- Leash
- Carrier (for smaller dogs)
- Training crate
- Dog bed or warm blanket/towel
- Dog toothbrush