



HEALTH CARE AND MAINTENANCE

Dog Vaccinations, Preventatives, and Screening

A good program of routine health care is essential for your dog; it started when he was a puppy and has been maintained since his arrival at Pilot Dogs. A complete health history of your dog is a permanent part of our records, which your veterinarian will have access to once you have graduated. This medical record includes your dog's weight history, dates and types of treatments, vaccinations, medications received, all medical procedures, and test results.

Upon graduation, you will receive two copies of your dog's health certificate. This certificate contains information regarding your dog's age, spay/neuter date, and physical description, as well as dates and types of all vaccinations. Please keep a copy for your records and give one to your veterinarian.

Your dog received vaccinations against distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, Bordetella, parainfluenza, and parvovirus; however, your dog will still need a booster shot on a schedule that your veterinarian will recommend. Your dog has also had a rabies vaccination that is good for 1 year. Check with your veterinarian on the regulations in your state regarding the rabies vaccination (some states allow a three-year rabies vaccine). There may also be other vaccinations that your veterinarian suggests, based on disease conditions in your area.

Your dog has also been tested for heartworm and is negative. Heartworm is a parasite that is transmitted to dogs by the bite of an infected mosquito. The larva migrates through the dog's blood stream and settles in the heart and lungs where it then becomes the adult heartworm; if left untreated, this can be fatal. All Pilot Dogs are on heartworm and flea preventatives in the form of a chewable tablet given once a month, and it should be given year-round. You will receive a one-year supply of this preventative prior to your departure, and we will send more upon submission of the annual heartworm antigen check from your veterinarian. Your veterinarian will also administer a blood test annually to ensure that the medication is working.

Your dog has been x-rayed for any hip problems. Dogs found to have problems in these areas were career changed from our program.

We ask that you send us a copy of your dog's annual vet visit. Your veterinarian's office is usually able to email it right as you check out; they can email it to jmassey@pilotdogs.org. It is critical that we know the health history of all the dogs that are out working so that we can make appropriate breeding decisions and can put out the healthiest dogs possible.

Microchipping

Your dog has received a microchip implant between his shoulder blades. On occasion, the microchip will migrate a short distance from where it was implanted. These chips help identify your dog should he ever get away from you and be found by a shelter, the police, or an animal control officer.

Your dog's microchip is registered to Pilot Dogs; we will be notified if your dog is found and scanned, and we will contact you. We keep the microchip registration in Pilot Dogs' name for consistency of contact information.

Teeth

During training, your dog had his teeth examined and cleaned if necessary. Most dogs will require only routine dental care. Occasionally dogs do require professional cleaning of their teeth. Your veterinarian will assess your dog's dental health during routine examinations.

Dry food and treats are somewhat beneficial to maintaining your dog's oral health; however, regular brushing is also recommended. To brush your dog's teeth, you should use a finger brush; you may also use a toothbrush or gauze wrapped around your finger. Dog toothpaste can be acquired from your veterinarian or a pet store. Never use human toothpaste, as it may contain a sweetener that is toxic to dogs.

Brushing removes plaque from the teeth, helps keep the gums healthy, and will decrease the frequency of your dog's need for a professional dental cleaning. Indications that your dog needs to have his teeth examined include bad breath or tartar build-up on the teeth; severe cases may exhibit bleeding gums, expression of pain when touched around the mouth, difficulty chewing, or continual pawing at the mouth.

Internal Parasites and Urinary Problems

Your veterinarian may have your dog's stool sample checked for the presence of internal parasites, which most often can be seen only through a microscope. These include hookworm, roundworm, whipworm, tapeworm, and coccidia.

Your veterinarian will want to check your dog for the presence of these parasites, as they can be picked up at any time. This should be done at least once a year, and more often if your dog has had a positive sample or lives around other dogs. Obtain a stool sample by following the same procedure used for cleaning up after your dog. Indications of an internal parasite problem include weight loss, continued loose stool, poor appetite, or a coat that feels extremely dry or brittle.

Weight

Learn how your dog feels, particularly over the rib cage. You will be told whether their present weight is acceptable or whether they need to gain or lose weight. We grade the overall weight and condition of your dog with a body condition score. It should be no more than a 3 out of 5, and no less than a 2. Ideally, your dog will be about a 2.8. We will demonstrate how this is done during the class physical.

The average pet is overweight; it is important not to let your dog get too heavy, as this can cut down on his working life. Extra calories for your dog may be in a seemingly harmless form such as a small morsel of "people food," a dog biscuit, or a little more dog food in the bowl, but these calories add up quickly. If you are having difficulty, your veterinarian will recommend a weight goal and a program for weight reduction which may include a special diet food and increased exercise. It is EXTREMELY important, particularly as your dog ages, to keep his weight under control!

Grooming

All dogs are bathed prior to being issued. Groom your dog daily, but bathe your dog on an "as-needed" basis. If there is a medical condition that requires frequent bathing, a shampoo formulated for your dog's skin and coat may be recommended by your veterinarian. Regardless, use a shampoo specifically made for dogs and is oatmeal based. The most

important part of any bath is to rinse the dog well; remaining soap in the coat can cause skin irritation.

If you notice that your dog has an obnoxious odor, do not use dog wipes or perfumes. Often the odor is due to dental, skin, or ear infections, or anal gland issues or expression. If you are routinely brushing and grooming and cannot determine the cause of the odor, arrange for an examination by your veterinarian.

Dogs have two gland-like structures called anal glands. Most dogs will release their anal glands in small amounts when defecating so the sacs remain small and healthy. At times, they are released when the dog is scared or stressed. Sometimes, these glands may get full and need to be emptied professionally. If your dog scoots his rear-end, licks excessively, or chews at his back end, contact your veterinarian.

Make sure to inspect your dog's nails when grooming. You can always ask a groomer or your veterinary hospital to do this for you. If you can hear your dog's nails when walking on a hard surface, your dog's nails are too long. Long nails may become brittle and tear, crack, or break off with resulting pain. Many working dogs' nails stay short if they are routinely worked on pavement or concrete surfaces.

Eyes and Ears

It is common for dogs to be treated for minor eye irritations while at Pilot Dogs. Ocular discharge may or may not be normal. A small amount of white discharge in the morning is quite common, just as you may have slight discharge from your eyes in the morning. Possible indications of an eye infection include yellow or green discharge, red eyes, excessive tearing, squinting, or continuous pawing at the eyes.

Your dog's ear health has been routinely monitored while at Pilot Dogs. Early treatment for ear infections will result in faster resolution and less chance of a chronic condition. Indications of a possible ear infection include a discharge or offensive odor from the ear, redness, heat and pain around the ear, shaking of the dog's head, or pawing at the ear. If any of these symptoms occur, an examination by your veterinarian is in order.

Dry Skin

There are many reasons your dog may scratch or lick himself. Sometimes scratching reflects a physical problem and sometimes it is behavioral. A dry coat, a very moist or dirty coat, fleas, parasites, infections, and various allergies can all contribute to excessive licking and scratching.

If scratching is due to dry skin, an option to help moisten the dog's coat is to use Alpha Keri oil, which can be purchased at many convenience or grocery stores. This oil should be diluted at one capful per quart of water and then sprayed on the dog as needed. Your veterinarian may also suggest a prescription product or medicated shampoo for you to use at home. Indications to contact your veterinarian include open wounds, hair loss, or redness of the skin.

Weather Considerations

Enclosed spaces, especially cars, can quickly get dangerously hot, resulting in heat exhaustion. Symptoms include collapse, weakness, or panting. Leaving a window down will not keep the temperature at a safe level even for a short period. If you suspect your dog might be suffering from heat exhaustion, rinse him with room-temperature water, then place him in front of a fan and call your veterinarian immediately.

Hypothermia is a sudden or chronic lowering of body temperature due to cold temperatures. Your dog's extremities may be affected by frostbite. Usually the ear tips, tail, or feet are first affected. Dogs may suffer if exposed to extreme cold or wet conditions. With frostbite, the affected area is cold, may be pale or bluish, and is painful. Hypothermic dogs may shiver, appear disoriented, have slower respiratory rates, and feel cooler than usual. Do not rub the affected body parts; instead wrap the dog in a blanket and call your veterinarian immediately.

In the wintertime, be aware of the use of salt in areas where you work your dog. Pilot Dogs recommends using dog boots while working in salted areas to protect the dog's pads. Salt has a drying effect on the pads and can cause discomfort, a burning sensation, and an upset stomach if the dog licks his feet. Indications that your dog has salt in his pads include limping or stopping altogether. Wipe and rinse the feet if you think your dog has walked through salt.

Antifreeze from a car's coolant system, often seen in puddles, is extremely toxic. It is sweet tasting and even small amounts accumulated over time are toxic. Keep all toxic materials up or

away from your dog. Clean up spills and puddles promptly. When working your dog, keep his head up and be aware of what your dog is doing when you stop.

Your Veterinarian

To ensure a long-term relationship with your healthy Pilot Dog, establish a good relationship with your veterinarian. Institute a preventative healthcare plan to avoid and identify problems early so they can be treated. Vaccinations and routine lab testing (fecal and heartworm) are important in a good healthcare program. It is equally important to monitor the day-to-day health of your dog.

Call your veterinarian for advice if you notice the following:

- Loss of appetite, weight loss, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Difficult or labored breathing
- Difficulty swallowing, or coughing after eating
- Difficulty getting up, loss of stamina, or easily tired
- Change in attitude or behavior, such as sudden hyperactivity or lethargy
- Stumbling or limping
- Possible visual difficulties or decreased night vision
- Rapid or excessively-slowed heartbeat or pulse
- Excessive water consumption or increased urination (amount or frequency)
- Coughing, wheezing, or sneezing
- Swellings (especially around the face, muzzle, ears, or joints)
- Excessive scratching or biting, eye or ear discharge, or unusual odor
- Elevated temperature (above 102.5 degrees) or shivering

A single episode of sneezing, diarrhea, or a slight decrease in appetite is probably not a major health consideration; a trend is important. When you call your veterinarian for assistance, you should be able to provide the duration and nature of the illness, and they will help you decide if an examination is necessary.

Although your dog is up to date on his vaccinations, Pilot Dogs recommends taking your dog for a “welcome visit” upon your return home to ensure a positive association with the veterinary

office for your dog. In locating a veterinarian, consider location, hours of operation, and emergency care services. Inquire if guide dogs qualify for any special pricing considerations.

You will meet one of our veterinarians on the day your dog has a physical during class. Your dog's records will be available, and you will have an opportunity to ask questions. Your dog's body condition score will also be evaluated.

Keep in mind that while a Pilot Dogs veterinarian may have told you one thing during your class physical, your veterinarian at home will be the most familiar with your dog in his current condition; they may find it necessary to change some things recommended by Pilot Dogs in order to suit what they feel is best for the current care of your dog.

If you or your veterinarian ever need information from our medical files on your dog, have your vet call our office at 614.221.6367.

If your dog has anything other than routine medical problems, please notify Pilot Dogs.