

Pet Care of a Dog

Dogs are hugely popular pets. In fact, there are eight and a half million dogs being kept as pets in the UK alone.

They are known as 'man's best friend', but how should dogs be cared for and what do we actually know about them?



Diet

Dogs are omnivores, which means they need a well-balanced diet of meat and plant-based foods. They need one meal a day, unless the vet advises otherwise. Their teeth are well-developed, with sharp incisors for tearing meat, and molars for grinding plant foods.

They must have access to clean, fresh water at all times, or else they are at risk of becoming very poorly.

Environment

Dogs need a comfortable, draught-free, clean and quiet environment. They need to be able to sleep, undisturbed.

There needs to be access for them to go outside to the toilet regularly, and have some form of exercise appropriate for their breed, every day. After all, compare the type of walk a St Bernard needs compared to a dachshund!

Dogs need a place where they can go if they are frightened. Dogs have very varied temperaments, or might have been previously mistreated, which means some scare more easily than others.



Did You Know?

The common ancestor of dogs is the wolf!



Dog behaviour

Dogs are intelligent, playful animals, who need to have suitable toys or objects to play with, along with regular exercise. There are 400 different breeds of dog, and each breed has different traits suitable for the purpose of its breed. From herding to hunting, retrieving and tracking, dogs retain instinctive qualities. Herding dogs follow quick commands and whistles; hunting, tracking and retrieving dogs are fast, have strong senses and tend to be easy to command. For these reasons, pet dogs need to be able to play, fetch, run and jump to stay happy and healthy.



Did You Know?

Domestication of dogs began 15,000 years ago!

Changes in behaviour

If a dog is lying down, not looking at you and turning their face away from you, licking their lips with their ears back, it could be a sign that they are worried.

If a dog is lying down, cowering with their ears flat, teeth showing and their tail down between their legs, it could be displaying signs of being angry or unhappy.



Did You Know?

Dogs can hear sounds four times quieter than humans can hear!

Training a dog

Dogs need rewarding with treats when they have done something well. They should not be shouted at, as they won't understand the reasons for this behaviour. They need consistent, clear instructions.

Dangers to dogs

Dogs are naturally inquisitive and need supervision to ensure their safety at all times, especially during walks in unfamiliar places. Some commonplace items are poisonous to dogs:

- Human foods like chocolate, onions, raisins, grapes and sultanas are very poisonous for dogs, and they can become very ill if they eat these things.
- Slug and rat poison can make dogs very ill and even be fatal for them, resulting in kidney failure, abnormal heart rhythms and sickness.



Helpful dogs

Dogs are wonderfully helpful when given the right training. There are assistance dogs which help disabled people, and dogs that can detect explosives, drugs and even illnesses like cancer and diabetes.



Did You Know?

A dog has a highly sensitive sense of smell!

Questions

1. Explain how a dog's teeth suit the diet it needs.

2. What other word could have been used instead of 'undisturbed'?

3. Why does the exercise a dog has need to be 'appropriate to their breed'?

4. In your own words, explain why some dogs might get scared more easily than others.

5. For how long have dogs been kept as pets?

6. Describe what sort of traits you might expect a dog bred for hunting, might have, and why.

7. Give three main instructions on how someone should train their dog.

8. Explain in detail why dogs need watching carefully if taken on a walk in an area they haven't been before.

9. If you were a vet and someone brought their dog in which had been sick, what three questions would you ask the owner to try to establish why the dog is ill?
