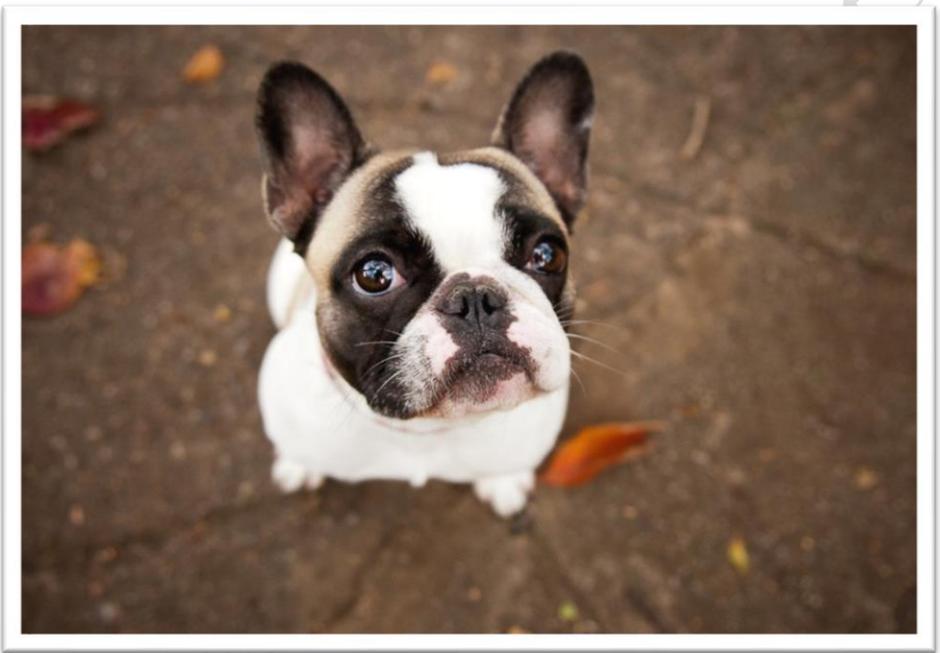




**CLUTHA · V · E · T · S ·**

**Animal Health Centre**



Clutha Vets  
Puppy Handbook

## Welcome to your new puppy

Here at Clutha Vets we want to work together with you to keep your new puppy healthy and happy for many years to come. We have a team of dedicated companion animal vets and nurses who can advise you on all aspects of your puppy's well-being.

Our aim is to give your puppy the best possible start and to help prevent health problems in the future. When you visit the clinic our vets and nurses will give your puppy a tailor made healthcare programme to suit his or her lifestyle. This booklet contains some basic information on the main aspects of puppy care including:

- Vaccination
- Worming
- Feeding
- Skin parasites
- Microchipping
- Neutering
- Training and socialisation
- Exercise
- Dental care
- Pet insurance



Clinic Contact Details and Hours:

**BALCLUTHA – 03 418 1280**

Monday – Friday 8.00am – 5.30pm

Tuesday evening to 7.00pm

Saturday morning 9.30am – 12.30pm

**MILTON – 03 417 8032**

Monday – Friday 8.00am – 5.00pm

**24hr / 7 day a week Emergency Service**

## Vaccination

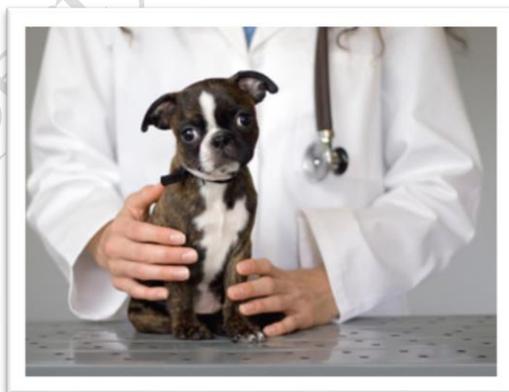
The diseases we protect dogs against are:

**Distemper** – a fatal viral disease that causes vomiting, diarrhoea, runny eyes and nose, coughing, convulsions and death. Thankfully no longer common due to a very effective vaccine

**Parvovirus** – a potentially fatal viral disease that causes severe vomiting and bloody diarrhoea which rapidly leads to dehydration and often death. It is passed on through infected faeces and can easily be spread by contaminated footwear, clothing and equipment. It is still regularly seen in unvaccinated dogs and puppies. Vaccination is very effective.

**Hepatitis** – a viral disease that attacks the liver and causes fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, pale gums, bleeding problems and seizures. Severe infections are fatal. It is most common in young dogs. Vaccination is very effective

**Kennel Cough** – a very common, very infectious upper respiratory disease. It is spread by droplets in the air and can be easily passed between dogs whether at boarding kennels, training classes or just when dogs meet on walks. It causes a harsh persistent cough, and in severe cases it can cause lung infections and (rarely) death. The two main causes of kennel cough are a bacteria (*Bordetella bronchiseptica*) and a virus (Parainfluenza virus) and these are what we vaccinate against.



## Age of Vaccination

The aim of the puppy vaccination course is to protect all puppies against Distemper, Parvovirus, Hepatitis, and Parainfluenza virus until their first booster at about a year of age. The first injection needs to be given before the protection they get from their mum starts to wear off, and the final one after all maternal protection has gone so pups can make a strong immune response to the vaccine.

Puppies usually have their first vaccination from 6 to 8 weeks of age. A second injection is given when puppies are 10 to 12 weeks old. A final vaccination is given at 14 weeks of age or older. The number of vaccines given depends on the age of the puppy at their first vaccination, and how high their risk of getting these diseases is. A booster injection is given 12 months later then usually every 3 years after that.

Kennel cough vaccination can be given as part of the puppy vaccination course and a yearly booster is needed. This vaccine is given up the dog's nose – a bit of a surprise for many pups and owners alike!

## Worming

Puppies should be wormed from 2 weeks of age, then every 2 weeks until they are 12 weeks old. In most cases 3 monthly worming against roundworms and tapeworms is then adequate. Roundworm larvae can cause serious health problems (including blindness) in people, and regular worming is of particular importance if your dog comes into contact with young children. More frequent tapeworm treatments may be needed if your dog is on a property or has access to land where sheep measles controls are in place. We can advise you on the most appropriate worming programme for your puppy.

## Feeding

Puppies should be fed on a specially formulated puppy food until 12 months of age (18 months for large breeds). Dried complete diets are the most cost effective and are more convenient to feed. If your puppy is of a breed likely to be over 25kg in bodyweight when it is fully grown then they need a large breed puppy food – it should say for large breeds on the bag. Up to 12 weeks of age puppies should be fed 4 times daily, then older puppies can be fed 3 times daily. Most puppies will be ready to go onto 2 meals a day once they reach 16 to 20 weeks of age. Adult dogs can be fed once or twice daily. Puppies grow very rapidly in the first 12 months of life - giving them the best quality puppy food for this first year is very important for the development of strong healthy bones and joints.



Please come and ask for advice if you are not sure which food is best for your puppy. Usually the better quality foods are more expensive but for good reason - they are better matched to your puppy's needs and have higher quality ingredients. Foods which say they are for puppies, adults and seniors are not going to be very suitable for any of these age groups.

A quick reminder of some foods which are toxic to dogs: chocolate, cocoa powder, grapes, raisins, macadamia nuts, and raw onions. Anti-freeze and some house plants are just a few of the common household items that are also poisonous to dogs. Remember your puppy should never be able to get to rat bait and slug bait. These are very common causes of poisoning and death. If your puppy has had access to, or eaten, anything that you think might be toxic please contact us immediately.

## Skin Parasite Control

The most common type of skin parasite we routinely treat for are fleas. Most other skin parasites are only treated when there is a clinical problem - for example ear mites and lice. Your puppy will be checked over for signs of skin parasites when they come for their health check and vaccination. We can discuss the type and frequency of treatments needed depending on your puppy's lifestyle. We usually advise spot-on treatments as they are more effective than flea collars, powders or shampoos. They are also much easier to apply!

## Grooming

If your puppy is long haired, or has a woolly coat, it is very important to get it used to being brushed and groomed. Long hair or woolly coats can get very matted and knotted, and cause a lot of discomfort. It is not possible to brush out these matts and knots and cutting them out with scissors risks cutting the skin. An anesthetic sedation is needed and the coat shaved with clippers.

Prevent knots with regular grooming. Start for a minute or two once a day using a suitable brush. Get your puppy used to being handled all over including their face, tummy and feet. Short haired dogs also benefit from being groomed, and it is a good time to check for wounds, lumps or other skin problems.



## Microchipping

All dogs should be microchipped and registered with the District Council by 12 weeks of age. Working dogs are exempt from being microchipped. However, it is a low cost and easy way of permanently identifying all dogs and is the most reliable way of ensuring your dog is returned to you if they are lost or stolen. Microchips will only get your dog back to you if the number on it and your details are registered. The microchip number and your dog's details are put on your local council's records when you register your dog. You can also register your dog's microchip with the New Zealand Companion Animal Register (NZCAR), a nationwide national register. There is a cost but it means if a registered dog is lost anywhere in New Zealand its owner can be traced through this one central database.

You will probably be surprised at how little it costs to have your puppy microchipped and registered. It is a simple quick procedure similar to an injection and does not require anaesthesia.

## Dental Care

There are a number of ways of keeping your dog's teeth clean and healthy. If you do nothing there is a high chance of your dog having dental disease requiring cleaning or extractions by the time they reach middle age. The gold standard is tooth brushing. This must be done with a pet toothpaste (human toothpaste makes dogs vomit) and either a pet toothbrush or a soft human toothbrush. Pet toothpaste contains enzymes which dissolve the plaque so don't worry about brushing vigorously. The toothpaste will work so long as it is smeared on the teeth and gums. Ideally this should be done daily but even a few times a week will make a big difference. You can start getting your puppy used to having their teeth brushed as soon as possible.

Dental chews can help to keep teeth clean but they need to be given regularly and can be quite fattening. You can also get liquids to add to the drinking water which help freshen breath and reduce bacteria in the mouth. There are special foods which help keep teeth clean. Hills Oral Care is better than normal dry food at keeping teeth clean and can be fed as the complete diet once your dog is over a year old.

## Neutering

It may seem too soon to be making a decision about whether or not to have your puppy neutered. However it is a good idea to think seriously about it now in order to gain the most health benefits from neutering, particularly for female pups.

### **FEMALES**

Most bitches will come into season for the first time between 6 and 12 months of age. Large breeds tend to be later maturing. Most seasons last about 3 weeks and the optimum time for mating is for a few days around the middle of this period. Most bitches will have some swelling of the vulva and a bloody discharge. If you are not sure if your bitch is in season or if her season is normal please contact us.

The only reason not to spay your bitch is because you want to breed from her. Having a litter of puppies does not have any health or behavioural benefits. Dogs with behavioural issues or any conformational or health problems should not be bred from. If you are keen on breeding from your dog we would be pleased to help and advise you on all aspects of breeding.

There are many health benefits from having your bitch spayed. The obvious one is preventing unwanted pregnancies. However it also prevents a womb infection called pyometra – a common but life threatening condition usually of middle-aged dogs, but also occasionally seen in young dogs. Early spaying at 6 months of age before the first season gives very good protection against certain mammary tumours (breast cancer). There is still good protection if spaying is done after the first season but the protection rapidly decreases with each season she has after that.

Have a serious think about whether you want a litter of puppies from your bitch. If the answer is yes, then please come and speak to us and we will give you all the advice and information you need. If the answer is no, then we will arrange to spay her at 5 to 6 months of age before her first season except in a few cases when we may advise you to let her have one season.

## **MALES**

The main reason for castrating a male dog is because you don't want to breed from him or he is showing unwanted male behaviour. This might include inappropriate urination, mounting other animals or objects, straying away from home, and aggression towards other male dogs. There are health benefits too. Castration prevents testicular tumours, and reduces the likelihood of prostate problems and certain skin tumours later in life. Please discuss neutering with one of our vets or nurses and we can advise you on the best decision for your dog.

## **WEIGHT GAIN**

The most common reason people give for not wanting their pet neutered is that they will get fat and lazy and their personality will change. This is not the case. Neutering does reduce the daily calorie requirement. After neutering you will need to keep a close watch on your dog's weight and adjust their feed accordingly. We advise a weight check 6 months after neutering to monitor this. Remember they will only gain weight if you feed more calories than they need and neutering in itself does not make them fat.

## **Training and Socialisation**

Training and socialisation (getting your pup used to everyday sights and sounds, other animals and people) is essential to your puppy's well-being. A well-trained confident dog that will sit, stay, come and walk to heel in any situation is a pleasure to live with. On the other hand a badly behaved dog can make everyone, including the dog, unhappy.



Up until 12 weeks of age puppies are very good at adapting to new situations, sights and sounds. This is the golden period for socialisation. After this age puppies gradually learn to be more fearful, although successful socialisation can still take place after 12 weeks of age.

At Clutha Vets we run puppy school classes which are the ideal way of socialising your puppy and starting basic training. Please speak to us about enrolling your puppy as soon as possible as there is often a waiting list. If

you are unable to come to these one of our nurses would be happy to help you on an individual basis.

Toilet training is another aspect of training we often get asked about. The most important thing is having lots of patience! The younger the puppy the less able it is to control its bladder and bowels and the more frequently it needs to go to the toilet. There are also only a few seconds between them realising they need to go to the toilet and them actually going.

You can train puppies to toilet on newspaper in the house but you then have to re-train them to go outside. Depending on your circumstances it may be easier to get your puppy used to toileting outside from the start. Put your puppy outside to the toilet as soon as they wake up and straight after eating. Give them a few minutes to get over the excitement of being outside so they can remember that they need the toilet! If they go give them lots of praise but ignore any accidents in the house. While your puppy is toileting you can use a command or phrase to encourage them. They will gradually link going to the toilet with those words.

An indoor kennel or cage can also help with toilet training as they are less likely to toilet in there. Please come and talk to us if you are having any problems with toilet training your puppy or if you are interested in using an indoor kennel.



**Clutha Vets Puppy Pre-School – 418 1280**

## Exercise

The most important thing to remember is that dog's bones and joints are soft and easily damaged until they are over a year old. Jumping should be avoided until over 1 year old. Exercise should be introduced gradually in a controlled way. It depends on the breed, age and individual as to how much exercise they need, so again, we would be happy to advise you on an individual basis.



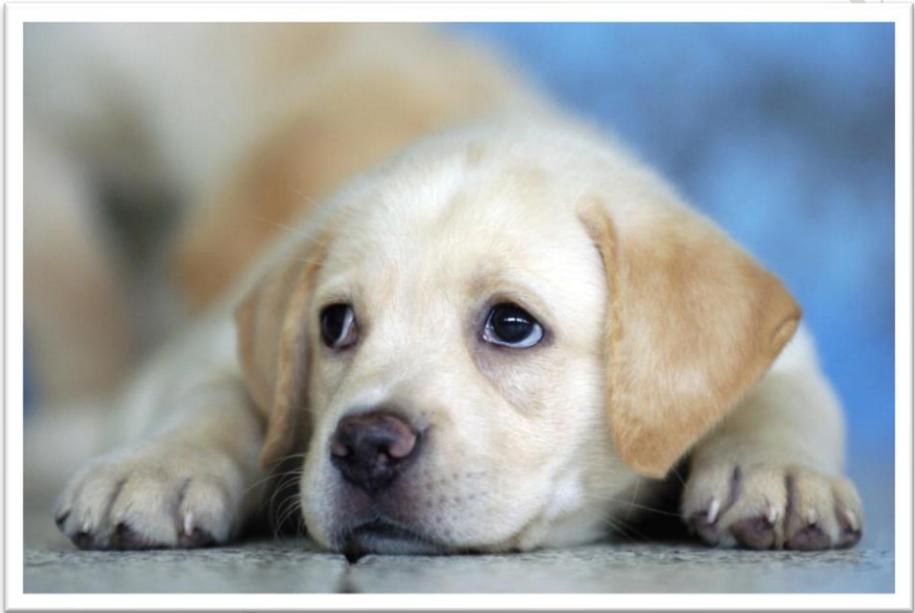
## Insurance

Veterinary medicine is advancing rapidly and many more diseases and conditions are now treatable. Sometimes these treatments come at a significant cost, particularly if referral to a specialist is recommended. Pet insurance is available to help meet these unexpected costs. As with any insurance there are many different policies to choose from. It is important to read the conditions of each policy carefully and to check if a certain condition is only covered for a certain period or up to a certain amount of money. Usually any pre-existing conditions will be excluded. We all hope our pet will be healthy and accident free but if the worst does happen then having a good pet insurance policy will enable you to choose the best treatment available.

## Website

Have a look at our website [www.cluthavets.co.nz](http://www.cluthavets.co.nz) , we have a section on Animal Health which is regularly updated with articles from our Companion Animal Vets.

Clutha Veterinary Association Inc.  
Compiled by Dr Catherine Copland BVMS



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