

Recommended Veterinary Care and Schedule for Puppies

Article #1

Let's start with the bitch. It is ideal that the bitch is vaccinated prior to pregnancy (not during pregnancy). This gives her strong immunity in her blood stream to pass on to the puppies. The bitch should also be dewormed or on heartworm prevention (most of which deworm your dog for intestinal worms as well). This helps to prevent her from passing worms to the puppies during pregnancy, through the milk during nursing and creates a less contaminated environment. A dog can get intestinal worms by eating a bit of dirt or licking their foot that has a very tiny worm egg on it.

When puppies are born it is very important that all nurse from their mother's first milk. This passes maternal immunity to the puppies, especially if she is well vaccinated. This maternal immunity will slowly disappear from the puppy's body, leaving them vulnerable to distemper, parvovirus, and other infections. Each puppy will slowly lose the maternal immunity at a different rate. This is why we vaccinate puppies multiple times, to protect them as soon as the maternal protection is gone. We also recommend keeping the puppies safe from areas where unvaccinated or sick dogs could have spread infections into the environment.

We pretty much assume all puppies are born with intestinal worms or are infected early in life. These worms are infective to people! The Companion Animal Parasite Council recommends deworming puppies with Strongid at 2, 4, and 6 weeks of age and then placed on a monthly heartworm preventative. I am pretty happy if we deworm your puppy at least 2 times prior to starting the heartworm preventative at 8 weeks. The heartworm preventative including Heartgard plus, Interceptor, Sentinel, and Iverheart all can be started at 8 weeks of age, and they remove intestinal roundworms and hookworms each time they are given.

Now let's talk about vaccines. The typical vaccine schedule for a puppy is at 8, 12 and 16 weeks. We generally do not start earlier if they nursed a bitch with good immunity. If we are unsure about the puppy's immunity from the mother we can start vaccines at 6 weeks of age. This is usually unnecessary. On the islands we vaccinate puppies and dogs for distemper, parvovirus, adenovirus 2, parainfluenza, and leptospirosis at each vaccine appointment.

Parvovirus and intestinal worms are the most common disease to cause early puppy death. We will go over parvovirus more in the next article. For now just remember that the virus can live in the environment for years, so a puppy is not safe anywhere an infected dog has been until 2 weeks after the 16 week vaccine booster.

Thanks for reading the article today. Next we will go over the disease caused by parvovirus in detail. This is a disease that is nearly 100% preventable through cleaning the environment and appropriate vaccination.

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