

# Dogs and puppies

Dogs have an average lifespan of 10-15 years.

Follow this guide to make sure your best friend can live a healthy life by your side.

## Food

Dogs should be fed dog food. Dry food is better for their teeth, but wet food is tasty as a treat. Puppies need to be fed puppy food until they stop growing and reach adult size (this depends on the type of dog). After that age, they can be fed adult dog food. Talk to your veterinarian about giving a raw, meaty bone to your dog once a week. This will help keep your dog's teeth and gums healthy.

A puppy or dog should never eat:

- ✗ Chocolate
- ✗ Cooked bones (raw bones are okay!)
- ✗ Grapes
- ✗ Onions

*These foods make them very sick and could be deadly.*

## Water

Always make sure dogs have access to fresh, clean water.

Dogs can only drink special puppy or dog milk from pet supply stores or supermarkets – cow's milk can make them sick!

## Shelter

Dogs need comfortable bedding in a safe place that will protect them from the heat, wind and rain.

When there is a storm or fireworks display, dogs can feel very alone and scared. Make sure to bring them inside and comfort them when they are startled by the sounds.

## Grooming

Remember, different breeds have different needs.

Dogs should be brushed to prevent their coat from matting and given a bath when needed. How often you groom or wash a dog depends on their coat, breed and if it's needed (e.g., if your dog has been rolling in mud, you should wash him).

Make sure to also check the length of their nails, including the 'thumb' nails! Their nails might need to be trimmed with animal nail cutters. Remember, only an adult or veterinarian should do it!



## Hygiene

Dogs should be let outside regularly to poo or wee. Make sure to pick up after them and keep their normal toileting areas clean.

## Health

Puppies and dogs can't take themselves to the veterinarian so there are a few things to do to keep them healthy!

- Dogs need a health check and vaccinations every year.
- Puppies need a series of important vaccinations to protect them from dangerous viruses.
- Fleas make animals very itchy and worms can be deadly. So, it's important to protect your dog by using a treatment from the local veterinarian, which is normally a dose of liquid that is squeezed onto the dog's neck every month.
- When a dog or puppy is quieter than normal, eating or drinking differently or their poo or wee is different, they should be taken to a veterinarian to be checked out!

## Enrichment

To prevent dogs from becoming bored and barking, they will need toys and a walk at least once or twice a day. During the walk, let them meet lots of different people and make new dog friends! Kongs are great for a dog because they have to work hard to get their treats!

## Training

The most important time to train and socialise a puppy is between eight to 17 weeks of age – so make sure they attend puppy preschool! At home, you can train your puppy or dog two to three times a day in sessions of 10 minutes. Otherwise, they won't remember what they've learned! Use positive reinforcement, like giving treats, to reward your dog when they do the right thing.

## Desexing

It is very important that pet dogs are desexed! Desexed animals can no longer have babies, which is good for our community because we have too many unwanted animals. Desexed dogs and puppies are less vulnerable to illness, better behaved and can live longer than non-desexed animals.

## Identification

All dogs and puppies need to have a microchip implanted by a veterinarian. The microchip links to all of the owner's important details on a register, which should always be updated.

If the dog is lost, the finder can have them scanned at the pound, RSPCA shelter or veterinary clinic. If the microchip is registered, the owner can be easily found. Dogs also need to wear a collar with an ID tag that has the owner's telephone number on it.

If you can't find the right dog for you at your local RSPCA shelter, animal rescue groups or at [adoptapet.com.au](http://adoptapet.com.au), check out our Smart Puppy Buyer's Guide to help you find a good breeder.

For more information about dogs and puppies, visit [kb.rspca.org.au/9/](http://kb.rspca.org.au/9/).