



**Beaumont Sainsbury
Animal Hospital**

Royal Veterinary College

Your puppy **CARE GUIDE**

Bringing a new puppy home is an exciting time and the start of a new adventure for both you and your pup.

Your life will change when the pitter-patter of tiny paws are heard and suddenly you will be responsible for all aspects of the care of a living, breathing animal. We've put together this pack to give you some guidance and help with questions you may have.



Everything you need to know for a happy, healthy start

Accredited, dog-friendly veterinary hospital

The Beaumont Sainsbury Animal Hospital is accredited by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons as a Tier Three Animal Hospital – the highest level of clinical and customer care standards that veterinary practices can achieve.



The Beaumont Sainsbury Animal Hospital has also been assessed and accredited by the Dogs Trust and British Veterinary Behaviour Association as a Dog Friendly Clinic. This means that the facilities, policies and staff have all been assessed as being behaviourally-friendly for your dog so that your dog's veterinary experience is as comfortable as possible.



Assessed by



Vaccinations

It is vital that your puppy is kept up to date with vaccinations to protect against the following infectious diseases:

- Canine distemper
- Canine hepatitis
- Canine parvovirus
- Leptospirosis

At 8 weeks old your puppy can have his or her first vaccination and health check with the vet. The second part of the vaccination course is usually given 4 weeks later.

From the day that you bring your puppy home he or she can be taken out into your garden if it is enclosed and out-of-bounds to unvaccinated dogs. As long as your puppy is given the vaccinations as described above, he or she can start to go outside on a lead in public areas from 13 weeks of age. We recommend that off-lead exploring and access to ditches and water is avoided until your pup is at least 14 weeks of age. Your dog should then receive booster injections on an annual basis.

Once your puppy has completed the primary course of vaccinations you will be given a certificate of vaccination. You may need to present this certificate to boarding kennels, dog walkers and puppy/ dog training classes before they can accept your dog.

Kennel cough

It is also possible to vaccinate your dog against kennel cough. The vaccine is administered by squirting a few drops up the dog's nose. This can be done at the same time as the routine vaccine or booster.

Kennel cough is caused by the Parainfluenza virus and Bordetella bacterium. Kennel cough is only rarely life threatening but it is an uncomfortable and distressing illness for dogs to have as it causes a very severe cough. Traditionally, kennel cough vaccination was only recommended for dogs going into kennels but as the disease is passed between dogs in many situations such as at the groomers, training classes, doggy day care, dog walking groups and in the parks it has become very common in the local dog population.

We now recommend that the vaccination is provided to all dogs that participate in the above activities and socialize with other dogs. The kennel cough vaccine requires annual boosters to maintain immunity.

Other vaccinations

It is also possible to vaccinate your dog against rabies, if you are considering taking your dog abroad.

Please visit our pet travel page:
rvc.uk.com/pet-travel

Worming

Almost all puppies are infected with roundworms passed on from their mother. We recommend worming puppies monthly until 6 months of age. After this, your veterinary surgeon can help you choose a long-term worming plan based on your dog's health and lifestyle.

Roundworm eggs are common in soil and easily carried into the house on shoes or your pet's fur. When your dog licks themselves, they swallow these eggs and become infected. One type, Toxocara, can spread to people and occasionally cause health problems, including blindness.

Dogs catch tapeworms either by eating fleas (fleas often contain tapeworm eggs) or by eating mice/ birds/ raw meat/ faeces.

Lungworm is spread by slugs and snails, so dogs that chew or eat grass, toys, or sticks are most at risk. Some even enjoy eating snails and slugs!

Our vets are happy to discuss your dog's individual situation with you, explain the different products available, and help you decide on a worming regime during any routine consultation.

Flea treatment

Fleas often cause itching and irritation in dogs (and can bite people too!). Some dogs are allergic, leading to severe skin damage even with just a few fleas. Live fleas are rarely seen as dogs groom them off, but flea dirt - tiny dark specks - can often be found in the coat.

Adult fleas are less than 5% of the total population; the rest live as eggs, larvae, and pupae in carpets, furniture, and floorboards. Fleas can hitchhike on shoes, and one female can lay up to 40 eggs a day. We recommend monthly flea prevention to stop infestations before they start. Our vets can advise on the best product for your dog - tablets are generally preferred for effectiveness and environmental reasons.

Tick treatment

Ticks live in grass, heathland, and low shrubs, attaching to dogs as they pass by. Check your dog during grooming, and use a proper tick remover - our team can supply one and show you how to use it.

We recommend using a product that kills ticks quickly, as they must be attached for 24-48 hours to transmit disease. Ticks can spread Lyme disease and, increasingly, Babesia in the UK.

Microchipping

All dogs living in the UK must be microchipped. A microchip is a tiny device (approximately the size of a grain of rice) that is injected under the skin at the back of your dog's neck. If your dog goes missing and is taken to a veterinary surgery, police station, dog warden or rehoming kennels, staff will scan your dog and read the unique microchip code. This identifies your dog on a central database so that you can be contacted and your pet returned. The microchip is also an essential part of the Travel Scheme for dogs travelling abroad.

Teeth

Dogs' teeth build up plaque and tartar and can become infected or loose like people's. Chewy toys, biscuits, and dental chews can help, but daily brushing is best for long-term dental health. Start young so your dog learns to enjoy it.

Use a soft brush or fingertip toothbrush and only pet-safe toothpaste - never human toothpaste. Our vets or nurses can show you how during a routine visit and give advice on introducing brushing gradually. Puppies get adult teeth between 3-7 months, and some may come in crooked, especially in short-faced breeds. We recommend a dental check at around 6 months of age to ensure their teeth are developing properly.

Pet Health Plans

Our Pet Health Plans are designed to provide cost-savings and convenience by spreading the cost of your dog's preventative health care (6 monthly vet checks, flea/worm/tick treatment, vaccinations, microchipping) with a monthly direct-debit scheme. The scheme also offers discounted rates on dental treatment, neutering and food purchased from the practice.

Further details can be found at <https://rvc.uk.com/pet-health-plan-SM>

Insurance

Dogs can have accidents or illnesses just like us, but there's no NHS for pets - owners must cover the cost. Emergencies or lifelong conditions like diabetes can be expensive, so we strongly recommend pet insurance to ensure your dog can always receive the best care. It provides peace of mind and lets vets focus on treatment rather than cost. Research policies carefully, as cover varies between companies. Lifetime cover with at least £4,000 - £7,000 per year is best, as cheaper plans may exclude important treatments later on.

Remember, Pet Health Plans cover routine preventative care, while insurance covers unexpected illness or injury - we recommend both for complete protection.

Diet

Puppies have different nutritional needs from adult dogs. Any commercial puppy food labelled as "complete" will be nutritionally balanced for your pup. Home-cooked diets are difficult to balance correctly, so we do not recommend them. Raw meat carries a risk of salmonella, E. coli, and campylobacter, but if you choose a raw diet, our vets and nurses can advise on the safest and most balanced options.

Use the feeding guide on the label as a starting point and adjust to maintain optimal body weight, taking into account age, size, activity level, environment, and health. Puppies should be fed three to four times daily until six months, then twice daily. Weigh your puppy regularly - dog scales are available at the surgery without appointment, and staff can help record weights and offer guidance.

Avoid too many table scraps, but controlled treats are important for training and rewarding your puppy - remember to reduce the main meals accordingly. Changes in diet should be made gradually over a week to prevent diarrhoea or colitis, and it's best to continue the breeder's diet initially before transitioning.

Neutering

Female dogs

A bitch normally comes into season every six months for about three weeks, usually starting between six and twelve months. Early bleeding lasts 7–10 days with the vulva swollen; she attracts males but is only receptive once bleeding stops, for 5–9 days. Close supervision is important to avoid unwanted mating.

We advise spaying if you do not wish to breed.

Advantages of spaying:

- Prevents unwanted pregnancies and twice-yearly management
- Reduces risk of mammary cancer
- Stops false pregnancies
- Lowers risk of life-threatening uterine infections (pyometra, ~25% lifetime risk)

Disadvantages of spaying:

- Possible weight gain
- Occasional urinary leakage in older bitches, usually manageable

Spaying removes the ovaries under general anaesthetic. Timing varies by breed/size; for bitches that have had a season, surgery is usually done about four months later. Most go home the same day, and laparoscopic (keyhole) spays are available - ask at Reception for details.

Male dogs

Male dogs reach puberty between 5 and 10 months, depending on breed. We do not recommend routine castration for all males, preferring decisions to be based on each dog's individual situation.

Benefits of castration:

- Reduces interest in bitches in season, escaping, and chasing
- Reduces mating behaviour (e.g., mounting owners or furniture)
- Can improve focus and trainability in some dogs
- May reduce aggression towards other dogs
- Helps control urine marking indoors
- Lowers risk of prostate problems and eliminates risk of testicular tumours

Disadvantages of castration:

- Possible weight gain, manageable with diet
- Small risk from general anaesthetic
- May worsen fear-related behaviours in some dogs
- Early castration in large breeds may be linked to musculoskeletal or internal issues

We usually wait until sexual maturity to assess behaviour. Castration can be discussed with a vet, and behavioural cases may benefit from a referral. A temporary hormonal implant is also available for 6–12 months.

Training

Puppies are highly adaptable! The best time to introduce them to new people, animals, and situations is between 7 and 13 weeks. While waiting for full vaccination limits some activities, carrying your puppy outside allows safe exposure to traffic, car rides, and other environments. Invite visitors, particularly children if there are none at home, for short, gentle play sessions, and always let your puppy approach at their own pace. Small or medium- sized friendly adult dogs can also interact, provided they are fully vaccinated.

Introduce new experiences gradually, keeping interactions short and ensuring your puppy can move away if uncomfortable. Attending classes or one-to-one sessions with a behaviourist can guide socialisation tailored to your puppy's individual needs and temperament.

At Beaumont Sainsbury Animal Hospital, our clinical animal behaviourist runs small, evidence-based puppy classes for puppies under 5 months (vaccination not required). These sessions also help puppies get used to the vet, making future visits less stressful.

Further information is available at: <https://rvc.uk.com/puppy-training-bsah-2025>

Pre-visit advice for pets visiting Beaumont Sainsbury Hospital

Making an appointment

Appointments can be made using the online booking system or by calling Reception. You may choose any available vet, but seeing the same vet consistently helps build continuity of care and rapport between the pet, owner, and vet. For emergencies, please call the practice directly rather than using the online system so that urgent attention can be arranged.

Travelling to the hospital

The practice is a 10-minute walk from Camden and Kings Cross stations and is served by several bus routes, with paid parking outside. Dogs should travel on a lead, harness, or in a ventilated carrier. Arriving early allows a short walk to reduce stress, and familiarising your dog with travel beforehand helps make visits easier.

Arriving at the hospital

Check in at Reception. Separate waiting areas exist for dogs, cats, and small mammals. Anxious pets can wait outside or in an empty consultation room - the Reception team will call when it's your turn, helping ensure a calmer experience for all pets.

During the appointment

At the start, the vet or veterinary student will discuss your pet's health, routines, diet, medications, and any symptoms. Bringing vaccination or other relevant documents is especially helpful if someone else brings your pet.

Consultations usually begin with discussion and may include a hands-off observation or gentle handling to examine the pet. Food rewards are provided to build positive associations; feel free to bring your pet's favourite treat. Pets attending for surgery, sedation, or digestive issues should not be offered food.

Pets that are fearful of the veterinary practice

Some pets find the practice overwhelming. Options include hands-off observation, consultations in the car park, anti-anxiety medication, or sedation. Training your dog to wear a basket muzzle at home can help manage fearful pets safely. A muzzle training information sheet is available at www.rvc.uk.com/muzzles and muzzles are available for purchase in the waiting room.

Making visits positive

Pets are more comfortable if they visit when healthy. Puppies can attend puppy classes, and adult dogs can have "happy visits" at quiet times - ask Reception for details.

Emergencies

During opening hours, call the practice and a team member will assess your pet.

Outside of our opening hours you will have the option of taking your pet to:

Queen Mother Hospital for Animals, RVC, Hatfield AL9 7TA, 01707 666399 – this is our sister hospital and is fully staffed 24/7 with emergency, critical care, trauma facilities, and specialist vets. Most cases can be treated as outpatients.

Vet 24, 10 Belsize Terrace, Belsize Park, NW3 4AX – for clients preferring an emergency service in central London

Overnight patients at Beaumont Sainsbury Animal Hospital are cared for by an on-site night nurse, with our vets on call for hospitalised pets.

Beaumont Sainsbury Animal Hospital
4 Royal College
Street, London, NW1 0TU

Monday to Friday: 08:00 – 19:00

Saturday: 09:00 – 15:30

Sunday: 10:30 – 15:30

Telephone: 020 7387 8134

**Emergency Care
(Outside Opening Hours):**

Vet24 0870 873 4576

www.rvc.ac.uk/BSAH