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The Dog Owner's Handbook

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Overview of Different Breeds of Dogs

There are over a hundred registered breeds of dogs. Recognizing the type of the dog is basically associated with its breed. A purebred animal belongs to a documented and acknowledged group of unmixed lineage. Before a breed of dog is recognized, it must be proven that mating two adult dogs of the same type would have passed on their exact characteristics, both appearance and behavior, to their offspring.

If thinking of adopting or buying a pet dog for yourself, it is important to know which type of dog you want. Here are a few popular dog breeds for your easy reference:

Labrador

Labradors are very outgoing dogs that have yellow, black or brown furs. Labrador are versatile dogs that has a wide rang of functions. Most of them are known as retrievers and are utilized as guide dogs for the blind. They enjoy holding different objects in their mouth and are prone to chewing things. Labradors are observed to be hypersensitive and have a high regard for their territory. Their fur is water repellant thus making them perfect for waterfowl hunting. They make an excellent family dog.

German Shepherds

German shepherds are also known as Alsatian. Originally, they were intended to aide for a farmer in herding their sheep or cattle. They are incredibly intelligent and very trainable. Because of their build they are often used as working dogs in the military or police community. Most of them are also guide dogs. German shepherds are large and strong dogs with varied fur colors. Most come in cream, gray, white or black.

Boxer

Boxers have pointed ears that are tilted forward. They have a distinguishable white underbelly and white parts at the tip of each foot. These white regions are often called 'flashiness' which sometimes extends to other parts of the body. These usually appear on

the shoulders and face. Boxers are playful and an energetic breed. They are perfect as a pet for children because they have an extended puppy hood, meaning they are not considered as an adult dog until they reach the age of three. Training would not be a problem. Boxers are known to be obedient and possess a strong personality. It is advisable to train a boxer at an early age. They can sometimes be a substitute as guide dogs or police dogs.

Rotweiler

Rotweillers' origin traced back on ancient times. Their existence has been associated with the Roman Empire as watchers for groups of cattle. Since then, their incredible strength and intelligence have been recognized. They are used as police dogs and military aides during wars. Rotweillers are black with tan spots on its cheeks, legs, chest, face and you find tan underneath their tails as well. They are marked with upside down triangles that can be found on the chest area. Each eyebrows have a unique spot. Rotweillers are intelligent and fearless dogs. You can notice their foreheads getting a little wrinkly when they are alert. Rotties are very active and playful and are fast on learning tricks.

Poodle

Poodles can be a very good companion and are very loyal to their owners. They belong to a quiet breed of dogs that has a naturally curly fur. Their color ranges from black, grey, white, blue, apricot or brown. Training a poodle tends to require more effort compared to other breeds. They are considered a "hypoallergenic" breed. They are very famous for their very nice coats. Maintenance proves to be a tedious job. Owners have to keep their hair in a manageable length so that matting and tangling is prevented.

Dachshund

Dachshunds are also referred to as sausage dogs because of their elongated built. They have short legs and pointed facial framework. Chasing and hunting are their favorite past times. Most dachshunds have crooked legs and chest compared to a barrel. Dachshunds are playful and loyal dogs that loves to chase small animals like birds. Their senses are very keen and well-developed though they often exhibit shyness.

Beagle

Beagles have acquired a strong sense of smell. Because of this quality they are used for hunting animals like rabbits. They have big ears that are low-set giving them that gentle look. Their furs are commonly white, black, brown or a combination of both. Beagles are known to be very good tempered. Training might prove to be a tricky task because these dogs are strong willed that makes them quite stubborn. Beagles travel in pack, being a pet dog might cause them to have anxiety.

Above is a simple overview of popular breed of dogs. In choosing a dog for you consider each breeds' physical appearance, temperament and health issues. Of course, each dog should fit your lifestyle. Remember dogs should be given proper attention and care but in exchange you can have the best companion ever.

Selecting A Breeder

Dogs are considered as man's best friend. Deciding to own one whether it is big or small involves a lot of responsibility. It is not just about feeding it but includes other chores such as grooming, watching its health and diet, cleaning up after it and most importantly, giving it some tender loving care. There are many places one can get a dog such as a kennel or the pet store. But if you want to get a purebred animal, you must seek a reputable breeder to get the best results.

Finding the right breeder for the dog depends on the breed that you selects. Professional breeders do not breed frequently and will only do so when a pair is found to be healthy and temperament that will insure the birth of also healthy offspring. Breeders will also breed only when a sufficient number of homes have been evaluated and deemed appropriate.

Given that there is no standard as to what a standard breeder is, you should do research by asking people and interviewing as many breeders as possible before making a decision. There are many categories of the type of breeders in the market and by knowing which one is the best and understanding the consequences; this will make all the difference of the type of offspring that will be produced.

The ideal breeder should have the pair of dogs tested for every possible disease as well as have all the information regarding the pair's ancestors and health records on file. Should a breeder find no problem in the history of the pair, you must still ask details to be sure. This is one sign that shows the breeder the interest of a potential owner of such a magnificent and smart animal. You can also ask the people who have been given offspring's in the past to check if there were any problems since the breeder maintains a close relationship with these dog owners.

Reputable breeders have certain requirements that you must have before qualifying as a potential dog owner. These are usually in the form of written contracts or guarantees with a spay or neuter requirement that limits the registration of the puppies. This is done both for the protection of the owner as well to control a possible overpopulation problem.

The person who wants a dog must have a secured backyard and attend certain classes such a puppy kindergarten to be familiar with the challenges you will face come the time the dog has been given.

The requirements needed by the breeder is not to delay the process of giving you a dog but to ensure that the person is aware of what will happen as a dog owner and the responsibilities that come with it as well as make sure that the puppies will have good homes. This is what makes responsible breeders different from others who are not since these people are not concerned about the health or welfare of the dogs but are just in it to earn money.

Once a person is able to find the ideal breeder, the waiting does not end there. Since the

demand for the breeder's dogs are well sought after due to the selective nature of the breeding practices, the newborn pups will still have to be raised with the breeder and will only be released when a number of pre-screened homes have been found. If you do all the research, it is possible that you will qualify as part of that list.

One of the most critical factors in identifying a good breeder aside from the health and food given is the condition of the mother after birth and how well are the puppies taken cared of. The best way to do is if the breeder is just nearby so you can visit the place from time to time and monitor the condition of the puppies.

Another good quality of a responsible breeder is the voluntary assistance provided to the owners of the puppies. If the placement of the puppy did not work out as hoped with a certain owner, the breeder can require the person to return the puppy and provide it with a better home since the life of the puppies is the responsibility of the breeder throughout the dog's life. We'll take a more in-depth look in the next chapter where we will discuss the pros and cons of purebred as opposed to a "mutt."

Purebred versus Mutt

You can choose either a specific breed otherwise known as pure bred as we discussed in the previous chapter or choose one that is if a mixed breed or a mutt.

For people involved with professional breeding, there is a huge difference in purebreds and so-called "mutts." "Mutts" are of mixed breed. Some are actually purebred but have no documentation proving that they are purebred. If you are looking for a pet and have no interest in entering into competition with your dog, this might be a viable option for you.

Choosing a dog depends on many things. The size of one's home, how much exercise is needed, does it shed often or if you wants a gentle or playful companion.

Deciding to own one whether it is large or small involves a lot of responsibility. It is not just about feeding it but includes other chores such as grooming, watching its health and diet, cleaning up after it and most importantly, giving it some tender loving care. There are many places you can get a dog such as a kennel or the pet store but if you want to get a pure bred animal, you must seek a reputable breeder to get the best results.

As we discussed in the previous chapter, breeding done in purebred dogs is done carefully. The pair is tested for every possible disease which includes having all the information regarding the pair's ancestors and health records on file. Should there be no problem in the history of the pair, then the breeding can begin. If in testing, the pair is not compatible due to diseases that are common in a specific breed, another dog will be selected to match with the other dog.

Since the demand for the breeder's pure bred dogs are well sought after due to the selective nature of the breeding practices, the newborn pups will still have to be raised with the breeder and will only be released when a number of pre-screened homes have been found. This is done for the welfare of the select few of owners and to control population growth.

If you opt for a purebred as we discussed previously and do meet the criteria that a responsible breeder will request, you stand a good chance of getting the dog you want. The restriction may seem severe but responsible breeders care a great deal about how "their" offspring will be raised.

Mixed breeds on the other hand or mutts as people call them could have been bred out of experimentation to produce a breed which could be better and stronger than the two breeds. Most likely, these were the results of accidents. This is the reason why dogs of mixed breeds just like pure breeds must be neutered since millions of dogs every year that are not wanted by people die in animal shelters.

Health wise, pure bred dogs that come from a line of strong parents won't have problems. This is because breeders screen the pair before the process happens.

Unfortunately, there are instances where certain breeders are more concerned about financial gain rather than the welfare of the animal. This is especially true of those breeders who do not practice the strict guidelines of proper breeding thereby producing inferior dogs.

Mixed bred dogs on the other hand, will fall somewhere in the middle since proper screening was poorly done or never carried out. Certain dogs carry varied deficiencies common to the breed and mixing the two will just pass on to the mixed breed.

Some people prefer pure bred dogs than mixed bred ones. The primary reason is that it is easier to sell and carries a certain prestige with it. Mixed bred dogs are seen as inferior and since no one is interested, most of these are rounded up and die in an animal shelter.

Pure bred dogs are seen as a higher class which is why they are always featured at dog shows. Mixed dogs are not allowed to join. The reasons given have not been that clear which is why mixed breed owners still contest the rule.

Adopting A Dog - Puppy or Adult?

Adopting a dog is an exciting event. Truly a man's best friend, you can rely on your pet to give you company, companionship and some can even guard your house. You need to review your personal lifestyle and needs when adopting a dog. It is a major decision whether or not you choose to have a puppy or an adult as a pet. Before deciding on which dog to adopt, here is some useful information that might help you decide.

Puppies

* Bringing up a puppy is an advantage because this means that you guide its growth and well being. You have the chance to raise it according to what you want. This means you

can ensure that it is properly nurtured with the right dog food, ensure that necessary vaccinations are given and prevent heartworm at this early stage. Having your puppy personally trained is also a plus since you can teach him exactly what you want.

- * You should adopt a puppy when it is at least 10 weeks old. Puppies need a lot of time to be cared for by their mothers. This is a crucial stage for them. They somehow gain a psychological advantage for both puppy and for the mother dog as well.

- * A puppy can easily adjust to new surroundings as compared to an adult dog even though most puppies may cause minimal to major damage to your personal stuff while they are in the stage of teething. They need to be housebroken and house training needs a lot of time, effort and patience from the owner.

- * There is no assurance of what a puppy will look like when it grows up; especially it is a mixed breed. Also, his temperament might change too when he grows up.

- * Most pet owners love how puppies can be entertaining for the entire family. They are very cute and adorable pets that is a hit for both children and grown ups. Puppies can be easily regarded as one of the family.

Adult dog

- * You would have less of a fuss taking care of an adult dog. They already have this established behavior that you can easily adapt too. By being with the dog more often, you would have more or less an idea of what its temperament is.

- * You need to get as much information as you can when adopting an adult dog. Take note of its habits and mood swings. Hopefully you can acquire this valuable data from the previous owners of the dog. Some adult dogs may have some behavior issues. It is important to take note of them.

- * It may take some time and effort for an adult dog to be completely comfortable with a new owner.

- * You need to introduce an adult dog to your children and other household members before bringing him into the home. This would help the dog be familiar with them and helps them refrain from biting or barking thinking that they maybe strangers.

- * Adult dog may not need your full attention unlike puppies need and would require lesser trips to the vet.

- * For a fully grown dog physique and behavior is basically not a variable anymore. What you see is basically what you get.

- * Most dogs are housebroken already so they would cause lesser damage to your belongings and don't wake up at night like most puppies do. They have usually overgrown the impulse of chewing things that strike his fancy.

- * An older dog can easily adapt to other pets, like other dogs or cats, if you have a group of them at your household.

Adopting a dog is not an easy task and choosing which one to adopt can be a little tricky too. Everyone loves sweet looking puppies, but not everyone can stand up to the tiresome house training although most appreciate the bonding shared with them. Adult dogs need no great amount of guidance but can still turn out to be a lovable pet. Whichever you think is the right pet for you, just keep in mind that taking care of them needs a lot of time and effort. In return, they would always keep you company and has ready smile with an excited wag of tail waiting for you everyday.

How to Housebreak Your Puppy

Housebreaking is the most important thing your puppy must learn. Common sense should tell you why. Do you want your house to stay spic and span? Then, think about it.

Handle your puppy's housebreaking well. Aside from the maintenance of your household hygiene, trained dogs are happy dogs. As creatures of habit, it's in their nature to keep schedules as pack animals. Here is how you should housebreak your puppy:

Ideal Housebreaking Age

When your puppy reaches the age of 8 to 12 weeks old, it's high time to begin housebreaking. Remember that adage that old dogs can't learn new tricks? It is still true. So, don't take any chances.

Crate Help

Dog trainers suggest using a crate in housebreaking your puppy. A crate is like a cage, with see-through bars and a locking door. Its size should accommodate the dogs' size for it to move around in. It should be used like a dog's bedroom. It is advised to not confine your puppy in his crate for more than two hours at a time.

The wonder behind using a crate in housebreaking your puppy is that dogs are not into eliminating by their sleeping areas. However, it might get forced to relieve itself if you cruelly lock him in somewhere for longer than he can hold it in. So, never use a crate to punish your dog, it will backfire. Generally, pups that are three-month old must eliminate every 3 hours, so you should lead him to a special outdoor comfort room more often.

Make Your Puppy Learn Routines

Another tip is to leave the house through one door only. This door should be the one that you want your dog to scratch to warn you about his being called by the nature.

Taking your pup out at around the same times every day will be very beneficial for the both of you. This will help in establishing a routine, and will make him learn to hold it in until you become available to take him out.

Look For Clues

If your un-housebroken dog is accustomed to roaming freely around the house, search for signs that show you he needs to do it. Be really observant enough of his behavior, i.e., heavy sniffing, circling an area, staring at the door with an intense look on his face, etc. If you catch him WHILE doing it, stop him with a quick grab of his collar and pull it up while saying "No" using your deep, stern tone (don't forget to use a deep, gruff voice when stating commands). Then, take him outside and let him finish what he is doing. Lastly, pat him on his head while saying "Good (his name)!" It is a must to make your dog get used to being praised whenever he does anything that makes you proud. Giving him food as a reward when he does his business in the appropriate spot can help, too.

Patience is a Big Virtue

Like any training endeavor, housebreaking requires a lot of patience. If you definitely despise cleaning your dog's waste off your Persian carpets on an hourly basis and having your whole house smell like a public bathroom, you want the housebreaking to be successful in a wink of an eye, if not sooner.

Common Sense Makes a Lot of Sense

The use of common sense will aid you big time in dealing with your puppy's housebreaking endeavor. Logical thinking should inform you to not give your dog water before bedtime if his tendency is to pee often at night time. Catering to his schedule first will prove to be very helpful in making it gradually change into yours.

Aside from patience and common sense, consistency is also one of the important factors of this dog training activity. If you suddenly forget about the routines yourself, don't blame if your dog if he starts committing accidents more often. Remember that the stakes are high (dirty and malodorous house). If you would like succeed in this housebreaking feat or just about in any other training drills, don't treat it as a game. Allot enough time and commitment on your part.

Obedience Training for Your Dog

There are dogs that do not have bad behaviors, and even if their owners are trying hard to teach them to obey some simple commands, these dogs are hardheaded. Chances are, many owners would just dump them to dog pounds because they are already fed up, and could no longer understand the behavior anymore.

These things could have been avoided if obedience training was used and implemented. Most obedience training in dogs is used to create a groundwork from which the dog and his master will learn how to effectively correspond to each other.

Moreover, obedience training is also employed by dog owners whose dogs are behaving badly. It is one way of incorporating discipline in the dog's behavior. This kind of training makes him realize that certain behaviors are not allowed and that he should not act that way.

When obedience training is incorporated into a dog's behavior, the dog, in turn, will be able to respond properly with the right behavior that is expected of him to manifest.

Consequently, many dog owners are wondering whether it would be better if a professional should handle their dog's obedience training. In most cases, it can be much easier to have a professional trainer or an obedience school to teach the proper way to follow a command. However, if the dog owner feels he can do just the same, then, there

is no special condition for that matter.

Whether the obedience training is done at home, by a professional trainer, or in an obedience school, there are things that must be considered when incorporating this kind of training. Here is a list of the things that should be taken into account.

1. Fun

Obedience training does not necessarily mean that strict rules should be imposed. This is because the dog is not aware of the reasons why he should be trained. Therefore, for him to respond to the commands, the training must be done in such a way that the dog sees the activity as something that is fun.

The dog will be able to respond positively if he sees that whenever he follows what he is asked to do, he gets rewards or praises, and that is having fun for them.

2. Consistency

During the course of obedience training, it is really important to have consistency in the training. For example, if a dog was allowed to sit on the rug the other day and when the dog tried to sit on the rug today, he was scolded. Things like this should not be taken for granted. It is extremely important to teach the dog what he should and should not do and stick to it. Confusion will only make the matters worst.

3. Obedience training instructor/trainer

When people choose to enroll their dogs in an obedience class, it is important to analyze the trainer before the owner leaves his dog. The character and personality of the trainer is extremely important. They should be professional enough to know how to handle the dog's behavior and how to train them properly.

4. Referrals

It is best not to try new and unfamiliar obedience training schools. This could be really risky both for you and for your dog. It would be better if dog owners ask for some referrals from their veterinarians, dog breeders, or other people who can give their honest opinions.

5. Charges

Not all obedience training schools are created equal. They vary depending on the kind of services that they offer. Therefore, it is best to consider the amount of charges that they provide and the dog owners should know how to analyze if the prices are worth it.

6. Methods used in the training

It is highly recommended that dog owners should contemplate first on the kind of methods being used in the training. This is because some obedience training schools do not use the appropriate method in training the dog. In this manner, dog owners do not get the results they expected.

Obedience training can be very useful in fulfilling most of the dog's essential needs. It gives them something to direct their skills and actions thereby making them reliable and happy pets.

Most people just don't know this, but one of the reasons why dogs behave inappropriately is because they don't have the right direction to guide their actions. They are confused on how to respond appropriately with the environmental and social variables that they encounter.

With obedience training, your dog will be on the way to a happier and more enjoyable environment.

Is Your Dog Fat?

Many people may not be aware of this, but obesity is one of the greatest problems dogs are dealing with in society today. Obesity in dogs, like humans, is also caused by excessive eating and unhealthy binges. Mostly, this situation is triggered by some environmental factors that when not controlled may just lead to more problems.

Like humans, dogs also develop certain diseases when they are overweight. These diseases will lead to more serious complications including death. So for people who wish to know the repercussions of obesity in dogs, here are some of the known consequences:

1. Arthritis

Obesity in dogs tends to put extra weight on their bones. In turn, the joints and other parts of the dog's bones may develop arthritis.

Excess weight in dogs may also initiate the development of other muscle and joint problems like spinal disc disease, hip dysphasia, and cracks on the joint ligaments.

2. Diabetes

Like humans, dogs can get diabetes too. We all know for a fact that excessive weight can cause diabetes in humans, this can also happen in dogs. This is because the more fat is stored in the dog's body, the greater its system will generate insulin in order to cope up with its growing mass. Hence, dogs have the tendency to resist too much insulin in the body. The end result is diabetes.

3. Skin problems

Obesity in dogs can also cause some skin problems. This is because excess fat deposits

are being stored in their skin; hence, their owners are having a hard time grooming them. When dogs lack proper grooming, there is a tendency to accumulate bacteria, dirt, or other elements that could cause harm to your dog's skin. In the end, they develop rashes, skin ruptures, and infections.

4. Capacity to tolerate heat

With too much fat deposits accumulated in their skin, dogs are more inclined to problems concerning heat tolerance. This is because dogs find it hard to tolerate heat due to the build-up of fats in their skin and is why most obese dogs are prone to heat stroke especially during summer time.

5. Respiratory problems and other heart diseases

Like humans, obese dogs have also the tendency to develop respiratory problems and heart diseases. This is because the chest cavity is already covered with thick fat deposits. Hence, whenever the dog breathes, the lungs are having a hard time expanding, so does the heart. The problem starts when the heart and the lungs can no longer produce the right amount of oxygen and circulate it within the dog's body.

6. Gastrointestinal problems

Obesity in dogs causes some problems in their intestines and pancreas. This problem results to inflamed pancreas, which, in reality, is very painful to the dogs and can also cause death among them.

7. Liver problems

Fats are harder to strain and this can pose a great problem to the dog's liver. Hence, when the liver can no longer function well because of the fat deposits that accumulated in the area, liver problems may occur and may even cause the death of your dogs.

These health problems are indeed life threatening. It depends upon the owner how to combat these problems in order to keep their dog healthy.

One of the greatest ways in solving weight problems is a strict exercise schedule. So, it is a must that owners create a healthy exercise schedule for their dogs. This can be done by taking them for a walk every day and/or letting him run through a field.

The best thing about this program is that not only does the dog get the chance to exercise but so does the owner! So, it's a double result with just one purpose.

Next is to create a healthy diet for your dogs. Diet meals are extremely important for dogs so that they can still obtain the necessary nutrients they need in order to stay healthy. This should include the right combination of fiber, meat, vegetables, vitamins, and minerals.

However, dog owners should always keep in mind that when their dogs are taking fiber, more water should be employed so as to prevent constipation.

Alternatively, dog owners should also remember that before incorporating all of these things in your dogs routine, it's best to consult the veterinarian first. This way you are assured the proper methods of dieting for specifically for your dog.

For healthier and happier dogs, give them the best love and care you can give plus a great dietary regimen. As they say, a healthy dog is a happy dog.

Let's take a more in-depth look at the proper diet for your dog.

Proper Diet for Your Dog

The dietary regimen is an important aspect of survival. The objective of dietary

management is to meet the basic nutritional requirements of the individual dog with proper proportions of protein, carbohydrates, and fat in a well-balanced diet that will promote optimal body weight.

Generally, these dietary regimens are employed to human beings. However, with the growing fondness to dogs, most dog owners and veterinarians recommend that dietary regimen should likewise be implemented on dogs.

Like humans, dogs need the right combination of the basic food groups in order to have a healthy life span. Dogs also need to be regulated on the kinds of food that they eat or else they would end up being obese as well.

Included in the dog's dietary regimen are the proper minerals and vitamins. These essential health items should be well incorporated into the dog's daily needs in order to have a healthy body.

With proper minerals and vitamins, dogs will be able to maintain shiny, healthy-looking coat.

For people who want to know how to prepare the right diet for their dogs, here are some tips to guide them through:

1. Meat should not be the only food incorporated in the dog's diet.

In reality, dogs are carnivorous. The dog's body is especially designed to generate growth and energy from meat products. However, dogs need fiber too in order to help them digest their foods properly and carbohydrates to provide them the added energy that they need.

So, it would be better if dog owners feed their dogs every day with the usual dog foods available in the market and occasionally give them real foods where meat, fibers, and

carbohydrates are present.

2. Dogs need minerals and vitamins.

Like humans, dogs need complex combinations of minerals and vitamins. These are needed to maintain the luster and shine in their coats and to provide them with healthy gums and teeth.

Lack of mineral and vitamin supplements will result in certain deficiencies that could be really difficult to deal with, such as extra dry or super oily skin, tummy problems, frail bones, low-weight, and worst cases are death.

Like humans, these dietary supplements are needed to give the dogs the extra needed nutrients in order to keep them healthy.

3. Real meal treats

It should come at no surprise that dogs love the real food more than their typical dog foods. Hence, whenever their owners give them real food, they consider them as treats.

It is best for the dog owners to include their dogs in their meal planning. With real food, dogs will be able to generate the needed nutrients their bodies need.

4. Mixed foods

Most people tend to think that deciding whether to give dogs moist or dry foods is a matter of preference. In reality, it is not. This is because mixing different kinds of foods is actually the best diet owners could give to their dogs.

Giving dogs variety of foods, nutritional value, and texture are the real diet meal dogs really need.

5. Greens.

A well-balanced diet for dogs includes green leafy vegetables. Even if dogs are carnivorous by nature, they also need the right amount of greens to provide them with additional nutrients that are only available in green leafy foods.

No wonder why dogs sometimes chew on grass. This goes to show that dogs really need some greens to provide their body with a well balanced diet.

There are no hard or fast rules when it comes to balanced diets for the dogs. However, it is still important to note the needed food groups that should be incorporated in the dog's diet.

Best of all, dog owners should always consult their dog's veterinarians especially on things like health and diet supplements for their dogs. The veterinarian knows what foods should be included in the individual dog's meal and what foods should be avoided.

Dogs, like humans, should not be fed with junk foods like sugary sweet sodas. These will only make them fat without the needed nutrients. And by all means stay away from chocolate. Chocolate is considered as poison to your dog and well as your cat.

When something about your dogs behavior is just not right, consult your vet. The vet knows best when it comes to the dog's care.

Canine Vaccinations Are Essential

Active immunization is the introduction into the body of microorganisms for the purpose of stimulating the body's defense mechanism. This concept is also applicable to other species like cats.

Veterinary medicine has come a long way toward better understanding the potential benefits of vaccinations. Veterinary experts have formulated certain solutions so as to combat the alarming increase of death in dogs which are usually caused by viral infections.

Since the creation of certain medications, many dogs are now saved from probable death brought about by many diseases like leptospirosis, hepatitis, upper respiratory infections, and parvovirus.

Like humans, dogs need vaccinations at an early age. That is why it is important to immunize puppies so that they will survive until they are fully grown.

Basically, puppies get their immunity from their mother's milk, which is also the same as that of human beings. However, these immunities tend to lose its effects by the time the puppies are already 6 to 20 weeks old. So, it is during this time that they have to be immunized.

Hence, in order to protect the puppies against infectious diseases, it is best to give them their shots and should be re-immunized after 3 to 4 weeks. In this way, the puppies will be able to endure any infectious disease that may come their way.

Rabies and Immunization

Rabies is an acute and almost invariably fatal disease communicated to man through the saliva of a rabid animal, usually dogs, foxes, squirrels, and bats.

Dogs, fortunately, always present evidence of the disease before becoming infective. The etiologic agent is an ultramicroscopic virus present in the saliva and the central nervous system.

The course of rabies in dogs is characterized by an incubation period of 20 to 30 days. This is followed by a period of excitement, when the animal becomes vicious. The excitement stage may be evident or may be entirely absent. Paralysis then develops, first involving the hind legs and thereafter becoming general. Death occurs within 10 days following the first symptom.

Alternatively, the effects of rabies in human beings can be very fatal as it is with dogs. In order to avoid these problems, it is best to have your dogs vaccinated with anti-rabies shots. Rabies vaccines can be given during the 16th to the 26th week of the puppies. This requires a follow up shot one year after for total protection.

Also, dog owners should take note that some vaccinations will generate adverse effects in their dogs. So, it is best to always observe your dogs every after vaccination. When certain reactions occur like vomiting, facial swelling, or trembling, it is best to discuss these matters immediately to your veterinarian.

Moreover, certain precautions should also be made when the age of the dogs are taken into consideration. Here are some tips to consider:

1. The age of puppies

It is best to consider the puppies age before subjecting them to their shots.

For puppies that are 4 to 20 weeks old, their first shots should be given during their 6th to 8th weeks of age. The last shots shall be given on the 14th to 16th week of age. These date apply to all primary vaccines.

For rabies, puppies should be 16 to 26 weeks old.

2. For dogs that are 20 weeks old up to 2 years old

During this age, dogs should have received their booster shots already. This is essential so as to lengthen the immunity of the vaccines in the dog's system. At this stage, additional vaccines are recommended for added protection such as vaccines against bordetella and other newer vaccines.

3. For dogs that are older than 2 years

By this time, the dogs should have been through with their booster shots. What comes next is the annual revaccination. These kinds of vaccines are still recommended so as to lengthen their protection against certain diseases.

The bottom line is that vaccinations are extremely important to your dog's life. Like the way they function in human beings, vaccines are needed in order to protect the dogs from imminent risk of acquiring diseases brought about by viruses.

With dog vaccines, you can be assured that your dog will be at its peak of health for a longer period of time, free from any life-threatening diseases.

Dogs Have Allergies Too

There are many things that both the dogs and the dog owners could have in common. For example, both dogs and dog owners could be prone to obesity if not regulating food intake and by not exercising.

In addition, dogs and humans may also acquire diseases that results from improper dietary regimen like diabetes, heart diseases, etc.

Moreover, the most amusing thing that both dogs and humans share is the fact that they are both vulnerable to allergies.

Sounds impossible? Think again.

Veterinary experts assert that dogs have allergies too. One of the primary signs of allergies is the itching of their skin. Their respiratory tract system can also be affected with allergies.

Normally, dogs will manifest symptoms of respiratory tract allergies like sneezing, wheezing, and coughing. Their nose and their eyes may also manifest a discharge just like humans do whenever they have colds or flu.

There are also allergies that may have an effect on their digestive system; hence, it may result to watery stools, diarrhea, or vomiting.

Experts say that almost 20% of the dogs in the United States suffer from several types of allergy. So, for people who want to know more about the different allergies that dogs acquire, here is a list of the most common allergies:

1. Allergies from fleas

It is a well-known fact that dogs are usually infected with fleas. However, what most people do not know is that they can get allergies through these fleas, too.

Well, it is not the fleas that actually cause the allergic reactions in dogs but the flea's saliva. Hence, it is important for the dog to undergo a skin allergy examination so as to determine if a particular dog is sensitive to flea saliva.

In the event that the dog is allergic to flea saliva, it would be better for the owner to implement a rigorous flea control or flea eradication treatment in order to lessen the allergic reactions. Though, it must be kept in mind that solutions that are used in flea control should be safe to the dogs.

2. Allergies pertaining to foods

Like humans, dogs get allergies from food as well. There are instances wherein dogs get allergies from foods that their system cannot tolerate, such as wheat, soy products, pork, beef, whey, fish, eggs, milk, corn, artificial sweeteners, and chemical preservatives that are placed in their food.

Moreover, dogs can get allergies in food that they have not tried before. So, the best way to combat this particular allergy problem is to feed the dog with the commercial dog foods more often instead of homemade products.

Some signs of allergic reactions to food in dogs are shaking of the head, scratching the ears, irritated skin, biting and licking at the rear feet, inflammations in the ear, sneezing, behavioral changes, vomiting, diarrhea, etc.

3. Atopic Dermatitis

Atopic dermatitis is a known allergic skin disease in dogs. This is usually caused by the hypersensitivity of the dog's immune system to ordinary substances that can be found in the environment like molds or dust mites.

Usually, a dog is said to be suffering from atopic dermatitis when the dog begins to excessively lick and chew its paws, licking the abdomen and its rear feet.

Atopic dermatitis can be seen as a saliva staining found in the armpits, between the toes of the paws, and in the groin. In light-colored canines, atopic dermatitis can be seen as a red-brown stain found on the same parts that were mentioned.

4. Allergies resulting from bacteria

This is the most common cause of serious allergies in dogs. Generally, there are certain

bacteria that thrive in the dog's skin. This is known as the species of Staphylococcus bacteria. In most cases, this does not cause allergies in dogs. However, there are certain types of dogs that develop an allergy to it.

The most common symptom of this kind of allergy is hair loss along with the development of ringworm like marks in the dog's skin. The areas where these marks appear usually get infected, hence, it is important to treat them with antibiotics.

Indeed, allergies are not for humans only. Allergies great affects almost 20% of the total population of dogs in the United States, and that is a pretty alarming number. Therefore, it is extremely important for dog owners to know these dog allergies so as to come up with some preventive measures at the first sign of the attack.

All About Heartworms in Your Dog

Dog heartworm is a common disease among canines in the United States. Discovered in 1856, the worms mainly live in your dog's heart and major blood vessels.

The worms, especially on worst cases, seriously impair the heart's operations. Worse, they could also clog your dog's blood vessels. These infections result to body weight losses, chronic cough, dropsy, breath shortness, chronic heart failure, vision disturbances, and ultimately, death.

Since the symptoms of heartworm disease vary among dogs, it would be best that a veterinarian check your dog to evaluate a final analysis. Most dogs show visible symptoms only when the disease has reached the point where it would be almost improbable to be cured by treatment. To help you see early symptoms and to hopefully save your dog, look out for these signs:

- Dogs that have been quite active usually tend to be tired easily.

- Dogs that would have been otherwise healthy usually gasp for breath.
- Coughing of your dog has suddenly become a common occurrence.
- Dogs bred for hunting could no longer keep up with rapid chases and usually fall from exhaustion.
- In some rare instances, the dog experiences convulsions, jaundice, and problems in the vision.
- Before it dies, the dog experiences emaciation. often precedes death.

Who gets infected by the heartworm infection?

Previously, it was thought that only long-haired dogs were more resistant to heartworms because of the high difficulty of mosquitoes (which bring the worms) to penetrate through the dogs' hair. Since then, it has been proven that this was not true. Mosquitoes even have a hard time penetrating through short-haired dogs. Actually, mosquitoes feed on the abdominal region of the dog. That is why both long-haired and short-haired dogs are susceptible to an infection, since both types have little hair on this region. Some mosquitoes also feed on the muzzle area or the ears where the dog's hair is quite matted down.

Can heartworm infection be treated?

Heartworm infection can be treated through chemical therapy if diagnosed early. Most of the chemical treatments kill the worms over some period of time. Killing all the worms in one swoop is no better: If all the heartworms were killed in just one treatment, the dead bodies would deposit in the lungs and kill the dog.

Remember also that the chemicals used in treating the worms are also as dangerous to your dog as the worms. That is why treating the disease using chemical therapy should be used with utmost care and should be handled by a veterinarian.

There also cases when surgery is needed. In most cases, this could be a feasible option. Consult with the veterinarian if surgical correction or any other method that can cure the infection.

There are also drugs that can prevent your dog from getting heartworms. These drugs attack the parasite in its early stages and stop the worms from being full-blown adults later. This doesn't mean that your dog would be free from infection. This only means that dogs can still get infected during the season of mosquitoes and yet remain unscathed of heartworms.

Preventative medication using drugs, on the other hand, can cause serious complications if your dog has already heartworm infections in a higher level. That is why the use of drugs should be under the supervision of veterinarians. Taking drugs is also combined with regular blood tests. This has shown to be quite effective in saving many dogs with heartworm infection.

In order for your dog to avoid heartworm infection, protect your pet from mosquito bites especially if there is a high mosquito population in your area or if it is mosquito season. You might want to screen the sleeping quarters of your dogs to avoid repeated bites. Repellent sprays can also be used, but these only have limited effects.

You might also want to consult your vet for preventive medication. In addition, you might want regular blood tests on your dog to assess early symptoms of infection. This is quite tricky, especially that the symptoms of heartworm infection could not be seen immediately.

In short, your pet dog which looked healthy may be having early symptoms of heartworm

infection. It would be best that you checked.

Dental Care for Your Dog

Clean teeth and gums are very important of the overall health of your dog. Here are some information on the most common dental problems of dogs and ways in treating them.

Dog's common dental problems

- Periodontitis

It is very common among dogs to have gum disease. At the age of two or three, many dogs have either periodontitis or gingivitis.

The most common dental problem for canines is periodontitis, also known as periodontal disease. The disease is caused by various factors: plaque, food debris, cell mucus, and a mixture of bacteria. This results to a film characterized by milky-white on the dog's teeth as well as the gums. When this film gets combined with saliva, the plaque it causes becomes tartar, and very hard to remove.

- Gingivitis

Gingivitis, also known as gum disease, happens when gum tissue suffers from an inflammation. Without treatment, it can lead to periodontitis, teeth loosening, bone loss, and ultimately, loss of teeth.

- Tooth fractures

Tooth fractures occur when dogs chew hard substances, such as hard rocks and cow hooves. The fractures can result in infection inside the broken tooth, which is known as

the endodontic disease.

How to prevent dental problems

Your dog can fight off these dental problems by removing the plaque before it actually develops as tartar. How to do it? The most effective way is by brushing his teeth. The brushing would reduce much of the bacteria presence in the mouth, not to mention making your dog's breath smell sweeter. Make it a habit of brushing your teeth on a daily basis.

Toothpaste. There are toothpaste products made especially for dogs. Brush your pet's teeth using dog toothpaste. Human toothpaste is specifically designed for humans to spit the paste washings out. Dogs cannot do that, so pick a dog toothpaste that is safe enough for dogs to swallow.

Toothbrush. Using a toothbrush in its teeth would take some time for the dog to get used to. Let your dog be acquainted and get used to this is by putting some garlic salt, mix the salt with water, and dip the solution in an old toothbrush. Hold the old brush, and let your pet taste and chew it. Your dog will start to realize that chewing a toothbrush is fun and tastes good. Make it a habit a few times, until it feels comfortable brushing with it.

Finger brush. You could also use a finger brush instead of a toothbrush. A finger brush is a good alternative, although nothing could replace the good ol' toothbrush. The finger brush just fits onto one's fingertip and can let you brush the dog's teeth without the dog knowing it. Well, at least almost. The disadvantage of getting a finger brush to clean your dog's teeth is that its bristles are quite large for the brush to go under the gum line's margin as effectively compared with regular toothbrush.

Professional cleaning. If you don't want to do the cleaning by yourself, you could take your dog to a veterinarian and have its teeth professionally cleaned. A good veterinarian will take additional measures in ensuring your dog's clean teeth by anesthetizing your

dog, scraping the buildup of plaque from all over the gum line areas, and polishing the teeth for a sparkling finish.

Home checkup. Try to make it a regular habit of checking the teeth of your dog for any cracked or broken teeth. If you see some problematic teeth, check promptly with the veterinarian.

Home safety. Of course, cleaning your dog's teeth does not mean you should disregard other areas of concern. Tough substances, such as bones, rocks, hard nylon, or cow hooves should be removed from areas where your dog could see. Buy your dog chewing toys that are safer like rubber-made toys. You could also provide bones that are soft enough for your dog to chew.

Mouthwash. There are some products in the market that deal very well in helping to kill the bacteria in your dog's mouth and could actually help heal damaged gum tissues. Do not forget to ask your veterinarian on the best products in the market.

Dental problems do not only happen to humans. Dogs also have dental issues as well. It is up to the owners on how to help their pet dogs overcome their dental problems.

Fighting Flea Infestation

The natural way:

- Vacuum your home frequently and seal vacuum bags before disposing.
- Wash the bedding of your dog weekly in warm soapy water. This is where fleas usually breed.
- Bathing your pet weekly with a mild dog shampoo prevents flea invasion.

- Use cedar shampoo for your dog, and put cedar oil in their sleeping mats. Cedar will repel fleas and other insects.
- Fleas are attracted to dry skin, so to avoid it, give your dog Linatone oil mixed with its food. Excessive shampooing should be avoided.
- A mixture of brewer's yeast and garlic, available in powder or tablet form can be given in small doses to your pet. This creates a certain odor in pets, and fleas are surely to avoid them.
- Fresh or dried pennyroyal leaves is a natural flea repellent. Use this in carpets to avoid the abundance of fleas in the home. Do not use it if you have small children around, as this could be toxic.
- A mixture of 60 ml of lavender oil with 2.8 liters of rock salt can also be placed in areas where dogs usually come in contact with and this solution could also be used to wash your dog.
- Planting marigolds in the yard is helpful too, it repels certain types of bugs as well as fleas.
- Boiled lemon or orange peel in water can be used as a dip for dogs and can be used too to soak in dog bedding for a few hours, then washed with warm soapy water.
- Lukewarm water with little shampoo and detergent is a good way to prevent fleas. A dog's body may be dipped into the solution for fifteen minutes and then rinsed. This only works if flea infestation is light.

The natural way of treating fleas is effective only if the level of flea infestation is average to very few. This method usually is recommended for prevention only.

Different commercially available products with chemical contents:

- Advantage. Active ingredient is imidacloprid. This is a flea poison, from Bayer. It is in a liquid form and applied to the skin, at the back of the dog, and works for about a month. This works by upsetting the nervous system of fleas when they come in contact with the liquid. This product is fast acting and is not absorbed into the internal organs and bloodstream of the dog.

Studies indicate that this product is highly toxic to fleas and other insects as well. A dog will be free from fleas in just a couple of days.

Ingredients are: imidacloprid -- a chloronicotinyl nitroguanidine integrated from the nitromethylene class of a compound. This joins the nicotinyl receptor sites of insects, thus upsetting normal nerve transmission which causes death.

A set of two vials costs 15-20 dollars.

- Frontline. This product is very similar to Advantage, but is not water soluble, so alcohol is needed to wash it off. This can safely be used in pups, dogs, cats and kittens.

Efficiency in repelling lasts up to four months.

Active ingredients include: Fipronil 5-amino -1- (2, 6-dichloro-4 [trifluoromethyl]phenyl) -4- (1,R,S)- (trifluoromethylsulfinyl) -1H-pyrazole-3-carbonitrile 0.29% inert ingredients 99.71%.

Fipronil works as a nervous transmission interruptor, which causes quick death to fleas and ticks. It is proven to kills 96% of fleas for the first two hours and 100% within 24 hours. Ticks die sooner than they attach themselves to the host. Fipronil is from the new phenylpyrazole class.

Very effective and can be considered safe, so long as dogs are not allergic to fipronil.

- Knockout. Performs like Frontline and is as effective, but can only be used in dogs.

Active ingredients: Pyriproxyfen: 21[1-methyl-2-(phenoxyphenoxy)ethoxy]pyridine....0.05% cyclopropanecarboxylate 2.00% inert ingredients 97.95% Also has NYLAR, which is flea growth regulator.

- Biospot. This is for topical application and kills up to 75 percent of fleas, eggs, and ticks. It also is a good repellent of mosquitoes and works for about a month.

Temporarily, at times, it turns white hair to yellow. This can not be used in cats and contains permethrins and IGR.

- Proban (cythioate) and Prospot (Fenthion). While not to be used in cats, they are widely used in dogs. This is absorbed by the bloodstream and fleas die due to the poison that is present in the blood. For it to work, it requires the biting of fleas. There are certain conditions to be considered though. You are injecting a small dose of poison into your dog's body and side effects are not known. Then this does not help if a dog has flea allergy, and can not risk to be bitten.

Generally fleas abound during the summer months, when it is their breeding season.

These commercial products can greatly help in fighting heavy flea infestation and needed where severe invasion occurs. However, it is always best to consult with your veterinarian as the choice of flea control will greatly depend on your life style.

Your Questions on Canine Hip Dysphasia - Answered

What is canine hip dysphasia?

Canine hip dysphasia (CHD) is one of the most frustrating diseases in veterinary

medicine today simply because it is so difficult to prevent and treat. CHD is a developmental disease of the bones in which the head of the thigh bone poorly fits the hip socket, causing damage to the cartilage, gradual destruction of the joint, pain and swelling. This disease should not be confused with hip arthritis. Rather, it is the most common cause of arthritis in the hips.

How is canine hip dysphasia transmitted?

CHD is an inheritable disease. It is passed on by the parents to the offspring. The only effective measure therefore to eradicate the disease is to prevent dogs with hip dysphasia from breeding. However, this is easier said than done, because not all dogs with hip dysphasia show signs of the disease. Seemingly normal dogs still carry the gene for CHD and are bred, causing the disease to stay within the gene pool.

How does one know if a dog has hip dysphasia?

A dog with hip dysphasia generally has less energy and movement. It has difficulty rising from a sitting position, lameness in the back legs, is hopping like a rabbit when running, and is reluctant to go up the stairs. However, these symptoms are usually not evident till the dog reaches middle age. In extreme cases though, some dogs exhibit obvious hip problems as early as 5-6 months of age.

How does a vet confirm if a dog has hip dysphasia?

Sad to say, there is no blood test or genetic test yet that will detect if a dog is a carrier of CHD or not. Diagnosis of the disease is routinely done through physical examinations and x-rays. X-rays help in assessing how bad the condition is, and through comparison with future x-rays, it can also serve as a gauge of how well the chosen treatment is working. Two techniques for taking x-rays of CHD-afflicted dogs are listed below:

1.hip-extended ventrodorsal view x-ray – It provides a frontal view of the pelvis and hip-

joints and best assesses the degree of severity of arthritis present.

2. PennHIP radiography technique – It is used to detect hip looseness in dogs as young as four months of age.

What are the treatment options for canine hip dysplasia?

There is no real cure for CHD just yet, but there are conservative or non-surgical ways to relieve its symptoms. These include the use of drugs to relieve pain and inflammation. Rimadyl, Ectogesic and Deramaxx are effective and have given a lot of suffering dogs the relief needed to live a normal life. Weight loss programs, controlled exercise and physical therapy are also very effective in certain cases.

When conservative treatment is not enough, the only other option is surgery. Surgery can be very effective as it corrects the underlying cause of hip pain which is a malformed joint. Surgery is approached in two different ways when dealing with hip dysplasia. Prophylactic surgery is done to prevent the progression of arthritis while therapeutic surgery aims to treat already arthritic hips.

Triple pelvic osteotomy is the primary preventive procedure available. It involves cutting the pelvis in three places and rotating the hip sockets to provide better coverage. This procedure is effective as long as it is done before arthritis sets in or before the joint is damaged. Another kind of preventive surgery, although still being studied if it is effective or not, is pubic symphysiodesis. This involves manipulating the way the pelvis grows to ensure a tighter hip. This procedure is done on very young dogs.

Therapeutic procedures include total hip replacement and femoral head ostectomy. Total hip replacement is performed mainly on larger dogs. High density, medical plastic is used to replace the socket and a high-quality, non-corrosive alloy is used for the ball. This procedure has a high success rate, almost completely eliminates pain and enables the dog to completely resume activity.

Another therapeutic procedure for hip dysphasia is femoral head ostectomy. It involves the removal of the top of the femur which then eliminates the painful grinding at the hip joint. The femur is then allowed to float freely causing the formation of scar tissue which then serves as a false joint. This procedure is not recommended for mild cases of arthritis and is generally effective only on smaller, well-muscled dogs.

Can canine hip dysphasia be prevented?

The best measure of prevention is of course careful breeding since hip dysphasia is a inheritable condition. The onset of hip dysphasia can be delayed in many dogs with a genetic predisposition by preventing excessive weight gain during the early months and by making sure that the puppy does not place undue stress on the hips.

OFA and PennHip offer information on breed risk. Prospective puppy buyers are advised to check for pedigrees for OFA, PennHip or GDC certifications.

Traveling With Your Dog

Most dogs like to go on adventures, which makes travel attractive for them. This is their natural hunting instincts making them want to meet new people and explore new places. However, it may pose as a problem since taking a dog along during your travels may be inconvenient. Quite a few people are frightened of dogs and the mess that dogs make while you're traveling can be very troublesome. It should also be noted that many lodgings and transportation services don't cater to pets such as dogs and cats.

Having your pet watched over by a professional pet handler may be needed to take care of your dog during the trip. You also have the option of having your pet stay with a managed kennel.

When checking around for a place for your dog to live while you're away, make sure it is

comfortable and clean. The dogs staying there should also look content and well-taken care of. A few of these dog kennels allow for you to provide your dog's own sleeping blanket, toy and his favorite foods for while you're away. Make sure, though, that your dog has had its immunization since it is a regular requirement for your dog's stay in such places.

If you really insist on your pet's company when traveling, here are a few tips:

- Take along a clean bill of health from your veterinarian. Your vet should also be able to provide you a certificate for this.

- Use a sturdy dog carrier. This is a must since you would rather not lose your pet en route to your destination. A few airlines have dog carriers available for sale though they can be quite expensive. Also, remember that some airlines prefer having your pet in the compartment for luggage . If you really can't part with your beloved, get a reservation for an airline that allows pets to remain with you during the flight.

- Dogs need good ventilation to keep them cool. Try to get air-conditioned cars when traveling cross-country. This is also true if you are traveling in trains.

- Don't let your dog hang his head out the window while the car is moving. It may be tempting to let your pet play around, but the risks of falling out or getting hit are still there.

- Leaving your dog inside the car or under the sun is risky. Heat stroke is a serious danger to your pet and can even be fatal.

- Never leave your dog unattended, especially when he is in his carrier. He may get stolen or kidnapped. This also goes for when he's wandering around. Sometimes, pets can be too adventurous and may end up in trouble, or worse, getting you in trouble.

- Fast pulse, rapid panting, red eyes and gums, excessive slobbering, feverish temperature or vomiting, means that your dog needs to see a vet quickly. Have cool towels placed on your dog and get to the closest pet clinic as soon as possible.

- Some countries have specific rules about pet travel. Try to familiarize yourself with them and try to follow them to avoid legal troubles later.

- A certificate for rabies vaccination and a notarized local language certificate from the closest embassy or consulate are sometimes required, though get one just in case. Better safe than sorry.

- In preparing for a long trip on the road, ready identification for your pet. A collar with the dog's name, your name and a handy contact number can save you from a lot of trouble.

- First-aid kits for your dog can be easily fixed up. Remember that some emergencies are special to dogs. A flea or tick powder is a good addition to this.

- Have a ready supply of your pet's favorite doggy treats during the trip. Make sure to bring more than enough to last the entire trip to be safe.

- Pack the essentials: clean water, dishes, favorite dog toys, leash, brush, plastic bags and towels, anything that can help your dog stay happy during the trip.

- A dog should be given the chance to answer the call of nature every two to three hours so it won't make any embarrassing messes.

Hopefully, these tips can help you have a better time with traveling with your dog. Bon voyage!