



SAN TAN CANINE TRAINING NEWSLETTER

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Are You A Dog Owner?

As a dog owner, you want to know you are meeting your dog's basic needs to ensure health and happiness. Like humans, dogs need food, water and shelter to survive. Also like humans, dogs need physical care and nurturing in order to thrive. Here's how to help keep your dog healthy, happy and safe while meeting the basic needs of all dogs.

Proper Nutrition

A healthy, balanced diet is fundamental. You are the one who needs to decide what food best suits your dog. Do plenty of research so you can make an informed decision. Research food companies that pledge to use high-quality ingredients instead of fillers. Then, choose a quality diet that your pet enjoys. Spending lots of money on a holistic, top-of-the-line diet is useless if your dog won't eat it. Many companies provide samples you can try without buying a whole bag. Others offer a money-back guarantee if your dog does not like the food. If you choose to provide a homemade diet, discuss the ingredients with your veterinarian first to be sure they are right for your dog. Then, make small batches until you are sure your dog actually likes it.

Once you have found an appetizing diet, watch how your dog responds over the first several weeks. A drop in energy level or a dull hair coat may warrant a diet change. If you do change your pet's food, always do so gradually to avoid gastrointestinal upset or food aversion. Consult your veterinarian for nutritional advice, especially if you notice any changes in your pet's health. Always be sure your dog has access to plenty of fresh, clean water.

Home – More than just a shelter

Dogs are pack animals – they are not content when excluded from the family unit. Though some circumstances may require dogs to live outside, most dogs will thrive in a primarily indoor environment. Your dog should have an area of the house dedicated as his own space, such as a kennel, crate or bed. This teaches your dog to have respect for his own space and, in turn, yours. Set down ground rules, enforce off-limit areas of the house, and welcome your dog into permissible areas. If your dog spends time outdoors, provide access to a doggie door or a temperature-controlled doghouse.

Never leave your dog unattended outside without shelter, especially during very hot or cold weather, as this can result in severe health consequences.

Physical Maintenance

Keep your dog healthy with regular exercise and preventive veterinary care. Establish an exercise routine, even if it is just a stroll around the block each morning. Depending on your dog's breed, more exercise may be necessary, but don't overdo it. Visit your veterinarian at least once or twice a year for a wellness check-up. Potential problems are often identified before your dog actually shows signs of illness.

Every dog needs basic grooming, such as bathing and nail trimming. Some dogs even need regular haircuts. Find a reputable groomer, or learn to groom your dog at home. Then, establish a grooming regimen and stick with it.

Nurturing Your Dog

Dogs thrive on structure and discipline, and training is paramount to your dog's quality of life. Choose a training program and follow through. You may prefer to join a training class with a professional instructor. Alternatively, you may wish to learn about dog training on your own. Either way, establish yourself as the boss, reinforce good behavior, and humanely correct misbehavior. Be consistent and you will see positive results.

Maintaining the human-canine bond is vital. Set aside time for you and your dog. Petting your dog, playing with toys, talking to him, or taking him for rides in the car are some ways to strengthen and preserve this bond.

Following the guidelines for your dog's basic needs sets the foundation for a long, happy life with your dog. Dog ownership should not be a chore, but an experience that enriches your life and that of your dog. If you can keep that tail wagging, you will be happier, too.

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