Tick list for responsible dog owners

☐ My dog has a dog bed
☐ My dog has regular daily walks
☐ My dog has regular meals of a balanced diet
☐ My dog knows the 5 basic commands
☐ My dog is up to date with vaccinations and regularly treated against fleas, ticks and worms
☐ My dog is insured
☐ My dog is neutered
☐ My dog wears a collar and ID tag
☐ My dog is microchipped

Dogs Trust
17 Wakley Street
London EC1V 7RQ
020 7837 0006
campaigns@dogstrust.org.uk
www.dogstrust.org.uk
Registered charity numbers: 227523 and SC037843

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Dog's name

Microchip number

Date of most recent vaccination

Date of treatment against fleas, ticks and worms
What dogs need

A suitable environment
All dogs need a safe and suitable environment; a comfortable bed in a quiet area that is secure and free from hazards. Their bed should be somewhere undisturbed, warm, out of direct sunlight and free from draughts. Dogs need to be given the opportunity to go to the toilet at regular intervals throughout the day.

A daily routine
A daily routine is vital for your dog’s wellbeing. You must be prepared to provide your dog with regular exercise with playtime in-between. Dogs are sociable animals that need company so shouldn’t be left alone for long periods of time as they may become bored or destructive. If you need to leave them, make sure someone you know can come and check on them, let them out to toilet and play with them.

A balanced diet
It is important that dogs have a balanced diet. Most dog foods are designed to supply the health needs of any dog but you can buy food that is more suited to your particular dog’s breed, size or age. Feed your dog at least once a day and ensure fresh water is available at all times. Puppies will need more frequent feeding. Human food is not recommended for dogs. Some foods can be harmful for dogs, for example, chocolate, raisins and onion. Keep a check on your dog’s weight and if you think they are under or overweight contact your vet for advice.

Socialising and training
Dogs need to be well socialised and trained from an early age, making sure they are safe and well behaved with people and other animals. Attending a training class and being consistent with training will help you raise a polite pooch. If your dog would benefit from training please contact your vet or Dogs Trust about training classes.

To keep your dog safe, here are 5 basic commands they should know:
- Sit
- Down
- Stay
- Come
- Heel

Always carry poo bags with you on your walks. It is every dog owner’s duty to clean up after their dog. There are no excuses for leaving it behind.

Avoid leaving your dog unattended in a public place. Tying them outside a shop leaves them at risk of being stolen. If you plan on going somewhere where you can’t take your dog with you, consider leaving them at home, or take someone with you who can stay with the dog.

Never leave your dog in a car – particularly in warm weather when they are at risk of overheating.
Grooming

Grooming your dog regularly keeps their coat clean and healthy and is a great way to bond. Getting them used to being handled also allows you to check for anything unusual. Long-haired dogs may need clipping in the summer to keep them cool. Remember to keep a check on their claws and get them clipped should they become overgrown.

Vet care

Vaccinations, Flea, tick and Worm treatment

| Vet care is essential for your dog and every dog should be registered with a local vet. Dogs must be kept up to date with vaccinations, worming, flea and tick treatments, and have regular check-ups. For dog owners on a low income the PDSA, Blue Cross and RSPCA may operate subsidised vet care in your area. |
| Puppies are normally vaccinated at 6-9 weeks old and then again at around 10-12 weeks old. This should be checked with your vet. Vaccinations cover dogs from distemper, parvovirus, hepatitis and leptospirosis, all of which can be highly infectious to other dogs, costly to treat and fatal. For some diseases, an annual booster injection will be needed to maintain immunity. Contact your veterinary surgeon to discuss vaccination timings and protocols for your dog. |
| Your vet may also recommend a kennel cough vaccination depending on your dog’s lifestyle. Contact your veterinary surgeon for further information. |
| Dogs need regular flea, tick and worming treatment. Lungworm is particularly dangerous and can be caught from eating snails and slugs that can carry the parasite. Contact your veterinary surgeon for advice on what treatment is needed and how often. |

Pet insurance

| Pet insurance is extremely important for all dog owners. It will help manage unexpected veterinary fees whilst ensuring the best care for your dog. |
| Many vets offer payment plans where the cost of all preventative health care for your dog is split into monthly payments, so check with your vet about the payment options available to you. |
Neutering – why neuter?

- Neutering is the most responsible way to prevent unwanted puppies.
- It improves the overall health and behaviour of your dog.
- Dogs can be neutered from an early age. Speak to your vet for advice on when to neuter your pet.

Female dogs

- Female dogs usually come into season for about 3 weeks, twice a year. Around this time they can get pregnant and normally will produce a bloody discharge. Whilst in season they may act strangely—trying to run away in search for a mate and will need to be kept away from male dogs. Neutering avoids the inconvenience and mess of having seasons.
- Pregnancy and giving birth can be a health risk and put your dog at risk of complications.
- Dogs can suffer from phantom pregnancies which can cause both behavioural and health problems.
- Neutering can prevent some cancers and womb infections (pyometra) which can be very expensive to treat and potentially fatal.

Male dogs

- Neutering can prevent behavioural issues such as scent marking and straying.
- Neutered males may be less likely to show aggression towards other dogs or be the target of aggression from other dogs.
- Neutering reduces the risk of prostatic disease and certain cancers that can be costly to treat at a vets and in some cases fatal.

Are you obeying the law?

Collar and tag

- When in a public place all dogs must wear a collar with the name and address of the owner inscribed on it, or a plate or badge attached to it. It is an offence not to comply and you could be liable for a fine. A collar and tag will ensure that any member of the public or local dog warden can return your dog straight away and avoid your dog being impounded.
- Additionally, in Northern Ireland, The Dogs Order 1983 requires that all dogs are licenced.

Microchipping

- It is a legal requirement for all dogs to be microchipped, with the keeper’s details kept up to date. This guarantees that an owner can be traced quickly and the dog returned should they go missing. To update your details contact your microchip database. If your dog is lost or stolen, inform the database and your local dog warden immediately.

Car safety

- Dogs need to be suitably restrained in a car so that they cannot distract or injure you or themselves whilst you are driving. You can use a dog guard, crate or a properly fitted car harness to secure them.