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### **Recommended guidelines for preventive health care in the dog**

Our goal is prevention, prevention, prevention. It is much easier, safer, and less costly to prevent problems, than to treat them. It also is the surest way to keep your pet feeling good and living long. Our guidelines are based upon that of the American Animal Hospital Association, the American Heartworm Society, and the Companion Animal Parasite Council.

New litters of puppies should be seen starting at 2 weeks of age for physicals and Deworming. Their mother should also be examined and have a fecal/stool check at that time. The puppies should be dewormed again at 4 weeks of age.

The 1st new puppy visit should be at 6 weeks of age or as soon as possible after acquiring your new pup. This visit will include a physical examination, internal parasite check, deworming, starting external parasite control, the dispensing of heartworm prevention to be started at 8 weeks at home, and begin the series of core vaccinations. (canine parvovirus CPV, canine distemper virus CDV, canine adenovirus/hepatitis CAV-2, and canine parainfluenza virus). If your puppy will be going to the groomer, boarding, attending classes, or going to a dog park we also recommend canine bordetella intranasal vaccine. This helps prevent kennel cough. This should be repeated before possible exposure.

The second puppy visit is at 9 weeks. The second in the series of core vaccines will be administered along with deworming. We are recommending a vaccination for leptosporosis be started around this time, but not together with other vaccines to avoid overwhelming the immune system resulting in negative reactions. We will also address any issues you are having with your new puppy.

The third visit consists of a core vaccine, deworming, and your puppy's rabies vaccination. Rabies vaccination is the only one required by law for all dogs and cats. We will make sure you have the heartworm and flea/tick prevention you need. At this time we suggest you schedule your puppies spay/neuter surgical appointment for between 4-5 months of age.

The 4th visit at 16 weeks finishes the core vaccine schedule and a fecal/stool check. We recommend a 2nd leptosporosis vaccine be given at about 15 weeks, again separately to avoid adverse reactions.

Dogs that begin vaccines 16 weeks or older need 2 core vaccines 3-4 weeks apart. Rabies vaccine may be given at this time along with Bordetella if warranted. We also recommend leptosporosis given in 2 doses 3-4 weeks apart.

The core vaccines of canine parvovirus, canine distemper virus, canine adenovirus/hepatitis, and canine parainfluenza should be repeated in one year followed by every 3 years. Rabies is repeated in one year, then every 3 years by N.C. state law. We recommend Bordetella vaccine yearly for dogs at risk (grooming, boarding, etc). We also recommend lepto vaccines annually given separately from other vaccines.

In our area we do not recommend vaccination for Lyme's disease, canine coronavirus, or canine influenza. Remember these recommendations can change as more information becomes available.

We recommend that dogs receive an annual physical examine until the age of 7 years, after which they should be examined twice yearly. The dog ages more rapidly than a human, so a lot can change in 6 months. During the annual physical your pet will have diagnostics for heartworms, internal parasites, tick borne issues, and periodic wellness blood panels. These tests tell us when something is a little bit wrong, before it gets a whole lot wrong.

This is our thoughts on heartworm prevention and testing. All dogs should be on heartworm prevention and should be tested annually. This is the recommendation of the American Heartworm Society (the folks that gather and analyze all the research and clinical info on canine and feline heartworms) the reasons for this are 1) many of us forget our own medications let alone our pet's medication. 2) even if you never miss a dose there is nothing to prevent your dog from having upset stomach and loosing the medication you just gave 3) if your pet becomes infected with heartworms, we need to know early to prevent heart and lung damage 4) lastly, heartworm tests can now be combined with other tests such as for Lyme's Disease. This test allows you to check for 4 significant diseases with one small blood sample.

Intestinal parasites: We recommend at least yearly testing for intestinal parasites. These creatures are very harmful to your pet, and contagious to other pets as well as humans.

Spay/neuter: We highly recommend that all pets be neutered. This applies to both males and females. The most obvious reason is to avoid unwanted litters of puppies. As you know the abandoned number of pets in this country is astronomical. However, multiple health benefits such as decreased cancers, uterine issues, prostatic issues, and other problems benefit from early spay/neuter. We recommend that pets be neutered between 4-5 months. Young animals have less recovery time. If you will be using your pet for breeding, please wait until 2 years for females and 1 year for males, before beginning any breeding program. Females breeding life should stop by 7 years of age, at which time they should be spayed. Female dogs do not undergo any type of menopause so they can continue to have pups at an elderly age. Males may continue to breed unless they are physically unable.