



by Dr. Gary Bird

Got Puppy: Welcoming your new friend home...Part 2

We would like to congratulate you on getting your new puppy. Owning a dog can be an extremely rewarding experience, but it is also a large responsibility. We hope this series will give you the help needed to make some good decisions for your new puppy.

The Final Steps...

My puppy seems to be constantly chewing. Why does this occur?

Chewing is a normal puppy characteristic. The puppy's baby teeth are present by about four weeks of age. They begin to fall out at four months of age and are replaced by the adult (permanent) teeth by about six months of age. Therefore, chewing is a puppy characteristic that you can expect until about 6-7 months of age. It is important that you do what you can to direct your puppy's chewing toward acceptable objects. You should provide puppy-safe items such as flat-strip rawhide chews and other chew toys so other objects are spared.

My puppy has episodes of hiccuping and a strange odor to its breath. Are these normal?

Yes. Many puppies experience episodes of hiccuping that may last several minutes. This is normal and will not last but a few weeks or months. All puppies have a characteristic odor to their breath that is commonly called "puppy breath." It is also normal and will last only until the puppy matures.

Can I trim my puppy's sharp toe nails?

Puppies have very sharp toe nails. They can be trimmed with your regular finger nail clippers (for awhile at least) or with nail trimmers made for dogs and cats. If you take too much off the nail, you will cut into the "quick" and bleeding and pain will occur. If this happens, neither you nor your dog will want to do this again. Therefore, a few points are helpful:

- * If your dog has clear or white nails, you can see the pink of the quick through the nail. Avoid the pink area, and you should be out of the quick.

- * If your dog has black nails, you will not be able to see the quick so only cut 1/32" (1 mm) of the nail at a time until the dog begins to get sensitive. The sensitivity will usually occur before you are into the blood vessel. With black nails, it is likely that you will get too close on at least one nail.

- * Another way to avoid the quick in black nails is to look at the nail from the side. On the bottom of the nail, there is a flat portion that extends from the toe. Near the end, this flat spot stops and the tip of the nail hooks downward. Cutting only this hooked portion stays away from the quick.

- * You should always have styptic powder available. This is sold in pet stores under several trade names, but it will be labeled for use in trimming nails. Talcum powder or corn starch can be used in a pinch.

Can you recommend something for pet identification?

The latest in pet identification is microchipping. This tiny device is implanted with a needle much like administering an injection. A special scanner can detect these chips; veterinary hospitals, humane societies, and animal shelters across the country have these scanners. A national registry permits the return of microchipped pets throughout the United States and Canada. We strongly recommend microchipping all pets.

Thank you for spending time reading about how to best take care of your new family friend. Your puppy will grow up to give you years of enjoyable friendship and caring! Be sure to take care of him so that he has the best healthy happy life he can as well...

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