



The 5 animal welfare needs

Your dog's needs...



pdsa
for pets in need of vets



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Do you know the five key things dogs need to lead a healthy and happy life? They are called the five welfare needs and the law requires owners to provide these. PDSA's Animal Wellbeing Report has found that fewer than half of owners know what these five needs are.

The five welfare needs



Environment

**The need for a suitable environment
(place to live)**



Diet

The need for a suitable diet



Behaviour

The need to express normal behaviour



Companionship

**The need to live with, or apart from,
other animals**



Health

**The need to be protected from pain,
suffering, injury and disease**

Environment



What dogs need

Any poisonous or hazardous items in the home or garden should be kept safely out of reach.

Dogs should have their own bed in a quiet place free from draughts.

When travelling in the car, dogs should be safely secured with a dog seatbelt, in a secured carrier or behind a dog guard.

Dogs need to be able to exercise every day – how much depends on age, breed and health.

The reality

Vets see thousands of accidents and illnesses caused by hazards and poisons in the home every year.

62% of dogs sleep in their own bed. It is important dogs have their own bed where they can rest undisturbed.

19% of dogs travel on the back seat with no seat belt and another 18% travel in the boot with no dog guard. If an accident happened, the dog could be fatally injured and the force of the dog being thrown forward could seriously injure the driver or any passengers in the car.

Only 58% of dogs get to do three or more exercise activities a day to keep their bodies healthy and their minds active.

PDSA says

Owners should ensure their dogs have a safe and comfortable living environment and provide plenty of opportunities for exercise on a daily basis.

checklist

- Safe from any hazards or poisons. ✓
- Restrained safely every time they travel. ✓
- Their own bed in a quiet area. ✓
- Exercised every day through a variety of activities. ✓

Diet



Top tip

Find out your dog's ideal body shape.



What dogs need

A complete balanced diet to ensure they get the correct balance of nutrients.

Regular assessment of their shape and weight when deciding how much to feed.

A diet suitable for their age – e.g. puppies should be fed puppy food.

If treats are given they should be for training, with a reduction in the amount of food given in their main meal on those days.

The reality

2.4 million dogs are fed on scraps or leftovers as one of their main types of food when they should be getting a complete balanced diet.

Only 16% of dog owners decide how much to feed their dog based on its weight or body shape. Knowing the correct body shape and weight for your pet will help ensure you feed the right amount.

Many dogs are not fed a suitable diet for their age – for example 75% of old dogs are not fed a senior diet.

98% of dog owners give their dog a treat, with 42% giving a treat daily.

PDSA says

Around 35% of dogs in the UK are overweight or obese and this figure is rising rapidly. Obesity can lead to serious health issues such as diabetes, heart disease and arthritis. Overweight pets are also less mobile, less willing to play and get out of breath quickly. Owners control their pet's diet and exercise and it's never too late to achieve positive change with the help of your veterinary practice.

checklist

Ask your vet for advice on the correct shape and weight of your dog. ✓

Check your dog is on the right diet for its age, breed and lifestyle. ✓

Cut out the treats. ✓

Behaviour



Socialisation should be carried out within the first eight weeks.



What dogs need

Socialisation is one of the most important things you can do for a puppy. Let them gradually meet people and other animals, and experience everyday sights and sounds, especially in their first few weeks of life.

Training is a great way to keep your dog's mind active. It will help ensure that you and your dog understand each other and that your dog behaves appropriately and safely.

Owners should seek help for any existing behavioural problems their dog may have.

The reality

Nearly half of owners did not know what socialisation their dog had when young.

59% of people did little or no training with their dog in the first six months of life.

Over 165,000 dogs show aggression to people on a weekly basis.

PDSA says

Socialisation and training are two of the most important things you can do for your dog. Socialisation should be carried out within the first eight weeks of age, although it should be continued, together with training, throughout a dog's lifetime. This means that even if a dog has been acquired at an older age they should still have lots of positive experiences. Aggressive dogs, inadequate socialisation and inadequate or inappropriate training are key concerns raised by animal welfare organisations and the veterinary profession.

checklist

- If you are thinking of getting a puppy, find out what socialisation they have had.** ✓
- If you own a young puppy, get advice about socialisation and how to do it properly.** ✓
- Teach your dog basic commands by taking them to a training class. Seek professional advice for any behavioural problems that your dog has.** ✓
- Never leave your dog unsupervised with children.** ✓

Companionship



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What dogs need

Dogs are very social animals so shouldn't regularly be left alone for more than four hours a day.

When you go on holiday make sure your dog is properly looked after by booking them into boarding kennels or find a reliable pet sitter.

The reality

62% of owners leave their dog alone in a house for five or more hours on a typical weekday.

19% of owners think it is fine to leave their dog alone for eight hours or more on a regular basis.

16% of owners leave their dog in the house while on holiday and someone comes to feed and exercise them. This is a worrying finding given the company and care that dogs require.

PDSA says

Sadly, virtually half of all dogs in the UK are not getting the recommended amount of companionship. They are being left alone for long periods of time which means they can be lonely, distressed and bored on a daily basis. This can lead to a wide range of behavioural issues. Dogs need company and stimulation to keep them happy.

checklist

- ✓ If your dog is regularly left alone for four hours or more, aim to spend an extra hour or two every day with them.
- ✓ If you have to leave them for more than four hours ask a friend, relative or local pet carer to visit.
- ✓ If your dog gets anxious when left alone speak to your vet practice for advice.
- ✓ Ensure your dog gets the care and attention it needs when you are on holiday.
- ✓ Never leave your dog home alone when you go away.

Health



Neutering dogs is key to reducing the number of unwanted litters in the UK, as well as having important health benefits.



What dogs need

Preventive treatments such as neutering, regular vaccinations, and worm and flea treatments, plus microchipping, are important for the long-term health and wellbeing of dogs.

Owners wishing to breed from their dog should research and take appropriate actions (such as health testing) in advance.

Regular grooming and dental care are important.

The reality

Millions of dogs are missing out on vital preventive treatments. For example:

2.8 million dogs are not neutered.

Only 15% of owners planning to breed from their dog in the next six months have taken them for the recommended health tests.

Just 11% of owners clean their dogs' teeth at least once a day despite this being the most effective way of achieving good dental health.

PDSA says

Millions of dogs are not getting the preventive care they need. There are high numbers of dogs that are not neutered, vaccinated, or protected against parasites such as fleas and worms. Neutering dogs is key to reducing the number of unwanted litters in the UK, as well as having important health benefits. Unvaccinated dogs are exposed to serious diseases such as parvovirus; vets still see many cases of this every year. Flea infestations cause severe distress in dogs and are entirely preventable.

checklist

- Ensure your dog is registered with a vet. ✓
- Consider the benefits of neutering and make sure your dog's vaccinations are up to date. ✓
- Check when you last treated your dog for fleas and worms and seek advice from your vet about suitable and safe treatments. ✓
- Take your dog to your vet for a general health check. ✓
- Look into pet insurance – injury and illness can mean unexpected vet bills. ✓

How can you help?

Why not join us on Facebook and Twitter to find out more about pet health and to share your thoughts?

www.facebook.com/pdsa



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For more information about pet health and welfare, download a copy of the PDSA Animal Wellbeing Report, which offers owners invaluable advice and guidance
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Registered charity nos.
208217 & SC037585



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