

## **FACTS and TIPS on being a RESPONSIBLE PET OWNER**

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### **II. Information:**

#### **1. Warm Saipan Weather:**

In Saipan's warm climate, pets are at high risk for overheating. Even if your animals are outdoors, you'll want to be watchful of danger signs. Here are some simple pointers to keep your dog or cat cool.

- **Water:** The most important way to prevent your dog from overheating is to make sure you have clean water available. Dogs and cats have a higher body temperature than ours; they get hot long before we do. Watch for signs of heat exhaustion. In dogs, a couple of signs are rapid panting and a bright red tongue; in cats, signs are panting and dark red gums, among others.
- When taking your pet to the beach, provide a shaded spot and plenty of fresh drinking water. Be sure to rinse them off after they have been in the salt water.
- Make sure there's always plenty of shade available for a pet staying outside the house. A properly constructed doghouse is best. Bring your pet inside or make sure they have shade during the heat of the day. Always provide plenty of cool, clean water.
- Watch out for antifreeze coolant leaking from your vehicle. Animals are attracted to the sweet taste of coolant. As little as one teaspoon of antifreeze can be deadly to a cat, and less than one tablespoon can kill a 20-pound dog. Consider using animal-friendly products that use propylene glycol rather than those containing ethylene glycol.
- A clean coat can help to prevent summer skin problems, so keep your pet well groomed. If she has a heavy coat, shaving your dog's hair to a 1-inch length will help prevent overheating. But don't shave your dog's fur down to the skin; this robs her of protection from the sun. A cat should be brushed frequently.

#### **2. Cleaning Your Dog:**

- Keeping your dog clean is important. If you've adopted an adult or older dog who isn't used to being groomed, start by gently handling her legs, feet, mouth, ears, and head several times a day for a few weeks. Most dogs will come around to this kind of handling once they get used to it.

To ensure your dog's health, we suggest you take the following precautions to avoid bigger and more costly problems down the road:

1. Gently brush your dog on a regular basis;
2. Wash your dog with a flea and tick shampoo on a regular basis;
3. Check your dog's eyes and gently remove any discharge. To clean your dog's eyes, simply moisten a cotton ball or washcloth with warm water and gently remove any

discharge. A moistened baby toothbrush is gentle enough to remove dried debris from the hair near the eyes. If you notice a lot of discharge or if it's thick and greenish or yellowish, call your veterinarian. These signs could indicate an eye irritation, known as conjunctivitis, or an infection;

4. Check your dog's ears once a week. If they look dirty, moisten several cotton balls with mineral oil, alcohol, or hydrogen peroxide. Lift each earflap and wipe the skin folds and any visible parts of the ear. Never insert anything into the ear canal.

If your dog's ears smell bad or ooze thick, dark brown, or yellow-green discharge, she could have an ear infection. Call your veterinarian if you see any of this yucky stuff.

### **3. Raising Children and Dogs Together**

Dogs are members of the family, and they deserve proper handling from all of your family members, so it's your job to teach your children and your dog how to treat each other.

Your children are an integral part of the family, so they should play a key role in caring for and training your dog. However, the responsibilities they can take on depend on their ages and abilities.

Ask your veterinarian what types of pet care jobs are appropriate for children of different ages. For example, even young children will enjoy a chance to help feed your dog and train your dog. However, your child must be much older to take full responsibility for feeding and watering the family dog.

### **4. Training Your Child**

Your children need to learn to be gentle and never to bully your pet. Here are some rules to teach your children about pet handling:

- Don't bother your pet at mealtimes or during his afternoon nap.
- Play gently. Rowdy play can confuse and over stimulate your dog.
- Don't allow a young child walk around holding a puppy. A puppy can easily squirm out of a child's hands and hurt himself or the child.
- Supervise your children when they play with the dog for the first few weeks. And don't let children out of your sight when there's a dog around. Animals and children can be harsh on each other in the absence of adult supervision.

### **5. Training Your Dog**

Teach your child to correct your dog if he nips. Encourage your children to play quieter games with the puppy to prevent this behavior entirely.

Speak to your dog in a firm voice when he is in trouble, or has done something wrong.

Hitting or smacking your dog only scares the dog and destroys its trust in you. A trusting dog is a good dog – for life.

Your dog needs to feel like he's part of the family, so introduce your pet to all of your family members and welcome him into your home.

### **6. Teaching Children to Handle Dogs**

Kids can be rough on animals. Just look at the mangled and matted stuffed animals strewn across your child's bedroom. Introducing a living, fragile, self-protective animal into this environment could be disastrous. So before you bring home a new pet, make sure your children know how to handle a furry new addition to the family properly.

## **7. Safe Approach**

Before approaching a new dog, make sure your child asks permission. If permission is granted, your child should approach the dog slowly and extend one hand in a fist with the palm down. While approaching the animal, the child should speak softly and talk to the dog. Avoid staring at the dog, as it may be interpreted as a sign of aggression.

If the dog sniffs your child's outstretched hand and seems friendly, he's giving your child permission to pet him gently. If the dog looks fearful or growls, leave him alone and try again another time.

Tell your children never to pet a dog they don't know without permission from the dog's owner and the dog.

Tell your children never to approach a stray or wild boonie dog, as they may be dangerous.

## **8. Just the Right Touch**

Dogs are just so cute! Your children may want to hug and squeeze them. But such intensity can frighten dogs and can be dangerous for smaller dogs.

Instead, explain to your child that dogs love to be stroked on the neck, scratched under the chin and around the ears, and patted on their sides. Also tell your children to avoid patting dogs on their heads since some dogs find this invasive.

## **9. Hey, I'm Eating**

How would your children like it if someone bothered them while they were eating, sleeping or playing a video game? Dogs need time to themselves just as much as we do. So tell your kids to let their dog eat, sleep and play with her chew toys by herself.

## **10. Child's Play**

A dog can get riled up or scared and respond by chasing, jumping or barking at your child. Dogs don't understand that yelling, running or repetitive actions like swinging are part of your child's play. If this happens, tell your child to stand still and stay quiet until the dog calms down and walks away. Then explain that it's better not to play rough when the dog's around.

## **11. Don't Fence Me In**

Teasing a dog that's confined behind a fence or in a crate can excite or anger her. Nobody likes to be teased. If the dog gets loose, she may take her frustration out on your child. So make sure your children know that teasing animals is against the rules.

## **12. Lifelong Friends**

A child's relationship with his dog can be one of the most rewarding of his life. And dogs enjoy the devoted attention that children happily provide. As long as your dog and your child respect each other, their relationship will blossom.

### **13. Flea and Tick Prevention for Dogs**

Fleas, ticks, and lice (mange) are dangerous disease carriers, and they can make your dog's life miserable. Fleas can transmit tapeworms and cause itchy allergic reactions, which can lead to scratching, hair loss and infection. Ticks can carry the bacteria that cause Lyme disease, a serious condition characterized by lameness, swollen joints and fever. Mange is a kind of flesh eating mite that literally eats your dog's skin. It is incredibly uncomfortable and itchy, and can/will lead to infection.

Flea and Tick prevention are easy. Apply a topical ointment, like Frontline Plus or Advantage, once a month to your dog's or cat's shoulder area. Treating the yard with a product like Sevin can help reduce the number of ticks and fleas in your house and/or on our dog or cat.

Mange can be treated by taking your dog to the vet a dip. In some cases, antibiotics are required to treat the skin infection. Ask your doctor about more information on prevention and treatment.

### **14. If Your Dog Has Been Infested**

If you started using one of these flea medications after you discovered a flea infestation, you may need to treat your house too. Why? Fleas can live for several months in your house and yard because flea eggs stay alive in your carpet, cushions and drapes for years.

Your dog isn't the only one at risk. People can get irritating flea bites too. Ridding your home of these pests takes time and a concerted effort. Here's what to do.

To get rid of housebound fleas, use professional flea foggers and sprays for hard-to-reach spots, following manufacturer directions. Clean the flea eggs out of your house by vacuuming several times in a week, taping the vacuum bags shut and throwing them away. Also regularly clean your dog's favorite hangouts and wash her bedding.

If your dog spends time outdoors or in a kennel, be sure to wash the bedding. Spray doghouses and kennels with an indoor flea spray, following manufacturer directions, and let all treated areas dry before you let your pet back outside.

If your flea problem is recurring, you may need to treat your yard as well. Use a professional, concentrated yard spray. Many of these sprays attach easily to the end of a garden hose for application. It's especially important to spray moist and shaded areas of your yard. But be sure not to use any environmental treatments directly on your pet and ensure the area is dry before letting your dog outside.

Ridding your pet and her environment of these hardy pests is a tough job, but you'll rest easier knowing your dog doesn't have to endure the maddening itching and scratching or the diseases these parasites can inflict.

## **15. Preventing Fleas and Ticks**

The easiest way to prevent fleas and ticks on your dog is to keep him indoors. This, of course, is not an acceptable solution for most dogs and their owners because dogs love to romp outdoors. If your dog must go outdoors, you can attack the flea and tick problem by controlling your dog's environment and using preventative measures on your dog.

## **16. Preventative Measures in the Environment**

If you keep your dog on his leash or in a fenced area when outside, you can greatly reduce exposure to fleas and ticks. When he's on his leash, keep your dog away from brushy areas and tall grass where fleas and ticks are waiting for their next host. Keep the fenced areas where you will allow him to run free of his leash well mowed. If you keep him away from areas where fleas and ticks are most likely to be found, you will greatly reduce the problem.

## **17. Preventative Measures On Your Dog**

Regular grooming will help you detect the presence of fleas and ticks early, which is one of the keys to controlling them. In addition, numerous products are available commercially that can help the flea and tick problem including treated flea and tick collars, sprays, powders, flea and tick shampoos, flea and tick dips and monthly treatment applications. These are small vials of solution usually applied to the back of the neck and at the base of the tail.

As with all products of this nature, you must be sure the product you use is made specifically for your dog. In addition, you must read and follow all directions precisely.