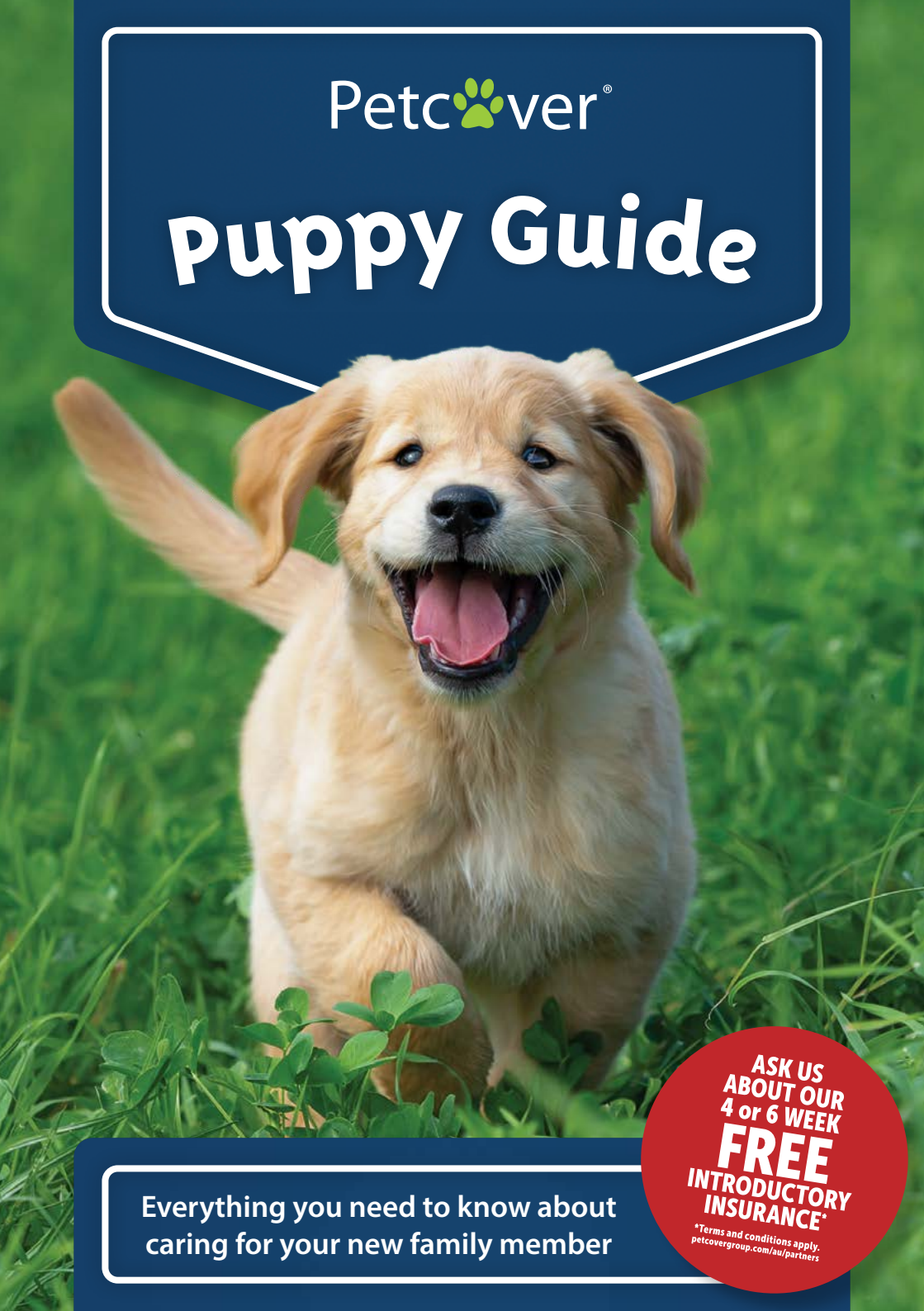
Petcover®

Puppy Guide



Everything you need to know about caring for your new family member

ASK US ABOUT OUR 4 or 6 WEEK **FREE** INTRODUCTORY INSURANCE*

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Welcome

Congratulations on welcoming your new puppy into your home! Whether you are young or old, a new addition to the family is always exciting.

Owning a puppy can be rewarding yet challenging. When raising your puppy, you must ensure that you provide a healthy and safe environment with regular veterinary care.

This guide provides useful information and tips on caring for your puppy during the early days and beyond, with insights on everything from vaccinations to toilet training. It offers guidance on the challenges you may experience with your new puppy. Being responsible for a puppy can be overwhelming. By making informed decisions, you can shape them into confident dogs.

Please seek veterinary advice regarding any further information or recommendations.

The Petcover Team

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Puppy milestones

Your puppy will experience many different stages on its journey to becoming a grown adult dog. These are some of the significant milestones your puppy will go through:

Did you know...

Puppies spend 15-20 hours sleeping per day.

Newborn	Welcome to the world! Your newborn puppy is born blind and deaf, making it helpless and solely dependant on its mother up until three to four weeks old.
2 to 7 weeks	Your puppy's eyes and ears start to fully open and form; they will even start to walk and bark. Puppies mostly eat solid foods and should be fed three times a day. At five to seven weeks your puppy's brain will reach physical maturity. It is also time to start their vaccination programme and to consider pet insurance.
8 to 10 weeks	Now puppies are ready for their new family and home. Have a look at the puppy shopping list on page 7 to ensure you have everything ready. At this stage, it's time to start to toilet and leash training your puppy. It's a good time to take your puppy to puppy preschool so they can learn to socialise and communicate.
2 to 3 months	They should be fully settled and familiar with their lifestyle and environment. Around 14-16 weeks, your puppy should have received all their vaccinations, and their permanent teeth will begin to come through.
4 to 5 months	Once fully vaccinated, your puppy is ready for the world, they should also be more responsive to training and interacting with other dogs. You can now reduce your puppy's feeds to twice daily.
6 to 12 months	From six-months-old, some breeds will start to slow their bone growth. Puppies usually get neutered at six-months-old. Talk to your local vet to get advice about when your puppy is ready, as all puppies are different.
12 months onwards	Your puppy is now considered an adult! Provide them with the right nutrition, regular health checks and loads of love. Switch their food to adult dog food to ensure you are fulfilling their nutritional needs.

Preparing your home

To ensure a smooth transition, preparing in advance will help your puppy feel comfortable and safe in their new home.

Before your puppy arrives:

- Prepare your puppy's bed and sleeping area to help them feel safe and comfortable during the transition. This will also help with initiating a routine when it comes to sleeping, feeding and toilet training.
- Remove any dangerous obstacles and check for hazards. Anything accessible on the floor such as electrical cords, chemicals or toxic plants may cause a risk to your puppy.
- Your puppy will need fresh food and water daily with separate bowls. Keep it in a place that is easily accessible to them.

Their first 24 hours

The first day can feel exciting but daunting for everyone. Your puppy may be timid or scared at first, but they will start to feel comfortable once they get to know their new home.

Do not overcrowd them; let them explore but watch closely and slowly introduce them to other pets and people. Children and puppies can be the best of friends. However, keep calm, let the puppy approach you and hold them gently. When introducing your puppy to your other pets, allow them to interact slowly to stop them from being territorial. Ensure all your pets have separate beds and food bowls to reduce the risk of feeling threatened.

Puppy-proof your house

- ☐ Screen off open fireplaces.
- ☐ Check for loose floorboards.
- ☐ Remove any tiny objects that could be swallowed, such as elastic bands.
- ☐ Remove any poisonous houseplants such as sago palms, ivy, rubber tree plants and lantana.
- ☐ Install a dog gate on the stairs.
- ☐ Place electric cables out of reach.
- ☐ Store children's toys out of reach.
- ☐ Remove newspapers and magazines from the floor otherwise the puppy may think they are for toilet training.

Puppy shopping list

Essential items:

- ☐ Dog bedding and blanket
- ☐ Food and water bowls
- ☐ Puppy food
- ☐ Collar and lead
- ☐ Dog crate or kennel
- ☐ Puppy pads
- ☐ Flea, tick, and worming treatments
- ☐ Pet insurance

Extras:

- ☐ Hot water bottle
- ☐ Chew items
- ☐ Activity/squeaky toys
- ☐ Treats
- ☐ Brush, comb, and nail clippers
- ☐ Shampoo and conditioner
- ☐ Cleaning wipes, waste bags

Puppy cuisine

What should I feed my puppy?

Choosing the right food is vital for the growth and health of your new puppy. Continue to feed your puppy the same food given to them by the breeder for the first few weeks. If you wish to change their diet, make sure you slowly introduce a new food. Have a two-week plan for gradually changing your puppy's diet; this will reduce the risk of an upset stomach or diarrhoea.

Committing to a strict diet will help reduce any diet-related health problems, such as obesity or diabetes. Make sure you remember to keep track of how many snacks and treats you are giving your puppy. Giving your puppy hard chews or bones can damage their jaws and is not advised. For recommendations on suitable food for your puppy, talk to your vet or local pet shop. Be sure to purchase food specifically for a puppy and always check the age requirements and ingredients.

How often should I feed my puppy?

During the puppy's developmental stages, providing them with the right nutrition is very important. A puppy between the ages of six to 10 weeks old should be feed at least four meals a day. Once they reach ten weeks old, drop feeding down to three times a day and twice a day once they are four months old. Any further recommendations can be found on the puppy food label or ask your vet.

Did you know...

Obesity is the number one health problem in dogs.

What NOT to feed your puppy

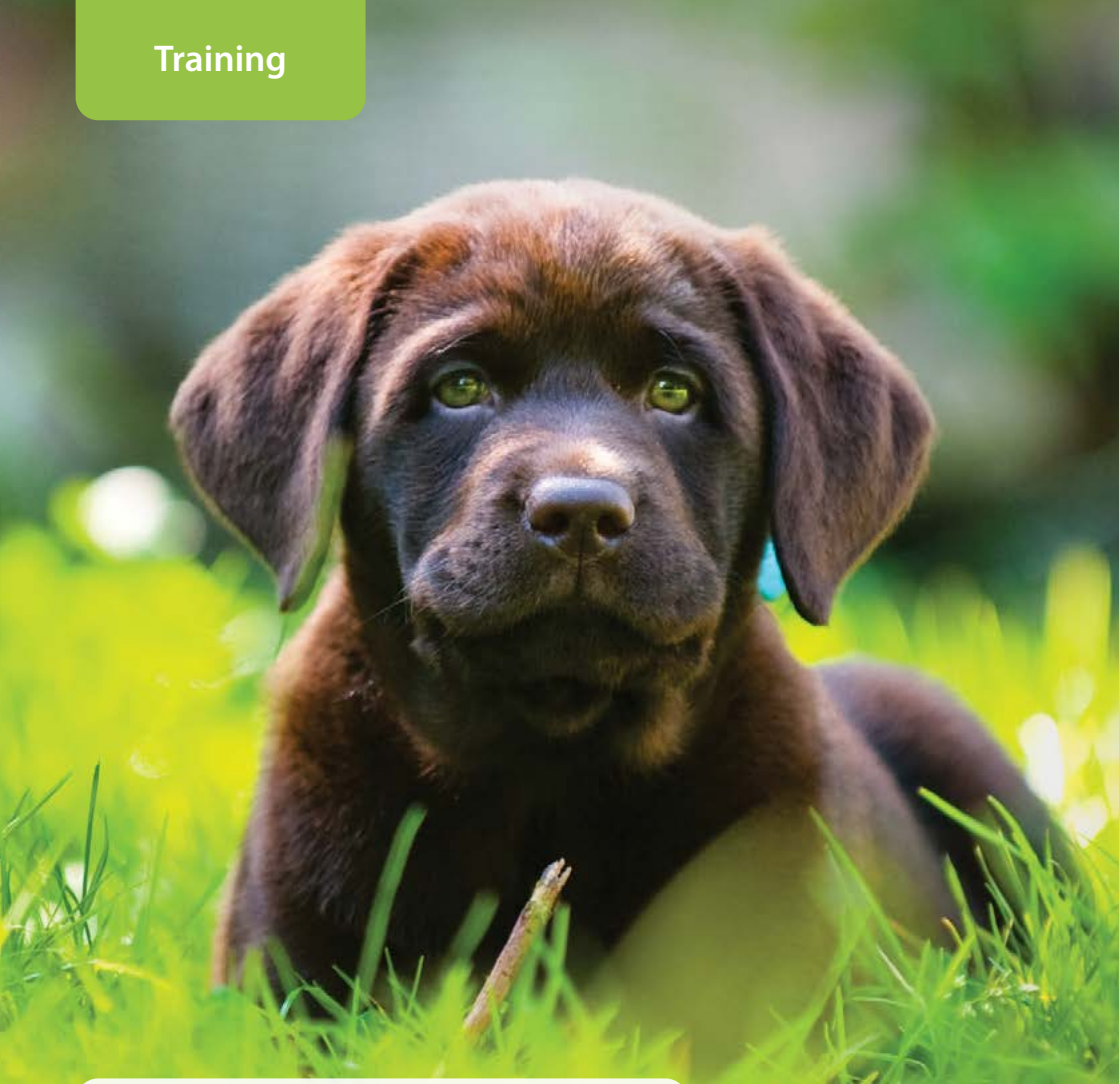
Puppies are known to love human food and can easily consume the wrong foods. Keeping certain foods out of their diet is vital to their health.

Your puppy should not eat any of these foods:

- ✘ Chocolate
- ✘ Grapes and raisins
- ✘ Ham or fatty meat
- ✘ Bones
- ✘ Milk & cheese
- ✘ Walnuts
- ✘ Macadamia nuts
- ✘ Alcohol
- ✘ Spicy food
- ✘ Avocado
- ✘ Onion
- ✘ Garlic
- ✘ Unripe tomatoes
- ✘ Mushrooms
- ✘ Coffee and tea

Some of these food items can cause serious issues, such as kidney or liver damage, digestive problems, vomiting and diarrhoea. We recommend having some healthy treats ready when they look at you with puppy dog eyes.

As puppies and dogs enjoy having human food, they may ingest something toxic and dangerous. Accidents or illnesses can result in expensive veterinary fees.



Toilet training

Accidents will happen, so use these simple steps to ensure your puppy relieves itself in the right place. The good news is your puppy inherits an aversion to fouling their resting areas; they only need learning opportunities to develop this instinct further.

Here are 5 steps to ensure your puppy succeeds:

1 When you can't supervise, accustom your puppy to an indoor kennel, puppy pen or small, chew-proof area. It will help because of the inherited tendency to keep the resting areas clean.

2 Take your puppy to the area you want them to use for toileting to develop the association between that surface and the rewarding pleasure of relief; praise from you will be a bonus. The best times to do this are when they wake up, finish eating or are excited.

3 Allow your puppy to relieve itself at least every two hours when they are awake. If your puppy is restless, starts sniffing the floor, circling, squatting or crouching, lift them up and take them to where you want them to toilet; if they are old enough, encourage them to walk there with you.

4 At first, your puppy will have limited bladder control, and it will need to relieve itself during the night. Plan to go to bed late and get up early, and you may also need to get up during the night. As their ability to wait develops, you can progress to extended periods.

5 While putting newspaper or training pads on the floor is useful for cleaning, if your puppy learns them as a preference, you will have to transfer the association. Put training pads or paper down where you want your puppy to go to the toilet, gradually reducing the amount once toileting in the desired location becomes established.

Remember Successful training depends on frequent occasions to go toilet where you want them to, and as little opportunity as possible for toileting where you do not want them to.

Leash training

Walking on the lead can sometimes be challenging, but with regular practice, your puppy will be walking in-line in no time. It is best to start using a lead while they are a puppy, putting them on the lead will also help with toilet training.

Getting used to the lead will allow your puppy to feel comfortable when they are on a walk. Always reward good behaviour with positive feedback or healthy treats.

Here are some tips to get your puppy to behave on a leash:

- Do not yank or drag your puppy when it is on the lead.
- Let your puppy wear a collar/harness and leash inside before going outdoors.
- Try to redirect your puppy if they are distracted by other animals.
- Start with small training sessions to become familiar.
- Always praise good behaviour while on the lead.
- Start with keeping a short leash to teach them to walk by your side.

How often should I exercise my puppy?

Although puppies will require much less exercise than an adult dog, it is still crucial for their mental and physical well-being. During your puppy's growth stage, you should be conscious that their bones and joints are still growing, and too much exercise can lead to exhaustion and joint damage.

All breeds will require a varied amount of exercise, at least once or twice a day. Your puppy's exercise regime should gradually be increased by five-minute increments each month. For example, a three-month-old puppy will require 15 minutes of exercise per day and 20 minutes at four months of age. Continue to slowly increase the number of minutes as they reach each growth milestone.

Puppy school

Socialisation is the most important part of a puppy's development and is critical to becoming a balanced, obedient adult. Your puppy is most impressionable at the age of five to 13 weeks. In preparation for puppy or obedience school, there are a few initial training methods to learn.

Some training you can do at home include:

The 'sit' and 'down' command

Hold a tiny treat above your puppy's nose, and it will naturally sit. Lower the treat to the floor, and your puppy will go down as well. Deliver the commands 'sit' or 'down' firmly – don't use your puppy's name. Only release the food on completion of the position. Repeat each exercise three times in one lesson, with at least three sessions daily.

The 'come' command

Say your puppy's name, followed by 'come'. If the puppy runs to you, reward it with a treat. Running backwards as it begins to run at you makes it more fun and is less overbearing for the puppy.

The 'stay' command

Show a second treat and use the command 'stay', then move about a foot away for a second, then go back and reward. The puppy doesn't realise you moved away and back. Gradually extend the time to five, 10 and 15 seconds before returning to reward.

Keep the puppy on a lead for the 'stays' and remember to praise as you give them the reward. In due course, only use food occasionally; a verbal reward will suffice.

Attending puppy school

After all vaccinations are complete, your puppy can now fully interact with other dogs and people. Puppy or obedience training schools can make a positive difference to your puppy's behaviour.

Learning basic obedience is essential for your puppy to mature into a well-mannered adult dog.

To choose a good trainer or obedience school, check with your vet and friends for recommendations on what is available in your local area.

What will your puppy learn?

- How to interact and communicate with people and other dogs to build their social skills.
- To get used to everyday noises, ensuring they don't get distressed.
- How to be more confident and comfortable with others which will help them adjust to your family.
- Learning good manners and behaviour such as reacting on cues: sit, stay, come, lead walking and toilet training.

Separation anxiety

Your puppy must learn how to be alone to grow up to be confident, independent dogs that does not develop separation anxiety.

Separation anxiety manifests itself in several ways. Dogs can become destructive, defecate indoors, excessively salivate, pant and pace, or bark and howl, with early training, this is preventable.

Learning to be alone, and to rely on their environment for their sense of security, is as important for puppies as being well socialised. Associating the learning experience with positive emotions will prevent anxiety and increase their capacity to be independent and cope with stresses, such as noise when left alone as adults.

Puppies should be slowly weaned-off their dependence on social contact. During your puppy's first few nights in its new home, you should sleep close to them. Then slowly increase the distance between the puppy and yourself. When you start to accustom your puppy to be on its own during the day, stay nearby as your presence helps associate its surroundings with being relaxed. Over time, gradually increase the distance between you and your puppy, until you can leave it on its own and find it calm when you return.

Become a puppy whisperer

Here are some key body language signs to help understand your puppy's mood:

Behaviours	Meaning
Making little jumps, or pawing at something, and giving short, 'cross' barks.	It is frustrated
Looking away, with its body and head low and ears back.	It is low in confidence.
Making a licking action, turning the head away, or raising a paw.	It is trying to avoid conflict.
Rolling onto its back and exposing its underside, sometimes urinating.	It is stressed.
Stiff in body, with ears forward and erect, and a raised paw.	It has spotted 'prey'.
Whining, with head, ears and body low, and the tail tucked under.	It is afraid.
Wagging its tail horizontally and wanting to sniff people or other dogs.	It is a greeting.
Crouching, wagging its tail, panting, barking or snapping its teeth excitedly.	It is playing.

Did you know...

Dogs only sweat from their paws

Vet health checks

Your vet can help by providing vital preventive healthcare, as well as giving you essential advice on their weight, nutrition, neutering, dental care and behaviour. As your puppy progresses through life, regular vet visits are essential for their well-being.

Vaccinations

Vaccinating your puppy is one of the most important things you should do as a dog owner. All dogs need to be vaccinated to protect them from dangerous, preventable diseases like canine distemper virus, adenovirus, and parvovirus.

The vaccination process starts at six to eight weeks, with a course of three injections. After this, your dog will receive a vaccination one year after their third puppy vaccination.

Vaccination schedule:
First vaccination - six-eight weeks old
Second vaccination - 10-12 weeks old
Final puppy vaccination - 12-14 weeks old

Neutering

Neutering is a safe and routine procedure, and your vet can advise you on the process and the recovery. This procedure is optional; however, it is a prevention of unwanted litters and has many health and behavioural benefits for both female and male dogs. Generally, it is recommended to neuter your puppy around five to six months old, before they hit puberty.

Microchipping

Microchipping is the most effective form of routine identity protection. It is a safe procedure where a tiny chip - the size of a grain of rice - is implanted under your puppy's skin. The chip can be scanned at vet clinics and animal shelters to identify your pet. If your dog is lost or stolen, it can be quickly reunited with you via the national database. Remember to keep your contact details up to date!

Worming

Every puppy has a burden of worms, often passed from its mother through the milk or placenta. Roundworms are the main problem for puppies due to the dangers they pose for people and animal health.

Make sure your puppy is wormed every two weeks up to 12 weeks old with a good-quality wormer from your vet. After 12 weeks, many vets recommend monthly worming until your puppy is six months old, before adopting the usual adult regime of a treatment every three months.

Fleas

It is vital to treat your puppy for fleas. Fleas may be tiny, but they can cause problems, especially for young puppies and can take over your home and garden.

To ensure that your puppy is flea-free, your vet can advise the most appropriate treatment and ongoing preventative product. These can be in the form of 'spot on' or 'topical' treatments applied directly to the skin or an oral tablet treatment.

Breed Specific Conditions

BOAS stands for Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome which is common in certain breeds of dogs such as Boxer, Boston Terrier, Bulldog and Chow Chows. Essentially, it is a condition that compromises the air movement in the mouth, nose and windpipe.

BOAS affects an animal's ability to exercise, sleep, play and eat.

Insurance

No matter how careful you are, your puppy can still become ill or injured.

Pet insurance gives pet parents peace of mind by taking the financial worry out of having a dog. It allows you the freedom to choose the right treatment based on the best medical options available. For information on dog insurance options available or to get a quote, please call us on **1300 731 324**, or visit our website **www.petcovergroup.com/au** or email **info.au@petcovergroup.com**.

Common injuries and diseases

Here are the top five claimed injuries and diseases for dogs:

Condition	Petcover paid*
Digestive problems	$13,204
Lymphosarcoma (cancer)	$12,827
Poisoning	$12,734
Hip dysplasia	$12,082
Foreign body ingestion	$12,071

* The amounts shown are an example only and are based on Petcover Group Data. Claimable amounts vary depending on selected cover and are subject to the policy terms and conditions.

Did you know...

Puppies grow to half their body weight in the first four to five months.

Regular health checks

There are simple health checks you can do with your puppy at home. Giving your puppy regular health checks will help it find vet examinations less stressful.

Posture

A healthy puppy will hold its head high, its tail down and move freely. Watch for stiffness or hunching.

Weight

You should be able to feel your dog's ribs, but they should not protrude. If you are unsure, check your breed's ideal weight with your vet.

Tail

Signs of an unhealthy tail include odd tail movement or the puppy may hold the tail down. Problems can be due to skin wounds, such as bites, muscle tearing from an accident, back problems, or weakness from neuromuscular or metabolic disease.

Eyes

Check for excessive tear production, a thick discharge, redness, a difference in blinking, closed eyelids or any swelling.

Ears

The outer ear canal should be clean with a pale pink lining. A little wax is normal. Signs of infection include an off-white discharge or an offensive smell.

Paws

If your puppy has an injured paw, it may show pain or distress by avoiding walking on it. Gently examine it for open wounds, redness, or objects such as thorns or splinters, and take your puppy to the vet if it appears injured.

Coat and skin

Run your hands over the body to check for any lumps, bumps, wounds or scabs. Also, check for fleas and ticks, especially in summer.

Teeth and gums

Your puppy's baby teeth should be pearly white (and sharp!). Puppies are teething from three to seven months of age, and their gums may be red and swollen.

Did you know...

Dogs have twice as many ear muscles as humans.

Grooming

Taking responsibility and care for a puppy means regular grooming to ensure a glowing coat and a fresh smelling puppy. Here are some tips on how to groom your puppy at home:

Basic grooming

Get a good bristle brush and start slowly with five minutes a day, to get your puppy used to it.

Maintaining a good routine will allow your puppy to feel comfortable and grow to love it. Consistent brushing helps reduce their hair from matting.

Dental care

Looking after their teeth helps prevent gum disease, which can lead to more serious issues. Apply doggy toothpaste regularly and ensure your puppy has an annual dental check-up with the vet.

Bathing

Regularly bathing your puppy with shampoo and conditioner will benefit their overall health and wellbeing.

Professional groomers are recommended, especially for non-shedding dogs that require regular coat care. Talk to your vet for advice about local groomers available.

Always reward good behaviour and give positive affirmations to train your puppy to become less stressed with grooming.

FAQ

What do I do if my puppy eats something it shouldn't?

Your puppy will be curious and want to eat everything and anything, from toys to human food. Your puppy should only be eating the food you are feeding them. If you think your puppy has eaten something wrong, seek veterinary assistance immediately.

Have you considered getting dog insurance to protect your pet from any unexpected vet emergencies?

Why do dogs bark?

Dogs use barking as a defensive tactic to alert there is danger or as a form of play and to show excitement. Regular barking can be due to many factors like fear, anxiety, or boredom. To break an unwanted barking habit, you will need to look for the cause and work on breaking the habit.

For example, if your dog barks at people walking past your fence, try to keep them inside where they can see out or use a leash and stay far from the fence. Use treats or positive affirmation to reward good behaviour.

How to teach my puppy not to bite?

Young puppies love to bite, especially when playing and during their teething stage. It's up to you to teach your puppy what is acceptable and what is not. Remember to be consistent with your training. Don't let your puppy bite sometimes. Otherwise, they'll receive mixed messages.

Allowing your puppy to socialise with other puppies and dogs at a young age will help them learn good manners and self-control. The reactions from other puppies and dogs will let them know if they are too rough. Don't be too worried, as it is a natural process, and the puppy must experience this for themselves.

How much should my puppy sleep?

Puppies tire easily, so make sure that the puppy has a little haven for them to rest or sleep. A crate or puppy pen is ideal for this purpose. Leaving them in the pen or crate from time to time can also help them get used to being alone and not develop separation problems.

How do you stop a puppy jumping on people?

From an early age, start teaching your puppy that it is not okay to jump up on people. As well as being annoying, this action can be dangerous, particularly with small children or the elderly. When your puppy is jumping up on you, gently turn your back against them to avoid giving them any attention. Only reward them when they are calm and sitting. Ensure that everyone in the household and any guests stick to this method so that the puppy will learn it is unacceptable.

Did you know...

Pet insurance receives the most claims out of any other insurance. We alone process, on average, over 35,000 claims a year.

Petcover®

As pet parents ourselves, we know a new puppy can be a fun and rewarding experience. At Petcover, we give pet parents peace of mind by taking the financial worry out of having a puppy. Our plans are designed to cover the unexpected so you can afford the care your pet deserves.

Petcover specialises in pet insurance which aims to help more of our nation's pets through illnesses and accidents each year. Our mission is to offer fast claim processing, outstanding customer service and comprehensive pet insurance plans. Have peace of mind knowing your puppy is protected from any unforeseen circumstances.

From your Poodle to your Pomeranian, our wide range of dog and puppy insurance is for everyone. To get a quote, please call us on **1300 731 324**, or visit our website **www.petcovergroup.com/au** or email **info.au@petcovergroup.com**.

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Petcover®

At Petcover, we are as dedicated to pet insurance as a dog is to a tennis ball.

Our mission is to offer comprehensive pet insurance plans, fast claim processing, and outstanding customer service.

Pet insurance is all we do, and we do it best.

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