



Ten Dog Care Essentials

Learn how to keep your dog safe, healthy and happy

Your dog gives you a lifetime of unconditional love, loyalty and friendship. In return, she counts on you to provide her with the basics, such as food, water, shelter, regular veterinary care, exercise, safety and companionship.

Take care of these 10 essentials, and you'll be assured to have a rewarding and long-lasting relationship with your canine companion.

1. Identify your dog

External Identification: Outfit your dog with a collar and ID tag that includes your name, address and telephone number. No matter how careful you are, there's a chance your companion may become lost—an ID tag greatly increases the chance that your pet will be returned home safely. The dog's collar should not be tight; it should fit so two fingers can slip easily under his collar.

Microchip Identification: Have your dog microchipped. Microchip ID will ensure that your dog will be returned to you if he is lost, even if his collar came off. When scanned by a veterinarian or animal shelter, your phone number, address and other vital information will appear, and you can be contacted. Napa Humane offers low cost microchipping.

2. Follow local laws for licensing your dog and vaccinating him for rabies

Check with your local animal shelter or humane society for information regarding legal requirements, where to obtain tags and where to have your pet vaccinated.

3. When you're off your property, keep your dog on leash

Even a dog with a valid license, rabies tag and ID tag should not be allowed to roam outside of your home or fenced yard. It is best for you, your community and your dog to keep her on a leash and under your control at all times.

4. Give your dog companionship

A fenced yard with a doghouse is a bonus, especially for large and active dogs; however, dogs should never be left outside alone or for extended periods of time. Dogs need and crave companionship; they should spend most of their time with their family, not alone outside.

5. Take your dog to the veterinarian for regular check-ups

If you do not have a veterinarian, ask a pet-owning friend for a referral and check out our information on choosing a veterinarian. If you are having trouble paying for veterinary care, you may be able to employ creative options or find sources of assistance.

6. Spay or neuter your dog

Dogs who have this routine surgery tend to live longer, be healthier and have fewer behavior problems (e.g., biting or running away). By spaying or neutering your dog, you are also doing your part to reduce the problem of pet overpopulation. Napa Humane offers low-cost spay/neuter.

7. Give your dog a nutritionally balanced diet and constant access to fresh water

Ask your veterinarian for advice on what and how often to feed your dog. Dietary requirements change as dogs get older, and a dog's teeth need to be cleaned and monitored regularly to ensure she can eat properly. Also keep an eye out for pet-food recalls and foods and plants that can be toxic to your dog.

8. Enroll your dog in a training class

Positive training will allow you to control your companion's behavior safely and humanely, and the experience offers a terrific opportunity to enhance the bond you share with your dog.

9. Give your dog enough exercise to keep him physically fit (but not exhausted)

Most dog owners find that playing with their canine companion, along with walking him twice a day, provides sufficient exercise. Walking benefits people as much as it benefits dogs, and the time spent together will improve your dog's sense of well-being. If you have questions about the level of exercise appropriate for your dog, consult your veterinarian.

10. Be loyal to and patient with your faithful companion

Make sure the expectations you have of your dog are reasonable and remember that the vast majority of behavior problems can be solved. Remember, not all "behavior" problems are just that; many can be indicators of health problems. For example, a dog who is suddenly growling or snapping

when you touch his ears may have an ear infection. If you are struggling with your pet's behavior, contact your veterinarian or local animal shelter for advice, and check out our behavior tip sheets, too.

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About Napa Humane

The Humane Society of Napa County and SPCA, known as Napa Humane, is a non-profit organization incorporated in 1973. Recognizing that companion animals are an important part of healthy communities, we've grown to consider Napa Humane a community service organization. Our programs and services are designed to address the needs of animals – and also to provide support, education, and assistance for all the people who care for and about them.

Napa Humane is a private and independent organization that is supported by private donations by individuals and businesses, bequests, and fees for service. We receive no government funding, tax dollars or funding from national animal welfare organizations.

Our Mission

To promote the welfare of companion animals through protection, advocacy, education, and by example.