



51 Danbury Road
Wilton, Connecticut 06897
www.southwiltonvet.com
Email info@southwiltonvet.com
Tel 203 762 2002
Fax 203 834 9999

Welcome to South Wilton Veterinary Group!

We are very excited to have you join our growing practice.

Please take a moment to sort through this new client welcome folder we have prepared for you.

Many frequently asked questions may be answered as we have enclosed information on many important topics related to the proper care of your precious pet.

We have enclosed information on:

- Our Services and Doctors
- Preventative Health Care Recommendations
- Microchipping as Permanent Identification for Your Pet
- Emergency Care for Your Pet
- Veterinary Pet Insurance
- Referrals to Specialists in our Area
- Local Pet Service Recommendations
- Payment Options and Policies

If you have any questions after reviewing this material, feel free to contact us by phone (203-762-2002) or email (southwiltonvet@aol.com). You may also visit our website at www.southwiltonvet.com for further information and downloadable materials. The section entitled "Pet Education" contains many helpful handouts.

Sincerely,

The Doctors and Staff at South Wilton Veterinary Group

Directions to Local Emergency Centers

If you have an emergency with your dog or cat after hours and we are not available, please go to the Veterinary Referral and Emergency Center in Norwalk, CT or the Cornell University Veterinary Specialists in Stamford, CT.

VREC

123 West Cedar Street
Norwalk, CT
203-854-9960

From I-95 South: Take Exit 14, at the end turn RIGHT onto route 1, at the next light turn LEFT (N. Taylor Avenue) go 1 block and turn LEFT onto West Cedar Street. VREC is immediately on your left.

From I-95 North: Take Exit 14, at the end of the ramp turn LEFT at stop sign continue to traffic light turn LEFT(Route 1) proceed to 2nd traffic light turn RIGHT(N. Taylor Avenue) take your first LEFT (West Cedar Street) and VREC is immediately on your left.

CUVS

880 Canal Street
Stamford, CT
203-595-2778

From I-95 South: Take Exit 7 – Atlantic Street. As you come down the exit ramp, proceed to the first light. Make a left at the light, onto Canal Street. Proceed on Canal Street 0.5 miles (past Fairway Market on right) to 880 Canal, which will be the last driveway on the left.

From I-95 North: Take Exit 8 - Atlantic Street. Move to the far right lane. At second light, make a right onto Canal Street. Proceed on Canal Street 0.5 miles (past Fairway Market on right) to 880 Canal, which will be the last driveway on the left.

Welcome to South Wilton Veterinary Group!

Congratulations on the addition of a puppy to your family. The goal of this handout is to educate you about the responsibilities that come with owning a new puppy. This handout is just an overview. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have. We look forward to a life-long relationship with you and your dog.

Vaccinations

Puppies require 3 sets of booster vaccinations starting at about 8 weeks of age. We recommend the following protocol:

1. **DHPP** (Distemper, Hepatitis, Parainfluenza, Parvovirus) Combination Vaccine.

This vaccine helps prevent canine distemper (a viral disease that affects the respiratory and central nervous system), hepatitis (a viral disease that affects the liver), parainfluenza (a viral disease that affects the upper respiratory system), and parvovirus (a viral disease that affects the intestines and can be fatal). This vaccine is given at an interval tailored to your individual dog's needs after the initial vaccine series is completed.

1st vaccine	8-9 weeks
2nd vaccine	11-12 weeks
3rd vaccine	14-15 weeks (some breeds may require an additional booster vaccination- your veterinarian will inform you if your puppy requires this additional protection).
4th vaccine	1 year later
	Every three years thereafter*

*Most dogs will receive Distemper/Parvo vaccinations once every three years once they reach adulthood. Some dogs may need the vaccines more frequently due to high exposure or kennel/show requirements. Your dog's veterinarian will ultimately decide on the best vaccination protocol for your pet.

2. **Rabies Vaccine**

This vaccine helps prevent the fatal viral disease spread by the saliva of infected animals. Rabies is a zoonotic disease meaning that it can be transmitted to humans. This vaccine is required by Connecticut state law for ALL dogs.

1st vaccination	12 weeks
2nd vaccination	1 year later
3rd vaccination	every three years thereafter*

3. **Lyme Vaccine**

Lyme disease is a growing concern in the state of Connecticut as well as surrounding areas. Lyme disease (a.k.a. Borrelia) is a serious bacterial infection that affects the joints, central nervous system and kidneys. The vaccine is an effective form of control for the disease; however, it is not 100% effective. A puppy who is vaccinated prior to exposure to ticks has a 75-80% chance of NOT getting the disease. The vaccination is given annually after the vaccination series is complete.

1st vaccination	12-13 weeks
2nd vaccination	15-16 weeks
3rd vaccination	Every year thereafter

4. **Bordatella**

This vaccine helps to prevent the upper respiratory infection commonly known as "kennel cough." This vaccine is given to dogs that are placed in boarding kennels, visit a groomer, or participate in "group" activities such as

training classes. Most kennels require this vaccine. The vaccine is a liquid and is administered through drops placed directly in the dog's nose. It is given once or twice yearly, depending on exposure. Talk to your veterinarian to determine what protocol is best for your dog.

Parasites

Puppies are common hosts to many parasites. We will test your pet for internal parasites by examining a fecal (poop) sample. This test can detect many of the common parasites, such as roundworms. A fecal exam will then be performed every 6 months as recommended by the CDC (Center for Disease Control). Intestinal parasites can cause weight loss, vomiting, and diarrhea.

As it is very common for puppies to have parasites, all puppies are dewormed whether or not they show any symptoms. We do this because research shows a cat or dog with worms can spread up to 3 million eggs a day in stool! Some of these fecal parasites are zoonotic, which means they can spread to humans. The elderly and children are most at risk. Occasionally puppies carry parasites that are not so common. These include coccidian and/or giardia and require special treatment.

Parasites can also live on the skin. The most common of this type of parasites you will be examined for are fleas, ticks and mites. If they are found, you will receive specific information and treatment regimens.

Dogs can easily become infected with heartworms. Heartworms are carried by mosquitoes and are transmitted to the bloodstream via a mosquito bite. The adult parasites (worms that can be as long as 12" and as thick as linguini) make themselves at home in the dog's heart and larger blood vessels. As you can imagine, this makes it very difficult for the dog's heart to work properly. Clinical signs of heartworm infection include coughing, vomiting, weight loss and lethargy. Luckily, heartworms are easily prevented by giving your puppy a monthly pill throughout its lifetime. Puppies should start on the preventative pill at 8 weeks of age and be given the pill every month thereafter, all year long. A blood test will be performed every year, at the annual exam, to ensure that your pet does not have heartworm disease, even if it has been on a preventative. If untreated, heartworm can be fatal. Treatment is very costly and has a host of difficult and complicated side effects. It is much easier, safer, and much less costly to prevent the disease with the monthly heartworm preventative.

Feeding

In the beginning (the first 6 months of life), most puppies can be fed a high-quality puppy food. While there are many types of food available, more expensive does not mean better. Your veterinarian can recommend several quality brands. Puppies should have fresh water available at all times. They should be fed 2 to 3 times daily for the first 4 to 6 months. The amount of food should be equal to one measuring cup of dry food for every 10 pounds of body weight per day. A 20 pound puppy would get a total of 2 measuring cups of food every day, or one cup twice daily.

Smaller breed dogs (those expected to be less than 50 pounds at adult weight) may continue on puppy food through their first year of life. Larger breed dogs (those expected to be over 50 pounds at maturity) should be gradually weaned onto adult food at about 4 months of age. Gradually wean your large breed to adult dog food by taking ¼ of their dry puppy food and replacing it with adult food. Increase the amount of the adult food daily until all the puppy food has been replaced. It is time to stimulate your puppy's appetite by adding some low-fat cottage cheese or canned dog food to the dry diet. Only use enough to lightly coat the dry food when thoroughly mixed. Other table foods should be avoided unless recommended by the veterinarian.

It is in everyone's best interest to keep your dog at a fit, healthy weight. Dogs that maintain a healthy weight are much more likely to avoid "old age" problems such as arthritis and other joint related difficulties. Excess weight can be added very easily by giving too many treats and feeding table scraps. Remember to include doggie treats and training tidbits in your estimation of your puppy's total intake of food and decrease their meal accordingly.

The Benefits of Spaying or Neutering your Dog

All dogs, unless specifically designated as a breeding animal, should be spayed or neutered. There is no ethical or medical reason to "just have one litter" these days. Dog overpopulation is already reaching epidemic proportions

with thousands of dogs being put to sleep in shelters every year. Spaying or neutering your pet not only helps to control the pet population, it also provides some significant medical benefits for your dog.

Female Dog Spay

Spaying, or performing an ovariohysterectomy is the procedure performed on a female dog. This is a surgical procedure performed in a sterile environment, at about 6 months of age and PRIOR to the first heat. The procedure involves general anesthesia and the removal of both the ovaries and the uterus. Pre-anesthetic blood tests are highly recommended to evaluate the puppy's internal organ function prior to the surgery to decrease surgical risks. Puppies that have this surgical procedure performed spend one night in the hospital recovering. The next day, they are released from the hospital with follow-up instructions for the caregiver.

A female dog that is not spayed runs several risks. The first risk is unwanted pregnancy. Medically, unsprayed female dogs risk uterine infections, uterine cancer and mammary gland cancer. All of these illnesses can significantly decrease the life span of your dog. For all of these reasons, we strongly recommend you spay your female dog.

Male Dog Neuter

Neutering, or performing a surgical castration, is the procedure performed on a male dog. This is a surgical procedure, done in a sterile environment at about 6 months of age. This procedure involves general anesthesia to facilitate the removal of the testes. Pre-anesthetic blood tests are highly recommended to evaluate the puppy's internal organ function prior to the surgery to decrease surgical risks. Puppies that have this surgical procedure performed spend one night in the hospital recovering. The next day, they are released from the hospital with follow-up instructions for the caregiver.

A male dog that is not neutered runs several risks. The first risk is creating unwanted pregnancy. Medically, un-neutered male dogs risk complications with prostate infections, and enlarged prostate and testicular cancer. Behaviorally, neutering reduces wandering, inter-dog aggression and other undesirable behaviors, such as bonding with human legs. For all of these reasons, we strongly recommend you neuter your male dog.

Good luck with your new puppy and we look forward to building a lifelong relationship with you and your pet! Please feel free to contact our doctors or staff with any further questions you may have:

South Wilton Veterinary Group
51 Danbury Road
Wilton, CT 06897
Phone: 203-762-2002 Fax: 203-834-9999
Email: southwiltonvet@aol.com

Twice a Year for Life!

What is pet wellness?

The goal of a pet wellness program is to prevent or minimize disease or injury, improve your pet's quality of life, and help your pet enjoy a healthy life for as long as possible. Your veterinarian will accomplish this in several ways:

- Routine health screenings
- Ongoing communication between you and your veterinarian
- Preserving the veterinarian-client-patient relationship

How often does your pet need a wellness exam?

- Like people, pets can benefit from routine wellness exams too. But with one important difference – pets age faster than people.
- Because dogs and cats age 7 times faster, on average, than people, significant health changes can occur in a short amount of time. And, the risks of cancer, diabetes, obesity, arthritis, heart disease, metabolic problems and other serious conditions all increase with age.
- Many pet owners are not aware that taking a dog or cat to the veterinarian once a year is the same as a person seeing their doctor or dentist every 7 years. We recommend that **ALL** pets have wellness exams every 6 months to detect, treat or, ideally, prevent problems before they become life threatening.

What is included in a wellness exam?

Here is a list of some of the most important health screenings for cats and dogs. We may recommend additional tests depending on your pet's health history and other factors.

- In adult dogs (1-6 years of age)
 - Immunizations
 - Parasite check
 - Heartworm check
 - Dental health
 - Blood panel (CBC)
 - Chemistry panel
 - Urinalysis
- Additional exams for senior dogs (7+ years)
 - Osteoarthritis check
 - Chest radiograph
 - Thyroid check
- We recommend **wellness exams** (evaluation of all body systems i.e. general appearance, musculoskeletal, respiratory, digestive, ears, eyes, circulatory) and **fecal exams** (to check for intestinal parasites) every six months.

CANINE DISEASES

<p>Rabies: A fatal viral disease spread by the saliva of infected animals. This vaccine is required by CT state law.</p> <p>It can lead to: Temperment changes, inability to swallow and convulsions. Ultimately fatal. Can be transmitted to humans as well as animals.</p>	<p>Distemper: A viral disease that affects the respiratory and central nervous system.</p> <p>It can lead to: Fever, diarrhea, respiratory problems, and convulsions. Often fatal.</p>
<p>Hepatitis: A viral disease that affects the liver.</p> <p>It can lead to: Fever, lack of appetite, vomiting, intense thirst, abdominal tenderness, and hemorrhages.</p>	<p>Parainfluenza: A highly contagious, airborne virus that affects the upper respiratory system.</p> <p>It can lead to: Harsh, hacking cough, sneezing, nose/eye discharge. Can be fatal.</p>
<p>Parvovirus: Highly contagious viral disease that affects the intestines.</p> <p>It can lead to: Severe bloody diarrhea, vomiting and fever. Can be fatal.</p>	<p>Lyme: Bacterial infection that affects the joints, central nervous system, and kidneys.</p> <p>It can lead to: High fever, swollen lymph nodes, lameness and loss of appetite.</p>
<p>Bordetella: Highly contagious respiratory problem.</p> <p>It can lead to: Dry hacking cough sometimes followed by retching. A watery nasal discharge may be present.</p>	<p>Canine Influenza Vaccine: Very contagious virus that causes respiratory illness.</p> <p>It can lead to: Coughing, fever, nasal discharge lethargy, inappetance, pneumonia.</p>

About the Vaccines

Benefits of the vaccines: Vaccinations are the best way to protect against the diseases mentioned above. By vaccinating our pets, we are protecting our environment as well as our communities and also helping to reduce disease outbreaks and their effects in the broader animal population.

When should you start vaccinating your pet? Your puppy should get his first vaccination at 6-8 weeks of age. Booster vaccines are given every 3 -4 weeks until the puppy is at least 16 weeks of age. Your veterinarian will go over your puppies tailored vaccination schedule with you.

Are there risks associated with vaccinations? Like any other medicine, vaccines carry a small degree of risk, but this must be weighed against the risk of the disease.

- **Mild Problems:** Some animals have a systemic reaction, including a low-grade fever or muscle aches and pain. This reaction is more common in young and toy breed dogs and causes them to eat less and sleep more for 24-48 hours.
- **Severe Problems:** Rarely, dogs will have a more severe anaphylactic reaction characterized by hives, swelling of the face, vomiting or diarrhea. In extremely rare occasions, it may also lead to death.

What to do if there is a serious reaction:

- ❖ Call the office right away or bring your pet in immediately.
- ❖ Write down what happened and the time that it happened.
- ❖ If your pet has a reaction after hours, call the Veterinary Referral Emergency Center in Norwalk. 203-854-9960

How to Brush Your Dogs Teeth

Step 1- Select an appropriate time

Find a quiet, convenient time when you and your dog are both relaxed.

Step 2- Acquaint your dog with the process

For the first few sessions don't even use a toothbrush. Hold your dog the same as when you are cuddling her. Gently stroke the outside of her cheeks with your finger. After she becomes comfortable with that, place a dab of toothpaste on your finger and let her taste it. We usually suggest starting with C.E.T. poultry flavored toothpaste because pets like the taste.

Step 3- Introduce the Toothbrush

Place a small amount of toothpaste on the brush. In a slow circular motion, brush one or two teeth and the adjoining gum line. The purpose of this step is to get your dog accustomed to the feel of the brush.

Step 4- Begin Brushing

Over the next several days, gradually increase the number of teeth brushed. It is important to eventually brush the rear teeth where plaque and tartar have a greater tendency to accumulate. Go slowly and gently. Stop brushing when you decide to stop, before the dog begins to fuss. If she learns to dislike the procedure and finds out that more fussing makes you stop quicker, then this brushing business is going to get harder, not easier.

Make tooth brushing a pleasurable experience

Proceed slowly and gently. Stop each session while it is still fun and lavishly praise your dog afterwards. She will soon start looking forward to tooth brushing and it will become a pleasant activity for both of you.

See the selection of dental health products at
Fuzzytummy.com

Consistency in the Family

Information provided by First Steps with Puppies and Kittens: A Practice-Team Approach to Behavior by Linda White, Edited by Evelyn Crawford, Veterinary Assistant and Reviewed by Dr. Diana Chang, VMD, South Wilton Veterinary Group

It is important for your entire family to work as a team to successfully train your new pet. Your puppy/kitten will need to learn the meaning of your words, the rules in your home, and your expectations of him or her. You will confuse your puppy/kitten if words, rules, and expectations are inconsistent from one family member to another.

Children can be great little trainers. It is recommended they be at least three years of age to help with training. Children should be supervised during training sessions. Pets and children should never be left alone unsupervised.

Since puppies do like to chew and kittens like to sharpen their claws, discuss these natural behaviors of puppies/kittens with your children before their favorite toys are chewed, clothing is ruined, and various other problems occur. Let your children know that cruelty (actions such as shocking, hitting, shaking, pulling ears, pulling tails, grabbing, or rubbing the pet's nose in feces) will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Many times children don't even realize that what they are doing is cruel to the animal. In addition to children, babies and toddlers should never be left alone with your pet or even with your most trusted adult dog, unsupervised.

Puppies and kittens have some basic needs—physically, mentally, and emotionally. They need to eat on a regular schedule (consult your veterinarian) and require access to clean, fresh water. Puppies need to relieve themselves frequently as well as nap many times throughout the day. Playtime, rest, and exercise are all important to young dogs or cats.

Puppies and kittens should have a safe, comfortable place to go when they are not being supervised. Ideally, puppies/kittens should be socialized a few minutes each day, and they should be trained for 5 to 10 minutes at a time. This time can be gradually increased as the pet gets older. Each training session should remain short to make it easy for the puppy/kitten to pay attention, but more sessions can be added throughout the day.

To care for your pet and to maintain consistency while training, develop an action plan for your family. Adults should be actively involved in supervising the following activities. Consider these questions when developing your plan:

- Who will feed the puppy/kitten and when?
- Who will keep the water bowl clean and filled with fresh water?
- Who will be in charge of the puppy's/kitten's bedding to make sure it is clean?
- What training techniques will you use for housetraining? Crate training? Litter training?
- Who will be in charge of training the puppy/kitten in these areas?
- Who will socialize the puppy/kitten to different people, places, and things? How often and when?
- Who will play with the puppy/kitten? How often and when?
- Who will take the puppy for a walk? How often and when?
- Who will brush the puppy/kitten? How often and when?
- Who will trim the puppy's/kitten's nails?
- Who will brush the puppy's/kitten's teeth? How often and when?
- Who will supervise the puppy when not in his/her crate? How long and when?

Develop a chart outlining everyone's duties. Have each family member check off their chores as they are accomplished daily and continue this for a three-month period.

Give your puppy or kitten room to make mistakes. Being overly demanding and short tempered can have long term negative consequences on the behavior and enjoyment of your pet over its lifetime.

Always be consistent. If your pet is not allowed to do something today by one person and then allowed to do the same thing tomorrow with someone else, the pet will become confused with the mixed signals. This can even

happen with the same person from one day to the next! Mixed signals can confuse your pet and lengthen the time it takes for puppies and kittens to learn what is right, wrong, acceptable, and not acceptable.

Puppies and kittens can express their confusion by being overly excited, fearful, shy, timid, or aggressive. In many cases, you may see a combination of behavior problems occurring.

This does not have to happen. Your pet is constantly learning, and every waking hour to them is a learning experience. With time, patience, and training consistency, your pet will become a successful member of your family. End all training sessions on a positive note. If the puppy/kitten is having difficulty learning a new cue, stop before you both get bored or frustrated and ask the pet to do something he/she is very good at, such as asking him to sit. Mark and reward this behavior and end the training session.

Families that work together as a team can be great trainers. Keep the same message every time (be consistent). If more than one family member is training, all family members should train the exact same way. Introduce variations into your training (different locations, different people, and distractions) gradually.

It does not matter what you are trying to teach your pet, just be consistent. If you are training a puppy to do his business outside, then take the puppy out the same door every time. If you want your puppy to be quiet while in his/her crate, don't open the door to the crate when the puppy is barking to be let out. If you do not want your kitten scratching or biting at your hands, never use your hands to play with your kitten. Use an appropriate cat toy instead. Reward the behaviors you want in a consistent manner.

Some people get upset with an animal because they think the puppy/kitten knows what they want. They call their pet hardheaded, or stubborn, or they say their pet has selective hearing. This can happen when you think the pet knows what the word "sit" means. You taught *sit* in the kitchen to receive meals, and now you are outside and the puppy/kitten just will not listen to you. It is not because the puppy/kitten did not hear you, nor does the pet have selective hearing. It is because your puppy/kitten really does not know what "sit" means outside.

Dogs and cats do not generalize very well—they learn in context. That means the puppy/kitten has to be taught *sit* in many different places for the first few times, and if possible with different family members. Once he/she understands *sit* in various places with different people, the puppy/kitten now understands that "sit" means put its rear end on the floor whenever it hears that word.



Training Principles

Information provided by First Steps with Puppies and Kittens: A Practice-Team Approach to Behavior by Linda White, Edited by Evelyn Crawford, Veterinary Assistant and Reviewed by Dr. Diana Chang, VMD, South Wilton Veterinary Group

What you allow today, your puppy/kitten will try again tomorrow. In many cases, this will be a good thing.

To the same effect, what you ignore today, your pet will learn to stop doing in the future. Your pet will try the same behavior many times until he/she realizes that the behavior is not going to be rewarded. When the animal makes that connection, the behavior will stop. Puppies, kittens, and children are always testing their boundaries.

Here are two simple rules to follow as your pet is learning the do's and do not's about his/her new home:

- Behaviors that are rewarded will increase in frequency, intensity, and duration.
- Behaviors that are ignored (not rewarded) will diminish in time, frequency, and duration.

If you like a behavior your puppy or kitten is exhibiting, give it a name and then mark and reward it. If you do not like the behavior the pet is displaying, walk away, look away, isolate him, or ignore him; do not scold, reason, or talk to him. Just ignore him when possible and walk away. This will ensure he is not rewarded for poor behavior, positively or negatively. However, do not ignore him or walk away if he is doing something that could hurt him or someone else.

The most important thing your puppy wants is your attention. Kittens are a bit more aloof, but they still enjoy getting attention. As far as your pet is concerned, whether you are scolding, pushing, pulling, or yelling, it is still attention. When you pay attention to your pet with words, pets, toys, or treats, he/she will want to perform more of those behaviors because he/she gets your attention. Making a short, sharp sound with a can or plastic bottle with coins in it, clapping your hands together, or a loud word such as "off" will interrupt the pet's behavior. When the puppy/kitten stops the inappropriate behavior, remember to mark and reward him.

You will want to make some decisions in regard to the training methods everyone in your household will use. Harsh corrections are no longer considered productive when training animals. Besides, your new family member deserves more respect than that.

For any type of training to be successful, everyone must use the same training methods. When different family members use their own style while training, the pet will only get confused and you will be setting your pet up for failure.

Although done differently, every puppy and kitten needs and deserves appropriate playtime and an opportunity to burn off excess energy every day. People who give their animals the exercise and playtime they so desperately need while young will find training will go much faster and easier than for animals who do not receive these opportunities.

Puppies and kittens who receive consistent guidelines and daily opportunities for exercise and play will become wonderful family members. Training, patience, consistency, and love are the keys. Consider your baby pet your newest savings account. What you put in today, you will get back in the future with interest (a well-behaved and trained pet for perhaps the next 10, 15, or 20 years).

Marking the Correct Behavior

Like most animals, one of the ways your dog learns is by associating things that happen at the same time. For reward-based training to work, the reward must be given as soon as the desired behavior is offered. This should happen within a half second from when the puppy offers the desired behavior. This is not always possible, however, unless your puppy is right by your side. To get around this problem, you can create a temporary substitute for the reward that becomes associated with the concept that a reward will come shortly. This learning process is called associative or classical conditioning. The temporary reward substitutes are called a mark (or a bridge).

A mark can be any word or other type of signal, just as long as it is used consistently. For example, you could use the word "yes" or a click from a clicker as a mark. You may choose to use another word, but it must always be the same word. In time, your puppy/kitten will begin to associate that something good is going to happen when he/she hears the word "yes," the click from the clicker, or whatever other word you have decided to constantly use.

Timing and consistency in all training are very important. The mark should happen the moment the desired behavior happens. It is important to follow up the mark quickly with the reinforcement reward (treat, pet, or play).

Turning Lures into Rewards

A lure is something you use to guide your pet into a behavior. A reward is something your pet receives after he/she offers a behavior. The most commonly used lures and rewards are food treats, although toys can be effective.

The lure is used to coax an animal into a behavior you want him/her to do. It physically guides the animal into the desired position, such as a *sit* or a *down*. You can use a lure to entice your pet to *come* when he/she is called by showing him/her the treat.

A reward just seems to “magically” appear when the pet offers a desired behavior. This differs from a lure in that your animal may anticipate a reward, but does not know for sure if there is one or when it will appear. If you have a visible reward in your hand, he will learn to offer the desired behavior only when you have the reward in your hand. In some situations, rewards may be visible, but they are not used as lures. A perfect example would be playing fetch with a dog. The dog sits, and then you throw the ball.

At first the reward may be food treats, as most puppies and kittens are motivated by food; however, the reward can be play, a favorite toy, or an ear scratch. Whatever motivates your animal most will work as a reward. Rewards work only if the reward being used is important to the animal. You will want to take some time to learn what motivates your pet.

When training your animal, you must determine what he/she loves and likes. Training treats are not meant to be meals. Always use tiny pieces of food so that your puppy/kitten does not fill up on them. Training treats should be low-fat and may include small, healthy commercial treats or tiny pieces of cheese, liver, chicken, fish, chicken hot dogs, or beef. Training toys for puppies to be used as rewards can be squeaky toys, tennis balls, a Frisbee, or any toy your puppy really enjoys. Training toys for kittens can be dancing feathers or tassels, catnip, a soft mouse, or other animated objects.

Offering your pet his/her normal mealtime kibble is okay if you are asking for an easy behavior without distractions. In many cases, though, kibble will not be enough to motivate your pet if there are distractions present.

Once your animal understands the cue you are requesting, treats should be used intermittently and unpredictably. One time you may reward with one tiny treat, another time two, then you may give an ear scratch or you may choose to use a favorite toy as the reward. The most important thing you can do is to keep your animal guessing.

When your pet goes from the lure to the reward for the first time or two, it is time to introduce him/her to a jackpot. A jackpot is a super-reward for doing something outstanding, such as many treats given for one behavior. For example, when your animal figures out that the cue *sit* means “butt on floor” without being lured into the position with a treat, that is a big accomplishment, and your pet deserves a big reward. Instead of one or two little treats, give him/her a handful of treats, such as five or six treats, one after the other, until your pet has received all of them.

Sometimes people get confused when training with food rewards. Their concern is that if the animal does not see the reward, they will not give the desired behavior. This is true only when you forget to turn the lure into a reward. See the following two examples.

Example: Using a Lure

Say you want to train your animal to *sit* on cue. Show your pet the lure/treat in your hand while he/she is standing.

Place your hand with the treat in it right above his nose and slowly move your hand with the treat in it over his head to a position just a hair above his nose. As you slowly move over the nose toward his head, his head will tilt upward to follow the treat until the only way he can keep an eye on that tasty treat is to put his butt on the floor. You have just lured him/her into a *sit*. Once the pet sits, mark (a word like “yes” or a click from your clicker) and reward him/her for giving you the behavior you requested.

Example: Combining Lures and Rewards to Train a Common Behavior

As in the example above, use a lure to begin training the *sit* command. You will want to begin associating a mark with the reinforcement (treat). When the animal’s butt hits the floor, mark the behavior (sitting) with a word such as “yes” or use a clicker, if you prefer. Once you have marked the desired behavior, quickly give the animal the treat. Repeat this exercise 15 to 20 times over three or four days.

Once the animal is performing the intended behavior consistently, it is time to add the word “sit.” The reason you wait to introduce the verbal cue is because he/she knows what is expected (sitting). Now is the time to associate a cue with the behavior. When you lure the pet into the behavior, say the word “sit” the second the animal’s butt touches the floor. As soon as the behavior is completed, mark and reward your pet. Repeat this

exercise seven or eight times a day (for 10-15 seconds) over the next couple of days, or until you are sure your pet is getting the idea; then it is time to replace the lure with a reward.

Keep the treat you are using as a reward out of the animal's sight this time, but have it available quickly when you get the correct behavior. Using your hand the same way (but without a treat), give your pet the verbal cue "sit" and wait for him/her to think through your request. Do not repeat the cue. Give your pet a few seconds to figure out your request. The second his/her butt hits the ground, mark the behavior with a "yes" or click and quickly give the pet a jackpot (many tiny rewards) to reward a great job.

Now that your pet understands the *sit* cue, you no longer need to use the food as a lure to coax him/her into sitting from standing. Instead, you give the verbal cue "sit," butt hits floor, and you immediately mark that *sit* with "yes" or a click from your clicker to let the animal know he/she has done exactly what you wanted, and then you reinforce the correct behavior with a treat as a reward. The reward reinforces the desired behavior.

Rewards Schedule

When you begin training your puppy/kitten, one very important piece of the training is a reward schedule. A reward schedule refers to how many and how often your pet will receive treats from you. The concept of a reward schedule is to keep your animal interested and guessing about what he/she may or may not receive when offering the requested behavior.

This schedule will start off very basic and then vary as the requested tasks become more difficult, other family members begin to train him, and distractions are added to the training schedule.

Good trainers are quick, both in marking the correct behavior and rewarding it. They are generous, yet unpredictable, with their rewards. They are unpredictable by changing the number, type, and even how often they use different rewards. This scheme will keep your animal guessing, make it fun, and keep your pet's attention focused on you.



Training Methods

Information provided by First Steps with Puppies and Kittens: A Practice-Team Approach to Behavior by Linda White, Edited by Evelyn Crawford, Veterinary Assistant and Reviewed by Dr. Diana Chang, VMD, South Wilton Veterinary Group

There are four basic training methods often used in training animals. Decide which method you want to use with your newest family member. Here is a little information about each method to help you decide.

Verbal Training

Verbal training consists of saying a word such as “yes” whenever your puppy/kitten does what is expected. Coupled with a reward, this reinforces the behavior that you want. Perfect timing is not necessary since the animal can also pick up on the emotional content of the mark (“yes” in a happy voice). For example, if you give the cue “sit,” when the puppy’s rear hits the floor, you mark it with “yes” (happy voice) and give the puppy a reward.

Target Training

Target training involves an object that your pet learns to touch with his/her nose. Once the pet touches the target from a short distance, he/she can learn to touch the target from a greater distance.

This method of training is great for getting a puppy or kitten from point A to point B without pulling or having to drag the pet into a position. Targeting can also be helpful in training a pet to do tricks.

To begin target training for larger breeds of dogs, use the palm of your hand as a target. Place the palm of your hand in front of the puppy’s nose. Say the word “target,” and wait for your puppy to lean forward and touch your hand. The second your puppy leans forward and touches the palm of your open hand with his/her nose, mark the behavior (the puppy touched your hand) and give him/her a treat to reinforce the behavior the puppy just gave you.

With smaller-breed puppies and kittens, you can use a targeting stick or an old wooden spoon. Take a piece of colored tape or use a marker and draw a line around the spot on the stick or spoon you want the pet to touch. Place the stick or spoon an inch in front of the animal’s nose. The second the puppy/kitten touches the targeting stick or spoon, mark and reward your pet.

If your pet does not reach out to touch the object, try rubbing a little cheese, chicken, or fish on your hand or on the targeting stick. This will usually get the animal’s attention. Repeat the above exercise with the new smell on the object.

Once your animal consistently touches the object when you say the word “target,” extend the distance between the animal and the target or your hand. Remember, every time you ask the pet to *target*, it is your job to mark and reward when he/she demonstrates the desired behavior.

Continue to gradually extend the distance until the puppy/kitten will walk around in a circle or across the room to *target* the targeting stick or your hand when asked to do so.

Clicker Training

Clicker training is similar to using verbal training, but instead of using your voice, you use your clicker. A small click from the clicker can be used to mark a requested behavior or to form more complicated behaviors. Timing in this method is extremely important. It requires the trainer (you) to click the moment the animal performs the desired behavior; for example, the second your puppy’s rear hits the floor when training the *sit* cue.

Before training your animal, train yourself to properly administer the timing of the clicker. Hold a tennis ball in one hand and the clicker in the other. Bounce the tennis ball, and the moment the ball hits the floor, click. Your click should be made at the exact moment the ball hits the floor. You may need to practice a few times to get your timing correct.

If you think you and your pet would enjoy clicker training, then by all means, give it a try. Clickers are available at most pet stores.

Hand Signals

Hand signals can be used as a replacement for verbal training. It is most commonly used when training a deaf animal, when training from a distance, in competitions, or just for fun. There are many different hand signals you can use in training. What they look like can be left up to you unless you are planning to compete in an obedience ring with your pet.

Training Sessions

Information provided by **First Steps with Puppies and Kittens: A Practice-Team Approach to Behavior** by Linda White, Edited by Evelyn Crawford, Veterinary Assistant and Reviewed by Dr. Diana Chang, VMD, South Wilton Veterinary Group

Training sessions should be short, lasting only five to ten minutes. By keeping the lessons short, you will be able to work with your young puppy's/kitten's attention span and fit the training into your hectic schedule. Later, as your puppy/kitten gets older and the animal's attention span increases, you can increase the length of the training sessions.

That does not mean, however, that a one-hour puppy or kitten class is not a great idea. In fact, these classes are a wonderful learning experience for both you and your pet. When you start a training session, it is important to be relaxed and pay attention to your animal. Begin training in a quiet place where there are no distractions. As the animal becomes successful in learning a new behavior and all family members can get the pet to perform the desired behaviors on cue, then you can begin adding distractions.

Distractions

As distractions are added to the training sessions, reward levels should be increased based on the level of distraction. For example, suppose you ask your puppy to *stay* and introduce a ball on the floor. At first, just ask your puppy to *stay* for a few seconds, then reward and release him/her from the cue. Instead of a regular treat, this time your pet might get a tiny piece of chicken! Wow, that really makes staying still worthwhile because he/she just got a great reward!

When training *stay*, gradually increase the length of time you ask the pet to *stay*. Once he/she has learned to *stay* for 60 seconds, you can introduce a distraction. This could be a ball rolling on the floor in front of the pet or an animated toy on the floor nearby. If the pet holds the *stay*, give him/her two, three, or four tiny pieces of meat or fish and then release him/her from the *stay*. This way, as cues become more difficult, the animal is willing to do its best in hopes of receiving that great reward for its efforts.

Treats

In the beginning, every time your puppy/kitten performs a desired behavior, reward him/her with a food treat. In order to give the animal a food treat that he/she will consider a reward, you need to understand what foods your pet likes and is willing to work for. Different treats will obviously have different values for your animal. Cooked chicken, chicken hot dogs, freeze-dried shrimp, or liver would be a better motivator than normal kibble. Learn what motivates your pet. As a general rule, you would use "normal" rewards for normal performance and save the "high-value" rewards for higher levels of performance. Mix them up a little from time to time so that your puppy/kitten never quite knows what reward he/she may get.

You can try offering a piece of kibble as a reward if the pet is hungry, there are no distractions, and you are asking for an easy cue such as *sit*. If kibble does not interest your pet, you may want to find another treat he/she is willing to work for. It may also be helpful to schedule your training sessions before mealtime, so you will know the pet is hungry.

Today, there are many healthy treats on the market to choose from. Look for treats that can be broken into many small pieces and that do not crumble on the floor when you break them up. When you drop tiny crumbs on the floor while breaking up the treats, your pet especially will be more interested in hoovering (playing vacuum) than paying attention to you. Test a variety of treats until you find the ones that motivate your animal. Only use healthy, low-fat treats and never use candy as a reward for your puppy/kitten because many kinds of candy are poisonous to pets.

Once your puppy/kitten is capable of performing a particular behavior on cue, you can start varying the rewards. You may offer one treat when your pet gives you the desired behavior, and the next time offer two. Or, you may give your pet one treat the first time he/she gives you a requested behavior and then an ear scratch the second time. Remember to keep the treats out of sight once you are past the luring stage in training a desired behavior.

Involving the Family

In order for your puppy/kitten to respond to all family members, everyone should take turns in training. This is a great time to introduce different levels of rewards, meaning treats that your animal places a higher value on. For example, an adult who spends a good amount of time with the pet might get by with just pieces of kibble as rewards. A three-year-old might need more interesting treats such as a small piece of chicken or shrimp to help the animal pay attention, so the child can see positive results from his/her training sessions. At the same time, you want the puppy/kitten to stay focused on the child.

Children should train the puppy/kitten the same way adults do, with short lessons, varying the rewards, and always ending a session on a positive note. Children should never be left unsupervised with a puppy/kitten or even an adult animal. This is when so many accidents happen. Constant supervision will ensure the safety of both the child and the animal.

Evolving

As your puppy/kitten's training request becomes more challenging, more interesting rewards should be offered. As time goes on and the animal becomes more proficient at accomplishing his/her tasks, rewards should become more varied and valuable. You can increase or decrease those rewards, depending on the puppy's/kitten's consistency and response time.

Remember to always end a training session on a positive note. If you are asking for a new behavior from your puppy/kitten and he/she is having a difficult time with it, go back to something your pet understands so you both can be successful before you end your session. Make your training sessions *fun* for both you and your animal. Your pet will learn to look forward to each session, and you can both continue to learn and have great fun in the process.



Housetraining

Information provided by First Steps with Puppies and Kittens: A Practice-Team Approach to Behavior by Linda White, Edited by Evelyn Crawford, Veterinary Assistant and Reviewed by Dr. Diana Chang, VMD, South Wilton Veterinary Group

The following are the keys to successfully housetraining your puppy:

- Manage your puppy's environment.
- Keep the puppy on a feeding schedule.
- Pick up any food the puppy does not consume after 15 minutes.
- Always reward the correct behavior (eliminating) when and where it happens.
- Always be consistent.

Basic Rules for Housetraining

Introduce a cue (word or words) to him when taking him to the designated elimination area, especially if the puppy is being trained to go outside.

Do not take the puppy for a walk to eliminate. Instead, take him to a designated place to eliminate and give him about six feet of leash to walk around while you are standing somewhat still. Once he has done his business, mark the elimination that has occurred in the proper area and reward him with a treat or take him for a walk as a reward. If you take the puppy for a walk to eliminate, the puppy can easily become distracted with all the different smells and sounds, and he may wait until he comes back inside the house to eliminate.

The other reason a walk is not recommended for elimination is because puppies quickly learn that once they eliminate the walk is over. They will learn to hold it as long as possible so the walk does not end. As the puppy's ability to hold it grows, walks will take longer and longer while waiting for the puppy to eliminate. There will be times when you do not have the time to continue the walk, you will come back inside the house, and he will eliminate on the floor.

Bring a treat with you when you take him outside to eliminate. Offering special treats just for proper elimination can make the training easier. The only time your puppy gets this really great treat is when he eliminates in the designated area. The second he is done with his business, mark the elimination with a word like "yes" or use a click from a clicker, then reward the behavior with the treat. After rewarding the initial elimination, stand still and wait if you think the puppy needs to eliminate again. Once he is finished eliminating the second or third time, mark and reward the proper elimination each time he eliminates. However, do not get too excited when marking the elimination behavior or you might distract him. A verbal "Yes, good boy" in a soft voice will suffice. Avoid giving him the treat inside when he returns from outside. The puppy will want to return inside too quickly to get his treat. He will relate the treat to coming back into the house and not the elimination he just did. Then, instead of completely finishing all his business outside, he will want to go back inside to get his treat.

Manage Your Puppy's Environment

You must constantly watch your puppy when he is not confined to a room, space, or crate. Accidents happen when you try to watch the puppy and cook, watch TV, do homework, or talk on the phone. Young puppies require constant supervision to understand what is expected of them with their new families and to learn what the rules are.

When you are distracted, you may miss your puppy's warning signals that tell you he is looking for a place to eliminate. Some puppies will sniff the ground, others will circle, some will raise their tails higher than normal, some will sit by the door leading outside, and others will walk quickly and suddenly squat. Every puppy has his or her own style and signals. It is your job to learn your puppy's signals.

When accidents occur—and they will—do not scold your puppy. This is very important! Scolding will cause many puppies to hide when relieving themselves so they do not get in trouble. This is why many new puppy parents end up finding surprises behind the couch or under tables. Elimination mistakes are usually the result of the puppy not being properly supervised. Paying close attention to him when he is not confined to his space will help prevent accidents from happening in the first place.

When an accident is in progress, make a short sound such as clapping your hands together to distract your puppy. Quickly scoop him up, if physically possible, and take him to the proper elimination area either outside or a wee wee pad inside to finish his business.

Stay with him until he is finished, and remember to mark and reward him with a treat or walk for eliminating in the designated area. Clean the accident area with a product that will eliminate the odor completely. Do not use any products that contain ammonia, however. They only encourage future eliminations in the same place. Use products that are made specifically for this purpose.

Remember to put your puppy in his crate or confined area when you cannot manage his environment. Most puppies want to keep their sleeping area clean and will try to hold it as long as possible before eliminating there.

Puppies need to eliminate on a fairly regular schedule: when they first get up in the morning, after a nap, after play periods, 5 to 10 minutes after drinking, 5 to 20 minutes after eating, before they go into their crates, when they first come out of their crates, and before going to bed at night. During waking hours, puppies may need to eliminate every hour or so.

Small dogs can sometimes be a little more difficult to houstrain. They are very close to the ground, and you may not realize when your puppy is actually eliminating until it is too late. Keep a close eye on little ones to help them learn what you expect from them. Manage their environment carefully.

Teaching Your Puppy to Communicate

If you are taking your puppy outside to eliminate, it will be important to teach him how to tell you he needs to go outside in the future. You can begin working on this now by teaching your puppy to *speak* (bark) to let you know he needs to go outside.

Offer your puppy a special treat and tease him with the treat until he barks. The second the puppy barks, say the word “speak,” then mark the behavior by using a word like “yes” or a click from a clicker. Reward him with the treat for barking. Repeat this exercise several times until he will *speak* on cue.

After he has learned to *speak* on cue, every time you take him outside, ask him if he wants to go outside, and give the cue “speak.” Mark the behavior and reward him with a tiny treat, then take him outside to his designated elimination area. In time, he will learn to tell you he needs to go outside by barking.

As a general guide, you can confine an 8-week-old puppy for three hours, a 12-week-old puppy four hours, and a 16-week-old puppy for five hours before he will usually need to eliminate. If he does not get a chance to relieve himself within that time frame, you may end up with him soiling his area. Do not get upset with him if this occurs; he simply could not hold it any longer. This was the result of human error, not your puppy’s mistake. If he is sleeping, you do not have to wake him up to go outside. Wait for him to wake up on his own before you take him to his designated elimination area. Remember to take the treats with you when you go outside so you will be ready to mark and reward him for eliminating in the proper area. Houstraining takes time, patience, and consistency.

Houstraining Troubleshooting

Suppose it has been more than a month since your puppy had an accident in the house. You think your job is complete and your puppy is now houstrained. Then, more houstraining accidents start to appear. What happened?

- The puppy may have a medical problem, such as an infection, and needs to be seen by his veterinarian.
- You forgot to teach him a cue that lets the puppy alert you to the fact he needs to go outside. If this happened, go back to the basics and introduce the cue (word or words). Cues such as “Outside,” “Let’s go outside,” “Do you want to go outside?” are appropriate. You can use any word or words you choose, just be sure to use the same word or words consistently. Your puppy can learn to respond by getting excited, barking, or sitting.
- You forgot to teach your puppy to communicate with you when he needs to go outside. This can be accomplished by teaching him to *speak* (bark), *sit*, or even ring a bell that is hung on the door you use when taking him outside. You may also use a bell placed on the floor for your puppy to ring to let you know he needs to go out.
- You take your puppy for a walk, and he comes in the house to eliminate. Since puppies are constantly learning, the puppy now realizes that once he eliminates, the enjoyable walk comes to an end. As a result, he holds it as long as possible. You run out of time to keep walking him and come back inside. The walk has ended and the puppy forgot to eliminate while outside or did not want to because he didn’t want the walk to be over. Either way, the puppy eliminates in the house. If this has happened, return to the basics and take the puppy to the designated elimination area. Stand there for a few minutes and wait until he eliminates. If he does, mark and reward him. If he does not eliminate in the elimination area, take him back inside and confine him to either his crate or a designated area. Wait 10 to 15 minutes and repeat the exercise. This must be continued until he finally eliminates outside. Mark the behavior (elimination) with “Yes” or a click from a clicker. Now take your puppy for a nice walk as the reward. You

will need to repeat this exercise every time he needs to go out over the next several days until he understands that walks happen only after the elimination occurs.

- Your puppy does half of his eliminating outside and the other half of his eliminating inside. This can happen when treats are given to the puppy inside the house instead of outside where the elimination occurred. The puppy thinks he is being rewarded for coming into the house and, in turn, he hurries to get back into the house for his reward. Your puppy cannot relate the reward to the desired behavior when the behavior is performed at one location and the reward is given at another location. Rewarding your puppy in a different location only confuses him. To address this issue, take the treats outside with you and be ready to mark and reward him as soon as the elimination occurs. If you know he is not done, be patient. Stand there and wait for the next elimination. Once it has occurred, mark and reward immediately at the location of the elimination. After a few days, he will connect the wonderful treats with eliminating and will want to do as much eliminating as possible while outside to receive the rewards.

If you are still having problems with your puppy soiling in the house, please contact our office. Your puppy may be dealing with a health issue.



Crate Training

Information provided by First Steps with Puppies and Kittens: A Practice-Team Approach to Behavior by Linda White, Edited by Evelyn Crawford, Veterinary Assistant and Reviewed by Dr. Diana Chang, VMD, South Wilton Veterinary Group

Crate training is an extremely valuable tool for you and your puppy. You will reap great rewards throughout his life by training your puppy to be comfortable in his crate. The crate will become his bedroom. It is a haven where he can get away from energetic children and company. It is a place where he can rest and be left alone. Crate training is the easiest way to control your puppy's environment, and it is helpful in housetraining.

Placing your puppy in his crate is not the same as leaving him in a laundry room or kitchen. Those areas are used and shared by the family, and your puppy needs and deserves his own space.

Children should be told to leave the puppy alone when he is in his crate. More important, children should never be allowed to go into the puppy's crate.

Your puppy's age can be used as a general rule to determine how long the puppy can stay in his crate before needing to relieve himself. This information holds true while the puppy is awake or active. Using your puppy's age in months and adding 1 will give you the number of hours he can be kept in the crate before needing to relieve himself. For example, a two-month-old puppy should not be left in his crate for more than three hours, and a three-month old puppy should not be left in his crate for more than four hours. This rule holds until the puppy is about six months old, when the puppy can be left in his crate for six to eight hours before he will need to relieve himself. It is not appropriate for any dog to be left in a crate for more than 10 hours a day. Your puppy needs and deserves exercise time, playtime, socialization time, training time, and the opportunity to interact with his new family. A crate is a training tool and should be used as such until the puppy understands all the rules in his new home. As he gets older, unsupervised time alone outside of his crate should be increased gradually.

A very important thing to remember is to never let your puppy out of the crate when he is barking or crying. If you do, you have allowed the puppy to train you! If the puppy has been in his crate for a while and starts to bark, he may need to go outside to relieve himself. Wait a few seconds until he stops barking or whining and then quickly open the door and take him to the designated elimination area. Immediately mark and reward him for eliminating in the proper location.

Begin crate training by setting up the crate in a room where the family is usually present. Place a dog bed or soft blanket inside the crate for the puppy. Leave the door open for a few hours and give him time to get comfortable with the look and smell of the crate.

Once he appears to lose interest in the crate, throw a few tasty treats inside the entrance of the crate to lure him into it. Tie the crate door securely open to ensure the door does not close accidentally and frighten him in the process of learning to be comfortable with his new crate.

If your puppy has not eaten the treats within 15 minutes or so, pick them up. At your next scheduled feeding, place your puppy's food bowl inside the entrance of the crate. Walk away from the crate and watch him.

If your puppy is hungry, he should approach the crate to eat. If after 15 minutes he still refuses to go near it, take the food out of the crate and place it two or three inches outside of the crate door.

Again, wait about 15 minutes to see if he will eat the food. If he will not go near it, move the bowl a foot or so away from the crate and repeat the exercise. Keep doing this until you find a place where he is comfortable enough to eat.

Once he is comfortable eating where the bowl or treats are placed, gradually move the bowl or treats closer to the crate and eventually into the crate and toward the back. Always leave the door tied open so the puppy can go in and out of the crate by himself during this phase.

Next, place a toy with treats inside it in the crate. This time when your puppy goes into the crate, close the door for just a few seconds. Then open the door and let your puppy out of the crate.

Repeat this exercise a few times a day, gradually increasing the length of time you keep the puppy in the crate with the door closed. Once he is comfortable being in the crate with the door closed for about 30 minutes, let him out of the crate. Remember to not open the door of the crate for your puppy when he is barking or crying. If you do, the puppy will learn that if he makes noise, he will be let out of the crate. This is not the lesson you want him to learn.

Most puppies love their crates. There are, however, some puppies who are very afraid of their crate and want nothing to do with it. Under these circumstances, it is better to find another method of confining a puppy than

it is to force him into a crate. Other confining options may include a utility room, a bathroom, an exercise pen, or a baby gate in the doorway of a small room. For small-breed dogs, perhaps a baby's playpen would do.

Many dogs from shelters and pet stores have been confined to crates for extended periods of time. These puppies may associate a crate with a negative experience and are often very concerned about being placed in a crate again.

Crate training has many rewards, including being able to leave your puppy alone without any damage to your belongings or accidents on the floor from improper elimination. This will speed up the housetraining process and provide your puppy with his own secure and comfortable bedroom while managing his environment.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FEEDING YOUR NEW PUPPY OR KITTEN

What should I feed my new puppy and kitten?

General guidelines to consider:

1. Select a food appropriate for the breed and life stage of your animal. For example, small breed puppy food (as opposed to large breed adult dog food) or kitten food (as opposed to adult cat food).
2. Select a food with quality control. AAFCO (Association of American Feed Control Officials) oversees the pet food industry. Make sure the food you select has a stamp of approval on the back of the bag. Check out www.aafco.org and acvn.org for more information.
3. Select a food that the puppy or kitten eats well and that does not cause digestive problems, such as vomiting or diarrhea.
4. Read the labels! Look for quality ingredients. Reading pet food labels is similar to reading human food labels. Look for meat as the primary ingredient without wheat, soy, or corn. For more information on interpreting pet food labels visit www.dogfoodproject.com or www.consumersearch.com/cat-food/review.
5. Look for a food with minimal processing, no dyes, preservatives, or chemicals.

Suggested Brands: EVO, BLUE BUFFALO, ORIGIN, WELLNESS, INNOVA, CALIFORNIA NATURAL, NEWMAN'S OWN

How much and how often should I feed my new puppy and kitten?

Puppies and kittens gain weight quickly on a weekly to biweekly basis due to growth spurts. As they grow, their caloric needs change. Every pet food contains a different caloric density. You, as the owner, need to adjust the amount of food eaten on a weekly to biweekly basis as your pet grows in order to meet your pet's changing needs. Please discuss optimal caloric requirements for your puppy or kitten with your veterinarian.

Since there is so much variation between each individual, even within the same species, learn to evaluate your pet's body condition. A body condition chart is enclosed to help guide you in the process (see below). While it is important to provide enough food for your young pet's caloric needs, be careful not to over feed puppies and kittens. Studies show pets that are overweight while young are typically overweight as adults.

We recommend feeding your puppy or kitten three times daily for the first few weeks. Make sure the puppy or kitten is eating and growing well and adjusting to the new household. Once the puppy or kitten is doing well, you may transition to a twice a day feeding schedule. Make food available for 15 to 30 minutes at meal times. After 30 minutes, remove the food until the next feeding time.

When do I need to change food choices for my new pet?

If you find a food that your pet eats well and does not cause gastrointestinal upset, do not change foods. Changing food can often result in gastrointestinal imbalances, such as vomiting and diarrhea, and encourage your pet to become picky with his/her food. **When you do need to change food, please transition gradually (over the course of a week) whenever possible.**

We recommend transitioning your puppy or kitten to an appropriate adult formula when they have reached at least 90% of their adult size and weight. Since there is so much variation between each individual within the same species, the transition will vary. Provided below is a general guide on when puppies and kittens reach this point:

- Kitten: 8-12 months of age
- Small breed puppy: 8-12 months of age
- Large breed puppy: 4-6 months of age
- Giant breed puppy: 4-6 months of age

Useful Websites:

www.petobesityprevention.com

www.aafco.org

www.acvn.org

www.dogfoodproject.com

www.consumersearch.com/cat-food/review

Recommended Resources

Finding A Good Trainer

Association of Pet Dog Trainers
Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers
International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants

www.apdt.com
www.ccpdt.com
www.iaabc.org

Books and Periodicals

Ian Dunbar

Sirius Puppy Training
Before and After Getting Your Puppy
Dr. Dunbar's Good Little Dog

Colleen Pelar

Living with Kids and Dogs Without Losing Your Mind

DVD's

Sarah Kalnajs

The Language of Dogs

Linda White

Puppy Smarts: a series of step-by-step basic training

Dog Training Tools

Buckle Collars

Martingale Collars

Head Halters

Leashes: 6-foot leashes in Nylon, Cotton, and Leather (strong, brawny dog)

Body Harnesses

Easy-Walk harnesses, www.gentleleader.com

Freedom harnesses, www.wayneheightower.com

Sense-ation harnesses, www.softouchconcepts.com

Food Delivery Toys: helps with chewing and stimulates the mind

Kong, Buster Cube, Buddy Ship, Squirrel Dude, Twist and Treat, and Busy Buddies



Internet Pharmacy Orders

Dear Valued Client,

Please take a moment to review the enclosed information we have received from our main drug and supply distributor, Merial. Merial manufactures Heartgard and Frontline products as well as many others that we use and prescribe on a daily basis.

We understand that internet purchases are convenient and sometimes less expensive, and we want to work with you to make your pet ownership experience as simple and as affordable as possible. We also want to warn you about possible counterfeit medications or improper storage techniques that are consistently being discovered within the internet pet medication market.

To avoid the confusion and risk all together, we can mail your pet's prescriptions to you for minimal shipping and handling fees.

If you would like to purchase prescriptions online, we will write you the prescription if medically necessary for your pet as long as you sign our Internet Pharmacy Waiver. We do not mean to inconvenience you; we just want to be sure that we have educated our clients of the risks that have been presented to us by our vendors, and we need to have proof of that on file in case of pharmacy error.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact us and discuss this further.

Thank you for taking the time to review this information.

Sincerely,

Doctors and Staff at South Wilton Veterinary Group

To Return Waivers:

Mail to 51 Danbury Road, Wilton, CT 06897

Fax to 203-834-9999/

Counterfeit Pet Products

You've heard of counterfeit money, but what about counterfeit flea and tick preventives? Fake versions of Frontline (a monthly spot-on flea and tick preventive) have started showing up in cleverly designed packages that appear identical to the real deal. But the product inside is not what you've paid for.

Using a counterfeit product could be a potential risk to pets, according to Joe Bailey, who's with pesticide programs for the Environmental Protection Agency.

Both Merial Ltd. And Bayer Corp., the manufacturers of Frontline and Advantage, respectively, have created places on their web sites to help consumers identify imposter packages. The EPA also has lots of info on its site, epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/petproduct.htm.

Better yet, you can avoid the risk of buying one of those sham products. Because both Merial and Bayer sell directly to veterinarians, there is very little chance of purchasing a counterfeit product through a vet. The bogus bug killers have shown up at retail stores, on web sites and through telephone order numbers.

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Contacts: Steve Dickinson
Merial Limited
(678) 638-3690
Steve.dickinson@merial.com

Cindy Apgar
Merial Limited
(678) 638-3690
condy.apgar@merial.com

Merial Assisting with US EPA Actions Announced Against Counterfeit FRONTLINE Packaging

Duluth, Ga., March 4, 2004 – Federal law enforcement authorities from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) today released the results of a multi-year investigation into illegal “counterfeiting” of packaging of Frontline® Plus and Frontline® products. Merial, which manufactures and markets Frontline® products, has assisted fully with this investigation, and in fact, instigated it by reporting the incidences of this illegal practice to the Agency. Merial is very pleased with this development, since the company is committed to ensuring that customers receive only Frontline® products in their approved packaging.

In announcing this action, the US EPA cited the potential for consumer confusion because of incorrect labeling in the counterfeit product packages. It should be noted that the products involved in the action by US EPA are in fact genuine Frontline® products. However, the counterfeiters have repackaged certain quantities of product destined for foreign markets in forged cartons, with potentially mislabeled dosages and incorrect labeling. These illegitimate product packages may not contain all the US EPA approved product information on dosing and safety instructions.

“Frontline products are safe and effective when used according to proper label instructions,” said Dr. Zachary Mills, DVM, Executive Director of Veterinary Services for Merial. “Merial stands behind the quality of all our products. A good safeguard to ensure the integrity of products such as these is to purchase them from a reputable source. The best way to be confident about the source of Frontline® products is to purchase them through your veterinarian.” Dr. Mills said.

“Veterinarians are in the best position to recommend proper flea and tick care for pets, because they can take into consideration such factors as the weight and health of the animal,” said Dr. Link Wellborn, DVM, President of the American Animal Hospital Association.

Consumers who have purchased FRONTLINE from a source other than a veterinarian and/or who have concerns regarding the product’s authenticity can go to www.frontline.com/epa and click through product images that will show how to identify authentic packaged product.

In general, there are some simple ways to visually identify authentic packaged product. Inside the box, the frontline product is contained in a foil blister pack that holds the individual product applicators. In the genuine product packaged for the US, this blister pack is labeled with instructions to use scissors to open the foil or to lift and remove plastic tab to expose the foil. Conversely, counterfeit packaged product contains no such instructions.

Visually, the back of the US packaging blister pack holding the product applicators is black and white; counterfeit packaging may contain orange colored bars on the back of the blister pack and may include foreign language such as the words “usage veterinaire”. To further identify the differences in packaging, pet owners are encouraged to visit www.frontline.com/epa.

Anyone with questions or concerns about the authenticity of their Frontline® product should return it to the place of purchase. For further information consumers may go to a special website at 22.frontline.com/epa, for product and packaging photographs and instructions, or call the Merial Consumer Response Center at 1-888-846-2340.

Merial is a world leading innovation-driven animal health company, providing a comprehensive range of products to enhance the health, well-being and performance of a wide range of animals. Merial employs around 6,000 people and operates in more than 150 countries worldwide. Its 2003 sales were in excess of \$1.8 billion. Merial is a joint venture between Merck & Co, Inc. and Aventis, S.A. For further information please see www.merial.com.

Counterfeit Pesticide Products for Dogs and Cats Found- Retailers Ordered to Stop Sales

Contact: David Deegan, 617-918-1017/deegan.dave@epa.gov

03/04/2004- EPA is acting to disrupt an effort to distribute counterfeit pet pesticides. The Agency has ordered pesticide distributors and retailers in a number of states to stop selling counterfeit pet pesticide products which falsely contain EPA registration numbers and labeling for the “Advantage” and “Frontline” brands of pesticides. “Advantage” and “Frontline” are trade names of widely available pesticides for control of fleas and ticks on cats and dogs.

The counterfeit pesticides appear to have been unlawfully imported and packaged in retail cartons which are designed to look similar to legitimately registered pesticides sold in the U.S. EPA’s investigation indicates that the counterfeit products have been sold to distributors and retailers throughout the country. The counterfeit products have outer retail cartons that are made to resemble EPA registered pesticides. Inside the cartons are applicators labeled and packaged for overseas markets. In some cases, the pesticide applicators may not have the proper child-resistant packaging or the accompanying instructional leaflet required by the Agency is missing. In addition, the consumer cannot be assured that the pesticide dosage is correct for the animal pictured on the retail carton. The counterfeit products may be different from legitimate Advantage and Frontline products in several ways. EPA has posted detailed information, including photos of legitimate products, at: <http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/petproduct.htm>.

Counterfeit products should be disposed of according to accepted procedures for other household chemicals. Many communities and municipalities have local resources to dispose of household chemicals, and consumers are encouraged to contact their local solid waste authority for more information of disposal programs for chemicals. Pet owners who are concerned their pet may be affected by counterfeit products should contact their veterinarian.

EPA regulate all pesticides used in the U.S. before a pesticide can be marketed in this country the agency performs a rigorous scientific review to ensure that use of the product is not likely to cause harmful effects on people, pets or the environment. Under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), EPA requires pesticide products to contain instruction for proper use, safety precautions to follow and directions for proper disposal of unused product and their containers. Legitimate Advantage and Frontline products that have been through EPA’s comprehensive review process and registered for use in the United States, and are not affected by this action. Because the counterfeit pesticides do not conform to established safeguards, the agency has issued “stop sale” orders on the counterfeit products in question. Extensive additional information is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/petproduct.htm>.

Merial Questions and answers Regarding EPA Announcement

1. What has the EPA announced?

Federal law enforcement authorities from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) today released the results of a multi-year investigation into illegal counterfeiting of packaging of FRONTLINE PLUS and FRONTLINE Top Spot flea and tick products for dogs and cats. US EPA has ordered retailers and distributors to stop selling counterfeit packaged Frontline products. Merial, which manufactures and markets Frontline products, has assisted fully with this investigation, and in fact, instigated it by reporting the initially discovered incidences of this illegal practice to the Agency.

In announcing this action, the US EPA cited the potential for consumer confusion because of incorrect labeling in the counterfeit product packages. It should be noted that the products involved in the action by US EPA are in fact genuine frontline products. However, the counterfeiters have repackaged certain quantities of product destined for foreign markets in forged carton, with potentially mislabeled dosages and incorrect labeling. These illegitimate product packages may not contain all the US EPA- approved product information on dosing and safety instructions.

2. Who will the announcement affect?

Since Merial only sells its products to veterinarians with veterinarian/client/patient relationships. Consumers who purchase FRONTLINE products from such veterinarians should not be concerned about the authenticity of the product.

This announcement addresses the issue of counterfeit packaging and retail outlets who are selling illegal counterfeit packaged FRONTLINE product. The US EPA cited the potential for consumer confusion because of incorrect labeling in the counterfeit product packages. Consumers who have purchased FRONTLINE products through sources other than a veterinarian and/or have concerns regarding the product's authenticity can go to www.frontline.com/epa and click through product images that will show how to identify authentic packaged product.

3. How can I be confident the FRONTLINE product I purchased is authentic?

The best way to be confident about the source of FRONTLINE products is to purchase them through your veterinarian. In fact, it is our policy to sell our small animal pet products only where a veterinarian/client/patient relationship exists.

4. What are the potential concerns of counterfeit-packaged FRONTLINE products?

Merial's top priority is the quality of our products and the health and safety of pets. The efforts behind today's announcement help ensure that the quality of our products remain unquestioned. We are concerned that:

- The label may not have the proper usage statements.
- The label may not reflect the proper dosage and weight requirements of the pet.
- The label may have confusing instructions regarding the dosage and weight of the pet because it uses the metric system rather than conventional US measurements.
- The label may not reflect Merial's special toll-free number in place for customers to call with questions about FRONTLINE products.

5. What should I look for on the package to ensure it is authentic FRONTLINE product?

In general, there are some simple ways to visually identify authentic packaged product. Inside the box, the FRONTLINE product is contained in a foil blister pack that holds the individual product applicators. In the genuine product packaged for the US, this blister pack is labeled with instructions to use scissors to open the foil or to lift and remove the plastic tab to expose the foil. Conversely, counterfeit packaged product contains no such instructions.

Visually, the back of the US packaging blister pack holding the product applicators is black and white; counterfeit packaging may contain orange colored areas on the back of the blister pack and may include foreign language such as the words "usage veterinaire." To further identify the differences in packaging, pet owners are encouraged to visit www.frontline.com/epa.

6. If I suspect I have "counterfeit" packaged product, what should I do?

Anyone with questions or concerns about the authenticity of their FRONTLINE product should return it to the place of purchase. For further information consumers may go to a special website at www.frontline.com/epa, for product and packaging photographs and instructions, or call the Merial Consumer Response Center at 1-888-846-2340.

7. Why do you only sell FRONTLINE products to veterinarians?

Merial believes that the veterinarian is the best professional qualified to serve the health care needs of pets, the concerns of their owners and to advise on the appropriate use of our small animal products. The Merial sales policy is to sell our small animal pet products only where a veterinarian-client-patient relationship exists.

8. If you only sell FRONTLINE for veterinarians, how to retail outlets obtain it?

It is our sales policy to sell our small animal pet products only where a veterinarian/client/patient relationship exists. Our priorities are the health of pets and the quality of our products. That's why we sell our products to health care professionals with the training and expertise to make the best decisions.

We don't want to speculate about how non-veterinarian retailers obtain our products because we don't know how it occurs. It is something only those selling the product know. We recommend you ask them specifically where they obtain our products.

9. How is Merial supporting the US EPA investigation?

We have assisted fully in this effort and we're pleased to discuss the role we've played in this important investigation. This is an issue we take very seriously. Merial first reported incidences of counterfeit packaging to the US EPA several years ago. We have been in contact with the US EPA and law enforcement agencies from the beginning – providing information, answering questions, and doing everything we can to help. Today's announcement draws attention to a very important issue, and we hope it will discourage people from the practice in the future.

10. What does Merial think about today's announcement?

Today's announcement is a great accomplishment for law enforcement, Merial and anyone who cares about the health and safety of their pet – it sends a strong message that counterfeiting animal health products is a very serious issue and those involved may face serious consequences. Merial's top priorities are the quality of our products and the health and safety of pets, and we're proud of the job we do. We commend the outstanding efforts of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, and we look forward to continuing our support of this investigation.

Internet Pharmacy Release Form

Date: _____

Client Last Name: _____

Pet Name: _____

Pharmacy: _____

I understand that I have requested a prescription for veterinary medicines to be filled by an internet pharmacy and that this is not recommended by South Wilton Veterinary Group.

I understand that South Wilton Veterinary Group does not have full confidence in internet pharmacies to fill prescriptions competently and correctly in order to ensure the safety of my pet(s). There have been many warnings issued by vendors in regard to incorrect dosing, counterfeit medications, and improper storage of temperature sensitive medications.

South Wilton Veterinary Group will not be held responsible for any mistakes made by this internet pharmacy.

Hospital policy dictates that an internet pharmacy prescription request will be filled only the first time without this signed release form on file in our patient's chart. If you do not return this signed release, and we receive another request from the internet pharmacy, it will be denied.

My signature below indicates that I have read, understood, and agreed to all terms dictated in this release.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

South Wilton Veterinary Group 51 Danbury Road Wilton, CT 06897 (203) 762-2002

Why Spay or Neuter Your Pet?

What do "spay" and "neuter" really mean?

Female dogs and cats are spayed by removing their reproductive organs, and male dogs and cats are neutered by removing their testicles. In both cases the operation is performed while the pet is under anesthesia. Depending on your pet's age, size, and health, he or she will stay at your veterinarian's office for a few hours or a few days. Depending upon the procedure, your pet may need stitches removed after a few days. Your veterinarian can fully explain spay and neuter procedures to you and discuss with you the best age at which to sterilize your pet.

Spaying or Neutering Is Good for Your Pet

- Spaying and neutering helps dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives.
- Spaying and neutering can eliminate or reduce the incidence of a number of health problems that can be very difficult or expensive to treat.
- Spaying eliminates the possibility of uterine or ovarian cancer and greatly reduces the incidence of breast cancer, particularly when your pet is spayed before her first estrous cycle.
- Neutering eliminates testicular cancer and decreases the incidence of prostate disease.

Spaying or Neutering Is Good for You

- Spaying and neutering makes pets better, more affectionate companions.
- Neutering cats makes them less likely to spray and mark territory.
- Spaying a dog or cat eliminates her heat cycle. Estrus lasts an average of six to 12 days, often twice a year, in dogs and an average of six to seven days, three or more times a year, in cats. Females in heat can cry incessantly, show nervous behavior, and attract unwanted male animals.
- Unsterilized animals often exhibit more behavior and temperament problems than do those who have been spayed or neutered.
- Spaying and neutering can make pets less likely to bite.
- Neutering makes pets less likely to roam the neighborhood, run away, or get into fights.

Spaying and Neutering Are Good for the Community

- Communities spend millions of dollars to control unwanted animals.
- Irresponsible breeding contributes to the problem of dog bites and attacks.
- Animal shelters are overburdened with surplus animals.
- Stray pets and homeless animals get into trash containers, defecate in public areas or on private lawns, and frighten or anger people who have no understanding of their misery or needs.
- Some stray animals also scare away or kill birds and wildlife.

Fix That Bunny!

When being conscientious about the pet overpopulation, don't forget to spay or neuter your pet rabbit. Altering rabbits can reduce hormone-driven behavior such as lunging, mounting, spraying, and boxing. Spaying females can prevent ovarian, mammarian, and uterine cancers, which can be prevalent in mature does. Also, rabbits reproduce faster than dogs or cats and are the third-most surrendered animal to shelters.

Spay or neuter surgery carries a one-time cost that is relatively small when one considers its benefits. It's a small price to pay for the health of your pet and the prevention of more unwanted animals.