

Source – RSPCA

<http://blogs.rspca.org.uk/insights/2013/01/03/meeting-your-dogs-welfare-needs/>

Top tips for canine care

Dogs come in all shapes, sizes and breeds!

Currently in the UK there are around 8 million dogs, making them one of the most popular pets. Owning a dog is a big responsibility and a long-term commitment, in terms of care and finances, as most dogs live for an average of 13 years.

If you're a dog owner then you'll want to ensure you care for them properly and meet their five welfare needs (which have to be met under the Animal Welfare Act).

Below are some top tips for caring for your dog, however for more information about meeting your dog's needs, please visit:
www.rspca.org.uk/dogs

Diet

- Make sure your dog eats a health balanced diet and monitor quantities of food to avoid him/her becoming over or underweight.
- Feed your dog at least once each day, unless your vet advises otherwise.
- Always make sure your dog has access to clean drinking water.
- If your dog's eating or drinking habits change, consult your vet, as your dog could be ill.

Environment

- Ensure your dog has a dry, clean and comfortable place to sleep and a safe hiding place where they can escape if they're feeling afraid.
- Ensure your dog has regular opportunities to go to the toilet at least every few hours in an appropriate place.
- Make sure your dog has access to an appropriate place where he/she can exercise on and off-lead at least once a day.
- If you have more than one dog, make sure to provide enough toys and resources to prevent them from becoming competitive or they may fight.
- Make sure the size and temperature of any place you leave your dog (including your vehicle) is appropriate.

Behaviour

- **When it comes to training only use positive reward-based training and avoid harsh and potentially painful training methods.**
- **Make sure your dog has enough to do so that he/she does not become distressed or bored.**
- **Provide your dog with safe toys and regular opportunities to play with people or other friendly dogs.**
- **Always be observant around your dog, if their behaviour changes or he/she shows regular signs of stress or fear (such as excessive panting, licking lips, hiding, cowering, aggression), seek advice from a vet or clinical animal behaviourist.**

Company

- **Make sure that your dog has opportunities to interact positively with appropriate companions so that he/she does not become lonely or bored.**
- **Make sure your dog is never left alone long enough for him/her to become distressed.**
- **Never leave your dog unsupervised with another animal or person who may deliberately or accidentally harm or frighten him/her.**
- **If your dog is fearful of, or aggressive towards, other dogs, avoid the situations that lead to this behaviour, and seek advice from a vet or clinical animal behaviourist.**

Health and welfare

- **Check your dog for signs of injury or illness regularly. If you suspect that your dog is in pain, ill or injured, consult a vet immediately.**
- **Take your dog for regular health checks with your vet at least once each year. Ask your vet for advice about things you can do to protect your dog's health, such as vaccination and treatments to control parasites (e.g. fleas and worms).**
- **Get your dog neutered, unless he/she is intended for breeding and provisions have been made to care for both parents and offspring.**
- **Make sure your dog can be identified, ideally via a collar and microchip (ask your vet for advice), so that he/she can be treated quickly if injured, or returned to you if lost.**
- **Consider taking out pet insurance to ensure your dog is covered if he/she needs veterinary treatment.**

<http://www.help-page.co.uk/rspca-customer-services-contact-dept.html>