



Well Pet Clinics Mini Series

Session 1: Getting Started - Setting up Clinics in Practice / Puppy and Kitten Parties

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Part 1 study notes

During this first session of well pet clinics you will learn the principles behind setting up and running successful nurse clinics. The term “well-pet” clinic is used to describe a wide variety of clinics that veterinary nurse can run for healthy pets or pets with medical conditions such as obesity or mobility issues.

Even though there has been a huge growth in nurse led clinics a recent study carried out by the RCVS showed that still only 28.9% of veterinary nurses are running clinics every day ¹. It would be great if we could increase that number as clinics are important for giving preventative health care advice as well as providing the client with a contact in the practice they feel comfortable discussing some issues which they otherwise may think unnecessary to bother the veterinary surgeon with. Running nurse clinics gives the nurse the opportunity to improve their skills and knowledge. They also increase client footfall and therefore potential sales the practice would otherwise miss out on. There are many clinics as nurses we can offer our clients and we will be covering some of these during this series. The clinics will vary between specialties but often the care given during a nurse clinic has common characteristics as you will see as the series continues.

In part 1 we will discuss in detail how to set up clinics within a practice and how to organise and run successful Puppy Parties and Kitten Events. In part 2 we will cover junior clinics and general pet clinics such as weigh and worm consultations, second vaccinations and microchip implants. We will also look into running dental and senior clinics. The information you can obtain from this series will be enough to get you started and as your clinics develop and your interests in a particular subject grows so will your knowledge base.

As registered veterinary nurses we must adhere to our professional code of conduct set out by the royal college of veterinary surgeons. ²

Part 1

Setting up clinics:

Every clinic is unique in the way it is structured and in the way that we obtain clients to attend although the initial set up with the practice should follow these five basic steps

1) Building your case –

Building a case to run clinics is the first essential step for success. Make sure to explain why the service is required and needed, clarify what you hope to achieve, what you are offering to your clients, the patients and to the practice.

2) Establish patient criteria –

Who is the clinic aimed at?

- puppy's/kittens,
- junior/adolescent
- senior/geriatric
- obese patients
- Patients with mobility concerns

3) Advertise your new service –

Plan how to publicise your clinic to the general public including new potential clients and of course very importantly your current clients.

- Register in consult room
- Practice newsletter
- Emailing current clients
- Local newspaper/radio station
- Individual invitations – through recommendation from vet (clipboard in consulting rooms)
- Host an open day – this is a great way of spreading the news to new potential clients
- Videos (TV in waiting room) showing stills or videos
- Post op discharge appointments

4) Set your location –

Where will you hold your clinics, will you need a consult room or do you have another room you can use? Do you have enough and appropriate space/facilities and access to a hygienic, safe room?

5) Practice meeting –

Have a practice meeting to gain support from your colleagues ensuring the multidisciplinary team are all on board and recognise the need and importance for the new service. Make sure you discuss:

- The name of the new service
- Who you are hoping to invite and how
- The health benefits of seeing your patients on a more regular basis such as early detection of diseases
- The content of the service and the price to the client
- When your clinics run, which day, what time so appointments can be made
- The launch date and when will this new service go live
- The financial and time saving benefits for the vets

Puppies

A puppies development varies depending on size of dog, for instance a cocker spaniel will open their eyes sooner than a Labrador and the rate they reach teething and adolescence will also vary. As we know puppies are born blind and deaf and require their mother's assistance to urinate and defecate and to help regulate their body temperature. They use their sense of smell and touch to be able to find their mothers teat to feed. On average puppies will start to open their eyes and ears within the first 2-4 weeks and this is when the socialisation and habituation should start. Of course this stage solely relies on the breeder and the puppy's mother. The crucial stage of development is said to start as the puppies are entering the transitional period. This is when they find their feet and can start to explore their new surroundings. This sensitive period lasts until they are about 16 weeks of age.

We should invite puppies to a party one week after their first vaccine (usually 6-8 weeks) up until 16 weeks of age. After this the puppies should really be enrolled in a puppy training class suitable for their age group.

We have to be careful at this stage also as it is also documented that this is their “fearful” period and too much stimulation and too many challenges could have the opposite effect on what you are trying to achieve. Carefully controlled stimulus during a party can help counter and control potential fearful situations. We cannot cover all situations in a class but keep this in mind when you are making socialisation tick sheets and owner hand-outs on do’s and don’ts.

Kittens

Kitten development follows a similar pattern as a puppy might. Their ears and eyes begin to open around week two and their sense of smell is getting much better usually favouring one particular teat to feed from. By week three they are much more aware and start to move about. Their sense of smell will be fully developed by week four and they become much more interactive.

Weaning starts around weeks four to five and they should be solely on solid food by week 8. It is advised to initially start kittens on a very soft gruel, ideally the same brand as the mother, and to gradually offer small amounts of dry kibble.

Socialisation starts from when they can hear and see so from about 2 weeks onwards. Between weeks 2-7 is a crucial stage where they learn how to play, interact with people and littermates and are aware of the environment around them. Adolescence stage is usually between 6-18 months old. This is often the start of sexual and dominance behaviour

As nurses we need to have a wide knowledge on a variety of different subjects and running puppy parties and kitten events will test that knowledge. During your parties you should try and cover the most important and current information an owner will need to bring up a healthy happy pet.

Subjects to cover are:

- Preventative health care
- Vaccinations
- Parasitic control the reasons of dual worming
- Nutrition
- Neutering
- Dental care
- Socialisation
- Training
- Insurance
- Seasonal topics (Easter, Halloween, fireworks, Christmas puddings etc.)

Preventative health care

The AAHA (American animal hospital association) has developed preventative health care guidelines due to the recent statistics that showed that there has been a fall in owners bringing their pet to the vets and therefore there has been an increase in preventable disease.

This proves the importance of educating our clients on preventative health care at an early stage as well as improving that bond between client and practice. Puppy parties and kitten events are a great way to initiate that connection. The guidelines cover the general agenda of a party stressing the importance of good communication and education. Covering topics such as infectious, parasitic control, dental care, behaviour, nutrition etc.

Vaccinations

There has been a lot of talk recently whether vets are scamming pet owners with vaccinations and that they are not required. Be prepared for this as it has come up many of time in my parties. My method is usually to discuss how different preventable disease affects an animal, for example Parvo virus. Explain how it is contracted and the morbidity rate of this disease, try and tell owners what is like for you as a nurse to nurse an extremely ill puppy/kitten and what kind of ordeal the pet has to go through to survive. Make them aware that having a good vaccination protocol could help prevent these horrible diseases. I believe it always has a bigger impact if you can tell them an experience you have had. Some owners are unaware that their pet can contract diseases from wild foxes entering their garden or even from pigeons or the bottom of their shoes as they walk in the house. Although It is very common to contract Kennel cough in kennels as it is an airborne virus how many times have you heard that an owner say that their pet hasn't been in a kennel so must have got it from the vets. Explaining how these types of disease can be contracted can really help an owner understand how best to give preventative health care to their animal and what to do if they suspect their pet has become ill.

It is best to find out what your practice protocols are for vaccinations and what you routinely vaccinate against as this may be differ slightly in the area you live, however information has been published on the guideline for selecting vaccinations and the administration by the;

- American Association of feline Practitioners (AAFP)
- American Animal hospital association (AAHA)
- American Veterinary Medical association (AVMA)
- European Advisory Board on cat disease (ABCD)
- World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA)
- Vaccination Guideline Group (VGG)

Although there seems to be a small difference between the recommended vaccinations it does state that all dogs and cats should receive the basic core vaccination to reduce the risk of contracting a disease that is widely distributed and has a high morbidity and mortality rates. The recommended core vaccinations for cats and dogs are;

Canine core vaccinations:

- Canine Distemper Virus (CDV),
- Canine Adeno Virus (CAV), and
- Canine Parvo Virus type 2 (CPV-2). (figure 1)

Feline core vaccines are:

- Feline Panleukopenia Virus (FPV),
- Feline Calicivirus (FCV)
- Feline Herpesvirus-1 (FHV-1).

Other non-core vaccinations should also be considered depending on the area you live and the risk of exposure to that animal.

Non-core vaccinations for dogs:

- Leptospirosis
- Canine parainfluenza (CPi)
- Rabies,
- *Bordetella bronchiseptica*

Non-core vaccinations for cats:

- Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV)
- Chlamydomphila felis
- Rabies

(Reference 8 – for vaccination protocols)

Figure 1 puppy infected with Parvo virus



Parasitic control

It is important to educate owners on the need for dual parasitic control. Heavy worm infestations can cause serious ill health and can even be fatal. They weaken the immune system and can cause diarrhoea, vomiting, blood loss leading to anaemia and even death. (Figure 2) during my parties, as part of a demonstration I pass around small pots with species I have collected over time. These include: round worms, fleas, ticks and tapeworms. I also have a pot filled with flea dirt so I am able to demonstrate to owners how to tell if it is soil or flea dirt, this is always a hit!

Common parasitic worms and how our pets can become infected:

- **Roundworms; (Toxocara canis, Toxascaris Leonina)**
 - Look like short lengths of spaghetti. The adult worm can live in the intestines of an animal causing the animal to become undernourished as the worm feeds on the contents. An infestation may present as the pet having a dull coat, lethargy, vomiting & diarrhoea and/or weight loss.
 - They can lay dormant for years and can become active in times of stress. They are most commonly activated during pregnancy, when a large number of worms can migrate to the puppy or kitten in the uterus. The animal can also become infected by ingesting an infected rodent or faeces.
 - This worm is particularly zoonotic and can cause permanent damage to child eyesight.

- **Tapeworms; (*Dipylidium caninum*, *Echinococcus granulosus*, *Taenia taeniaeformis*)**
 - They are composed of many segments and owners usually comment that it looks like a grain of rice. Owners can notice segments on fur around their pet's anus or on their bed. A heavy infection can cause anaemia, lethargy, loss of appetite and a dull coat.
 - Most commonly infected by ingesting fleas as these are the intermediate host for *Dipylidium Caninum*. Other *Taenia* species can infect our pets if they eat infected rodents, rabbits, and sheep
- **Hookworms; (*Ancylostoma caninum*)**
 - They look like small, thin worms with a hook. That attaches onto the wall of the intestine they have similarities to the roundworms (live in the intestine and zoonotic). An infestation may present with bloody stools, anaemia, lethargy, and diarrhoea and weight loss.
 - People can become infected if they walk barefoot on infected soil, as the worm will penetrate directly through the skin.
- **Whipworms; (*Trichuris vulpis*)**
 - These are long, thin whip-shaped worms that live in the animal's colon. They attach and feed off the gut wall. They can cause anemia, weight loss, flatulence, haemorrhagic or mucus diarrhoea and lethargy.
 - Pets can become infected by infected matter like rodents' faeces, soil, food and contaminated water
- **Lungworms; (*Angiostrongylus vasorum* (dog), *Aelurostrongylus abstrusus* (cat))**
 - These are thin slender microscopic worms and are passed in infected faeces. Dogs and cats are commonly infected by eating slugs and snails. Unlike many parasites it is not passed on from dog to dog.
 - The larvae migrate through the gut, lymph nodes, liver, venous system, heart and then into the pulmonary artery. Then the eggs enter the lungs, move up the trachea, and then swallowed. This larva has a long migration and can causes different problems; pet can become generally unwell, have excessive coughing, bleeding or seizures.
 - May owners say there pet doesn't eat snails but they can accidentally ingest one as they are eating grass or if a small slug is on their coat as they are grooming.

Treatment:

It is recommend that puppies and kittens should be wormed from 2 weeks old and every 2 weeks until they reach 12 weeks. Thereafter they can be wormed every month until they reach 6 months of age after which they should be able to be wormed every 3 months. This may differ in your practice depending on what products you stock so again make sure you follow your practice protocol. Many companies offer free worming and flea prevention for the first dose so it would be good to contact your local drug representatives to find out of any offers are available. You could always include these products in your puppy/ kitten packs (making sure they are appropriately labelled).

Figure 2 – severe roundworm infestation in a young puppy



Nutrition

A puppy is weaned from its mother's milk around the age of three to four weeks and should be fully weaned by eight weeks of age.⁶ They should be weaned with a high quality complete and nutritionally balanced puppy food designed for the size of breed as this will promote good health and development. For example if you have a large breed dog such as a German shepherd they will require a controlled volume of calcium and fat in order to reduce the risk of developing bone and joint deformities.

The selected food should contain all of the essential nutrients required to sustain life without causing a deficiency or excess (protein, fat, carbohydrate, fibre, vitamins and minerals). Most high end companies make a puppy food that is designed from weaning to the end of their growth period. The food should be moistened to porridge like consistency initially then less water added as they learn to crunch and use their teeth. An unbalanced diet at this crucial stage of development can have severe consequences for a pet's growth and increase the chance of infection and disease. For example a dog fed on a meat-only diet has a diet high in phosphate and low in calcium and is therefore at risk of nutritional secondary hyperparathyroidism which can lead to spontaneous fractures, as evidenced in a study in great Danes.⁷

The Association of American Food Control Officials (AAFCO) has published a chart of recommended minimum and maximum requirements for a range of nutrients including vitamins and minerals required for growth and maintenance.⁸

Puppies have high energy requirements to keep up with the rapid growth during the first half of their puppyhood. After the growth period stops or slows for instance after neutering or after they have reached about 80% of its adult weight the requirement for energy falls.⁹ It is therefore important to discuss this with new owners and explain how to understand food labelling to ensure the right amount of food is being given. This will hopefully also reduce the risk of their pet becoming overweight due to overfeeding.

The number of meals a puppy should be fed is dependent on their age:

- 6-8 week old puppies should be fed 5/6 small meals a day
- 4 months reduce amount of meals to 4 times daily
- 5 months reduce amount of meals to 3 times daily
- 6 months reduce amount of meals to 2 times daily

Kittens start to wean around four weeks old, and the process is usually completed when they reach eight to ten weeks old. The main point to remember when considering the nutritional requirements of a cat is they are not small dogs! Cats require a higher level of protein compared to a dog and they require an essential amino acid called Taurine which they cannot synthesize like dogs can. Taurine is critical for normal heart muscle function, vision, digestion, foetal development, neurological and a healthy immune function. A diet deficient in taurine can have severe consequences such as central retinal degeneration (CRD) and dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM). Arginine is another essential amino acid which is also extremely important as they cannot synthesize like the dog, without these acids cats are unable to convert ammonia to urea which will result in ammonia toxicity.

Cats don't tend to have a strict feeding regime and are classified as free-choice (ad lib) feeders. Several studies have shown that if a cat is fed free-choice they will eat at frequent and random times, sometimes between 9-16 meals per day^{3,4,5} nibbling on small meals rather than consuming a large volume in one go. This may need to be adapted if the cat does overeat, as this method is not suitable for all cats.

Supplemented diets

Supplements are considered to be anything that is provided in addition to a normal diet including; table scraps, titbits, vitamins or mineral supplements. For example many people give cod liver oil thinking that it is of benefit but in fact it can cause a condition called Hypervitaminosis D as cod liver contains high levels of Vitamin D which plays an important role in the calcium and phosphorus metabolism and can lead to soft tissue mineralisation and organ dysfunction.

Feeding supplements can reduce the amount of normal diet a pet consumes at mealtimes, causing a potential deficiency in essential nutrients required for healthy maintenance. On the other hand some pets may eat all the extras plus their normal diet, making them at risk of consuming well above their energy requirements which in time will cause obesity.

Neutering

Neutering is a term we use for the removal of an animal's reproductive system and a common question is "at what age should we be advising our clients have their pet neutered?"

There always seems to be a different answer depending on each individual veterinary surgeons and I'm afraid to say the articles published addressing this question don't pin point a correct age of neutering for either a cat or a dog. In 2008 the veterinary record published an article that showed that the average age recommended by veterinary practice to neuter kittens was 22.6 weeks and only 28% of veterinary surgeons thought it was appropriate to neuter kittens aged 12-16 weeks old ¹². Another article published in 2008 carried out a survey on practice policies in veterinary practices in Great Britain and found that the average age of spaying a bitch was 6.5 months and the dog 7.5 months. The survey also showed that there was very little agreement on whether a bitch should be spayed before or after the first season, 164 of 973 vets recommended spaying before (16.9%) while 201 of 973 (20.7%) would never recommend neutering before a first season. ¹¹The recent Veterinary Surgery-small Animal book by Karen Tobias states "The most important risk factor for malignant mammary tumour development in pet dogs is choice and time of spaying. When spayed before the first estrus, before the second estrus and after the second estrus but before the 2 years of age, respectively, the risk of mammary tumour development in neutered female dogs is 0.5%, 8% and 26% respectively of that seen in intact females. Spaying at a later age may still reduce the risk for benign tumours but will probably not reduce the risk of malignant tumour development."

Owners may be concerned that neutering their pet will change the pet's nature or make them become obese. You can reassure owners that the health benefits of neutering will outweigh these concerns and that if they feed a balanced diet suitable for neutered pets and continue with regular exercise then any risk of weight gain is massively reduced. You can inform owners that neutered animals need 30% less calories than when entire ¹³ and this information should help them control weight. There are also many pros and cons for neutering animals;

Pros

- To help control population and unwanted pregnancies
- Can decrease behaviours in males such as hyper-sexuality, roaming and dominants or aggression. Such behaviours include relentlessly seeking bitches, cocking leg indoors, spraying, aggression shown to other males.
- As it can reduce aggression and stop straying it also reduces potential fighting which would otherwise spread disease and cause infections for instance FIV/FelV in cats
- Eliminates the risk of pyometra infections in females
- Entire male cats may spray inside the house causing a very strong unpleasant smell
- To prevent or reduce testosterone-mediated behavioural problems in males
- Stops false pregnancies and the nuisance of seasons
- Greatly reduced the risk of developing mammary tumours

Cons

- It can be expensive
- Carries an anaesthetic risk
- Potential for weight gain (although if advised properly about energy requirement post op this can will be reduced)
- Can cause changes to the animals coat
- Can increase the risk of metabolic and hormonal changes
- The potential risk with possible incontinence later in life or even immediately following the surgery. (Research seems to suggest that in females, incontinence can largely be avoided if the bitch is spayed after her first season)

While it is important for owners to be aware of the cons you should stress that the pros (i.e. the improvement to the mortality rate) far outweigh these. You should discuss what would be typical day for a pet when coming in for the operation and what to expect from recovery as this sometimes is what concerns the owner more. Questions such as; how their pet will be when they take it home, will it be in pain and discomfort, and are they allowed to go for walks etc. are common. Giving a tour of the practice is a good way of helping put owners mind at ease and how their pet will be cared for during the day.

Dental care

Although it is very unlikely that a puppy or kitten will have dental disease at their life stage there are a few things we can show and discuss with owners during the party/event. Dental concerns such as deciduous teeth or an over/under shot jaw can be noticeable at a young age, as can enamel defects. (Figure 5 for overshot jaw)

We tend to notice teething more in puppies then we do with our cats and what owners may construed as bad behaviour in a puppy such as biting, chewing the furniture or eating their pair of favourite shoes could come down to the pet just teething. Making sure you give advice to puppy owns on how they can help reduce these incidences;

- A cold carrot or apple from the fridge to chew on
- A “chilly bone” or alternatively an option for a comparative homemade product is wetting a face cloth, twisting it and placing it in the freezer (making sure supervision is given at all times with this option) (figure 3,4)
- Ice cubes with their wet diet mixed in to make it tasty
- Kong also has a lot of good dental toys available and you should have a few to demonstrate.

Things to avoid:

- Antlers
- Butchers bones
- Nylon bones

(These have shown an increase in dental fractures in adult dogs and early education is essential that they are not appropriate toys)

- Playing with Sticks
(Causing potentially serious stick injuries requiring surgery)

Another sign a puppy is teething is a reduced appetite although this should always be investigated by a veterinary surgeon to make sure the puppy is healthy.

We will be discussing in more detail how to identify different stages of dental disease in the next session but It is important during a puppy party to stress the importance of dental hygiene, educating owners that dental care is not just cosmetic and that dental disease can affect other vital organs as the bacteria invades the blood stream. Teaching an owner at an early age how to successfully brush their pet's teeth, by demonstrating how to start introducing toothpaste and eventually a toothbrush, can really help put them on the right path and prevent dental disease and the risk of unnecessary anaesthetic later on.

Figure 3– homemade frozen teething cloth



Figure 4– bought frozen chilly bone



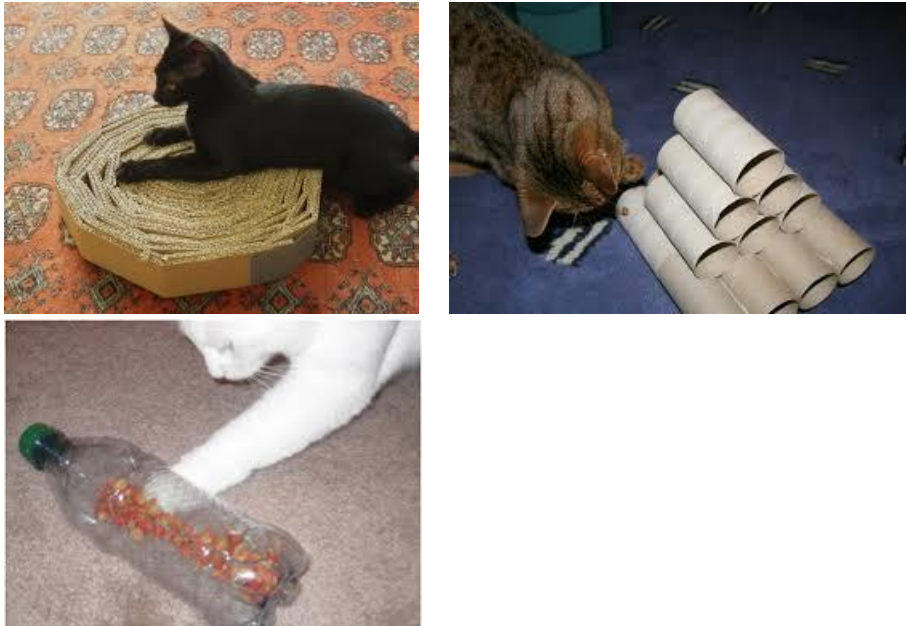
Figure 5 – deformed jaw



Socialization & training

Socialisation and training is one of the key points to address, if not done correctly this can lead to serious behavioural issues later on. The first 16 weeks of a puppies/kittens life are absolutely crucial to their development and acceptance of new experience. This will mould the adult they will become. The way this should be handled varies between kitten and puppies. I always recommend that new puppies are taken to some sort of training class, partly because this will help the owners kick off any training regimes they want to put in place but equally importantly to allow the puppy the chance to socialise with other puppies who are around the same age and therefore to be able to learn the boundaries of appropriate social behaviour in a safe environment. Remember that puppies enter the “fear period” at about 10 weeks so care should be taken to ensure it is a positive experience. Kittens are most receptive to socialisation between 2-7 weeks of age. As with puppies it is important to allow interaction between different people and to expose them to new and exciting experiences Interactive toys will provide valuable enrichment, for example a laser torch to perfect hunting and pouncing techniques. Let the kitten be exposed to different surfaces such as clean feathers, cardboard boxes (with some with cut out holes for tiny paws to poke through), while bags for life can also give many hours of entertainment. If the owners are intending the cat to venture outdoors then time spent outside in secure back garden even on a harness and lead is an important first step There are also many fun cat toys on the market such as cat and mouse, wand toys, catnip toys, food dispensing toys and many homemade toys which can all provide good stimulation (figure 6). The best advice we can give a kitten owner is to let them experience everyday experience like the Hoover, funny hats, other pets and children. Although cats will usually take things at their own pace

Figure 6 – home made toys for cats



Toilet training is another training issue new owners seem to have some difficulty with so make sure you bring this topic up in your puppy/kitten events. The animal's mother will be the first one to help teach the puppy/kitten where is appropriate to relieve themselves. The puppy/kitten will hopefully already be used to going in the garden/litter tray to relieve itself after each meal, each play and after it has woken from a snooze by the time the new owner comes to collect it and bring it to its new home.

If an owner is concerned that they are having serious issues with toilet training then I would advise them to have their pet checked out by a veterinary surgeon to rule out any underlying conditions that may be causing the problems, such as a urinary infection. Assuming any underlying conditions are ruled out you should help the owner to put in place a programme to help reinforce the toilet training they are doing.

Toilet training a puppy:

1. Encourage the puppy into the garden immediately after waking up.
It is common for puppies defecate twice in the morning , if your puppy does this and he has only passed one stool but seems finished, then allow him back into the house and keep constant watch for the tell-tale signs of needing to go again, then encourage him back to the designated spot to allow for him to relieve himself for a second time in the correct place.
2. Allow the puppy outside after eating his meals as eating stimulates the digestive system; they usually need to urinate and defecate anywhere between 30 minutes to 2 hours after a meal.
3. Allow the puppy outside following each play session or an exciting event such as a visitor or the children coming home from school.
4. Try and use a command word such as; go be clean, toilet, go pee pee/poo poo or be quick; the command should be short and precise.

Watch for the tell-tale signs, such as sniffing the ground, circling or squatting before saying the command word. Wait with your puppy then praise him after he has performed.

5. If accidents are still occurring after following these guidelines then advice would be to take the puppy out to designated spot every 1-2 hours and praise him after he has gone to the toilet

Potential training errors

- overfeeding
- feeding a diet or food not suitable for that puppy
- feeding to late at night, which could cause the puppy to defecate overnight
- irregular feeding
- feeding foods that are too salty causing the puppy to drink excessively
- Punishing the puppy for accidents. This can cause the puppy to become fearful of going to the toilet in front of you.

Toilet training a kitten

- The majority of kittens will be litter-trained by the time you get them home, cats are very clean creatures and they initially learn to use a litter tray by copying their mother. New owners should use the same litter as the breeder did and if possible a similar shaped litter tray such as a low-sided plastic tray; you may want to change to a deeper or covered tray later.
- If the kitten is not using the provided litter tray try and keep the kitten to one room in the house, preferably the room that you are in most of the time, and gently place the kitten in the tray after it has eaten, when it wakes up from a sleep or if you see them sniff, scratch or crouch in a corner.
- If you have more than one cat in the house then make sure you supply at least one box for every cat plus one extra. Once the owner is happy that the kitten is using the tray then it can be allowed to explore more areas in the house.
- Eventually the owner can change the litter tray into a more convenient place in the house and as the kitten grows up it will probably prefer to do its private business in a quiet, low-traffic area that is easily accessible.
- Always remember to keep the litter tray away from the cat's food and water avoiding damp or dark basements, distant bedrooms, areas with noisy washing machines or busy hallways with lots of people or other pets passing.
- Remember cats are clean in nature and do not like going into a dirty litter tray so remove the soiled litter with a scoop, leaving the rest of the litter fresh and dry. Remember to clean the whole tray regularly.
- Avoid scented litter or liners as these can deter cats and may be put off using the tray and may favour the owner's carpet instead.

Insurance

It is important to remember that we can only give advice on why insurance is important but we are not at liberty to advise which insurance company an owner should choose. As we know pet insurance provides cover in case of accidents and emergencies or if their pet becomes ill. It helps to give peace of mind that if veterinary treatment is required then any money concerns may be lessened and therefore the correct investigation or treatment can be provided. There are three type of insurance available;

- Lifelong cover – this is similar to 'comprehensive' car insurance. It means that the policy will cover for the animal's life and provide cover for a variety of non-preexisting conditions or any illness up to a 'maximum' annual cost. You can claim to that amount every year.
- Per condition – this can also provide cover 'for life' but will only cover one that condition to a maximum amount stated in the policy.
- Annual cover– this will cover a particular 'condition' for the first year then after that yearly policy ends it will then be classed as a pre-existing condition therefore it will be excluded from the policy.

Some other benefits insurance can provide include:

- Third party (in case your pet causes an accident or knocks someone down and causes injury)
- Recovery of cost of pet if stolen or dies from illness
- Advertising and reward
- Kennel/cattery fees if you are hospitalised
- Cost of your holiday if your pet is taken ill

Seasonal topics

Keep in mind when organising your agenda for each party/event that you should cover any relevant seasonal topics as these can be lifesaving. Topics such as:

- Easter and the risk of chocolate toxicity due to theobromine being toxic to dogs
- Halloween & fireworks nights due to the increase risk of being frightened and potentially running from or into danger as well as the food from barbeques
- Christmas including warning owners of the risk to pets of eating Christmas puddings (raisin poisoning) etc.
- The serious health risks antifreeze poses to cats
- Heatstroke with pets being locked in hot cars

Getting a new pet is an incredibly exciting event for an owner and they will normally come into your practice with some initial trepidation but once they are comfortable you will probably find they have scores of questions they would like to discuss.

These notes will hopefully give you some of the knowledge you need to get started with setting up and running your parties/events but it isn't aimed at giving you the answer to every single question. The aim is to at least help you prepare for some of the key points you will need to reinforce to new owners to ensure their relationship with their new pet gets off to the best start and that the puppies/kittens needs are met at a most crucial stage in their development. Covering the basics on preventative healthcare, general husbandry, nutrition and socialisation and training initially will allow you to then move on to some of the owners more specific issues safe in the knowledge that you have covered the basics. Remember to give them clear and concise literature to take home with them to refer back to for guidance until the next trip to the vets.

Reference

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