



Congratulations on the adoption of a new animal companion! As veterinarians, we are committed to being sure that your family and pet have a great, long, healthy relationship. In order to keep your new pet and family healthy, here is a list of pet health care basics that should be taken care of by veterinary professionals soon after adoption and on an ongoing basis. Be sure to ask about and get the following topics addressed. It is extremely important to establish and maintain an ongoing relationship with your veterinarian to be assured that all your pet's health needs are met throughout each stage of life.

1. Sign up for or activate a free or reduced rate **pet health insurance policy** if it is offered for the first month by the rescue. Do this **BEFORE** you take your pet home to prevent any diseases or conditions brought on by transitional stress being considered "pre-existing conditions".
2. **Take your pet to see a veterinarian** within a week of adoption to establish a veterinarian-patient-client relationship. Do not wait until your pet gets sick to visit a veterinarian.
3. **Rabies vaccination** – required by law for dogs and cats over 16 weeks of age in Ohio. A licensed veterinarian must administer this vaccine; most shelter animals need to get one after adoption.
4. **Vaccine need assessment** – Have your vet assess what has been given, and what else should be given. Your veterinarian determines this by considering your pet's age, lifestyle (indoor vs. outdoor, goes to groomers, dog parks, etc.), and what has been given at SPCA. Puppies and kittens need a series of shots while their immune systems are maturing to prevent deadly diseases like Canine (dog) Distemper or Parvovirus and Feline (cat) Panleukopenia or Calicivirus.
5. **Confirm** your pet's **microchip** information and be sure you register your contact information in the proper place. Be sure your veterinarian has the microchip number on the medical record.
6. **Parasite (fecal) test** – Intestinal parasites can cause all sorts of problems in your pet, but can also infect humans with serious health consequences. Take a fresh fecal sample with you to your pet's first veterinary checkup, and as often as your veterinarian prescribes thereafter.
7. **Heartworm prevention** – Dogs should be given heartworm prevention by prescription from your veterinarian. Many heartworm preventives also control other parasites, so your vet can help you choose which one is right for your dog. Ask your vet about heartworm prevention for cats as well.
8. **Flea and Tick Prevention** – A veterinarian can make recommendations as to how to keep these irritating and disease carrying pests off your pet and out of your home safely and effectively. Some of these medications can be toxic if used inappropriately, so ask what is best for your pet.
9. **Housetraining / Behavior** – Thousands of animals are surrendered to shelters each year because they have not been properly housebroken or taught proper pet etiquette. Your veterinarian can make suggestions about appropriate training strategies or classes available in your area.
10. **Diet** – Pet foods are not one-size fits all. Your veterinarian is trained to make appropriate dietary recommendations. Just like in people, proper diet prevents obesity and disease.
11. **Dental Care** – Dental disease can cause a whole host of other medical issues. Your vet can discuss preventive dental care and treatment for problem teeth, stinky breath, etc.
12. **Plan ahead for your pet's future welfare**- whether or not you choose to purchase a long term health insurance policy for your pet, you should keep funds on hand not only for annual wellness care and vaccines, but in case your pet's needs emergency treatment. You should also have a plan for who will care for your pet in the event that the primary owner becomes unable to do so.

Thank you for giving a previously homeless animal a home and keeping them healthy and happy.

-The Cincinnati Veterinary Medical Association