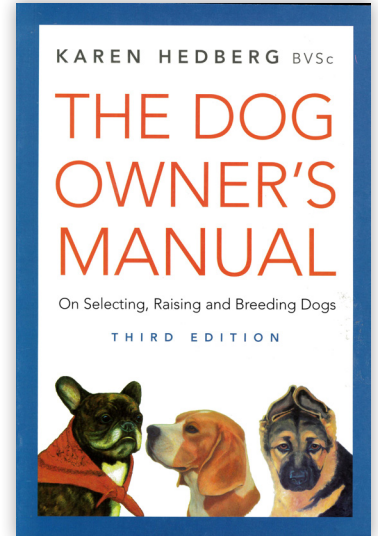




VET CHAT

Advice for new Puppy Owners



An extract from Dr Karen Hedberg's book, 'The Dog Owner's Manual.'

There are many things to do when bringing home a new puppy for the first time, however Dr Karen Hedberg BVSc outlines a few other very important issues which you may not have considered.

If you are a new owner and you have had the puppy for less than a week, the puppy may still be under considerable stress trying to adjust to a new household, new people, loss of its litter mates, change of environment and, quite often, the diet as well. This is the most stressful time of a young puppy's life and it is often trying to respond to a vaccination done the day before you collected it. No wonder so many puppies end up at veterinary hospitals within a week of leaving home.

When purchasing a puppy, try to determine when it was vaccinated. If the answer is within the last 3-4 days, delay picking the puppy up for several more days. If it has not been vaccinated and you still wish to pick it up, do so, get it checked out that same day and, if is all well, take it home. Allow it to settle in for a week, then have it vaccinated, provided it is healthy. (I personally feel that all breeders are morally obliged to vaccinate and have a thorough veterinary examination done before selling a puppy).

The further the puppy has travelled and the more severe the weather conditions, the more stress it will have been subjected to.

Also, the more quickly a diet is changed, the more stress is placed on the resources of the puppy. The gut bacteria are delicately balanced and a sudden change of food can be most upsetting. If the diet that was being fed to the puppy before you picked it up was very poor, give the puppy a very bland diet, such as cooked chicken or fish, cooked rice and yoghurt or junket. Add in a small amount of semi-soaked dry dog food (or dry cat food for the small breeds) and feed the same food 2-3 times daily for several days before trying to slowly adapt the puppy to an appropriate diet. If the motions are loose, add some cornflour to the mix.

If there are young dogs in the household, make sure their vaccinations are up to date.

Do not allow a sick puppy to be in contact with another puppy under 16 weeks of age, particularly if it has not come from the same litter or is not fully vaccinated. This applies especially to Rottweilers, Dobermanns and Greyhounds, as these breeds are often severely affected by gastric viruses and are very poor patients, making very little effort to live once they are sick. Do not handle other people's puppies, particularly if they are off colour, and restrain other people from handling your puppy.