

Shiny, Happy Puppies

Give your pup a healthy start by covering these basics.

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When: Look for fleas and ticks during daily grooming sessions. Spot-on adulticides can be administered anywhere between 7 and 10 weeks. Check the label of the product you are using, or check with your veterinarian. Also, begin heartworm prevention pills or chewables at 8 weeks.

How to Prepare: Ask your veterinarian for product recommendations. In severe cases or areas where fleas are active year-round, designate one day per week as flea control day, during which you thoroughly vacuum and dust and wash all bedding (human and canine). Also, arm yourself with tweezers or a tick-remover for easy, sanitary removal. To remove a tick, grasp it near the dog's skin with the tweezers and pull straight up, then clean the area thoroughly. Dispose of the tick without touching it; a slight touch may transmit disease.

Remember: New insect growth regulators and spot-on adulticides are the cutting edge of pet pest control. Following the directions on the packaging yields a virtually pest-free existence for most dogs.

The Veterinarian View: "When we talk to new puppy owners, we always talk about pest control and strongly recommend that as soon as a pup turns 8 weeks old it be started on a year-round regimen of an insect growth regulator and heartworm prevention," said Jay Empel, DVM, of Vernon Woods Animal Hospital in Atlanta, Ga. "We give a free sample of a combination product to get puppy owners started. During flea season, we recommend the addition of a topical adulticide product. Nothing takes care of every flea, but this combination handles at least 98 percent of the fleas in most cases."

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