

Health Tips For Your New Pet

Congratulations on your new pet! We hope that this information will help you keep your cocker healthy, so that you enjoy many years of happiness together.

Heartworm Preventative – Heartworm disease is a potentially deadly illness contracted by the bite of a mosquito. In our climate, you must give your pet a monthly heartworm preventative pill year-round to help protect your dog from contracting heartworms. This simple pill may save your pet's life. Many people find it easiest to remember to give their dog the pill on the 1st of every month (e.g. – Jan 1st, Feb 1st). Your vet will prescribe the heartworm preventative for your dog, and a heartworm test should be completed annually or at the instruction of your vet.

Flea/Tick Preventative- Due to our climate, we recommend using a flea/tick preventative year-round. There are many different brands, but all come in a small applicator that is applied between your pet's shoulders. If you are unfamiliar with flea/tick preventatives, please ask your vet for recommendations. These are available at many pet stores or on-line without a prescription. Most people apply the flea/tick preventative the same day they give the heartworm preventative.

Diet- Cocker Spaniels are prone to allergies, so the type of food and treats you purchase is extremely important. Most of our dogs need to be on a limited ingredient diet or hypoallergenic diet to decrease ear infections and overall itching. These foods may be bought at pet stores. It is best to feed your dog twice a day. If the dog does not finish the food within 20 minutes, pick it up and try again at the next mealtime.

Weight – Cocker spaniels are prone to becoming overweight. Excess weight is not cute - it is a huge health hazard. Not only do overweight dogs experience painful conditions like arthritis two years earlier than their normal weight counterparts, but their life expectancy is two years less. Be kind to your animal and monitor its weight carefully. Many vets do not tell their clients that their dogs are overweight because they do not want to offend, so if you have any doubts – ask!

Ear Cleaning- Cocker Spaniels are prone to ear infections due to their long, floppy ears. If you are not familiar with cleaning your dog's ears then ask your vet to show you how. You can purchase ear wash solution from your vet's office or from a pet store. How often ears need to be cleaned depends on the dog; some need it weekly, others monthly.

Vaccines- All OBG animals are current on their vaccinations, and you will receive a copy of their vet records when you take them home. You will receive the originals once the adoption is final. Please check the dates on the vaccines carefully, since in the case of owner give-ups the vaccines could be due again soon after adoption. Shelter-originated dogs normally receive their vaccines when they come into OBG's care.

Grooming- Cocker Spaniels need to be groomed every 6-8 weeks because their fur continuously grows. Nails should also be trimmed at this time. Grooming is usually ~\$60, depending on the business. Many individuals also do this themselves. Regular grooming will keep your pet's skin healthy.

Bloodwork- Most vets begin doing annual or biannual bloodwork as dogs age. Some diseases do not exhibit symptoms until they have progressed, so this simple test can screen for unknown problems.

Glaucoma Test- Cocker Spaniels are more susceptible to glaucoma than many other breeds. Once your pet is of middle to senior age, it is a good idea to have your vet perform a glaucoma test annually or as your vet instructs.

Urinary Infections- If your pet is having a lot of accidents, it could be a housebreaking problem or it could be a medical condition. Please do not hesitate to contact us - we have several housebreaking tips we can offer. If housebreaking efforts do not work after a couple weeks, it is best to have your vet examine the dog to make sure it is not due to a medical problem.

Separation Anxiety- Some rescue dogs exhibit significant signs of distress when left alone (destruction near possible exits, crying, drooling, housebreaking accidents). To help prevent and treat mild separation anxiety, you should not make a big production on coming and going from the house – ignore the dog for 15 minutes when you arrive home and do not pay a lot of attention when you are leaving the house. The problem is first best dealt with by behavior modification. If this is not effective, there are temporary medications that your vet can prescribe which may help. It is best to address the problem when it first starts before it gets out of control. We recommend reading "I'll be Home Soon" by Patricia McConnell or "The Dog Who Loved too Much" by Nicholas Dodman (both available on Amazon).