Responsible Dog Ownership

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Dogs hold a very special place in the hearts of millions of Australians. Dogs and owners can do so much together - go for walks, play games or simply share a quiet snooze in the sun. Research has shown that owning a pet can have measurable health benefits, that adults and children are more relaxed in the presence of a friendly dog and that pet owners suffer less health problems than non pet owners.  The first step to responsible dog ownership is choosing a puppy or dog that suits your age and stage of life. Please see our [Buying a Dog](http://dogsact.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Choosing-a-Breed1.docx) section for assistance in selecting a breed, finding a responsible breeder and choosing a puppy.  Bringing your new dog home   |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | Before bringing your new puppy home, ensure that you are able to keep it securely confined to your own property. Decide whether the dog is to live outside or be allowed inside the house. For the first few nights the puppy will fret for the company of its litter mates and may whimper during the night. Make sure that the puppy has a snug, warm and secure bed in a confined area.  When you bring your puppy or dog home make sure the house is quiet and allow it to settle in without too much interference. Once your puppy or dog has settled in to its new home it should be familiarised with all the normal household noises and activities and introduced to visitors to |   ensure that it becomes confident and well socialised. Other pets should be introduced to the new arrival slowly and under close supervision.  When you get your new dog or puppy home:   * As soon as possible, preferably the same day, have your vet check the puppy. * Make sure the puppy has fresh water available at all times * Make sure the puppy has a warm and protected place to sleep * Educate all family members, including children, on how to care for and handle the puppy - make sure they know not to disturb the puppy when it is tired or sleeping, or when it is eating * Define the area your puppy has to play in - train it not to go into those parts of the home where it is not allowed, e.g. the bedrooms   Feeding To maintain your dog's health and well being it must have a balanced diet. Puppies have different nutritional requirements to adult dogs.  Any changes to diet should be made gradually over several days. Dogs enjoy chewing on large raw bones but never offer cooked bones or those likely to splinter and hurt your dog’s mouth, throat and even stomach.  Water is essential to your dog's wellbeing and clean water must be available at all times.    Sleeping Your new puppy or dog needs his own space. He should be provided with a warm bed in a draught free place. If your dog does not live in the house with the family perhaps his special place could be the laundry or garage or even water proof kennel in the garden.  Exercise All dogs need daily exercise. A daily walk or two is good for you as well as your dog. Be sure to check local laws to know where you dog is allowed, where it needs to be on-lead and where you can let it off-lead (provided it is well trained and will return to you when called).  Cleaning up after your dog Responsible dog owners must ensure that their dog does not soil parks, gardens, beaches or streets by giving the dog every opportunity to relieve itself in its own back yard before being taken for a walk.  Accidents may happen and it is your responsibility to be prepared by carrying plastic bags or commercially available 'pooper scoopers' to clean up and dispose of your dog's faeces.  Socialisation Socialising your dog, especially your young puppy, around other dogs and humans regularly means it will be more likely to be confident and friendly in the future. This can be done just by taking your dog out in public or by attending classes. Puppy Socialisation classes are designed to help your new puppy adjust to other dogs and people in a friendly caring atmosphere. Puppy Socialisation classes run as a four week course, ideally suited for puppies 8-20 weeks of age. Many veterinarians offer puppy classes.  [Dogs ACT Obedience Clubs](http://dogsact.org.au/act-dogs-clubs/) offer continued training for your pup  Kennelling   |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | Ideally, the kennel should have its own enclosure with wire fences, (high enough to be jump proof), with a concrete floor for cleanliness and dig proof. This is an ideal set up for the dog that spends his time alone while the family is at work and school to prevent your lonely bored dog roaming the back garden looking for mischief and barking at every thing that moves both day and night |   Neighbourly mannersDogs which are allowed to bark excessively disturb the neighbourhood and neighbours will be unlikely to investigate a disturbance should something be amiss. Constant barking can often be a sign of boredom and dogs need regular walking for physical and mental stimulation.    When walking your dog it should be kept on a lead and you must observe all Domestic Animal Service (DAS) regulations. Comply with the regulations re registering your dog with DAS and be sure that your dog wears its DAS registration tag and identification at all times.    Your dog should never be allowed to wander or roam. The consequences can be severe, ranging from a fine from DAS to the dog becoming lost or even injured or killed by a motor vehicle.    Desexing  If you are not planning to breed from your dog or show it, it is advisable to have it desexed by the age of six months.  Dogs and children A dog can truly be a child's best friend if the child and the dog are taught how to play together. Running and chasing games with children and the dog should always be supervised by an adult until an understanding has developed between the dog and child. Most dogs are loyal and trustworthy companions, and if your dog is not used to children it should be introduced to them under careful supervision to ensure it remains so.  Get InvolvedAnother way to give your dog exercise and socialisation is to get involved in dog activities.  Showing If you have purchased a purebred puppy, then talk to the breeder about getting involved in dog shows. There are shows scheduled almost every weekend of the year. This will give you the opportunity to meet others with your same breed (as well as other breeds) and get grooming and other breed-specific tips. Many members of DOGS Victoria enjoy the hobby of showing dogs.    Obedience and other dog sports Obedience training is one of the best things that you can do for your dog. A well-mannered member of your household is more enjoyable to be around than an unruly pet.  Other activities that you can involve yourself in with your dog are Agility, Endurance, Herding, Retrieving Trials and Tracking. See our [Events Calendar](http://dogsact.org.au/events/)for information on these activities. |