



## Getting a New Puppy or Kitten - Part 1



I hope you have enjoyed the last few articles on some of the common conditions we see. We are now going to change tack a little bit and have a look at the process of getting a new puppy or kitten.

This is obviously a very exciting and rewarding thing to do, but can also be very hard work, and getting this bit 'right' is an essential part of the journey. I feel there is quite a bit of misunderstanding in the 'new puppy/kitten area' and I'd love for you all to have enough information to help make the right decisions. As with the previous few articles, this article comes as a two part series. In the first part of the series, we shall cover choosing which breed to buy, choosing where to buy from, vaccination, flea and worm treatment, and microchipping. In the second part, we shall cover neutering, insurance, and socialisation and training.



### Breed

If you are buying a puppy or kitten from a breeder, **it is very important that you take a lot of time thinking about the breed you would like to get**, and spend some time researching it. This is especially the case in dogs. Although there are always exceptions, certain breeds do tend to come with certain behavioural characteristics, potential health problems, and specific 'needs' such as lots of exercise, space, mental stimulation, or grooming. All dogs, regardless of the breed, need daily exercise, and should not be left alone for long periods.

It is particularly important you are aware of the **potential health problems** associated with the breed/mix of breeds you'd like to get before buying the puppy or kitten. Some of these you may never see, and some may not present until later on in life. However, unfortunately, many are present from birth, or develop or become apparent at a young age, and these then cause a constant issue for the rest of the animal's life. If you would like to know more about the potential health problems in certain breeds, do get in touch with us. Otherwise, it is always worthwhile to look on the internet, speak to other dog/cat owners, contact breeders and the breed society, and/or visit dog/cat shows.



## Where from?

There are numerous places you can ‘source’ a new puppy or kitten, including professional breeders, ‘hobby’ breeders, pet shops, puppy/kitten farms, and rescue centres. Clearly some are far better than others, and pet shops and puppy/kitten farms should be avoided at all costs!



When buying a puppy or kitten, **it is very important that you meet at least the mum** (and ideally the dad), and see the environment in which the puppy or kitten was brought up. Be very careful when buying puppies or kittens over the internet, and make sure you know exactly where they are coming from - it is very easy to be misled with this.

A number of breeds of dog can carry genetic (inherited) diseases. Reputable breeders of these dogs will usually have genetic testing performed on both the mum and dad before breeding. For example, there are genetic tests for ‘progressive retinal atrophy’ in Cocker and English Springer Spaniels, ‘von Willebrand’s disease’ in Dobermans, and ‘collie eye anomaly’ in Border, Bearded, Rough and Smooth collies. Many large breed dogs are also hip, or elbow, ‘scored’ prior to breeding. Having these tests performed is very important, and very helpful. However, do remember, many breeds are pre-disposed to diseases or conditions, which you cannot perform genetic, or other testing, for so they are **no guarantee** of future health.

## Vaccination

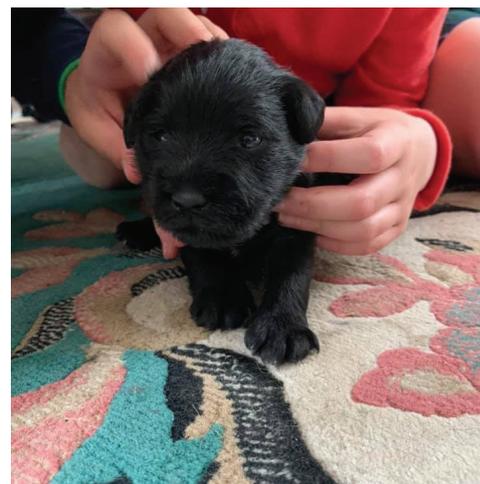
A puppy and kitten’s first course of vaccinations involves two injections - a ‘first’ and ‘second’ vaccination. The ‘second’ vaccination is required because puppies and kittens receive some antibodies via their mother, which prevent the vaccination from working to its full extent. As a general rule, we vaccinate puppies at 8 and 12 weeks, and kittens at 9 and 12 weeks. However, this can change depending on the age of the animal when they first come to us, what vaccinations they have already had and, if so, which manufacturer produced the initial vaccination.



There is significant variation across the country in what puppies and kittens are vaccinated against in their initial course, so if your puppy or kitten has received their ‘first’ vaccination with the breeder, it is important you bring all the details with you so we can discuss this further at the ‘second’ vaccination. Whether your puppy or kitten comes to us for their ‘first’ or ‘second’ vaccination, we will also give them a good check-over to make sure they are healthy.

## Flea and Worming

It is very important your new puppy or kitten is de-wormed and treated for fleas. Most puppies and kittens, if from a responsible breeder, will already have had some effective treatment by the time you pick them up. If this is the case, it is very helpful to know what they have had, so we can dispense the appropriate ongoing medication at the appropriate time. However, many puppies and kittens will not have been given an effective treatment, or will not have been treated at all, and it is not uncommon for new puppies and kittens to come to us with fleas and/or worms.



Again, as a general rule, puppies and kittens need to be de-wormed and flea treated every month until 6 months old. How you treat your pet from then on is up to you, but remember regular parasite control with an effective product plays a huge part in helping keep your pet healthy. More detailed information can be found in my four part 'Fleas, Ticks, Mites and Worms' articles.

## Microchipping

Kitten or puppy - please get them micro-chipped! In dogs, it is legal requirement and many puppies are already microchipped by the time you get them (if not, you **MUST** get them microchipped). In cats, it saves a huge amount of distress and worry, helping vets, the police and rescue centres all over the country identify them when they go wandering, get trapped in vehicles or just disappear. It is very cheap and, in cats, can be done painlessly if performed under general anaesthetic when they are castrated or spayed.

I hope you have enjoyed the first part of this series. Next time, we shall cover neutering, insurance, and socialisation and training. If you have any questions about what has been covered in part 1, please do get in touch.

