

Ask the Vet



Kitrina Journell, DVM

Dr. Journell graduated from the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana College of Veterinary Medicine in 2007 and then worked in the suburbs of Chicago for two years before relocating to North Carolina. Dr. Journell met her husband while completing her Biology, Pre-med Degree at James Madison University. They are now happy to call North Carolina home

and recently welcomed their newest addition, Hadleigh, to the family. Their three furry kids (Parker, Abe, and Madison) adjusted quickly to the new baby, and they are now a happy family of six! Dr. Journell loves practicing at the Animal Hospital of Lewisville because of the close relationships she has been able to establish with many clients and their pets.

PLANNING FOR A NEW PUPPY

Adopting a new puppy or kitten is a very exciting time for the whole family. There are a lot of things that should be addressed before bringing your new pet home. A few of the many things to consider include making decisions about crate training, making sure the puppy will be able to get walked often, “puppy proofing” the house of any potential toxicities or foreign body ingestions (small toys, socks, open trash cans), and of course, making sure you have a relationship with a veterinary clinic. Puppies and kittens need regular exams by their veterinarian to detect any abnormalities before they become a problem. Below are several questions that new puppy owners are always eager to know about their veterinary visits!

Q How often will my puppy need a vaccine?

A Your puppy needs an exam by your veterinarian beginning at 6-9 weeks old to determine if your puppy is healthy and to begin necessary vaccines. Your puppy will need an exam and booster vaccine every 3 weeks until 16 weeks of age. The puppy’s mom gives her puppies maternal antibodies to help protect them in their first weeks of life, but every puppy’s antibody levels will decline at different rates. We know that the maternal antibodies decline to a low enough level where a vaccine is crucial sometime between 6-15 weeks. In order to make sure your puppy is protected, make sure to visit the veterinarian every 3 weeks, and be sure they get their final vaccine after 15 weeks old and then annually.

Q Why does my puppy need to be dewormed?

A A large percentage of puppies have intestinal parasites often referred to as worms. Fecal floats and direct smears are very important tests to try to detect the microscopic eggs

or organisms. Some low grade parasite infestations can go undetected, and the puppy may not be showing any clinical signs. If the parasites go untreated, the puppy can become very sick and have diarrhea (possibly with blood), weight loss, vomiting, and are at risk for becoming dehydrated. It is very safe and inexpensive to treat for the most common worms. Fecal floats are necessary to detect if any additional dewormer is needed (for instance, with tapeworms or coccidia).

Q When do I need to begin flea prevention?

A In North Carolina, flea infestations are a big problem. Your veterinarian will examine your puppy to determine the right time to start flea prevention, but generally, once the puppy is 2lbs. and at least 7 weeks old there are a couple of veterinary approved products that can be used. At our hospital, we provide the first flea prevention complimentary based on a discussion with the owner to establish the safest product for each individual puppy. Besides being a nuisance, fleas can cause skin irritation, anemia, and when ingested, can lead to a tapeworm infestation.

Q Will my puppy need a heartworm test?

A We start most of our puppies on heartworm prevention at the second visit (around 9-12 weeks old). A heartworm test is not necessary when you start heartworm prevention as a puppy. Pets that have been kept up to date on heartworm prevention generally do not have to be tested for the first time until their annual appointment, one year after their final puppy vaccines.

See ad for Animal Hospital of Lewisville on page 55.