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***Wellness - care - daily observing.***

Because of your passion for your dog, your dog is much less just a dog or just a pet and far more a member of your family.

Like humans, diseases are an important part of daily caring and then for your dog.

You are an important link in the medical care of your dog.

Information provided can help you as an owner to be a good steward of your dog, to identify and learn about the treatment options available for common dog diseases you can do yourself – but for what you don't know... see your vet.

You should ask yourself - could I help my dog to recover from common dog diseases?

Do I know the warning signs of the most common canine diseases and disorders?

Realize your dog depend on **you** for its existence and quality of life. Preventive care of dogs, their wellness and care, is very important since most dogs have short lives compared to humans and disease processes appear sooner than you expect.

A complicating factor that adds to rapid progression of any disease is a dog's ability to hide illness from you.

Your dog cannot tell you how it feels and if you do not look for visual symptoms every day, and know your dog it might be too late to save your dog's life, then the disease could have entrenched itself or it will be difficult and costly to correct.

### **What are the steps you can take to increase your dog's quality and length of life?**

It all starts with awareness.

Observing daily for symptoms of diseases.

This anyone can and must do ... observe ... for signs of disease such as lethargy, changes in appetite, excessive licking - itching, dog hair loss, cough, worms, diarrhoea and vomiting among others.

Daily watch your dog eat, breathe, urinate, defecate, moving and find out about possible skin infections.

#### **Eating.**

Since dental diseases are so prevalent watch as it eats for any signs of listlessness and not eating as normally do - difficulty chewing – odour – swelling - pawing at its muzzle.

#### **Breathing.**

When your dog is at rest – count the number of times it breathes per minute (watch it for 15 seconds and multiply that number by 4).

A typical dog breathes 30-40 times per minute, although this can be variable based on breed, exercise and external temperature.

The important thing to watch for is an increase in its respiratory rate over a period of time.

Trend this on a piece of paper so you can see this trend as it gets going.

This can be a subtle but very important parameter to measure since an increase here can be for many different reasons.

#### **Urination.**

Look for any change in habits here, particularly the following -  
Urinating more often or in greater amounts than normal.

Urinating small amounts frequently.

Straining to urinate.

Inability to urinate.

Licking at genitals.

In female dogs it can be difficult to assess some of these parameters, so try to pay close attention when she squats to urinate.

### **Defecation.**

Again, any significant change - continual diarrhoea of any type - straining to defecate - licking at anus rubbing backside "scooting" any blood on faeces – worm in faeces.

### **Walking – gait - movement.**

Obvious lameness is readily noticed.

Also look for a dog that is leaning more towards one leg or the other, tires easily after walking or playing, is slow at getting up after resting, or is reluctant to go up or down any type of elevation like stairs or jumping into a vehicle.

### **Skin diseases.**

Dogs don't scratch for nothing – something is causing the itch.

### **Now that you have observed your dog's daily habits.**

Learn to examine for problems that are not so apparent.

The best way to catch common dog health problems before they become a major health issue is to schedule six monthly, yearly and or three yearly visits to your veterinarian.

### **Regular vet visit for examination.**

Regular full spectrum diagnostic tests - faecal and blood panel test for worms, bacteria and viruses will reveal beforehand any unseen problems - get your vets advice.

### **Realize this is a major part of awareness and caring.**

These tests can also be timed when it is due for vaccines - 6 monthly, yearly or 3 yearly.

During this wellness examination, your vet will go through a detailed examination checklist.

Based on these examination findings everything that is normal or abnormal will be exposed.

### **Daily physical self-examination during your contact with your dog.**

Make it part of your day to *thoroughly* inspect the body of your dog - if you find any abnormalities contact your vet.

Leading causes of dog diseases and conditions are various skin allergies - ear infections - stomach upsets - bladder infections - benign tumours - arthritis or other joint diseases - eye infections - enteritis (dog diarrhoea or intestinal inflammation - canine hypothyroidism.

### **Consistent problems you need to be attendant to.**

Dental disease.

This is by far the most common problem we encounter during a physical exam.

It is overlooked by almost all dog owners due to the difficulty in examining a dog's oral cavity and lack of awareness as to its importance.

The importance of good dental hygiene for your dog cannot be overemphasized.

It is the source of needless suffering and disease, and is completely preventable.

### **Are your dog's teeth healthy?**

You should also pay close attention to your dog's body language and actions.

If the dog display any of the following, it may not be in top dental health;

Halitosis (nastier breath than usual), extreme drooling, trouble swallowing, chattering teeth, hesitation to eat, tilting her head while eating and pawing at their mouth.

If you notice any of these signs, try sticking to a good dental regimen for a week.

Teeth cleaning by your vet might be so important and by getting your dog's teeth cleaned at an early age you might prevent anaesthesia.

### **Arthritis – joint problems.**

This insidious problem sneaks up on dogs as they age or earlier with strenuous exercise.

A dog that appear a little stiff or doesn't walk as long or as fast as it used to, or is not quite as active as it used to be, can seemingly become debilitated overnight.

It is now in obvious pain, is not eating, and oftentimes cannot use its rear legs.

In reality, this problem did not occur overnight.

You missed the subtle signs of its progression because your dog hid them from you.

This arthritic problem needs to be addressed as your dog reaches middle age and before the problem progresses.

### **Degenerative Joint Disease – DJD.**

Some larger and older dogs are prone to degenerative joint disease, a progressive, incurable disorder that restricts your dog's everyday movement and activities.

At its worst stages, DJD results in permanent lameness and can really only be helped by pain management.

More importantly, make sure your dog's weight is under control, because joint diseases can be very common in certain breeds and can nearly always cause lameness and may not be reversible.

Some of these diseases are dog hip dysplasia, osteochondrosis and elbow dysplasia.

### **Obesity - nutrition.**

Obese dogs are prone to an array of diseases – mostly dogs that do not actively work or in conditioning.

Important problem areas ones are arthritis, sugar diabetes (diabetes mellitus) and liver disease (hepatic lipidosis).

You might need to get your vets advice in proper feeding or prescribed diets.

The diet your dog should be on, no matter whether it is healthy or ill, should not be decided by advice from an outlet store or feed store.

Their main goal is to sell you food, mostly based on marketing, and not tailor made to your dog's specific needs and your vet's advice will be very important.

### **Parasites - external.**

Every dog owner should watch for these dog symptoms if you believe that a parasite might be the cause.

In general, it is best to consult your veterinarian when choosing flea and tick preventatives for your dog.

**Fleas** are one of the most common parasites pet owners must face. Begin by bathing your dog with a flea preventative or dip or spray application, then apply the flea repellent recommended by your vet.

**Ticks** love to feast on the blood of mammals and tend to hang out near ground level until they sense a shadow, vibration or heat, which find a suitable place on the dog, the tick dives right through the skin and gorges itself.

Their saliva can cause inflammations on the skin, but a more troubling problem is an infestation of several ticks, which can lead to anemia.

In extremely bad cases, the poison in a tick's saliva can cause paralysis, Lyme disease with fever.

You should apply a flea and tick repellent recommended by your vet to your dog's coat on a monthly basis if you live in an area where ticks in dogs is a problem.

**Mosquitoes** can also be fatal for dogs since they're carriers for heartworms and can infect your dog if she's not on a heartworm preventative.

**Dog ear mites** - Dark brown or black wax can be an indicator of dog ear mites.

You can confirm this by running a cotton ball over the outer part of your dog's ears, then holding the cotton ball against a dark piece of paper under a bright light.

If you see any movement, your pup has ear mites.

Speak with your vet to prescribe stronger washes and medications to get rid of the mites and their eggs as well as any secondary yeast infection they may have created.

### **Worms.**

Roundworms - The most common worms are roundworms which can be avoided using regular worm preventative.

The symptoms are "spaghetti stool" (faeces that look like spaghetti), vomiting, or diarrhoea.

Hookworms are intestinal parasites that can cause anaemia by sucking blood through the internal organs.

As a result, diarrhoea, weakness, and weight loss can occur.

Hookworms are extremely easy for your dog or puppy to contract—they can move through their pads or belly into the body from the soil or grass or can be ingested.

Heartworms (if you live in the area this disease is a problem - transmitted through mosquitoes and grow inside the heart until they completely block heart functions and lead to heart failure)

are one of the most well-known internal parasites and can be easily prevented with a regular heartworm treatment.

Symptoms are coughing, weight loss, and fainting can be indicators of heartworms.

Be aware that if the winter in your area was mild, there could be more mosquitoes and cases of heartworm in dogs.

### **Dog diseases and symptoms caused by germs and viruses.**

There are several types of viruses that can negatively influence your dog's health.

**Blastomyces** - keep out of shady areas beneath bird-packed trees, because lack of germ-killing sunlight makes those spots a hotbed for germ activity.

It may cause your dog bronchitis, pneumonia, or skin sores.

**Streptococci bacteria** - If you notice sores on your pup's skin that are raised and whitish or look as though they may contain pus, may have a strep infection.

**Rhabdovirus - the virus that causes rabies** – carried by rats other dogs.

**Leptospira** -keep your pup away from drinking from outdoor puddles which may contaminate bacteria.

Here vaccination is the best way of preventing disease and infection.

Many vets now offer extended release versions of more common vaccines.

Most vaccines are administered during the first year of life.

After that you should need only annual or 3 year renewals.

### **A few common viral and bacterial diseases and symptoms.**

**Parvovirus** - spread through infected faecal matter, pups that have a nasty habit of eating other dogs' faeces are at high risk.

Symptoms are diarrhoea, stomach pain, vomiting, and lethargy. Dogs that go too long without treatment of symptoms such as dehydration can result in shock and death.

**Distemper** - this disorder causes dog symptoms such as trigger seizures, convulsions, poor behaviour and even blindness. Symptoms are fever, fatigue, vomiting and discharge from eyes and nose.

**Kennel cough** - can be distinguished from normal coughing through its dry, shallow honk.

It was named because the disease is transmitted best in close quarters with poor ventilation, but many kennels today take great steps to preventing such conditions.

**Rabies** - dog rabies can turn your once sweet and harmless pet into a ferocious predator.

There is no effective treatment for the virus, so vaccinations are especially important for rabies.

It transmitted by saliva, usually through bites from wild animal such as meercats - rat's wild cats.

If your dog is bitten by an animal you feel may carry the virus, wash the wound with soap and water (wear gloves!) and take her to the vet for a booster.

**Tetanus** - it is common in nearly all warm-blooded animals and is most commonly contracted through the presence of soil in a deep wound.

If the infection goes unnoticed and untreated, it can cause spasms, lockjaw, and even death.

Routinely inspect your pup for cuts, scrapes and wounds are important to prevent tetanus.

**Canine Lyme disease** - carried by ticks, it is most common in heavily wooded areas in which ticks have access to a number of different animal hosts.

Tick transmits the Lyme bacteria from the mouse through its saliva. Symptoms are fever, lameness, and lethargy and weight loss.

To prevent the disease, use regular tick preventative for your dog, but also make sure you run your hands through her coat and inspect her thoroughly after outdoor walks.

### **Scars/wounds.**

Scars/wounds can mean so many different things.

Dogs can cut themselves on their dog houses, get the scars during hunting, and yard accidents happen too sometimes.

Just because an American Pit Bull Terrier has scars doesn't mean the dog was used as a fighting dog.

Make your own ointments for wounds.

Aqua cream – half

chamfer half

Mercurochrome half

Tissue oil half