

Your complete puppy guide

Everything you need
to know to help you
get started



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Buying a puppy



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What to consider?

Bringing a puppy home is an exciting time for any household (who doesn't want to hear the pitter-patter of tiny paws?), but it's important to make sure you're fully prepared and informed on what to expect when they walk through your front door for the first time.

Whether you've owned dogs before or this is new territory for you, we've put together everything you need to know about welcoming a puppy into your life!

Before getting a dog you need to consider:

- How much do you know about the breeder?
- Have you met the puppy's mother and/or father?
- Are there any health risks associated with the breed?
- **Is your home puppy proof?**
- **How do you toilet train a puppy?**
- **Do you need puppy insurance?**
- Has the puppy been treated for worms and fleas?"
- Has the puppy been neutered?



You should also consider the following before purchasing a puppy:

- Is the breeder a registered **Kennel Club member?**
- Does the breeder have a **legal breeding licence?**
- Is the puppy over 8 weeks old?
- Has the puppy been "socialised"? Is it home reared and exposed to everyday sights and sounds?
- Has the puppy been vaccinated and microchipped?

Is there room for a puppy in your home and your life?



If you want a puppy, you should think about whether you can give them your TLC



Time

Puppies need a lot of attention and this doesn't change as they get older. Can you give them enough time?



Lifestyle

Can you fit in a puppy around your current lifestyle? Remember that different breeds have different temperaments, so you need to find a breed that will work for you.



Cost

It's not just the one-off cost of buying a puppy that's expensive. It's also vet bills, kennelling costs and food costs. Are you able to provide what your puppy needs?



Day-to-day

A puppy needs regular feeding, regular exercise and a comfortable space to sleep and play.



Home

You should only consider buying a puppy if you have enough room in your home (and garden if you have one) and the time to care for them.



Plan

You also need to provide veterinary care for your puppy, as well as training and socialisation with other dogs and humans. Make a puppy plan to help schedule play time, short walks, feeding and the all-important toilet training!



Where to start when looking for a puppy?

Are you buying a puppy from a breeder or someone you know?

Are you rescuing a puppy from a shelter?

If you decide that adopting a puppy from a shelter is the option for you, then have a look for the dog shelters in your area, visit their websites and get in touch to check out their requirements for adoption. Below are some of the top dog shelters in the UK:

- [RSPCA](#)
- [Dogs Trust](#)
- [All Dogs Matter](#)
- [Battersea Dogs & Cats Home](#)

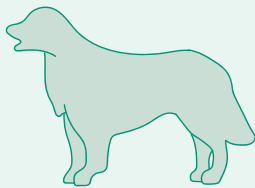
Due to a landmark piece of legislation known as '[Lucy's Law](#)', since April 2020, puppies and kittens can no longer be sold by third-parties. Lucy's Law means that you can now only adopt puppies from rescue centres or buy them direct from the breeder.

Dog breeds with health issues



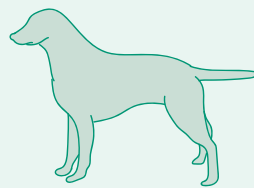
Dog breeds with health issues

If you'd like your very own pedigree pup, then remember that there are some hereditary diseases, which can be passed down from the parents, such as:



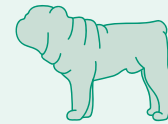
Golden Retrievers

Golden Retrievers can be susceptible to a skin disease known as 'Canine Atopic Dermatitis', which causes skin irritation. The breed is also known to suffer from hip dysplasia.



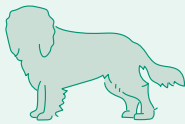
Labrador Retrievers

Labradors also suffer from hip dysplasia and other issues with their joints, including 'Osteochondritis Dissecans', which affects their elbows and shoulders.



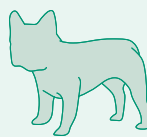
English Bulldogs

English Bulldogs can suffer with breathing problems and various skin infections. Their large shoulders – even in puppies – also means that some mothers struggle to give birth naturally.



Cavalier King Charles Spaniels

It's not uncommon for Cavalier King Charles Spaniel's to suffer from cataracts. The breed can also suffer from heart conditions.



French Bulldogs

French Bulldogs and other short-faced breeds often suffer with a breathing issue known as Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome (BOAS).



Get further information from the **Kennel Club**, the breeder or your vet.

Adopting a puppy



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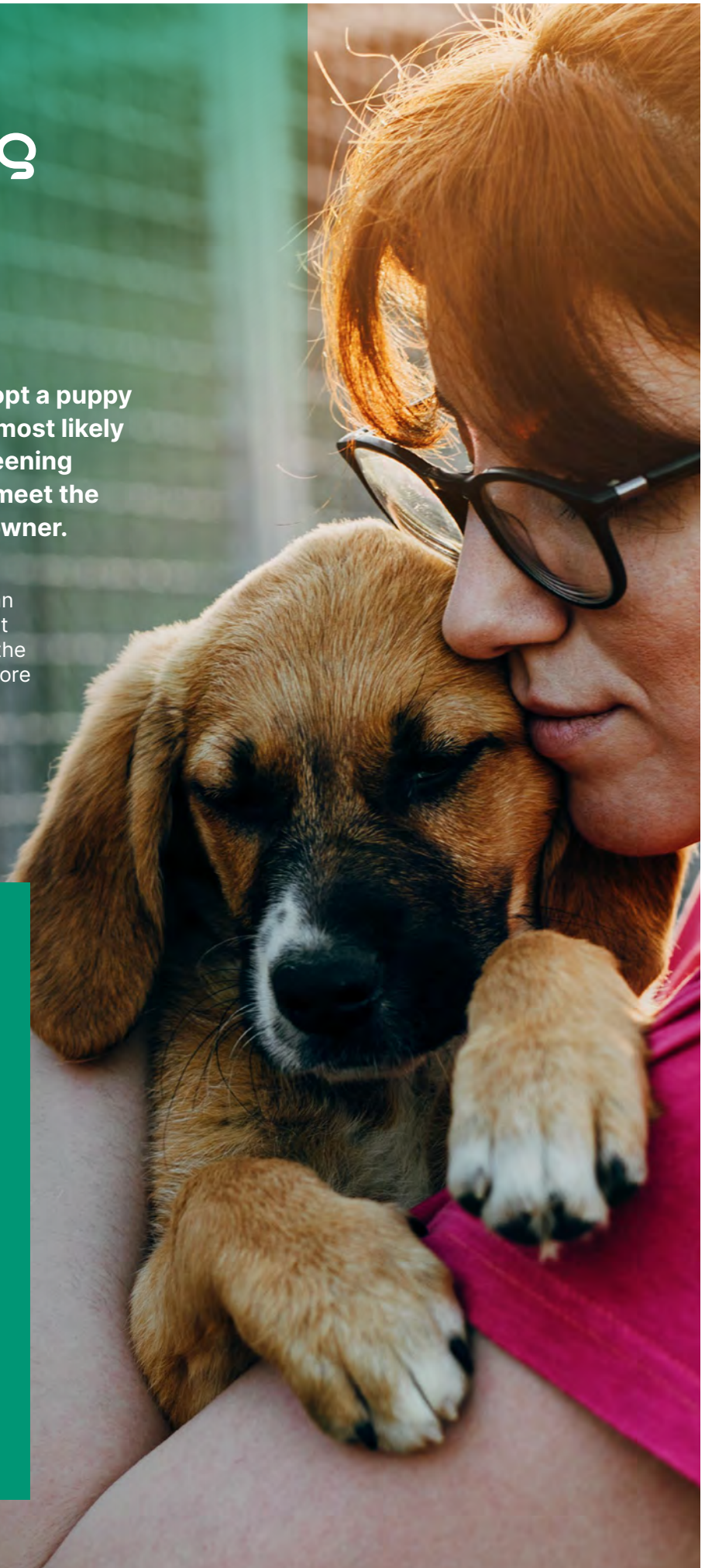
Adopting a puppy

If you've decided to adopt a puppy from a shelter, you will most likely have to complete a screening process to ensure you meet the requirements as a pet owner.

Dog shelters will be more than accommodating and will most likely encourage you to visit the puppy you want to adopt before taking them home.

Even though shelters are required to vaccinate and microchip dogs and puppies that are up for adoption, make sure you ask the following questions:

- Has the puppy been vaccinated and if so, for what?
- Is the puppy microchipped?
- Are there any pre-existing illnesses the puppy has or might be susceptible to?



Buying a puppy



Buying a puppy

Dog breeders must vaccinate and microchip puppies before they leave for a new home. If the breeder is a registered member of the Kennel Club, the puppy must also be registered.

If you want to buy a puppy from a breeder, then you can find registered UK breeders via the **Kennel Club**.

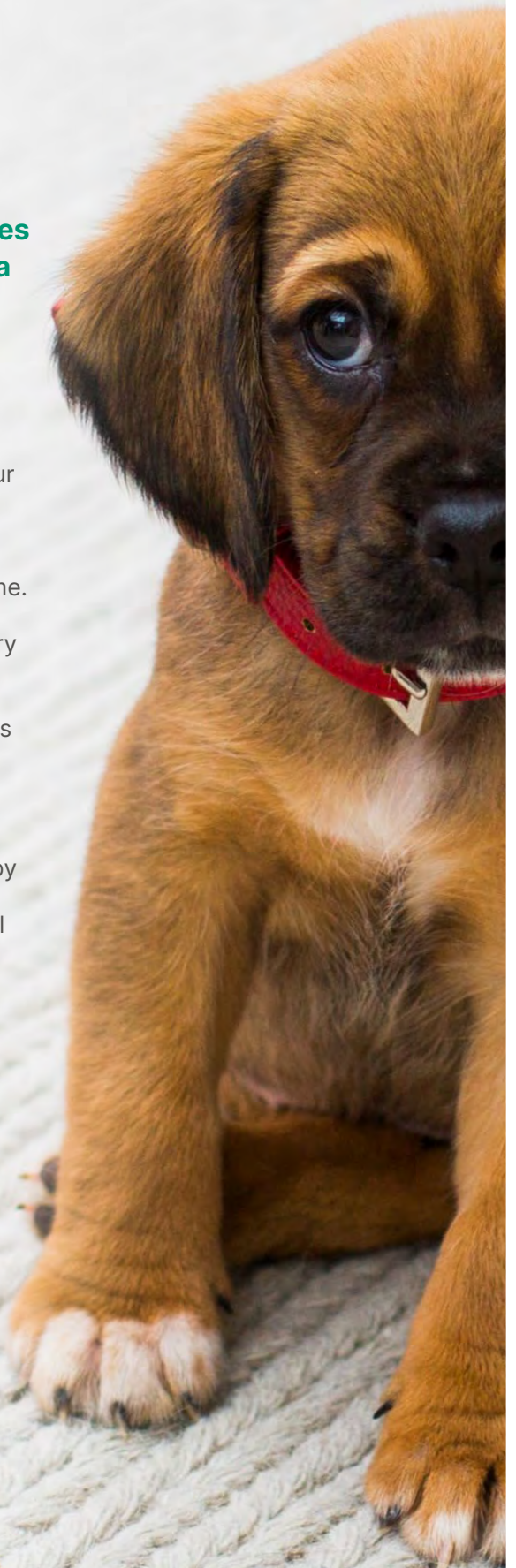
Since October 2018, dog breeders in England **must have a licence** if they either run a business that breeds or sells dogs, or if they breed more than five litters in a year and sell any of the puppies.

Don't be afraid to ask the breeder the following:

- Can you visit the puppy where it was born? If so, try and visit more than once.
- Can you see the puppy with the mother and siblings?
- What is the health history of the mother and father?
- Will the puppy be wormed before you take them home?
- If the puppy is a pedigree, can you see the family tree?
- Can you return the puppy if there are any issues?

A good dog breeder should openly answer your questions and be open to answering any further questions you have once you bring your puppy home. Be wary of breeders that do not disclose any or very little information about the puppy's parents, any potential health conditions and vaccinations.

If the breeder refuses to show you where the puppy was bred, its mother with the puppy or wants to sell the puppy in a different location to where it was bred, then walk away.



How to puppy proof your house



Puppies are naturally inquisitive and boisterous, which could lead to serious injury or even illness.

Here are 8 top tips

on how to make your house safer for your new arrival:



1

Young puppies love to chew when they are teething! Keep wires out of reach and move or use a pet repellent spray on furniture and other items to prevent bite marks. Offer them a suitable chew toy to help distract them from the pain.

2

Chocolate can be dangerous if eaten by puppies and dogs. It contains theobromine, a powerful stimulant that is toxic to most pets. Sweets, cakes and cookies can also upset their stomachs and lead to diarrhoea and vomiting. You can read more about dogs and chocolate [here](#).

3

Never give your puppy or dog cooked bones as they can splinter and cause serious internal injury. Raw bones such as chicken or wings or lamb can help keep your puppy's teeth and gums healthy!

4

Block any escape routes in your garden such as a hole in the fence or gap in your gate to prevent your puppy from running off. Keep any rooms which you don't want the puppy to go into shut.



8 tips continued...

5

Puppies love to sneak around when your back is turned. Keep common household cleaning agents such as bleach, disinfectants, drain cleaner, oven cleaner, paint, gasoline, and rat poison stored away safely and securely.

6

Certain house and garden plants are poisonous to cats and dogs including lilies, philodendron, dieffenbachia, elephant ear, eucalyptus, spider plants, azalea, ivy, amaryllis, pyracantha, oleander, boxwood, aloe vera and plant bulbs. Keep poisonous house plants out of reach from your puppy.

7

Avoid using chemicals on your lawn as this is where your puppy will want to go toilet! If you have to use chemicals or sprays, read the instructions carefully and keep your puppy off the lawn.



8

Puppies grow quickly! Collars and harnesses will soon become too small, so you will have to invest in a few different sizes over time. Regularly check that your puppy's collar and harness is not too loose or too tight as that could cause asphyxiation or injury.

If you want more information about what to look out for around the home, then check out our article on how to puppy-proof your house [right here!](#)



The first few nights

It's exciting when you're finally bringing your puppy home but remember that this can be an overwhelming time for them.

Having never spent time on their own, your puppy will be missing its mother and litter mates. A new environment can be very stressful for your puppy, so keeping them close to you for the first few nights will help them settle.

Move your puppy's crate or bed into your room. If you don't want them in your room permanently, move their bed into another room over time so they can adjust.

Don't be tempted to bring your puppy into bed with you for the first few nights as this could encourage bad bedtime behaviour.



Training your puppy



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Training your puppy

As soon as you've brought your puppy home, you can get stuck-in and start training!

Bear in mind that puppies have a short attention span and tire easily, so keep your training short but frequent.

Always use gentle teaching techniques and lots of positive reward reinforcement such as treats, verbal and physical attention. These rewards are also a great way to motivate your puppy, encouraging them to want to follow your commands.



The basics of puppy training

One of a puppy's first training objectives might be to 'Sit' or 'Stay' which can be learnt from as young as 7 – 8 weeks old. Aim to give your puppy the command to 'Sit' once and reward your puppy into the correct position. Once your puppy has performed the command, instantly reward them with a treat or praise!

Your puppy may not obey your first command, but don't worry! This could be because you're progressing too quickly. If this is the case, then slow it down so your puppy can keep up. If you need to repeat your command to your puppy, they will learn that it's OK to receive several repeated commands.

When your puppy starts to obey your command readily, hide the treat in the palm of your hand and do the actions only. When the puppy performs the task, give them the reward. If your puppy does what is asked after a short period of time, you can then reward with a food treat once every few times.

You can then slowly take the food treats away when your dog is performing the tasks without them and replace them with praise only. Make sure that they know they're a good boy or girl!



If you wish to socialise your puppy with others and teach your puppy commands around real-life distractions, then you could consider taking your puppy to training classes. Attending these classes will help you learn how to prevent

problems before they start and the trainer will be able to provide you with specialist advice. You will get to meet other owners and witness the behaviour of their puppies as well.

A misbehaving puppy

Naughty puppies can be quite testing at times, but you should make an effort to avoid punishing a young dog.

Punishing your pup for something they've done isn't always necessary and can lead them to avoid people at a time when forming bonds and attachments is absolutely critical.

By keeping a close eye on them, you can help prevent

problems pro-actively and set up an environment for your puppy to succeed.

If you do need to tell your puppy off, then a verbal "No" or a loud noise is usually enough to grab their attention, so that you can correct their behaviour.

How much time should I spend training my puppy?

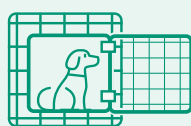
As your puppy's attention span is small, consider staggering your puppy's training throughout the day for about 5 minutes at a time, maybe three or four times a day.

Some puppies can get bored of training if it goes on for too long. If you have people living with you, make sure you involve everyone with the training of your puppy so that you can keep it consistent!



Crate training

Crate training is a great way to teach your puppy good behaviours from a young age. Teaching your dog when to use their crate can be useful for everything from mealtimes, bedtime and keeping them safe. Here's a few steps on how to successfully crate train your puppy!



Step 1

First thing's first, you need the right size crate for your puppy. A crate should be big enough for your puppy to stand up and move around in. Finding a large enough crate for your puppy should be easy but remember that they grow up quickly!



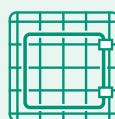
Step 2

Place some blankets and a favourite toy in the crate to make it comfortable for your puppy. A puppy's crate should be their safe place, so keep the door open throughout the day.



Step 3

Keep a water bowl in the crate so your puppy can have a drink when they want to. Start giving them treats when they go to explore their crate and you can gradually build up to feeding them their meals in there.



Step 4

Once they're comfortable with spending time in their crate, start closing the door on them. Keep the door closed for just a few seconds to start with as your puppy may not like it at first. Over time, you'll be able to keep the door closed for longer.

What are the benefits of crate training your puppy?

- Crate training is great at helping curb your puppy's chewing.
- Crate training allows you to include your puppy in all aspects of family life and still maintain control of your home.
- Crate training gives your puppy a safe haven. Avoid using the crate for punishment.

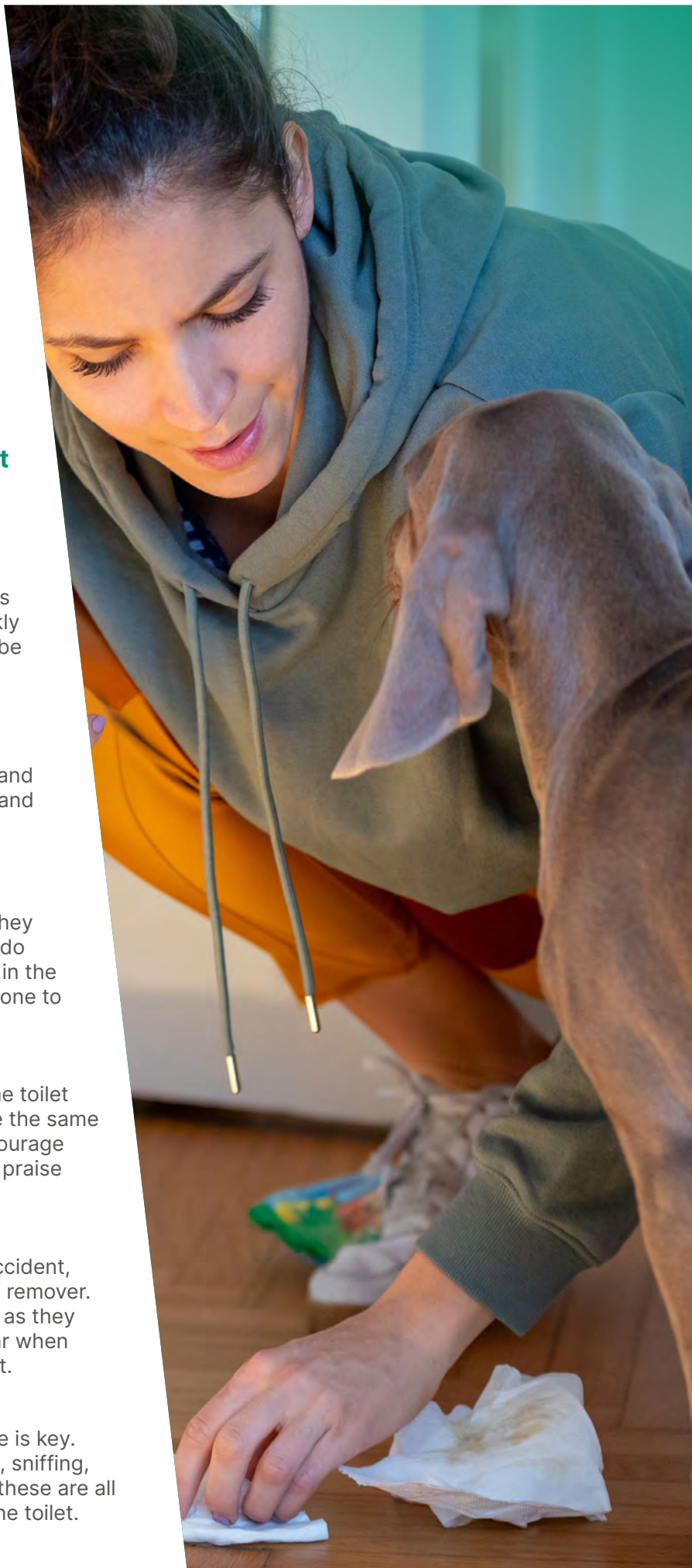


Toilet training


Being consistent is the key to toilet training your puppy – that and being able to predict the future!

Your puppy can't tell you when they need to go, so don't expect them to. Accidents are bound to happen, so as long as you stay calm, clean up quickly and keep persisting, your puppy will be happily housetrained in no time.

- 1** In the morning, take your puppy outside to the toilet and praise your puppy verbally and with treats if they do their business outside.
- 2** Don't blame your puppy if they go to the toilet indoors but do praise them if you wake up in the morning and they haven't gone to the toilet overnight.
- 3** Carry the puppy to the same toilet location every time and use the same phrase or command to encourage your puppy. Make sure you praise every success.
- 4** If your puppy has had an accident, clean it up with a pet odour remover. Don't discipline your puppy as they may learn to hide out of fear when they need to go to the toilet.
- 5** Your puppy's body language is key. Keep an eye out for circling, sniffing, and walking backwards as these are all signs that they may need the toilet.



Why do puppies chew?

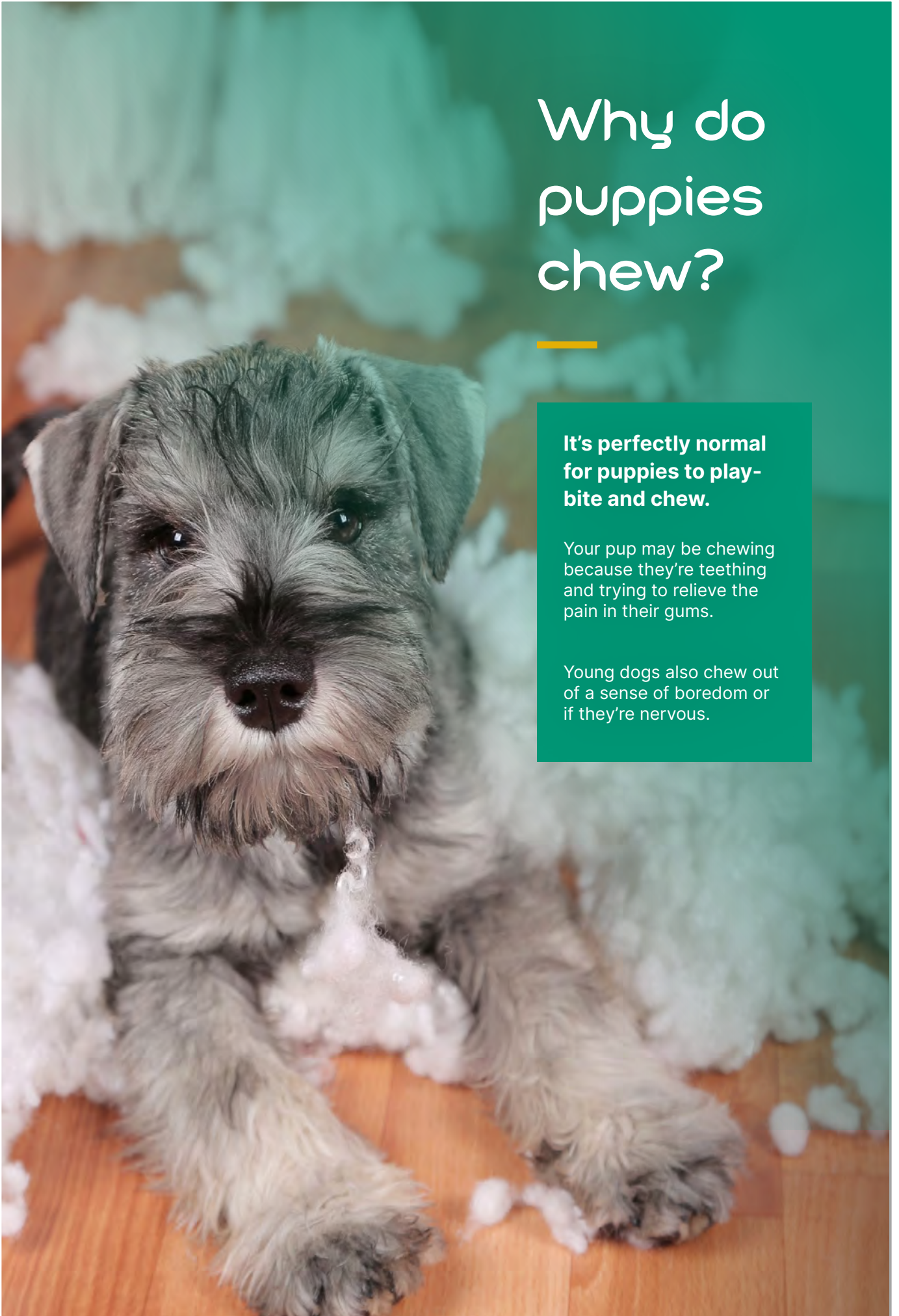


Why do puppies chew?

It's perfectly normal for puppies to play-bite and chew.

Your pup may be chewing because they're teething and trying to relieve the pain in their gums.

Young dogs also chew out of a sense of boredom or if they're nervous.



How can chewing be treated?

As your puppy grows, the chances are that they will start chewing less and less. In order to stop your puppy from chewing early, you need to figure out why your puppy is chewing.

Teething is painful for pups and much like young babies, they will naturally want to gnaw and chew to help soothe their gums. It's important that your puppy doesn't chew on things that they're not supposed to or anything that may cause them harm.

Give your puppy alternatives to chew, such as:

1 Chew toys

2 Rope toys

3 Kong toys filled with treats

Make sure that valuable objects that you don't want your puppy to chew are kept out of reach in the early stages. Puppies also chew because they're nervous or over-tired, so let them have some time in their crate to rest where you can keep an eye on them.



Feeding your puppy



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Feeding your puppy

Puppies will be dependent on their mother's milk until they are around 7 or 8 weeks old. Your puppy will then begin the process of feeding themselves, known as weaning.

If you're buying your puppy from a breeder, then they should already be weaned from the mother's milk and gradually moved onto solids such as specialist puppy foods.





How often should I feed my puppy?

Your puppy will grow up fast! Growing pups will have at least double the nutritional requirements of a full-grown adult dog, so you need to make sure that your puppy is getting what it needs.

How much you should feed your puppy will depend on their size and breed. Be careful not to overfeed your puppy and make sure that they're getting the right food and nutrients that they need to grow into a healthy dog. Your vet will be able to advise you on how much and what type of food you should be giving your pup.

How much should they have?

Puppies aged between
2–3 months



4 meals
a day

When you first take your puppy home, you should be feeding them at least four times a day. Puppies at this age grow rapidly, so they need a diet of special puppy food to support that growth.

Puppies aged between
4–6 months



3 meals
a day

As your puppy approaches the 6-month stage, you should be able to take them down to three meals a day, although the quantity of each meal can be larger. Again, consult with your vet about what your puppy should be eating and how much.

Puppies aged
6 months+



2 meals
a day

At the 6-month stage, your puppy's growth will start to slow. Some small breeds of dog will even be close to finishing growing. At this point, it should be fine to put your puppy onto a twice daily diet which they should be able to maintain for the rest of their life.

When can I take my puppy outside?



When can I take my puppy outside?

You may be quite nervous about taking your puppy outside before they're fully vaccinated and that's perfectly understandable.

Most vets will recommend that you wait until two weeks after their last vaccination booster until they can go outside.

When your puppy is born, they receive some passive immunity from their mother.

These maternal antibodies help protect the young pup from illness and diseases. However, this immunity wears off over time, meaning your young dog will need to be fully vaccinated before they integrate with unfamiliar dogs and explore the outside world.

Regular exercise for your puppy

Keeping your puppy active helps them stay healthy, lets them burn off any excess energy and allows them to settle down easier in an evening!

Puppies are bundles of energy, so plenty of exercise is important! Regular exercise keeps your puppy healthy, lets them burn off excess energy and allows you to strengthen the bond between owner and dog.

If your puppy hasn't finished their course of two-stage vaccinations, then they shouldn't be taken for walks outside. Instead, you should get them used to walking around on the lead or playing fetch, whether that's indoors or out in the garden.

Once your puppy is fully vaccinated, you should be able to take them out for short walks at least twice a day.

Regular exercise is really important for all puppies, especially energetic breeds such as the Border Collie or Siberian Husky.



What is socialisation?



What is socialisation?

Helping your puppy to develop relationships with other dogs and humans in their environment is a process known as 'socialisation'.

Socialising your puppy from an early age, will help them develop into a calm and well-rounded dog.

Your puppies confidence will grow, allowing them to cope with new situations without becoming overly anxious or stressed.

Socialisation is crucial in the early stages of a dog's life and helps form their overall temperament and personality.



How to socialise your puppy

Socialising your puppy while they're young, will help them to interact with their surroundings, people and other pets! The more positive experiences a puppy has in this time, the less anxious they tend to be as they grow older.

With that said, don't put too much pressure on yourself to socialise your puppy. In those first few months, it won't do any harm to meet other dogs, pets and people in short periods. A new puppy always seems to bring household visitors, so use this chance to get your pup used to being around people.

Your puppy may show signs of anxiety at first when they're meeting new people and much older dogs. Try to comfort them when they do by stroking and soothing them and if this doesn't work, then take them away for a while. They can always try again another time!

If your puppy hasn't yet been vaccinated, then you should only let them socialise with dogs that you know are healthy and fully up to date with their vaccinations.



If your puppy is happy making new friends, then make sure that you give them plenty of praise.

Building your puppy's confidence alone

Puppies need a lot of attention during their first few months and can worry if left on their own for long periods. Building your puppy's confidence is important in helping to reduce stress.

If you're working from home, then your puppy may be used to you being around all the time. This is great for creating a bond between you and your young pup, but it's important that they don't become too reliant on your company and start to become more confident on their own.

Make sure your puppy gets some 'alone time' regularly. To start with, 15 minutes in their crate or safe area with some water, treats and their favourite toys should be enough for them to get used to being alone. After a while, you should be able to leave them alone without issue for longer periods of time.



Vaccinating your puppy



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Vaccinating your puppy

You must get your puppy vaccinated when they are between 8 and 10 weeks old.

Puppy vaccinations are usually done in two-stages, with the second round of vaccinations happening around two weeks later. Your vet will be able to give you some advice on the best time to get your puppy vaccinated.

What diseases will my puppy be protected against?

Your puppy's vaccinations should protect them against diseases and conditions such as:

- Canine Distemper
- Kennel Cough
- Canine parvovirus
- Parainfluenza
- Leptospirosis

Once your puppy has been vaccinated, you will need to schedule in booster shots every 6 – 12 months to keep them up to date.

If you've adopted your puppy from a rescue shelter, then they should be vaccinated before coming home with you. Be sure to ask your rescue centre if your puppy is fully vaccinated before paying your adoption fee.



Fleas, ticks and worms

Your young dog is bound to pick up a parasite at some point during their life, so it's best to know what you're looking out for and what you should do about fleas, ticks and worms.

Fleas

Fleas are blood-sucking insects that can move from pet to pet (and humans in very rare cases). Flea eggs can live in your carpets, gaps in floors and walls and can stay dormant for months at a time.

The best way to try to prevent your dog from getting fleas is to start a regular course of flea treatment. There are lots of different types of flea treatment that you can buy from your local supermarket including:

- Spot on flea treatments (liquids)
- Tablets
- Combs
- Powders
- Flea collars

Which works best for you and your puppy is up to you! Your vet should be able to point you in the right direction and tell you when you should start treating your dog for fleas, which is usually around 6 to 8 weeks of age.



Ticks

Ticks look like small egg-shaped spiders and can attach themselves to your pet. They're often found in long grass that dogs love to run around in. Ticks can be hard to spot and don't just pose a threat to dogs. Bacterial infections such as Lyme disease and Babesiosis can be caused by ticks.

Make sure you check over your puppy or dog for ticks after you've been walking through long grass. You should be feeling for small bumps on your pet's skin around their head, neck, ears and feet. The best way to remove a tick is by using special tick removing tools, rather than squeezing or pulling the tick by hand. This could result in squashing the tick, causing blood to go back into your puppy and increasing the risk of infection.

Tick collars, sprays and spot-on medications can be used to help stop ticks from feeding off your pet.



continued >

Fleas, ticks and worms

Worms



Puppies bought from breeders should be wormed before they leave their home.

Puppies can be wormed for the first time when they are about five weeks old. Puppies should then be wormed at eight weeks and 12 weeks old and then every three months from that point forward to help prevent them from picking up worms.

Signs that your puppy may have worms include:

- 'Scooting' or dragging their bottom
- Loss of fur
- Loss of weight
- Visible worms or eggs around their fur
- Diarrhoea or vomiting

The main types of worms that your puppy can pick up are roundworms, tapeworms and lungworms.

Roundworms

These look like spaghetti and can sometimes be transmitted before puppies are even born if the mother is already infected.

Tapeworms


The most common type of tapeworm uses fleas to transmit to their host. Puppies and dogs can pick up these worms while they're nibbling or grooming for fleas.

Lungworms

These live in your puppy's respiratory system and can be caught by dogs after eating grass or playing with toys that have been left outside for a long time.



Puppy insurance



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Puppy insurance

Getting a new puppy is an exciting time for anyone! But you never know what might happen – or when.

Pet insurance can provide you with a safety net against expensive vet fees if your puppy hurts themselves or becomes unwell.

With petGuard, you can get specialist **puppy insurance** that helps you with paying for your vet fees, emergency boarding costs if you've suffered an accident yourself and more!

petGuard
Serious pet insurance



Why choose petGuard?

Here's just some of the reasons to choose petGuard:



Option to pay
your vet bills
straight to
your vet



Interest-free
monthly
payments



10% multi-pet
discount when
insuring multiple
cats and dogs on
same level of cover



Over 37 years
of experience
protecting
puppies and
dogs



In-house UK
customer service
team that are
ready to help
you



Pet insurance
that you can
trust

You have the option of either our Accident Only cover to protect your puppy against injuries they might suffer, or our Accident & Illness cover to help pay for your vet bills for injury and illness.

You can then choose your annual vet fee limit of either:

- £3,000
- £6,000
- £12,000

You can take a look at some of the great benefits of our **[puppy insurance here!](#)**

Don't forget, [get a quote](#) for your puppy today you'll receive **20% off your first year of cover!**



Good luck!



From everyone at petGuard, we hope
you enjoy your new puppy



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Guardcover

Seriously good insurance

Protecting the UK's cyclists
photographers, musicians and
pets for over 40 years



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Serious cycle insurance

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www.cycleguard.co.uk



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musicGuard
Serious music insurance

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