**Caring for your pet**

We all know the saying “A dog is man’s best friend”. A dog is a loyal companion who never questions or doubts us. In return for a daily meal and some shelter he will give us unconditional love. We need to make sure we care for these trusted friends.

We should get to know where our local veterinary clinic is so that if our pet is ill we can take him there for treatment. If he is not eating or drinking and lying around he should be taken to the vet or clinic.

**Sterilisation**

We all need to be responsible pet owners. Taking your dog to be sterilised from six months of age will prevent the population of stray dogs escalating out of control.

Female dogs are spayed. Their uterus and ovaries are removed in an operation so they can no longer have puppies. A bitch can have a litter of puppies every 6-10 months.

Male dogs are castrated. Their testicles are removed and because they no longer have hormones circulating in their system, they make better pets. They will be less likely to roam the streets looking for a bitch on heat and less likely to be hit by a car or fight with other dogs.

**Vaccination**

There are many potential, fatal diseases which kill dogs if we don’t take adequate measures to vaccinate them as puppies and throughout adulthood. Vaccinating protects our pets from dying from these diseases. Puppies can be vaccinated from six weeks of age. The vaccine is repeated twice to give the puppy full immunity. They are vaccinated against Parvovirus, distemper, Infectious Hepatitis, Parainfluenza and a respiratory disease caused by Adenovirus type-2.

**Fleas and ticks**

Fleas and ticks are parasites commonly found in the environment. They jump onto our pets and can cause irritation to our pets and in some cases disease. Dogs should be treated regularly against ticks and fleas. Advice can be sought from a veterinarian or a local animal clinic as to which products can be used and how often. We should also deworm our puppies and dogs regularly to prevent them from getting sick and spreading the worms to humans.

**Diet**

Dogs should be fed proper balanced meals to keep them healthy. We should also take note that we can cause problems by feeding them the wrong things when we mean to do good. Large breed puppies should be fed a diet for large breed dogs. This diet is formulated with lower protein and calcium levels to slow growth thus reducing the changes of joint and bone problems while growing and later in life. By adding bones, milk or calcium supplement to a large breed puppy’s diet, we are causing problems for him. Feeding bones to dogs can cause problems when they get stuck in their gastro-intestinal tract, and should be avoided. It is important that dogs have clean, fresh water available to them at all times.

**Safety measures**

Dogs do not understand traffic or follow our rules. If we take them out it is very wise to have them on a leash so we can keep them out of harms way. We also want to be able to control them from getting into a fight with other dogs.

Let us respect and care for these creatures. They take care of us as best as they can, let us do the same for them – all creatures great and small!