

Avoiding rookie mistakes



Choose sensible and look after your new pet

Congratulations on your brand-new pet!

Bringing home a new puppy or kitten is incredibly exciting, but there's plenty you need to do to help them settle into their new home comfortably. When you first bring them home, you need to make sure everything is ready and set up for a warm welcome.

Pet care is not always straight forward, especially if this is your first pet. There's exercise, dietary requirements and regular vet checks to think about. This booklet is here to help you through the first few months of pet ownership and is full of moments where you can document your new pets' growth! Because as you'll soon find out, it's all about them.

You've just completed your first vet visit, and they've probably told you some great information on your new pet. So why don't you write it down now:

At our first vet visit, my new pet _____

was told _____

Fill in your new pet's details here

PASSPAWT

A U S T R A L I A

vets choice 

Name _____

Breed _____

Holder's Signature _____

Affix Photo _____

Sex M/F _____

Species _____

Date of Birth _____



Where to find:







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Visiting your local vet

Vet checks are an important part of keeping your new puppy or kitten happy, healthy and ready for their everyday adventures.

Your pet ages much more quickly than humans, so it's important you regularly check-in with their vet to ensure a long and happy life for your new best friend.

Your vet can help with advice on:

-  How to feed your new puppy or kitten properly
-  How to control parasites such as fleas, ticks and heartworm
-  Vaccinating and treatment plans
-  Desexing your pet
-  Socialisation and training
-  Treating your sick or injured pet

Vets are specialised in helping your furry friend. They have a wide range of specialised equipment and can usually offer all of the necessary diagnostic tests at their clinic.

If there's a serious problem, your vet might recommend a visit to a veterinary specialist or emergency centre who has particular expertise and more advanced diagnostic abilities such as CT and MRI machines, much like your doctor may do when you visit them.

After your first vet check, you will need to take your puppy or kitten in every three to four weeks, depending on the course of vaccinations your new pet needs. It is important that you follow the advice of your vet while your pet is young, as they are more susceptible to getting ill.

After your pet's first birthday, you will then only need to take them in for check-ups once a year, or if they get sick or injured.

My vet

Name

Address

Clinic name:

Tel:

Email:

Your next check-up for your new pet is on:

Second follow up:

Third follow up:

In the case of an emergency, most vets have arrangements to take care of your pet after hours. As with any after-hours service, this may cost more than you would pay during normal clinic opening hours, just as it does to call a locksmith or plumber in an after-hours emergency.



Vaccinating your new pet

Vaccinating your pets against preventable diseases is an important part of owning a pet. It helps reduce the risk of them becoming unwell from some severe, life-threatening diseases.

It is recommended that adult cats and dogs are vaccinated with core vaccines every 1–3 years. However, depending on where you live this might need to be more often.

How often to vaccinate

Puppies and kittens should be vaccinated with an initial course for all core diseases in three separate boosters at 6–8 weeks, 10–12 weeks and 16 weeks. Some vaccine manufacturers provide early finish vaccine schedules which allow two instead of three boosters, which can be discussed with your vet.

After your new puppy or kitten has received their initial course, they will require a booster 12 months later and then progress to an adult schedule.

Your vaccination plan

is due for their next round of vaccinations on:

6–8 week booster

10–12 week booster




16 week booster

12 month vaccine




Core vaccines

Core vaccines should be administered to all pets to protect them against severe, life-threatening disease. These vaccinations include:

Dogs

-  **Canine distemper virus**
-  **Canine adenovirus (hepatitis)**
-  **Canine parvovirus**



Cats

-  **Feline parvovirus (panleukopaenia or infectious enteritis)**
-  **Feline calicivirus**
-  **Feline herpesvirus (viral rhinotracheitis)**





Non-core vaccines

Non-core vaccines are required by pets who live in areas that put them at risk of contracting specific infections. They are administered annually and what type of non-core vaccine your pet needs depends on where your pet lives, its lifestyle, the amount of time it spends outdoors, as well as its age and general health. Types of non-core vaccines include:

Dogs

-  **Parainfluenza and Bordetella bronchiseptica (Canine Kennel Cough)**
-  **Leptospira interrogans (leptospirosis)**

Cats

-  **Feline leukaemia virus (FeLV)**
-  **Chlamydia felis**
-  **Bordetella bronchiseptica**
-  **Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV)**

How often and what type of vaccines your new pet needs is based on your unique situation and should be decided between you and your vet. There's no one size fits all approach.



Parasite Prevention

Preventing Ticks

In some areas of Australia, the paralysis tick is a familiar foe to pet owners. Found along the east coast, paralysis ticks can cause a debilitating and often deadly paralysis in pets that encounter them. Keeping an eye out for the signs of tick paralysis and taking steps to prevent ticks on your pet is important if you live in prone areas.

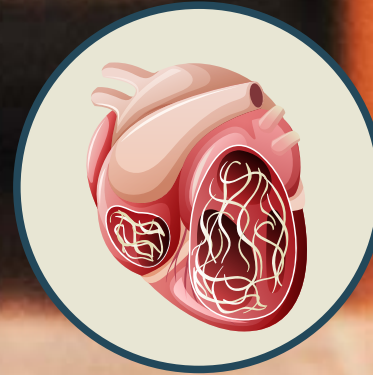
Prevention options

There are numerous options for tick prevention. Pets in at-risk areas on the east coast should have tick prevention year-round. Prevention options include spot-on treatments, chewable tablets that last between one and three months and collars that last between one and three months.

Although tick washes and sprays are available, these generally aren't recommended as they don't provide long-term prevention, and some can be deadly to cats. Ask your vet for recommendations on tick prevention and pick the product that best suits your budget and lifestyle.

Checking for ticks

It's important to check your pet for ticks daily, as this is the best method to detect and remove ticks promptly.



Run your fingers through your pet's coat from their head to their tail, paying attention to their ears, under their collar and between their toes, feeling for any lumps that might indicate a tick.

By using tick prevention options year-round, knowing the signs of tick paralysis and checking your pet daily for ticks, you can keep your pet safe.

Heartworm Prevention

There are many effective heartworm prevention options on the market. If heartworm is an endemic in your area, your vet will be able to help you with the best preventative plan for your pet. Many pet owners manage the risk of heartworm disease with a yearly injection, as this removes the risk of forgetting a dose of preventative medication and your vet can administer this injection as part of your pet's regular health check.

The other option is to make sure your pet is on heartworm prevention medication year-round. There are two main types of preventatives; monthly preventatives that come in a spot on or tablet form (often combined with other types of worming and flea medications) and a yearly injection, however even one missed dose can put them at risk of heartworm disease if you choose this method.

Important areas to check for ticks

In or around the ears

Under the collar

Between the back legs

Around the tail



Around the eyelids

Around the mouth and gums

Under the front legs

Between the toes

Diet

Your new pet has a range of diet needs, and much like people, their needs change depending on their age, health status and can depend on how fussy your pet is. While there are a range of pet food options on the market, not all are created equally. Too little or too much food, or the wrong type of food could cause health problems for your pet.

It is best to discuss the dietary requirement of your pet with your vet, as they will take into consideration all the unique factors of your new pet to determine which food will work best for them.

It is also very important to make sure your new pet always has access to clean fresh water, especially in the warmer months.

Feeding times for puppies

Most puppies need to be fed around three times a day. It is best not to leave your puppy alone when eating so they learn that having people around food is a good thing. Putting tasty treats into your puppy's bowl as they eat will help your puppy look forward to people being around at meal times and will help them become less protective of food.

As your puppy grows the amount they are fed will need to be adjusted. Commercial puppy foods will have guides on the bag or tin to help you know how much a puppy or dog of a particular age and size generally needs to eat.

Feeding your new kitten

Kittens should be offered food at least 4 times per day, as they grow. But take care not to overfeed or underfeed your kitten during this time. It is best to start feeding wet kitten food and introducing dry kitten food as your kitten grows, as wet food is easier for your kitten to eat when young.



Never feed puppy or dog food to your kitten, as it will be deficient in taurine, an essential protein that cats need and can only get from their food. Commercial kitten foods generally have guides on the bag or tin to help you know how much a kitten or cat of a particular age and size generally needs to eat.



Microchipping

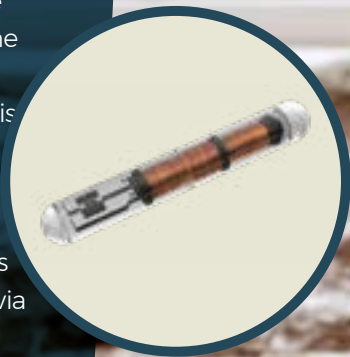
What is microchipping and how does it work?

A microchip is a permanent method of electronic identification. The chip itself is very small – about the size of a grain of rice – and is implanted just under the skin between the shoulder blades at the back of an animal's neck. Each chip has a unique number that is detected using a microchip scanner. The microchip number is recorded on a database registry with details about the pet and owner. Should your pet become lost, vets, animal shelters and local councils can scan your pet for a microchip and contact you via the database.

It is very important to keep your contact details up to date on the database so that if you move to a new house or change your phone number you will still be contactable in the event of your pet becoming lost.

If a pet is transferred to a new owner, the new owner must ensure that their contact details are recorded on the database.

Receiving a microchip is a minor and relatively painless procedure for your pet which should be carried out by a registered microchip implanter, such as your local vet. It is also recommended that your pet wears identification tags on their collar, as these are a simple way for someone to contact you should they find your missing pet. But as these can easily be lost, microchipping is still the most reliable identification method for your pet.



Microchip number

After your first visit with your new pet, you should be registered as their owner. And just so you don't forget, write down your pet's microchip number below.

Pet Name

Microchip number is

Desexing

Desexing your pet is the socially responsible thing to do as it can reduce behavioural problems such as free-ranging and some aggressive behaviour, which can cause public nuisance.

Your vet will help you decide the appropriate age of desexing based on current scientific evidence, and consideration of the animal's weight, vaccination status, health status and ability to withstand major surgery.

Desexing also reduces population, helping to keep dogs and cats out of animal shelters and off the streets.



Make sure to check with your local council on microchip and desexing requirements for your pets. Local councils often have different requirements, and you may even need to register your pet with them. Check your council's website, or give them a call for more information.

The fun stuff about your new puppy

Socialising your new puppy

Puppies have a sensitive period of development called the socialisation period that occurs between 3-12 weeks and any experiences a puppy has during this time can affect their behaviour for life. By socialising your puppy during this time, your puppy will learn to accept other dogs and people as a normal part of life without them becoming frightened or aggressive.

It is also important that you expose your puppy to as many experiences as possible during this time, as the more they are exposed to the more they will accept as normal everyday occurrences. Puppy preschools are a great way to start exposing your puppy to social situations while also learning good manners. Just remember to fully vaccinate your puppy before taking them out to public places.

Beds and personal space

Your puppy should have a bed of their own as it will be their safe haven as a puppy in a new environment they are getting used to. It is often a good idea to crate train your puppy as this can:

- 🐶 Prevent damage if the puppy is destructive when they are investigating their environment
- 🐶 Help with house training
- 🐶 Be a safe area for the puppy when you are unable to supervise them
- 🐶 Enable the puppy to be a part of the family when they may otherwise have been put outside and been excluded
- 🐶 Help with future hospital stays and boarding

Crate training needs to be a positive experience for your puppy, it shouldn't be seen as a punishment. Speak to your vet about the best crate training method, as this can sometimes be a bit tricky, especially in the mix of all the other training that happens with a new puppy.



The fun stuff about your new puppy

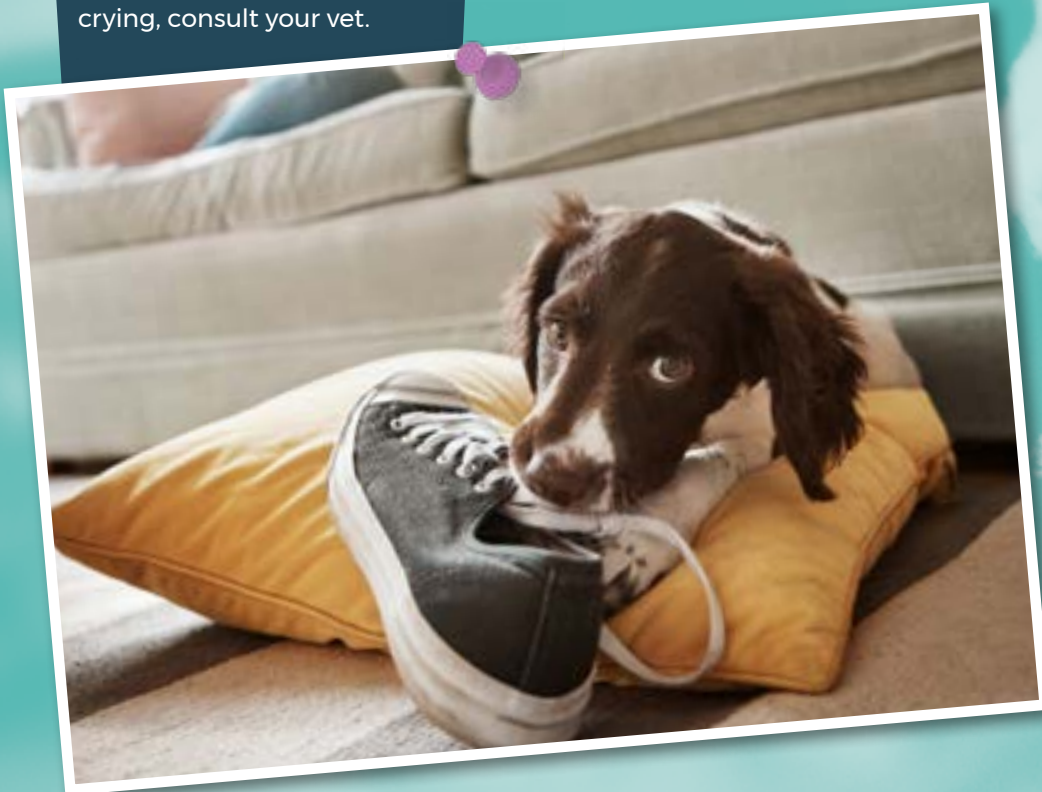
Puppy crying at night



It is normal for a puppy to cry at night when you first bring them home. You can help them to settle in by providing a comfortable warm bed and creating their own space where they can feel secure. If they still do not seem to settle, you can use a synthetic pheromone near their bed to help them settle. If you have any concerns about your puppy crying, consult your vet.

Puppy toys and chewing






Your new puppy is just learning the ins and outs of the world, so they don't yet know what they can and cannot chew! They explore their environment with their mouth, so by providing lots of safe and appropriate toys that they can chew instead of your furniture, you can encourage the exploration in a positive way. Change the toys daily to keep them interested and engaged.



Biting

Biting is something that your puppy will do as it tests out its new environment. Puppies do not “grow out” of biting habits so what may seem cute and bearable in an 8-week-old puppy is definitely not when they have developed a full size set of teeth and powerful jaws, so they must learn to not bite.

Here's a few ways you can teach your puppy to not bite:

-  Encourage the puppy to chew on safe toys that can't be swallowed
-  Give your puppy fresh raw bones they can't swallow. Bones can help exercise their jaws and also keep teeth clean
-  Never allow your puppy to bite, chew or mouth you, even if it seems to be in play
-  If your puppy does bite, walk away and ignore them, DO NOT punish them
-  Using your hands and waving them around may excite your puppy so if they are biting, it is best not to use your hands to correct the behaviour. Slapping your puppy may actually make things worse. It makes some puppies hand shy while with others it actually encourages aggression.



Exercise is not an alternative to walks

While playing in the backyard with your dog does keep them active, it does not replace the enjoyment of a walk for your dog. Walking allows your dog to sniff and explore, stretching their other senses as well as their legs.

The fun stuff about your new puppy

Toilet training

Puppies may not develop full bladder control until after 20 weeks, so be patient. The number of accidents that your puppy has should reduce as they begin to develop preferences for surface types around seven to eight weeks. Puppies will tend to go to the toilet after they first wake up, eat and play so it's important to look for warning signs after those activities. It is during these times that it is also most effective to house train your puppy, taking them outside when you see warning signs such as starting to circle or sniffing at the ground. Take them outside to the same spot every time and praise them profusely when they successfully go to the toilet and reward them with a treat after.

If your puppy has an accident in the house, never rub their nose in it or punish them later. Puppies only make an association if it is less than a few seconds after the act. If you do catch them in the act, make a sudden noise (that does not frighten your puppy) then take your puppy straight outside and give them lots of praise and a tasty treat when they are finished.

Digging in the garden

It is important that you keep your puppy entertained, especially when they're left unsupervised. Puppies are still learning, so when not entertained they will make up their own entertainment, like digging in the garden. Digging is a natural instinct for dogs, and puppies will instinctively do this to have fun. By giving them alternate options through a variety of toys to play with, you can encourage your puppy to spend their energy not digging up the flowers. If you find you can't discourage your dog from digging, then giving them a space they're allowed to dig like a sand pit will help.










Training your puppy

Puppies are highly impressionable in their early years and develop habits that last their life, so teaching them the basics like sit, stay, drop and come is ideal while your dog is still young. But puppies

do have a shorter concentration span and are clumsier as their motor skills are still developing. By using short, easy steps and having a lot of patience, your puppy will learn quickly what is expected of them.

Here are a few training tips for teaching your puppy:

-  Spend at least 10-15 minutes each day training your puppy
-  Each lesson should be short and fun and always finish on something the puppy can easily do
-  Go on daily leash walks when your puppy is old enough
-  Use rewards. Dogs, like people, learn fastest when the reward is given immediately and when your dog knows what you expect of them. By rewarding them, they will learn what is expected quicker through positive reinforcement
-  Be consistent in your training. If your dog is allowed to do things sometimes but not always, then it's very difficult for them to learn what you expect of them
-  Touch your puppy all over by looking in their ears, mouth and clean their teeth so they learn that these are normal, tolerable, even fun. Get them used to this when they're young, so that if there's ever a problem, your dog will tolerate the investigation
-  And most importantly, have fun with your new puppy and praise them for everything they do right.

The fun stuff about your new kitten








Handle your kitten daily

It is best to handle your kitten daily while it's young so that your kitten understands that it is normal to be picked up and touched. When handling your kitten, speak softly and praise it while touching their paws, ears, and opening its mouth. Grooming your kitten daily is also a good idea, especially for long-haired breeds. This will help keep your kitten's fur tangle-free and reduce the amount of hairballs your cat will have. And remember, to always reward your cat for calm behaviour.



Litter trays

Cats will use a litter tray without much encouragement, but to minimise issues it's best to:

-  Provide a tray that is big enough for the cat. About 1½ times the length of an adult cat is the minimum size
-  Put the tray somewhere easily accessible to the kitten
-  Keep the tray away from high traffic areas as cats like privacy
-  Keep the litter tray and food bowls away from each other
-  Clean the tray daily, especially for covered trays
-  Praise your kitten when it uses the litter tray
-  If you have more than one cat in the household, provide one litter tray per cat and one extra if possible. Place each litter tray in a different location or room (not side by side) to prevent one cat blocking another cat's access.

The fun stuff about your new kitten

Inside cats

Keeping your kitten indoors keeps them safe from cars, dogs and other cats while also protecting the native wildlife. If you are going to keep your cat inside, then it is best to train them when they're a kitten.

Providing shelves and hidey holes up high that the cat can use will give them more space to explore, especially by making them more attractive by locating them in sunny spots and placing soft bedding there. Making sure your indoor kitten has plenty of toys to







play with while you're not home is just as important. Anything that moves or makes noise is particularly attractive, like a ping pong ball, and can keep a kitten amused for hours. Cats also often eat grass when outside, so make sure your cat has access to its own garden with catnip, catmint, or cat grass. Keep in mind that indoor plants, such as lilies, however, are toxic and should be removed from rooms that your kitten can access.

You can hide dried food for your cat to find rather than just feeding from a bowl to make them forage to mimic natural behaviour and keep your kitten's mind and body active. You can also teach your cat to walk in a harness or a lead for controlled excursions outside.

Scratching

Scratching is normal behaviour for cats and is used as a scent marker that allows messages to remain long after the cat has left the area. It is best to encourage your cat to scratch in designated areas such as a scratching post.

Scratching posts need to be:

-  Covered with a suitable loose-weave material such as hessian
-  Sturdy and have a stable base so it doesn't topple over
-  Tall enough (or long enough if it is horizontal) to allow your cat to stretch
-  In a location where your kitten will use it, usually a prominent area or in front of where the kitten has already started to scratch








Don't replace the material once it's worn and torn as this is when your kitten will use it most.

The fun stuff about your new kitten



Hygiene and bathing

Cats are incredibly clean animals, and self-clean by licking themselves to remove dirt and matted fur. However, if you want to bathe your cat you can, and it's better to start when your kitten is young. By bathing your kitten, they will learn that bath time is a normal part of life. Cats do not respond well with forceful restraints, so when bathing your kitten avoid holding them too tightly. Some tips for stress-free bathing are:

-  **Start when you first get your kitten**
-  **Keep the water warm.**
A cat's body temperature is higher than ours (about 38.6°C), so if the water feels lukewarm to you, it may feel cold to the kitten
-  **Trim or file their nails before you bath them so that if you get scratched, it won't hurt**
-  **Have a mat, rack, or even a towel on the bottom of the tub for the cat to cling to make them feel more secure**
-  **Cats don't like being underwater, so using a shower attachment close to the cats body is better than trying to bathe them in a tub**

Training your kitten

Kittens can be trained, provided you are patient, keep the training to short two to three-minute bursts and use rewards such as praise and food. To train your kitten to come on cue, call their name and immediately reward your kitten when it approaches. It is especially easy to train your cat to come when reinforcing this behaviour around meal times or with a treat.

To teach your kitten to sit, hold a treat in front of your kitten's nose and move your hand slowly up and back over your kitten's head towards its back. As the kitten follows the treat, their head will go up and bottom down. There is no need to push on its back. Repeat the exercise often. When your kitten is sitting consistently, then start to use the word "sit". Teaching tricks such as "give me five" or "shake paws" also involves rewards. Just wait for your kitten to lift its paw and reward immediately.

Never punish your kitten if they're slow to respond as this can aggravate problems. If your kitten is caught out doing something they shouldn't, clap your hands instead of yelling and ask them to go away.

And most importantly, have fun with your new kitten.

Protect your pet as they grow

There's nothing like the excitement of a new pet. They're a brand-new member of the family, and there's lots of exciting moments to be had ahead.

You didn't choose your new pet for their good sense, predictability or rational thinking. You chose them for their lovable nature, companionship and the downright silly moments where you laugh so much you can't breathe.






At Vets Choice, we don't want your pet to change, we just want to protect them. And our Vets Choice Rookie cover is designed to protect them as they do their thing, while you stay sensible.



What is Vets Choice Rookie?

Vets Choice Rookie is a free 28-day policy available exclusively through referral vets for puppies and kittens between eight weeks and six months old.

Designed for the young ones, this free cover is packed full of features such as:

-  One day waiting period for accidents
-  Two day waiting period for illnesses
-  No commitment to continue after 28 days
-  Third party liability cover
-  Aggregate limit of \$4,000 for policy period



Who is Vets Choice insurance for pets?

Vets Choice is the first pet insurance policy endorsed by the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA), built to promote responsible pet ownership. Our policy has been developed to help more pets receive the care they need, by minimising the financial impact essential treatment can have on owners.

We're 100% Australian owned, and a product of Guild Insurance, the trusted partner of the AVA for over 20 years.

What happens after 28 days?

Before your policy ends, you'll be contacted to discuss how your new pet is going. We'll expect to hear all the cute and funny stories, so don't hold back!

You'll also be given the opportunity to upgrade to Vets Choice Pro or Vets Choice Elite to ensure that your pet remains covered for life.

There is no obligation to upgrade, and if you choose not to, the cover will simply expire after 28 days.



To see the full list of features and benefits for Vets Choice Pro and Vets Choice Elite,

visit vetschoice.net.au
or call 1800 999 738

For more information about Vets Choice insurance for pets
visit **vetschoice.net.au** or call **1800 999 738**



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