

Keeping Our Dogs Happy & Healthy in the New Year

Now that we've had the opportunity to get accustomed to the idea that we are living in 2011, it's time to make plans not only for our own health and well-being, but the health and well-being of our animal companions. They are vulnerable and trusting and they depend on us for virtually all aspects of their lives and care. I have some suggestions for keeping your pet healthy and happy in the New Year and the foreseeable future

Make certain that your pet is current on her vaccines.

Schedule a physical exam for your pet. Before doing so, check her out yourself to determine if there are any unusual lumps, bumps, rashes swollen or painful areas of her body or if she is exhibiting any unusual behaviors. Bring these to the attention of your vet. Also, if appropriate, consult your vet about the advisability of testing or screening for potentially dangerous health issues.

Be sure that your pet has proper identification should she get lost or stolen. She should always wear a collar with a tag including her name, address, home and cell phone numbers.

Get your pet microchipped. Should she run away or get lost or stolen the chip can be scanned at countless veterinary clinics throughout the country and result in the recovery of your pet.

Get your pet spayed or neutered.

Groom and brush your pet often. Brush her teeth on a regular basis also – at least once a week.

Trim your pet's nails on a regular basis.

Keep your pet well trained and socialized. A well-behaved pet is an ambassador for her breed and an asset to you, your family and community.

Provide your pets with a healthy diet and healthy treats. More natural and organic foods provide your pet with the proper nutrition they deserve. You and your veterinarian can determine an age appropriate diet and one that meets the special needs of your dog.

Keep your pet safe and secure in your car. Use a pet car seat, pet safety belt or pet barrier so that the pet cannot roam about, fall or distract you when you're driving.

Exercise your pet regularly. At the very least, walk your pet three or four times a day. You may also run, play fetch and hike with your dog.

Disaster preparedness is an issue that is also very important in light of Katrina and so many other natural as well as man-made disasters. Have a plan in place to protect your pet along with a survival kit for both you and your pet.

Most importantly, continue to bond and interact with your pet. You will find this friendship to be joyful, fulfilling and rewarding!