



Caring for Toy Breed Dogs

Animal Medical Center
2920 Lee Blvd.
Lehigh Acres, Fl 33971
(239)369-0555

Small dogs are adorable, fun, and, with the toy breed craze in Hollywood, becoming an increasingly popular pet. At first glance, it seems that small dogs would be easier to care for than larger dogs. A closer look reveals that raising these tiny bundles of joy comes with its own challenges. Toy breed dogs and puppies are prone to hypoglycemia, hypothermia, traumatic injuries, and, of course, "spoiling".

Hypoglycemia

Hypoglycemia is a decreased level of blood glucose (blood sugar). This condition can become dangerous very quickly, and can even lead to death. Toy breeds, especially puppies under three months, are particularly prone to hypoglycemia.

Stress, illness, excessive handling, fasting, and a long period of activity often precede hypoglycemia in toy breed dogs. Weakness, lethargy, tremors, loss of appetite, lack of coordination, seizures, unresponsiveness, and strange behavior are some signs of hypoglycemia.

If these signs are noticed, you can apply some Karo syrup or honey to your dog's gums. The sugars can be absorbed through the tissues of the mouth; it does not need to be swallowed. If your dog is unresponsive or very weak, be careful to only apply a small amount so that the dog does not choke. The dog should then be taken to a veterinarian immediately.

To help prevent hypoglycemia, tiny puppies should be fed at least 3 to 4 times a day. Some puppies even need 5 to 6 feedings a day. If leaving home with your young toy breed dog, always have a snack available. As your toy breed reaches adulthood, 2 to 3 meals a day should be adequate.

If your puppy is showing signs of illness, such as vomiting, diarrhea, or lack of appetite, he should be seen by a veterinarian as soon as possible. Waiting until the next day can be detrimental in toy breed puppies, as hypoglycemia, dehydration, and hypothermia set in quickly.

Hypothermia

Toy breed puppies are also prone to hypothermia, which is a decreased body temperature. Their tiny bodies and small amounts of fat for insulation make them susceptible to becoming dangerously cold.

Signs of hypothermia include shivering (the shivering response ceases when the dog

reaches an extremely low temperature), pale or blue gums, decreased appetite, and unresponsiveness. Temperature can be taken by inserting the tip of a digital or mercury thermometer (designed for people) into the dog's rectum. Normal body temperature is between 100 and 102.5 degrees Fahrenheit.

If you suspect hypothermia, wrap your dog in blankets and rub and stimulate his body. You can also use a heating pad or warm water bottle with a blanket between the dog and the heat source to prevent burning. Immediately contact your veterinarian.

Providing a warm place for toy breed dogs to retreat, such as a blanket or dog bed, will help prevent hypothermia. Toy breed puppies should be kept in a warm, climate-controlled room. Providing blankets to snuggle is also helpful, as it is similar to cuddling beside the puppy's mother and littermates.

Traumatic Injuries

Small dogs are not as durable as their larger peers. A fall from your arms, a jump down from the bed, or a game of wrestling with a child can end in fractured bones, head trauma, lung injuries, and other serious complications. Small dogs are also known for being stepped on and tripped over by getting underfoot of their owners.

If you have small children and would like a toy breed dog, seriously consider how they will treat a tiny, fragile canine. Teach your children proper handling techniques and the consequences of being too rough with the dog.

Another way to prevent traumatic injury is to be extremely careful when carrying the dog. If you are toting the dog often, consider a papoose, stroller, or purse for safe transportation. If your dog loves being on the furniture, providing steps for easy access will help protect his fragile legs from dangerous jumps.

Also keep in mind that backyard fencing to contain a large dog may not be adequate for containing a toy breed dog. There may be openings in the fence which a small dog can squeeze through and then become injured by another animal or a vehicle.

Spoiling

Along with health concerns, there are also social concerns of toy breed dogs. Because they are so cute and pleasant to hold and cuddle, toy breed dogs are prone to becoming "spoiled" and poorly socialized. Avoid the urge to constantly baby your tiny dog. Allow him to be a dog, walk on the ground, and meet other people and animals.

Also, do not neglect obedience training because he is small. Toy breeds need manners just as much as large dogs. Though tiny, these dogs are pack animals with pack instincts. If you do not take the leadership role, your petite, furry friend will rule you.

Congratulations on your new addition, please let us know if you have any other questions or concerns.