

How many vaccinations a puppy needs and when to vaccinate them



Puppies. The word just makes you smile.

Now we've got one, a small and very furry one.

When we got to the farm to get her, she was wobbling around in a stable, burrowing in the hay, bouncing and yipping as it persistently attacked her.

We scooped her up and had our fingers licked and nibbled without mercy. She peed in my wife's hands and the decision was made.

For the pup, the drive home was a sombre affair. She got quite subdued and so she got scooped up again but this time, she decided to be a little sick on my wife. My wife wondered if this was a sign of things to come and I suggested, maybe for her. This will happen to you. But fear not. It will just be milk. It washes out.

Actually, if we backpedal a little, "What to wear when you go and get your puppy."

Irrespective of the puppy's current location, one wears old work clothes and brings a towel.

We were returning our little pup home to what our two girls, Jessica and Jenny, knew only as a 'surprise.'

When we pulled up the driveway, two little faces were pressed against the window and were soon running out at full tilt towards the car. For 6-year-olds, they were unusually still for microseconds and then exploded into love and joy. At that moment, my wife and I were relegated to 'barely sentient.'

Our pup was now their pup (apart from the icky bits, feeding, keeping alive). And at this point, she was still using her working title of "Bess."

The first order of business as dinner was proposed by Jess and Jenn, the new owners, who announced her name will be "Tribble". The motion was unchallenged and so it was. "Tribble" would enter the realm of veterinary records and doggy passports.

Jess and Jenn were up before daylight and from that moment, it wasn't clear who would get tired first. My bet was on the girls.

The girls knew Tribble had to see the vet to get her vaccinations and this was the day. They remembered their own jabs and were OK with the needle that would make Tribble squeak, but then almost instantaneously start wagging her little tail.

Our little Tribble would be free of some pretty nasty things as she licks her way through life.

Distemper

Distemper is a virus. It's spread by other dogs coughing, sneezing and sharing food. Look out for runny eyes and noses, coughing, fever, diarrhoea, vomiting and seizures. Distemper used to be known as "hard pad" because it causes the footpad to become thicker and harden.

Kennel Cough

Dogs usually get kennel cough from places where other dogs gather, such as dog parks, boarding kennels, training groups and dog shows. It spreads via direct contact, like touching noses or sharing water or food bowls. It can be treated in most adult dogs but it's danger increases in puppies. Look out primarily for a cough with a "honking" sound and also look out for a runny nose, loss of appetite, lethargy and sneezing.

Hepatitis

Infectious canine hepatitis is not related to the human form of hepatitis. Look out for a slight fever, congestion, enlargement of the stomach, vomiting and any pain around the liver. There's no cure for Hepatitis but it can be treated successfully.

Heartworm

Heartworms take up residence near the heart and pulmonary arteries, affecting how blood is sent to the lungs. They can also invade the liver and kidneys. They can grow to over a foot long and, if there are enough of them in the same place, they can block and damage organs. When a dog is initially affected, there are no symptoms. The symptoms come later in life. Look out for coughing, loss of appetite, lethargy or difficulty breathing. Heartworms are transmitted by mosquito. Start a preventative programme after about 12 weeks. It can't be vaccinated against but it is preventable with the right meds.

Leptospirosis

Leptospirosis is caused by a bacteria, found in soil and water all over the world. It's a disease that can be spread from animals to humans. Look out for fever, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhoea, lethargy, weakness, muscle pain and stiffness and loss of appetite. Antibiotics are effective, and the sooner they are given, the better.

Lyme Disease

Yes, there's Lyme disease for dogs as well. It's transmitted via ticks. Look out for your dog limping, his lymph nodes swell, his temperature rises, and he stops eating. If diagnosed quickly, a course of antibiotics works but be wary of any relapses, which can happen months or even years later.

Parvovirus

This virus attacks the gastrointestinal system. Look out for vomiting and a fever, loss of appetite and diarrhoea, which can contain blood. The dog will become quickly dehydrated, which can kill a dog in 2-3 days, so get them to the vet as soon as possible. Eventually, their own immune system will overcome Parvovirus, so in the meantime, keep them hydrated and comfortable.

Rabies

Rabies affects dogs and humans, in fact, all mammals. It's a virus that invades the central nervous system. Look out for excessive drooling and a fear of water. It's usually transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. Treatment within hours of infection is vital.

It's important to know that there are different puppy vaccination schedules for all dogs. Which part of the country you live in and your dog's individual risk factors will need to be considered. Some dogs do not need every vaccine.

As with all things, talk to your vet.

We've covered the first of several essential stages of care that Tribble needs so, one day soon, we'll have a bigger healthy Tribble.

Tribble is 6 weeks old. The best time to vaccinate your pup is anytime from 6 - 10 weeks.

She will have her second shot 2 - 4 weeks later.

And at 6 - 12 months, she'll get a booster.

Over time, some vaccinations will tend to weaken so make sure your vet establishes and maintains a regular booster programme.

And think about pet insurance as well. It's not a big cost considering Jess and Jenn would literally murder us if we hadn't.

Our little Tribble is now a happy and healthy big Tribble. Jess calls her Mega-Tribble.

Who knew that something I could fit on my palm would transform into the only thing Jess and Jenn want to see when they get back from school.

My wife says, get used to it.