



Dog Talk

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Tips from the rescuers

Have you picked up a stray or adopted a shelter dog that needs a little more loving? We ask rescuers to share some of their best pick-me-up tips.

DOGS who have had a rough start in life can look terrible. Once your vet has given your pet the all-clear in terms of worms, parasites and other health problems, there are a few things you can do to help boost your dog's overall health.

"When a dog comes in, we immediately deflea, deworm and give it a medicated shampoo bath," Lily Leng from SPCA Penang (at spca-penang.net) says.

"We also give all the dogs Vi-Sorbis vitamins specially formulated for canines. The cats get multivitamin tablets for people. They're sugar-coated, so they go down easily. Dogs with a skin problem get a medicated shampoo bath twice a week.

"Most of our dogs have short fur, but if it's long, we trim it. This makes it easier for the treatment to get past the coat and to the skin. In the cases where the skin condition is really bad, we shave the dog. Don't worry; the fur grows back quickly enough."

"If the skin problem is just dry skin, we add one cap of cod liver oil to their diet daily. In cases where the dog isn't eating right, the vet sometimes recommends two caps a day."

Feeding your pooch

Rescue dogs can be very thin, so fattening them up is an important part of getting them back on their paws again. Sandra Kok, from



Life-saving tips: Don't really know how to nurse the dog you've just adopted to the prime of health? Ask the rescuers.

Homeless & Orphan Pets Exist (HOPE) in Johor Baru and online at hopejg.org, has worked out a system that works well for her rescues.

"Normally we divide their rations into five small meals to be fed to them throughout the day. We cook a special high-protein and nutritious dish consisting of boneless chicken, pumpkin, cabbage, egg and brown rice (or white rice), which are to be cooked together like congee.

"We also give them high-protein dog kibbles in the afternoon. We add Pet Tab Plus, a supplement that contains 21 essential vitamins and minerals, to this meal.

It helps correct nutritional deficiencies caused by poor diet or appetite loss."

Sandra also advocates making sure your pet has lots of clean water available 24/7.

Lynette Lim of The Langkawi Animal Shelter & Sanctuary Foundation (and at langkawilife.org.my) adds, "Boiled chicken is a classic cure for diarrhoea and a delicate tummy. We boil chicken breasts in plain water because it's easy to digest for dogs as well as cats. When stools are solid, you can go back to the normal diet.

"Our dogs also get a veggy boost at lunchtime from our in-house mash that's made up of lean beef mixed with carrots, peas, leafy greens and rice," she says.

While home cooking can be a great food source for dogs, do remember that certain foods are



SPCA Penang administrator Lily Leng with Hanson, the dog.

dangerous for man's best friend.

Never feed your dog chocolate, onions, garlic, grapes, raisins, macadamia nuts, avocados, alcohol, or caffeine-rich drinks like coffee and cola. Also beware of processed foods and sweets containing the sugar substitute xylitol as it can cause liver failure and seizures in dogs.

Massage for health

"An interesting alternative therapy is massage. Dogs who have been shut into cramped spaces, kicked, or otherwise mistreated, may have sore and stiff muscles – just like we would if we'd been abused. Massage can help such pets, and promote bonding between you and your pet to boot.

Isabel Ling, a veterinary surgeon in KL, uses this touch therapy to help her own pets.

"Just recently my dog Kinoko hurt her back playing with Kiss, a Great Dane friend. Kinoko has gotten a little pudgy recently and isn't as agile as she used to be.

I gave her a good back rub for a few days in a row and she has come good again.

It was nice to not have to give her pain relief unnecessarily.

"However, I think that if the animal is in too much pain, then massage probably won't help.

"How do you tell the difference? Well, I generally give the animal a firm rub/scratch. If they yelp, try to bite you, or growl then you should stop. If they lean in, keep going," Ling explains.

"To massage your pet use long, continuous strokes just like how you would a human. If you are scared or the dog is frightened, you can try getting a capped brush and brushing firmly.

"Getting all that dead hair and skin off will do wonders and get the circulation going. Warm combs besides often do just as much good as a massage. Positioning hot water bottles on painful spots as heat therapy can also help," she reveals.

Above all, do keep in touch with your vet and discuss all treatments thoroughly so your pet has the best start in his or her new life. You'll love the results!

■ Ellen Whyte lives with three cats but sneaks out to visit dog friends regularly. She blogs at blog.lepak.com.