BARN DOGS

- A horse owner's guide to dog care
- Canine nutritional needs
- Keep your dog's joints healthy
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I can’t imagine heading out to ride without my two dogs, Roca and Chloe. They both seem to love the barn as much as I do. Roca, a 3-year-old Australian Cattle Dog, practically never stops moving, checking up on all of the people and horses he sees. Chloe, my other red heeler, is 12. She, too, used to be game for hours of fun at the barn, but I’ve noticed that lately she is content to sit on the sidelines and observe. She’s still enthusiastic, which is heartening, but I worry that her stoicism may cause her to hide illness or pain as she propels herself through yet another romp in the pasture.

As a lifelong rider, I’m a veteran of coordinating the many facets of horse care—scheduling everything from farriery work to vaccinations weeks in advance. And every time I groom a horse, I’m on the lookout for new wounds, swellings or abnormalities. Yet, when it comes to my dogs, I find myself clipping nails only when they are noticeably overdue and scratching ears without taking a closer look at what’s inside. Maybe it’s because Roca and Chloe are always close by that I don’t feel the need to be that rigorous about planning their veterinary care.

Fortunately, dogs can live long, healthy lives with just basic care—decent food, plenty of water and shelter as needed. “Generally the biggest health risk is other dogs and dog fights, as well as the threat of getting hit by a car,” says Robert Fleck, DVM, of Rainland Farm Equine Clinic in Woodinville, Washington. Fleck is an equine veterinarian who has bred and raised Jack Russell Terriers for more than 30 years. With supervision and a leash, he adds, most dogs live happy, healthy lives around horses.

Although that puts my mind at
ease, I realize it would be beneficial to take a more methodical approach to my dogs’ health maintenance. And I suspect I’m not alone in this realization. So here are some basic guidelines for keeping your barn buddies as happy and healthy as your horse.

**DAY-TO-DAY**

- **Exercise.** Dogs who either live on or visit a farm regularly are probably getting plenty of exercise. Still, daily walks and/or play sessions will help any dog stay lean and healthy, and it’s a great time for bonding and training, too.

- **Tooth brushing.** By the time they are 2 years old, 80 to 85 percent of dogs have developed some degree of periodontal disease—fungal infections of the gums and other soft tissues in the mouth—which, left unaddressed, can lead to kidney and heart disease as well as other health problems.

  The best way to prevent periodontal disease is to brush your dog’s teeth. Ideally, you’d do this every day, but even once or twice a week can make a big difference in his oral health. You’ll want to spend a few days training your dog to allow you to handle his muzzle and insert your fingers into his mouth, and then you’ll need to use a brush and toothpaste meant for use in dogs.

  Chew toys and treats designed to fight dental plaque can also help keep a dog’s teeth clean. Many dogs love to chew hoof clippings swiped from the farrier, but try to keep those to a minimum. “Hoof clippings generally lead to a vomiting dog and can cause intestinal blockage,” says Fleck. Rawhide chews carry the same risks; offer them to your dog only under supervision.

- **Grooming.** The length and thickness of your dog’s coat determines whether, and how often, you need to brush him. Many enjoy the sensation, and grooming will not only help remove loose hair, but also give you the opportunity to look for evidence of fleas, ticks and insect bites. Short-haired dogs may not need regular brushing, but it’s important to remember that ticks can still find places to hide on their bodies, so check around and under ears, elbows and other less conspicuous places at least every few days.

  Also be on the alert for hot spots—red, angry-looking bacterial skin infections. If you spot one, stop your dog from scratching, licking or further irritating the area. Many topical treatments are specially formulated for hot spots, but if one persists despite your treatments, call your veterinarian for advice.

**WEEKLY TO MONTHLY**

- **Baths.** How often you need to bathe your dog depends on a number of factors, including the type of coat he has as well as his predilection for rolling in stinky stuff. But generally, your nose will tell you when it’s time for another bath. In addition to getting rid of that “doggy smell,” bathing is still one of the most effective ways to remove fleas, mites and other external parasites. Specific issues, such as dandruff...
or skin allergies, can also be treated with medicated shampoos. Make sure you use a shampoo formulated for dogs, and rinse thoroughly. If it’s cooler outside, let your dog hang out in a warm place until he’s thoroughly dry.

- **Heartworm preventive.** Like horses, dogs can host a number of internal parasites, including roundworms and tapeworms. But the bigger threat, of course, is heartworm, *Dirofilaria immitis*, a mosquito-borne parasite that in its adult form lives in a dog’s heart, lungs, and blood vessels. Treating an established case of heartworm is difficult, but prevention is much easier: A number of heartworm preventive products are available, including liquids applied to the skin as well as oral tablets, both of which are usually administered monthly.

- **Nail trimming.** Just like a horse with overgrown hooves, a dog whose nails get too long may develop a variety of problems. Mainly, he may alter his gait in ways that put strain on his tendons and joints. How often you’ll need to clip your dog’s nails depends on his lifestyle. “Horses need their nails trimmed every six to eight weeks,” says Fleck. “A dog’s nails vary, however, with their activity level and the surface they walk on.” A dog who routinely walks and runs on hard surfaces will wear his nails down naturally and may never need trimming, while a more sedentary one may need attention every week.

A quick way to see if the nails need to be cut is to take the paw in your hand and gently squeeze at the base of one of the nails. Push it in about one inch for smaller dogs and two inches for larger ones. If the thermometer doesn’t slide in easily, don’t force it; just pull it back out and try again.

A normal temperature reading for a dog is between 100 and 102.5 degrees Fahrenheit. Anything above 103 degrees is cause to go to the veterinarian, but if your dog’s temperature is above 105 degrees, take immediate action to cool him down, dousing his body with cold water.

The thermometer should come out looking fairly clean. Any traces of blood, diarrhea or black, tarry stool could indicate bleeding ulcers or illness. Share your observations with your veterinarian.

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**If you suspect your dog is ill but aren’t sure whether a trip to the veterinarian is necessary, his temperature may provide an important clue. To take it, you’ll need a rectal thermometer designed for use in dogs. Lubricate the end with petroleum jelly or baby oil, and with the help of a friend to hold your dog still, insert the thermometer into the anus. Push it in about one inch for smaller dogs and two inches for larger ones. If the thermometer doesn’t slide in easily, don’t force it; just pull it back out and try again.**

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were pups; others may need to go to a groomer or veterinary clinic, where they can be safely restrained.

Dogs’ nails, like hooves, can be black or unpigmented. Clear, unpigmented nails make the quick (the blood-filled cavity that runs down the center of the toenail) clearly visible and easy to avoid when trimming. The quick in black nails, however, is impossible to see, so err on the side of caution when clipping.

If the quick is accidentally nicked, the amount of blood lost isn’t enough to harm your dog. Try scraping the nail through a bar of soap to form a plug or treat it with silver nitrate powder, which encourages clotting.

While you’re handling those paws, check that no foreign objects have become lodged between the toes or pads, and make sure the pads aren’t too dry or cracked. If so, moisturizers formulated for dogs can help soften them.

EVERY YEAR

An annual veterinary examination is the cornerstone of your dog’s wellness, and geriatric dogs—those over age 7—may benefit from a complete checkup every six months to catch developing issues earlier. Your veterinarian will check your dog’s ears, eyes and teeth. If you’ve been skimping on the tooth-brushing routine (and, I’ll admit, too, this probably doesn’t get done as often as it should) your dog may have a buildup of tartar and plaque that may require professional cleaning. Depending on how bad the case is, your veterinarian may recommend doing the procedure with or without general anesthesia. Putting your dog under carries risks and is more expensive, but it does allow for a more thorough job. Keeping your dog’s teeth clean is more than just a cosmetic issue—poor dental hygiene can lead to bacterial infections that not only cause pain, but can spread to the heart, kidneys and liver.

Vaccinations are, of course, a vital part of a dog’s care. The American Animal Hospital Association recommends a list of “core” vaccines every dog needs, including rabies, distemper, canine parvovirus and canine adenovirus. Depending on where you live and whether your dog is frequently boarded or mixes with others, you may also need to protect him against other diseases and infections such as bordetella, Lyme disease and leptospirosis.

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In addition, your veterinarian will do a blood test for the heartworm parasite either annually or semi-annually, depending on the type of preventive you use. You’ll be asked to bring in a fecal sample for analysis, so your veterinarian can identify any other parasites your dog may be carrying and prescribe the appropriate treatment. Common canine parasites include hookworms, whipworms and roundworms, all of which can be present in dogs of all ages, as well as coccidia, which occur more often in younger puppies. Signs of infection include vomiting, diarrhea, bloody stool and, in the case of tapeworms, rice-like kernels in the sample.

Your annual veterinary visit is also a good time to determine whether your dog is developing signs of arthritis, which is common in many aging small animals as well as horses, although the specific joints likely to cause trouble may vary. “Joint health so very much depends on the breed and genetics of your dog,” says Fleck. “For instance, Dachshunds have a lot of back issues.” Arthritis in dogs is often controllable with noninvasive treatments, including supplements with ingredients such as glucosamine, chondroitin sulfate, hyaluronic acid and MSM, and possibly nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as firocoxib, carprofen or aspirin. “Joint injections can be given for pain relief, but they are not routine in dogs,” he says.

For me, and for many other horsepeople I know, a trip to the barn just wouldn’t be the same without the dogs. So it’s worthwhile to take some time to make sure your dog will have no trouble keeping up with you and your other four-legged companion around the barn and on the trails.

### FAST FACT:
The longest ears on a dog belonged to a Bloodhound named Tigger, from St. Joseph, Illinois, according to Guinness World Records. His right ear measured 13.75 inches long and his left was 13.5 inches long. Tigger died in 2009.

For canine use only. Use to support healthy joints.

**HylaSport Canine**

Source of Glucosamine HCL, Chondroitin Sulfate, MSM and Hyaluronic Acid

**Product Facts**

**Active Ingredients:** (per 10g dose)

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