



THE KENNEL CLUB
Making a difference for dogs

Information Guide

Common canine poisons in the house and garden



www.thekennelclub.org.uk

Common canine poisons in your house and garden

What is a poison?

A poison is a substance, which when introduced to an organism, is capable of producing an unwanted effect.

When we talk about poisons many people automatically think of dangerous chemicals such as cyanide or strychnine, but forget about substances that are more commonplace, such as plant leaves that cause skin irritation, or smoke from a cigarette. Many people are unaware of the poisons around their home or the risk that these can pose to their pets.

What substances could be harmful?

Poisonous materials commonly found around your home could include: pharmaceutical products (both medications for humans and their pets), pesticides (ant baits, rodenticides, herbicides or slug baits), plants, venomous animals in your garden and household cleaners, to name a few.

How can a dog come into contact with a poison?

Dogs can be exposed to poisonous substances in a number of different ways, such as through skin contact, substances in the eye, inhalation, or envenomation (through a bite or sting). However, the most common way for them to be poisoned is to ingest, or eat, a poison.

How to use this guide

The information presented in this guide is intended to be used to prevent poisoning by raising awareness of certain poisons, rather than as a document to be used in an emergency. If you suspect that your dog has been poisoned, or has come into contact with potentially poisonous substances, contact your local veterinary practice immediately.

The lists of poisons in this information guide are not exhaustive. If an item is not mentioned in this guide it should not be assumed that it is not poisonous. Further advice on substances that could harm your dog could be sought from your local veterinary practice.

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What to do if you suspect your dog has been poisoned

If you think that your dog may have eaten, touched or inhaled something that it shouldn't have, consult your local veterinary practice immediately.

Do not try to make your dog sick. Trying to do this can cause other complications, which may harm your dog.

In an emergency you can help your veterinary practice make an informed decision as to whether your dog needs to be treated by them, and if so, what the best treatment would be. Where possible you should provide your veterinary practice with information on:

- What poison you think your dog has been exposed to (i.e. chocolate, ibuprofen etc.). Include any product names, or lists of ingredients if relevant
- How much they may have been exposed to (i.e. 500mg, 500ml, one tablet etc, even approximations may help)
- When your dog was exposed to the poison (i.e. 5 minutes, 5 hours or 5 days ago)
- If your dog has been unwell, and if so, what clinical effects have been seen

It is easier for a veterinarian to care for a poisoned dog if it is treated sooner rather than later. If you are in any doubt, do not wait for your dog to become unwell before calling for advice.

If you do need to take your dog to your veterinary practice, make sure that you take along any relevant packaging, or a sample of the poison, i.e. parts of plant or fungi. Always make sure that you yourself are protected and can not be poisoned in turn.

In your kitchen

It is important to remember that some human foods can be very dangerous to dogs. If you wish to give your dog a treat, ensure that it is something dog-friendly and avoid giving them any of the foods listed below.

Chocolate

Chocolate contains a chemical called theobromine which is poisonous to dogs and other animals. Generally speaking, the darker the chocolate, the more theobromine it contains, and therefore the more poisonous it is. White chocolate contains very little theobromine and although it is unlikely to cause theobromine poisoning, it is still very fatty and can make your dog ill.

Chocolate poisoning can initially cause vomiting and diarrhoea, but may lead to excitability, twitching, tremors, fits and life threatening problems with the heart.

Each year, reports of dogs with chocolate poisoning increase dramatically around Christmas and Easter. During these periods take extra care to ensure that all chocolate is kept out of the reach of your dog. Although chocolate wrappers are not poisonous, they can cause an obstruction if eaten. This can be very dangerous and may require surgical intervention. Signs of an obstruction may include vomiting, lethargy, your dog being off their food, not defecating or finding it difficult to defecate.

Onions (*Allium species*)

Onions, garlic, leeks, shallots and chives all belong to the *Allium* family. These plants all contain a substance which can damage red blood cells in dogs and can cause life threatening anaemia. Signs may not present for a few days, but can include stomach problems and may cause your dog to become sleepy, dull, weak, or develop rapid breathing. Poisoned dogs may also have discoloured urine.

Ensure that your dog does not eat cooked foods that contain these vegetables, i.e. onion gravy, onion bhaji etc.



For more information on these, or other poisons, please visit:
www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health

Raisins (fruits of the *Vitis vinifera*)

Grapes, raisins, currants and sultanas are all toxic to dogs and it is believed the dried forms of these fruits are more toxic. It is not known why these fruits are poisonous to dogs, or how much is dangerous. Some dogs have eaten large quantities of these fruits and had no effects, while others have become unwell after very small amounts.

As well as possibly causing stomach problems, these fruits can cause kidney failure, which can sometimes be delayed by up to three days. Kidney failure may sometimes present as a decrease in urination, or your dog may also appear dull and show signs of increased thirst. Prompt treatment is important. If your dog does eat any amount, contact your veterinarian immediately.

It is important not to let your dog eat any foods that contain these fruits, such as hot cross buns, Christmas cake, Christmas pudding, fruit cake, mince pies, stollen etc.

Xylitol

Some sugar-free sweets, sugar replacements, chewing gums, nicotine replacement gums and even some medicines, contain an artificial sweetener called xylitol, which can be very poisonous to dogs. Xylitol is more commonly found in food products in America, but is beginning to appear in sugar-free products in the UK as well. Xylitol can cause an otherwise healthy dog's blood sugar level to quickly drop to dangerous levels and larger amounts can also cause liver failure. Signs of poisoning can include your dog appearing weak, lethargic, or they may collapse or develop fits.

Other common items found in your kitchen which can harm your dog:

- Alcohol
- Blue cheese
- Raw bread dough
- Cooked bones
(not poisonous, but can cause mechanical damage if swallowed)
- Large amounts of sugar/sweets
- Macadamia nuts
- Mouldy foods

Tips on how to poison proof your home:

Keep all chocolate out of the reach of your dog. At Christmas, this includes chocolate coins hung from Christmas trees, advent calendars, boxes of chocolate put out on Christmas day and don't forget, the wrapped chocolate presents under your Christmas tree (just because its wrapped doesn't mean your dog can't smell it!).

In your cleaning cupboard

Cleaning products themselves are likely to taste unpleasant and so may not be particularly attractive to dogs. Brightly coloured packaging or interestingly shaped bottles on the other hand may appear appealing to them, or seem like an excellent toy to play with. Make sure that all cleaning products can not be accessed by your dog and that dogs are kept away from areas that are being cleaned, or have recently been cleaned.

Chlorine based bleaches

Dogs may come into contact with these household cleaners by chewing the containers or drinking from recently cleaned toilets. Bleach diluted in water may be less harmful, but can still cause salivation and stomach problems. More concentrated solutions of bleach can cause corrosive injury to the mouth or gut and may cause further complications if splashed in the eye or on the skin. Bleach should never be mixed with other cleaning products.

Detergents (laundry detergent, soaps and many household multipurpose cleaners)

Many of these substances contain chemicals which can cause salivation and stomach problems if drunk or licked. If an animal vomits after drinking or eating these substances, it can make the vomit frothy or foamy. This may increase the risk of vomit getting into the lungs and causing breathing difficulties.

Liquid capsules/ sachets used in washing machines are highly concentrated detergents, which may appear attractive to pets and children. These concentrated substances may cause more extreme tummy upsets and can lead to dehydration if untreated, or can damage the eye through direct contact.

Oven cleaners, drain cleaner and other caustics/corrosives

These substances can cause tissue damage. If licked up by your dog, splashes from these may also cause injury to the eyes and the skin surrounding the mouth. Effects from these cleaners can include salivation, stomach problems, ulceration, chemical burns and difficulty breathing or swallowing.

Other common items found in cleaning cupboards that could harm your dog:

- Dishwasher tablets
- Dishwasher salt
- Kettle descalers
- Metal polishes

Tips on how to poison proof your home:

A large number of instances of bleach ingestion come from dogs drinking from recently treated toilet bowls. To prevent your dog from doing this, make sure that you always put the toilet lid down after cleaning and try to remember to keep bathroom doors closed.



For more information on these, or other poisons, please visit:
www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health



In your medicine cupboard

Dogs are more likely to encounter human medications when these are outside of a medicine cabinet. Not only should medications be kept out of reach of your dog when not being used, but remember to put away any boxes of tablets immediately after use. Do not leave tablets lying on tables while you get a drink to help wash them down. Dogs are not humans and so should never be given any human medication unless specified by a veterinary professional.

Ibuprofen and other Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

NSAIDs are often used to manage inflammation and pain in both humans and dogs. Human NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen, diclofenac and naproxen, are different from the ones given to dogs and can make them very unwell. Human NSAIDs (and dog NSAIDs in overdose) interfere with the dog's ability to protect its gut and so can cause severe tummy upset. Ulcers may form in their gut, leading to blood in the stools and vomit. Kidney failure can also occur and may be delayed for several days. Signs of kidney failure may include inappropriate urination and increased thirst. Some NSAIDs can also cause fits.

Oral contraceptives

These small tablets are one of the medications most frequently eaten by dogs. Fortunately, oral contraceptives are of low acute toxicity and even large amounts are unlikely to cause any major concerns, apart from a possible mild stomach upset. Some oral contraceptives may temporarily disrupt oestrus in bitches.

Paracetamol

This widely used pain medication may initially cause vomiting, brown gums, increased heart rate, changes to the rate of breathing, swelling to the face and paws, and can also cause delayed liver failure, that may not present for several days.

Paracetamol can also be found in many other over the counter medications in combination with other drugs.



Psoriasis creams

These creams often contain vitamin D derivatives which are extremely toxic to dogs. Dogs are usually poisoned by licking off recently applied cream from their owners, but may also lick or chew the tube of cream. These drugs enhance the resorption of calcium from the bone and increase the absorption of calcium from the gut. This causes hypercalcaemia; an excess of calcium in the blood. Signs may present after 6 hours, but could be delayed and can include weakness, profuse vomiting and diarrhoea, and increased thirst. As calcium levels rise it can cause muscle spasms, fits, heart problems, kidney failure and can cause the gut and lungs to become calcified.

Other common items found in medicine cabinets that could harm your dog:

- Antidepressants
- Aspirin
- Blood pressure medications
- Diabetes medications
- Heart medications
- Sleep aids



For more information on these, or other poisons, please visit:
www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health

Tips on how to poison proof your home:

Many people carry medications around in bags that they use on a daily basis, i.e. handbags or rucksacks. When at home, don't forget to keep these out of reach of your pet, as an inquisitive dog who discovers a box of tablets, foil packaging or a bottle of medication, may be inclined to play with it.

In your garden

There are many different plants commonly found in gardens around the country that could make your dog ill. Some of these are highly poisonous, while others may only cause a mild tummy upset. Plants also vary in attractiveness to dogs; a shrub may sit in your garden for years without being touched by them, while a fallen conker or acorn may instantly appear enticing the moment it hits the ground. Deciding what to keep in your garden will not only depend on the toxicity of the plant, but also how inquisitive your dog is.

Fungi (also known as wild mushrooms or toadstools)

There are thousands of different fungi in the UK, varying dramatically in shape, size, colour and how poisonous they are. Although some fungi may be fairly distinct in appearance, it is incredibly difficult to identify most wild mushrooms. Some fungi are edible, while others are extremely dangerous, and sadly it is not always easy to tell the difference between the two. Signs of poisoning may vary dramatically depending on the type of fungi eaten, and may include stomach upset, blood in the stools or vomit, neurological effects such as hallucinations or fits, kidney or liver failure. The type of fungi eaten will determine the onset of effects, which can be very sudden, i.e. ten minutes after eating the fungi, or may be delayed by days, or even in some rare instances by several weeks.

If your dog does eat an unknown wild mushroom, take them to the vets immediately and if possible, bring along a picture, or ideally a sample of the fungi in a paper bag, or carefully wrapped in paper (do not wrap or place in a plastic bag). Take note of the area where the fungi was found (i.e. was it growing in grass or on a tree stump etc.) as this may help experts identify what fungi your dog has eaten should they become ill.

Spring bulbs

Incidents of poisoning from spring bulbs are most likely to occur from dogs eating the bulbs in autumn when they are planted, or in spring when they begin to flower.

Daffodils - Effects from poisoning can include vomiting, stomach upset and salivation, but can escalate to dogs appearing sleepy, wobbly on their legs, or collapsing. In more serious cases, fits and changes to heart rate, body temperature and blood pressure can occur. Dogs can also become unwell if the flowers are eaten, or if water from a vase containing daffodils is drunk.



Tulips - the toxins found in this plant cause irritation to the mouth and gastrointestinal tract and usually only result in drooling, vomiting and diarrhoea. Serious cases are rare, but effects could include heart problems and breathing difficulties.

Spring crocus – these flower in spring and are said to be of low toxicity and may only cause a mild stomach upset if eaten. These bulbs are not to be confused with autumn crocus, which flower in autumn and can cause severe stomach upset, kidney and liver problems and bone marrow depression.

Toads

Toads secrete venom from glands found on their skin that can be poisonous to pets that bite them, pick them up in their mouth or lick them. Toads are most active in warmer months and may be more easily found by your dog after rain or at dawn or dusk. The toads venom can cause irritation in the mouth, leading to apparent pain, salivation and pawing at the mouth. In more severe cases it can cause behavioural changes (the dog being wobbly on its legs, appearing disorientated or anxious), increased breathing, heart rate changes and fits.

Toads commonly eat slugs and snails and therefore could be a source of lungworm for dogs.

Other common items in your garden that could harm your dog:

- Acorns
- Compost/ Mouldy foods
- Conkers
- Foxgloves
- Large amounts of apple seeds
- Pesticides (also see “In your shed/ garage”)
- Stones from *Prunus* species (plums, cherries etc)
- Yew trees

Tips on how to poison proof your home:

When planting a number of bulbs, make sure to either keep your dog out of reach of the bulbs, or keep the bulbs in a sealed container and take each one out as you plant it.



In your shed/garage

Substances commonly stored in sheds and garages are usually the ones that potentially could be the most harmful to dogs. Ensure that these areas are not easily accessible by your dog and that any chemicals are placed in areas that can not be easily reached by them, or are locked away.

Antifreeze

Care should be taken when using antifreeze products, especially those that contain the chemical ethylene glycol. Ethylene glycol can be lethal when ingested and its sweet taste may make it tempting to pets. Antifreeze should be stored in secure containers away from animals and children. If using antifreeze, make sure that your pets are kept well away and if any is spilt, ensure that it is cleaned up. Effects of poisoning may initially appear as vomiting, diarrhoea, weakness and the dog appearing drunk. An untreated poisoned dog may appear to recover, but this may be followed by kidney failure. Prompt treatment is important. If your dog does drink or lick any amount, contact your veterinarian immediately.



Herbicides (plant killing chemicals)

The types and toxicity of chemicals used to kill plants vary dramatically. Most cases of poisoning occur from dogs that brush up against, chew or lick recently treated plants, or from dogs playing with or drinking from containers. Clinical effects vary dramatically depending on the type of herbicide, but can include vomiting, dehydration, blood in the stools or in the vomit, ulcers in the mouth, breathing problems, heart problems, kidney and liver failure.

Rodenticides (rat or mouse killers)

These substances are designed to be attractive to mice and rats, and unfortunately are very attractive to dogs as well. These are the most commonly encountered household poisons and account for a large number of dogs taken to veterinary practices each year. There are many different types of rodenticides for sale, many of which can cause harm to your dog. The most commonly encountered rodenticides are designed to be eaten by rodents over a period of time, which often interfere with the animals' ability to clot their blood correctly and can cause bleeding. Bleeding may not always be external and poisoned dogs can show signs of weakness, lethargy, lameness or bruising. Other rodenticides can cause vomiting, excitement, changes in body temperature, fits or even gastric blockage.

Slug bait

These substances are most often found in the form of pellets and are very attractive to dogs. There are a number of different types of slug bait which vary in toxicity, some of which are said to be relatively safe to mammals. However, some slug baits contain a substance called metaldehyde, that is highly toxic to dogs. This chemical can quickly cause dogs to develop tremor, twitching and fits, which can go on for a number of days. Cases of poisoning most frequently occur when it is warm and wet, when slugs are most common and gardeners are most likely to use this pesticide. If using slug pellets, make sure they are scattered around the area you wish to treat, rather than left in piles where they are more easily eaten by your dog.

Other common items found in sheds/ garages that could harm your dog:

- Creosote
- Fertilisers
- Fuels
- Gloss paints
- Insecticides
- Water proofing sprays
- White spirit

Tips on how to poison proof your home:

Preventing dogs from being exposed to the sorts of chemicals found in your shed and garage is largely about safe storage and safe usage. If you do use any pesticides in your house or garden, make sure that you keep any packaging till you have finished using the product. In the case of rodenticides, many owners will take their dogs to the vets without any knowledge of the active ingredient because they have thrown it away.



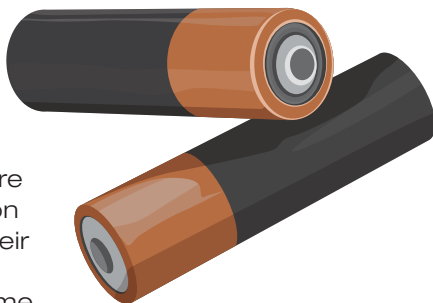
For more information on these, other poisons, and a more complete list of poisonous plants please visit: www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health

General poisons

The following items are poisons that can be found anywhere around your home.

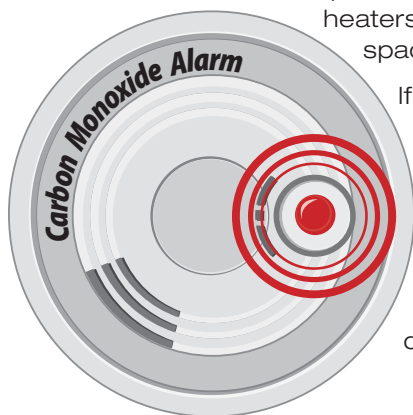
Batteries

If a battery is chewed and punctured by your dog it can cause chemical burns, or even heavy metal poisoning in very rare and extreme cases. If swallowed whole, they are less likely to leak their contents, but can still cause a blockage. This can be very dangerous and may require surgical intervention. Signs of an obstruction may include vomiting, lethargy, being off their food, not defecating or finding it difficult to defecate. Small button batteries that become stuck in the throat, or in the gut, can produce an electric current which can significantly damage the surrounding tissue.



Carbon monoxide

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas with no colour, taste or smell and can be produced from house fires, faulty boilers, faulty heaters or heaters used in poorly ventilated spaces.



If inhaled in large enough concentrations it can cause a range of non-specific clinical effects, including the dog appearing sleepy, vomiting or showing changes in behaviour, breathing and heart rate. Carbon monoxide is highly poisonous to both humans and animals and you should consider fitting a carbon monoxide detector in your home.



For more information on these, or other poisons, please visit:
www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health

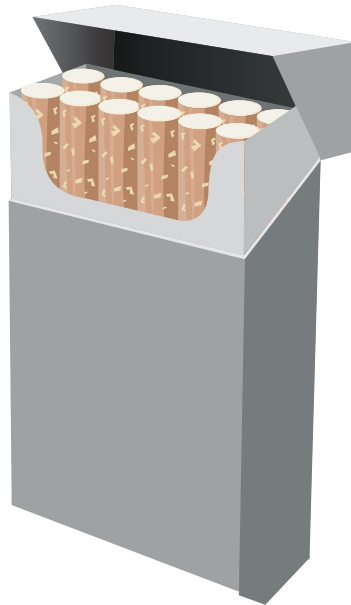
Potpourri

Potpourri is made up of a number of dried plants and flowers. These fragrant decorations may cause, at the very least, vomiting and diarrhoea. How toxic your potpourri is will depend on which dried plants have been used. Identifying which plants are in your potpourri is often very difficult, especially as the dried plant matter is often artificially coloured. Potpourri often includes hard items, like pine cones or bark, and these could become stuck in your dog's throat and cause breathing difficulties, or an obstruction in their gut. This can be very dangerous and may require surgical intervention.

Cigarettes and other nicotine containing products (cigars, nicotine gums, patches and e-cigarettes)

If eaten, these products can all cause vomiting, increased salivation, tremor and may also interfere with the dog's heart rate, blood pressure and breathing. Swallowed nicotine patches may cause prolonged effects, while swallowed e-cigarette refill bottles or vials may cause sudden toxicity after being in the gut for a while.

Some nicotine gums may contain Xylitol, an artificial sweetener that is toxic to dogs and can cause a very quick and potentially serious drop in blood sugar. In some instances it can also cause liver failure (see "In your kitchen" section for further information).



Poisons out and about

Adders

These are the UK's only native poisonous snake and are found in a wide range of different habitats. Adders hibernate over winter and emerge in spring; this is the time when the likelihood of being bitten is highest. These snakes often bask in the sun and inquisitive dogs that stumble upon them are most often bitten around the face, muzzle and front paws.

Signs that a dog has been bitten may appear quickly and can include small puncture wounds, swelling, bruising, pain, lameness, salivation, vomiting, increased temperature, bleeding and may also include changes to the heart beat, blood pressure and breathing rate.

Dogs that are bitten should be taken to a veterinarian as soon as possible and the bite should be left alone. No tourniquets should be applied and owners should not attempt to suck out the poison as this may cause further complications. If you see an adder in your garden, or when out for a walk, it is advisable to leave it alone. The adder is a protected species and it is illegal to harm or kill them.



Blue-green algae

Blue-green algae can be found in many types of waterbody throughout the UK (i.e. ponds, streams, lakes, estuaries etc.) and these can produce toxins which may be harmful to animals and humans. The types of chemicals produced by the algae may vary and can therefore cause a wide range of different clinical effects. These effects can range from vomiting and diarrhoea (both of which may be bloody) to lethargy, effects on the heart and blood pressure, twitching, problems breathing, liver and kidney impairment or can even cause death shortly after exposure.

Dogs are most commonly exposed when swimming, playing in or drinking from contaminated water. Water that contains blue-green algae may appear a different colour, or may be recognisable from coloured algal blooms, appearing on the surface of the water, or close to the shore. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know if there are any toxins present in the water without testing.

The amount of algae in a body of water may vary throughout the year, but is likely to be at its greatest in, or after, hot and sunny periods (i.e. mid to late summer) and will vary depending on the amount of nutrients available in the water. If you come across a body of water that is known to contain blue-green algae, do not let your dog swim in it or drink from it.

Seasonal Canine Illness

The cause of this particular illness is not known (and may not actually be a poison), but appears to affect a very small proportion of dogs taken for walks in woodlands between August and November. Dogs can appear with a range of clinical effects, but the most common signs are sickness, diarrhoea and lethargy, which most typically appear 72 hours after walking through woodland.

Seasonal Canine Illness (SCI) was first identified in 2009 after similar cases of an unknown illness were seen in Norfolk (the Sandringham Estate and Thetford Forest), Nottinghamshire (Sherwood Forest and Clumber Park) and Suffolk (Rendlesham Forest).



Book references

For more detailed information on veterinary toxicology and substance poisonous to pets, you may wish to read the following books:

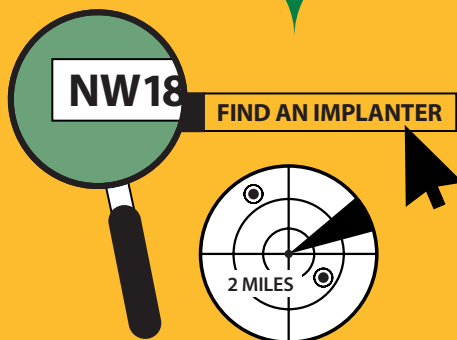
Title:	BSAVA/ VPIS Guide to common canine and feline poisons
Authors:	BSAVA/ VPIS
Published:	In 2012 by British Small Animal Veterinary Association
ISBN:	978-1905319459
Title:	Poisonous2pets: Plants poisonous to dogs and cats
Author:	Nicole O'Kane
Published:	In 2009 by Poisonous2pets
ISBN:	978-0980634808



The UK's largest lost and found
database for microchipped pets

Petlog and the Kennel Club make it easy to find your local Petlog implanter

Did you know that new legislation is being introduced in England in April 2016 that requires all dogs to be microchipped? This includes puppies at eight weeks, before they go to their new homes.



To make sure your puppies are registered on Petlog,
the UK's largest database for microchipped pets visit:

www.petlog.org.uk/findanimplanter

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THE KENNEL CLUB

Making a difference for dogs

The Kennel Club works to protect and promote the health and welfare of all dogs in the UK. We want happy, healthy dogs living long lives with responsible owners. All profits from the organisation go straight into funding the many programmes run in the best interest of dogs and dog owners, and to support the Kennel Club Charitable Trust to re-invest into a wide variety of welfare and health programmes.

Anyone can register their dog with the Kennel Club. By registering you will demonstrate your commitment to your dog's well-being and to the health and welfare of all dogs. You can register online today at **www.thekennelclub.org.uk/dogregistration**.

Whatever your dog's needs, the Kennel Club is here to help and support you.

Find out more by contacting us on **01296 318540**, or visit our website at **www.thekennelclub.org.uk** to find out more about the wonderful world of dogs.

Additional guides on a wide range of subjects are also available to download from our website at www.thekennelclub.org.uk:

- Asthma and your dog
- Breeding for health
- Breeding from your dogs
- Choosing and bringing home the right dog for you
- DNA profiling and parentage analysis services
- Do you know dog law?
- Do you know how to look after your dog in its senior years?
- How to get involved in fun activities and competitions with your dog
- How to get started with dog training
- How to register your dog with the Kennel Club
- Introducing dogs to children or babies
- Kennel Club endorsements
- Moving house with your dog
- Pet Insurance Guide for dog owners
- Puppy Socialisation
- Road travel with your dog
- So you are thinking of working with dogs?
- Thinking of showing your dog in the UK?
- Travelling abroad with your dog
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