



Dyrebeskyttelsen Norge

# Responsible dog ownership

An introductory guide  
to a good life for dogs



## Responsible animal ownership

Before you bring a dog into your life, take time to consider it carefully. Becoming a dog owner comes with major responsibilities.

Do you have time to provide your dog with walks, activity, training, and companionship – every single day?

Have you considered that dogs can live for 10–15 years or more?


Have you familiarized yourself with the needs of dogs and what it takes to give them a good life?

Can you afford veterinary visits, food, equipment, and insurance?

Do you often travel or work long hours? Do you have someone who can help care for the dog, or will you rely on a kennel? If so, this is both a cost and a responsibility that must be considered.

Choose a dog with care. Avoid impulse purchases and illegal imports. Buy from breeders who follow good animal welfare practices – or consider adopting from a rehoming center.





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## The dog – a social and dependent pack animal

Dogs are social beings that seek connection. They form strong bonds with people.


As pack animals, they do not necessarily cope well with being alone. Most adult dogs can learn to stay home alone for a few hours a day, but this requires gradual training and adjustment.

The rest of the day, it's important that the dog spends time with its owner. Good dog ownership is about presence and interaction – for life. Dogs have been humans' companions for thousands of years and are now one of the world's most common pets. They've adapted to human lifestyles and live in our homes as family members, walking companions, helpers, or sources of comfort.

Despite domestication and a strong bond with humans, dogs still have powerful instincts and needs that must be met for them to thrive. Dogs are intelligent and curious animals that learn through experience and interaction. They need both physical exercise and mental stimulation to stay healthy and happy.

Walks where they can use their noses and explore, play and bonding, training and problem-solving – all these enrich their daily lives and support good behavioral development.

Without stimulation, dogs may become bored, frustrated or develop destructive behavior.



***Dogs need both physical exercise and mental stimulation to stay healthy and happy***

Like all animals, dogs need safety and health care. They must have a secure place to rest, regular grooming of fur and claws, access to clean water, and nutrition suited to their age and health.

If a dog becomes ill, injured, or shows signs of discomfort, the owner is legally required to seek veterinary care – and must be prepared for both the responsibility and costs that follow throughout the dog's life.

## Puppies – the start of a whole life

Welcoming a puppy means welcoming an individual who is entirely dependent on safety, guidance, and closeness.

Puppyhood is a critical stage in a dog's life – both physically and mentally – and what happens in the first few months lays the foundation for how the dog will develop as an adult.

Puppies need peace and rest to grow, but also stimulation and gradual exposure to the world around them. Everything new – sounds, smells, people, cars, children, and other animals – should be introduced in a safe and positive way, at the puppy's own pace.

It's important to establish good habits and routines early – including housetraining, socialization, handling, alone training, and learning basic skills.

Training should be based on praise, rewards, and trust – never punishment. The puppy should learn that cooperation with you is rewarding.

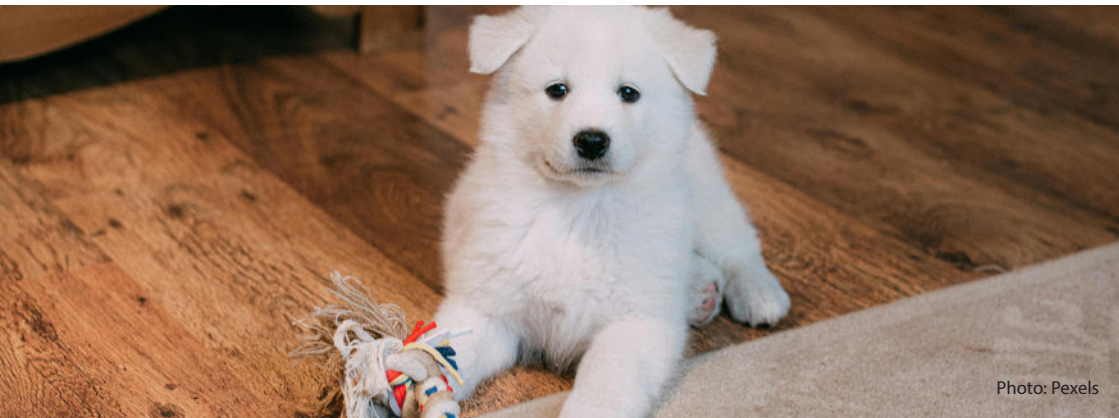
Safety and patience are the keys to raising a well-adjusted, confident, and balanced dog.

Many underestimate how demanding it is to have a puppy. It requires time, often causes sleep deprivation, and involves a lot of work.

The puppy should gradually be allowed to explore the world at its own pace, with support from the owner.

This includes:

- Positive exposure to different environments, sounds, and people
- Training to be alone
- Getting used to car rides, handling, nail trimming, harness/leash, and crate



## Dogs and children

Remember that children under 16 cannot legally or practically be solely responsible for animals. An adult must always be the responsible owner.

If the adults in a household are not willing or able to take care of a dog, you should not get one “for the children”.

Important points for safe interactions between dogs and children:

- Never leave small children alone with a dog: children’s impulsiveness may frighten or hurt the dog, and the dog may react unexpectedly
- Teach children the dog’s signals: a dog that withdraws, growls, or shows teeth needs to be left alone
- Teach children dog safety rules: don’t disturb a dog that is eating or

sleeping, always ask before petting, and don’t take the dog’s toys

- The dog is always an adult’s responsibility: children can help with tasks, but adults hold full responsibility
- Gradual familiarization is key: positive experiences help build a good relationship between dog and child
- Puppy classes can be useful: both puppy owners and children can benefit from courses that focus on interaction between dogs and children

***An adult must always be the responsible owner***



## Social contact

All dogs need daily physical activity and mental stimulation. Dogs must be walked at least three times a day. In addition to relieving themselves, they need to use both body and mind to satisfy their needs.

This includes:

- Walks where the dog can use its nose
- Interactive play and problem-solving tasks
- Training and learning through reward-based methods

Needs vary between dogs. Some dogs require lots of exercise and stimulation, while others need more calm. All dogs need safety, structure, and predictability.

## Health and care

A dog should never experience pain, illness, or suffering.

As an owner, you are responsible for:

- Daily grooming and hygiene
- A safe and comfortable place to rest
- Regular coat care and nail trimming
- Quality food and clean water
- Core vaccinations and annual boosters. Initial vaccination during puppyhood and yearly revaccination against infectious and potentially life-threatening diseases is very important. This includes diseases such as kennel cough, distemper, infectious hepatitis, and parvovirus. Vaccines strengthen the immune system and reduce the risk of serious illness. Annual vaccination and health checks also give your veterinarian the chance to detect early signs of disease or health problems, so your dog can receive quick treatment and improved quality of life.
- Visits to the veterinary clinic for illness, injury, or signs of discomfort  
Veterinary treatment can be costly. Pet insurance is highly recommended for all dogs.



## Dental care for dogs – crucial for their health

Many dogs develop dental problems at a young age, and daily tooth brushing is the most important thing you can do to prevent dental disease. Without regular dental care, plaque and tartar will quickly build up, which can lead to gum inflammation (gingivitis) and periodontitis. Periodontitis is a serious inflammation of the structures supporting the tooth, which causes the gums to recede and the teeth to loosen. The condition is painful, often chronic, and can be difficult to detect before significant damage has occurred.

Daily tooth brushing with a soft toothbrush and dog toothpaste is

the most effective way to keep your dog's mouth healthy. Other products such as chew toys and special dog food can be helpful, but they do not replace brushing.

Small dog breeds are especially prone to dental disease – including chihuahua, pomeranian, yorkshire terrier, and toy poodle. This is often due to crowded teeth and genetic predisposition. Brachycephalic breeds (short-nosed), such as French bulldog and pug, are also at risk. Good dental health is an important part of good animal welfare – it prevents pain, disease, and costly veterinary bills. Start brushing early and make it part of the daily routine!

### ID-marking

All dogs must be microchipped and registered in an approved registry like Dyre-ID. This ensures that a lost or injured dog can be traced back to you. Remember to update your contact information in the registry if you move.



Photo: Pexels

## Signs of illness – when to react

Dogs often hide pain and illness, and changes in behavior can be the first sign that something is wrong.

That's why it's important to know your dog well and respond to even small changes.

As an owner, you have a duty to consult a veterinarian if you suspect your dog is sick. Ignoring symptoms can lead to unnecessary suffering. Remember: dogs can't tell you when something is wrong – it's your responsibility to seek veterinary care if something doesn't seem right.

Signs your dog may be unwell include:

- Drinking or urinating much more than usual
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Limping or difficulty moving
- Lethargy, fearfulness, or restlessness
- Loss of appetite or weight loss
- Bad breath, bleeding from the mouth, or swelling around the mouth
- Excessive scratching or wounds on the skin
- Labored breathing, coughing, or sneezing
- Behavioral changes, such as aggression or withdrawal

If you suspect illness – contact a veterinarian!



## Accidents and health challenges in dogs

Even with the best care, accidents and illness can happen. Dogs can injure themselves while playing, on walks, or in encounters with other animals.

Injuries to paws, claws, muscles, and joints are common. Other issues include poisoning from harmful plants, chocolate, or chemicals, insect bites, or foreign objects lodged in the throat or stomach.

There are also numerous health conditions that can affect dogs, both genetic and environmental. It's important to learn about the health risks associated with the breed before getting a dog.

Some illnesses develop gradually and may be hard to detect without regular health checks.

Stay alert and consult a veterinarian if your dog's behavior changes, shows signs of pain, or seems uncomfortable.

Many conditions can be treated effectively if discovered early – but can lead to severe suffering if left untreated.

## When the dog grows old

Older dogs may develop stiffness, pain, or reduced vision and hearing. They need more rest, but still benefit from companionship and adapted activity.

As an owner, you must look out for signs of illness, pain, or discomfort. A veterinarian can assist with assessment and pain relief.

Remember: a dignified life for a dog lasts until the very end.



**For more information**



[dyrebeskyttelsen.no](https://dyrebeskyttelsen.no)



[mattilsynet.no](https://mattilsynet.no)



[atferdskonsulenter.no](https://atferdskonsulenter.no)



Dyrebeskyttelsen Norge

## **Would you like to support our work for animals in need?**

The Norwegian Society for Protection of Animals (NSPA) is the only nationwide animal welfare organization in Norway that provides hands-on help to animals in need. Every day, all year round, our local branches work to rescue animals from homelessness and neglect.

We also run Lisaklinikken, Norway's only free veterinary clinic for people facing financial difficulties. Here, animals receive the veterinary care they need, and all treatment is completely free of charge.

In addition, Dyrebeskyttelsen Norge works to improve welfare for all animals. We engage in political advocacy and fight for laws that give animals more rights and better protection.

If you would like to contribute to a better future for animals,  
scan this QR code:



Learn more about NSPA at [www.dyrebeskyttelsen.no](http://www.dyrebeskyttelsen.no)