



Puppy Pack

Puppy Raising Information

CARE AND MAINTENANCE

When raising your Neapolitan Mastiff puppy, remember that the bones are growing at a terrific rate and any undo stress can/will cause irreparable damage to the youngster. This is a very slow maturing breed, but the rate of growth in the first 12 months is extreme. A Neapolitan puppy will appear “adult-like” quite young, but care must be taken to keep the growth as slow as possible.

FEED

This is the most important factor in owning a healthy and low maintenance Neapolitan. Following is a recommendation for feeding.

Puppies 6-12months; two meals per day. A balanced puppy formula dry food for the first 12 months, some mince or canned could be added as flavouring.

Lamb, beef and even kangaroo are good sources of meat and served on the bone will provide good chewing to help maintain healthy teeth and gums.

Please never feed your Neapolitan after strenuous activity... it can lead to bloat.

Keep large quantities of fresh water available. As the puppy grows so will the drool, so cleaning out the container and refilling is essential.

As the dog gets older but certainly not before 6-12months the puppy food can be changed gradually to quality Adult dog foods. It is also acceptable to mix half adult & half puppy formula dry from 6 months until the massive growth is ‘over’ usually around 8-12 months. Twice daily feeding is recommended for at least 6 months but is also acceptable for the lifetime of the Neapolitan.

As the pup grows the intake of food will increase. At no time do you want your Neapolitan fat! Even in adulthood. The trick is to easily FEEL the ribs (without digging through fat!) but not to SEE the ribs. That is a safe guide throughout the life of your Neapolitan. In the summer heat it is especially important to not allow excess weight; the possibility of heat stroke is amplified in an overweight dog.

WORMING

Heartworm treatment is a must. Once a month pills are the easiest, starting immediately upon receiving your pup. This will be carried out his/her entire life.

Normal worming should be done every three months with Drontal All-wormer or equivalent. It is suggested you worm you puppy 10 days after getting him, a month after that then three monthly.

EARS

A cleaning of the ears once a month is usually all that is necessary. Otoderm Multicleanse solution or diluting Malaseb Shampoo (anti fungal/bacterial) and putting INTO the ear, give a ‘massage’ to the base of the ear and let the fluid come out on its own (breaks up the wax etc as well as ‘sanitising’ the ear). Puppies may need extra cleaning. If the ear ever smells bad, and the dog is scratching a visit to the vet is needed.

EYES

The heavy rolls of wrinkle on the dogs which is so desirous might sometimes cause problems around the eyes. Entropion (eyelids turned in) and ectropion (eyelids turned out) is certainly seen in the breed. This breed is expected to show haw, or the redness of the drooping lower lid, but excessiveness here can be a potential problem. Most cases are very mild and par for the course in breeding/owning Neapolitans, these cases do not interfere with the vision or health of the dog. Check the parents and other relatives yourself, ask questions. More pronounced entropion might cause ulcers on the corneas and, if not surgically treated, blindness. The amount of wrinkle is NOT in direct proportion to the problems surrounding the eye. Many heavily wrinkled dogs exhibit no affects; many smooth faced dogs are affected. Cherry eye is relatively common in growing pups, removal of the gland is the most successful treatment, although procedures have improved with tacking the gland into place.

SKIN

Due to the folds and wrinkles Neapolitan's can be susceptible to Bacterial infections. This is especially so in wet humid conditions. Otoderm Multicleanse solution, Malaseb Shampoo or Listerine applied on problem areas can clear up most issues. Drying off the area 'in' the dewlap and under the mouth before bedtime will also assist in keeping the bacteria away. These areas are most susceptible.

In heavy rain some Neapolitan can get 'rain scald' ... typically seen as small lumps over the back which then lose the hair and look red and 'angry'. They are a form of 'heat spots' which is part of the pyoderma family. Again, pouring on Listerine can alleviate the sores, you can use it safely from the moment you see the lumps.

Coat changes in Neapolitans are not pretty. Usually in spring when the weather changes, the hair begins to fall out, with the dead hair being quite pale compared to the new growth. It will make them look moth-eaten. The moulting can last up to about 6 weeks. Shedding out with a shedding blade (using one in a long blade form with handles, same as for horses is best) will help speed up the process. Watch for hot spots that may occur.

VACCINATION

Vaccinations should be done at 6 weeks, 10 or 12 weeks and 16 weeks and then annually. Remember to keep your pup contained while waiting for the vaccine to take affect.

Neapolitan puppies seem to be particularly susceptible to parvovirus so it is essential you do not expose him to lots of strange dogs, parks etc., until he is at least 12 weeks old. Parvo takes approximately 7-10 days to exhibit in an exposed pup. Signs are diarrhoea and vomiting, typically with a very smelly and often 'pink or red' colour. Get to the vet immediately!

EXERCISE

For the first 6 months the growth rate is rapid. Your pup will grow approximately 100 times his birth weight in 24 months. But the majority of that is in the first 6 months. Typically you will see about a 2 kg gain each week until they reach ~50kg. Then it will slow.

Consequently joints can be damaged easily, so things like stairs, terraced gardens, jumping into vehicles etc., should be avoided until at least 9 months. Getting your pup into the car/ute/trailer is best done by placing the front feet up and then lifting the rear. You can teach him to get the front up by himself. Don't let him jump out – ease him out by supporting his neck/chest area to avoid damaging his elbows.

Your puppy can go on walks with you. Straight line exercise is the best without extended jogging or running. Certainly no 10 kilometre hikes - at least until the dog is 18 months or so. The exercise itself is not bad for them; it is the fact that you don't know 'when' the joints/muscles are tired. When a pup is self exercising in the yard he will stop when he's 'done'. If you are on a walk it may be that he should stop ½ way home, but will continue on to please you... it is this last part that is causing damage.

DISCIPLINE & TRAINING

Neapolitan's are Mastiffs and as such are "Alpha" dogs, so when you get your cute little puppy home he is definitely going to try to be the "boss". Please exert your authority from day one. Teach him "No" immediately. Physical discipline with a Neapolitan is not a good idea. Learn to growl! When he is being 'told off' by his mother or littermates he is growled at, this he understands. If 'severe' discipline is needed you can accomplish this by grabbing the lips/flews with both hands, staring into his eyes and using your roughest low voice (not screaming) telling him he is the naughtiest dog in the world. Well timed and executed you will establish in his mind that you are truly boss and he will gain huge respect for you.

Your Neapolitan will always love you, but gaining his respect is paramount for a safe happy relationship. Remember that he will grow very large, males up to around 80 kg. Whatever you do with him as a pup will be carried through with him as an adult, if you don't want him on the couch/bed or jumping up on you when he's big, then DO NOT permit it when he's little. Make sure boundaries and rules are followed by the WHOLE house regarding his upbringing. It is no good to have four family members say NO to something and for one member to say "OK". Consistency is extremely important.

Obedience training is a good idea, but talk to those running the lessons about having a giant dog, some trainers/clubs are less helpful with the 'biggies'.

Neapolitan's are natural guardians and need no training to be able to protect you. It is not recommended to be involved in guard training unless you are an experienced trainer.

SOCIALISING

After completing your vaccinations at 16 weeks, take your pup everywhere with you, meeting new people/dogs/things will open up his confidence and stimulate his mind. Working with the pup in this manner ensures that he respects your decision, but never let him become afraid or become angry in these lessons. You are teaching him to trust and respect you.

Think of the socialising and exposure to different things as 'increasing' his tolerance to new things and creating a happy, well adjusted adult that will not 'over-react' to new people or dogs. Too many times we have heard stories of Neapolitans that are 'over-protective' of their people/home and it only causes problems for the owners... the dog should react seriously only when the threat is serious. Never allow your baby to growl or bark in public situations, reprimand quickly so they learn to accept what you deem acceptable.

Dog shows are excellent areas for socialising, so are shopping car parks, public parks (dog friendly) etc... wherever you find people! Always keep a firm hold on the lead, never allow the Neapolitan to be out of your direct control, YOU are responsible for YOUR dog's behaviour.

Do the 'right thing' from the beginning and you will not have 'issues' later.

SHOWING

Socialising is the important start to showing, so your puppy is happy and comfortable around strangers when you are present.

Your pup needs to learn to stand still and be approached/touched by a stranger, and have its teeth looked at. He needs to trot easily next to you on a lead.

You will need a slip collar (chain choker for older pups, nylon for babies), a sturdy leash (nylon or leather), a number holder (a safety pin can start you out). Some portable shade is advised, as most shows have limited access to shade. A chair, there is a lot of waiting! A crate (or a stake/chain to tie him to) for your dog so you don't have to hold him the whole day. Slobber cloth (rag/towel) to wipe his mouth/eyes before judging. A bowl for water, there will always be a tap/sink somewhere at a show.

Contact the Information Officer to find another member who might be showing in your area for assistance in starting out. Remember to attend our Club Shows for interaction with other Neapolitan Mastiffs & owners!

GROOMING

With their shorthaired coats little grooming is necessary. Brushing with a grooming mitt or brush is a simple grooming that helps in the dog being handled and manipulated – the more all over touching you do at home will make it easier to be touched by your vet. Open his mouth and look at his teeth (the back ones too).

Bathe with an Anti-Bacterial shampoo or gentle dog shampoo only as necessary.

Flea control is a must, but it is best to control them in the environment, not on the dog, a topical flea treatment (TopSpot) as necessary (particularly in warmer weather).

ENVIRONMENT

Jumping up and down levels or steps is not advised. If you do have steps, you will need to make sure your puppy learns to take them SLOWLY one step at a time – no launching.

Trampoline beds are excellent for Neapolitans and might help reduce bursars (a swollen ‘ball’ of fluid on end of joint, typically on elbow or hock) and calluses.

HEALTH TESTING

If you are intending to breed Neapolitans health tests are advised. Australia does seem to have mostly healthy Neapolitans, but health testing will help understand what is happening ‘inside’ the dogs... not just the surface impression. Even if you are not planning on breeding it would be helpful for the Neapolitan Mastiff database to have the hip and elbow tests done at a minimum.

Tests should be performed no earlier than 12 months with 18 months being ‘optimum’, but definitely before breeding.

Hips and Elbows are to be xrayed and submitted to the Australian Vet Association (AVA) for scoring and grading. Since the dog needs to be under general anaesthetic for these xrays ensure that your vet is comfortable and experienced with general anaesthetic for a giant brachycephalic breed.

Eye certification is to be done by a certified Ophthalmologist. Check with your veterinarian regarding visiting Ophthalmologists to possibly avoid a long distance trip. Follow ups every two or so years are recommended.

Von Willebrand’s and Factor 8 blood testing, these are bleeder’s diseases which occur in some giant breeds and are very easy to eliminate if testing is carried out.

Heart checking can be done by your own Vet. It is to be checked by auscultation in the mitral, pulmonic, aortic and tricuspid valve areas, the ventral right precordium and the right craniodorsal cardiac border. Any abnormalities could be followed up by Ultrasound with a cardiac specialist.

Full panel thyroid test. Thyroid abnormalities can be seen in this breed, and although some expect problems it should not be the norm. Normal thyroid is normal for the breed. Many with thyroid problems can be placed on medication to control it, although this is not ideal for those used in breeding programs.

Patellas are to be palpated for slippage by a vet without anaesthetic.

This breed is very special and not like a “normal” dog... being a giant breed they will often have “growing pains” in the first 6-12 months of life and will need restriction in activity if they are feeling any pain. The slower (through feeding) we can make them grow, the better adults they will be. Do not expect to “never see the vet”. Often the Neapolitan will have poor radiographs but still maintain normal activities. Even if the parents of this pup are Hip and Elbow Xrayed it in no way guarantees that the pup will not suffer from some form of bone/joint drama.