

## Visiting Your Veterinarian

How often should my pet go to the vet? The answer to this question depends on the pet's age, health and behavior.

### Puppies And Kittens

- Should visit the veterinarian for a basic health check and to receive their initial puppy or kitten shots and the recommended boosters.
- They should be wormed and vaccinated every 3-4 weeks until they are 4 months old and they should be spayed or neutered during this time as well.
- After these initial visits, they will only need to see the vet once per year.

### Adult Pets

- Should be examined at least once a year. Older pets may need to be seen more often. This schedule allows the veterinarian to learn how your pet normally looks and behaves and makes it easier to spot abnormalities when they occur.
- You may want to time your visit to the veterinarian to coincide with your pet's annual vaccines or their examination for parasites such as intestinal worms, fleas and ticks.
- Adult dogs and cats should be vaccinated every 1 to 3 years depending on which vaccine is needed and the risk factors for disease pertaining to each individual pet. Your veterinarian can help you determine which vaccines are needed and how often.
- The veterinarian will examine your pet focusing on how it looks, smells, feels and behaves. He or she may want to do laboratory tests to evaluate parts of the pet that we cannot see or touch such as the heart, blood, or bladder, especially in pets older than 6 or 7 years.

To make the most out of your visit, make a list of questions to ask before you arrive at the veterinarian's office.

- The veterinarian can advise you not only about medical health, but also about behavior, nutrition, exercise physiology and many other topics.
- The veterinarian's office is a good place to get advice about flea and tick products, learn how to brush your cat's teeth, or trim its nails.
- Preventive dentistry is increasingly recognized as being important to your pet's well being. Teeth cleaning requires general anesthesia to do a thorough job. The vet can discuss the benefits of dental cleaning with you.

If you adopted your pet at the Santa Barbara Humane Society, it has received its vaccines (check your paperwork to find out when the next ones are due), received a physical and temperament exam from the veterinarian and staff and is spayed or neutered. We recommend that you and your new pet develop a relationship with a veterinarian who offers the full range of services so that you can continue to maintain your happy, healthy, loving bond.