

KEEPING YOUR THERAPET HEALTHY

The Therapet is almost by definition going to meet and bring comfort and happiness to people who are not in the best of health, and whose immune systems may be weak either through disease or in some cases because of the treatments which they are receiving.

It is the duty of every Therapet owner to ensure that their Therapet is in the best of health, and not going to take germs into the environment of those we are visiting. We must be able to convince the authorities in charge of hospitals, homes or schools that we have taken every precaution to ensure that our Therapet is safe and can only bring benefits to those whom we visit.

CANINE CONCERN SCOTLAND TRUST ask all Therapet owners to take the following health precautions.

- Annual Health Check. **All Therapets must have an annual health check-up by your own veterinary surgeon.** You must inform your vet that your dog is a Therapet and will be visiting people who may be in poor health and whose immune system may be compromised either by disease or therapy. Your vet will advise on the appropriate vaccine regime. Most vaccine manufacturers stipulate a 3 yearly booster for the Distemper, Parvovirus and Infectious Canine Hepatitis components as immunity lasts longer with these diseases. **HOWEVER**, the immunity to LEPTOSPIROSIS will only persist for little over a year so ANNUAL boosters are required for this disease – this is very important when visiting vulnerable people as it is the only one of these canine diseases that can be transmissible to humans.
- We do realise that some dogs may have had problems with vaccine reactions in the past. If that is the case, please ask your vet to carry out a risk assessment, and if he or she feels that the dog's lifestyle poses little risk of contracting these infectious diseases, particularly leptospirosis, then we would accept an email from your vet to that effect.

In the course of the annual health check your vet will probably check for any signs of ear, eye, nose or mouth infections (including dental disease) and ensure that the coat is clear of any signs of skin disease. **However, please try to have a discussion with your vet on these points so that you are clear in your own mind.** Remember these are the parts of your Therapet with which the people you are visiting will make direct contact.

- Deworming against both round and tape worms must be undertaken at least every three months, and monthly if your Therapet is visiting schools or youth groups.
- Skin Parasites. You must protect your dog against fleas and ticks..
- Passport Dogs. If your Therapet has been abroad in the past 12 months it may require a special treatment for ticks and worms – check with your vet.
- Regular dental checks to stop smelly breath and the risk of spreading infections through saliva.
- Regular ear checks. Ear infections can be painful if someone pats your dog's head and infection could be passed to a human
- All Therapets who are unwell should be withdrawn from duties until back to normal, or until professionally cleared if veterinary treatment was required. Therapet owners should not visit if they are unwell.
- Raw Meat Diets. In 2018 we implemented a policy on Raw Feeding due to significant scientific evidence that Raw Meat Based Diets may contain pathogenic bacteria and parasites which could infect dogs and possibly, in rare circumstances, pass to those in contact with the dog. Some of our partner organisations, including the NHS, also require that dogs visiting their premises are not fed on a raw meat based diet. We therefore implemented our policy that Therapets should not be fed a raw meat based diet. We keep this matter under review as new research is undertaken and if scientific evidence states that RMBD are safe and free from risk of causing infection we shall reconsider our decision. Careful consideration of evidence at our most recent review in January 2022 has, however, not persuaded us to alter this decision. This decision was ratified at our Board meeting on 24 April 2022.