

Care of Your Rescue Cavalier

You are now the proud owner of a Rescue Cavalier. You will find that they are the most loving, gentle and happy little dogs. The basic needs of a Rescue Cavalier are no different to any other, but a little extra thought may be needed to ensure he settles in his new home quickly. To help ensure that your Cavalier has many happy and healthy years ahead, here are some tips for your guidance.

House Training

Do be patient with your new Cavalier for the first few nights. Everything will seem very strange to him, having left his familiar surroundings and family. A lot of love and reassurance will soon make him realise that he is safe with you.

Your Cavalier may have been perfectly house trained in its previous home, but you may have the occasional 'accident'. Again, a little patience may be needed and your encouragement and praise when things 'go right' will speed this process up. He shouldn't be chastised for mistakes and once he is settled and used to his new home, should once again, become clean.

Diet

You Cavalier will settle in quickly if given the same food as he was having previously. Too quick a change of diet may lead to an upset tummy, especially when he is feeling insecure from the change in a new home.

Try to keep him on the same diet for a couple of weeks and if you wish to switch over to some other brand of dry or fresh food, do it gradually over a period of a week. This can be done by slowly increasing the amount of his previous food to that of his new food in each of his meals. Directions on how best to do this are usually found on the food packet.

Everybody has their own ideas on what the ideal diet should consist of for their Cavalier, but research does show that the best form of feeding all the essential vitamins, minerals and trace elements as well as the correct balance of protein and carbohydrate, comes from ready prepared dog food, whether this be in the form of complete tinned foods, complementary tinned foods (this means to be served with roughage of biscuit added), or in the form of a complete dried food. So many varieties are available nowadays that it is sometimes difficult to make a decision on what brand to use. Most of them are highly palatable and your Cavalier would probably love them all, so it is up to you.

Other animals

If there are other animals in the family, care with introducing them to the newcomer will lead to a happy household.

It is understandable that you will want to give a lot of time and attention to your new Cavalier to help him settle, but it would be unwise to ignore the others. Try to have the same routines with the others as much as possible. They will not appreciate a stranger coming into your house and stealing the limelight. In a similar way, the arrival of a new baby can make his/her older sibling jealous and take care to avoid any potential conflicts.

Children

Cavaliers are normally very good with children with their happy, gay temperament and size. However, if your dog has not lived with children before, he will need to get used to the younger members of the family, their size, noise and little mannerisms. Sudden screams, shouts and movements may alarm or frighten him. He may not be used to the over exuberant hugs and loves that a young child can give. Adult supervision will be necessary in early stages, until the dog is relaxed in the child's company. The child should be taught to respect the dog. This is an ideal time for teaching the younger child to tidy up and put their toys away after playing. Tears will be saved if the child tidies up and toys not left around for the dog to chew. If the dog does chew something that it shouldn't, take it away but give him one of his own toys. He will then learn what he is allowed to touch and what not.

Vaccinations

Dogs of all breeds need to undergo an initial course of vaccinations followed by a booster every year. If the annual booster lapses, your Cavalier will lose his immunity to fatal diseases and so it is essential to keep a record of the month his booster is due. If no information is available about the vaccinations your dog had from his previous home, you should seek advice from your veterinary surgeon. Otherwise, if he is accompanied with a vaccination certificate, you can then take him for his booster when it is due as stated in the certificate.

Worming

Worming is a very vital procedure, but so simple nowadays. There are many brands of combined wormers available and the guidance of your vet would be helpful. Regular worming is essential for the health and well-being of your Cavalier, and even if you do not have other pets, your Cavalier is still prone to infestation when out exercising where other dogs and cats have fouled. The roundworm larvae lie dormant in the tissues of all dogs and if these emerge, they cause heavy infestation. Scavenging at dead birds or bird droppings can also infect with tapeworm, so a multi-wormer is advisable. Most wormers are prescribed according to weight, so do weigh your Cavalier before dosing to obtain the correct dosage.

Anal Glands

Cavaliers are sadly prone to building up excess debris in the anal glands. These glands are situated on either side of the anus and may be full without you realising. Some Cavaliers will suffer in silence, but on the other hand, some dogs will show signs as dragging their bottoms along the floor, causing their tail, preening and nibbling at their paws and legs, and turning quickly to look at their rear end. Do watch for these signs, as blocked anal glands cause much discomfort and pain and, if neglected, may lead to anal abscesses. This in turn can lead to the need for surgical removal of the glands which is a very painful operation. Some Cavaliers, in extreme cases, may need glands cleaning as often as once a month, whereas others may go very much longer. Your vet will perform this task easily, and it takes about one minute. The charge is minimal, but is vital for your dog's well being and comfort. Some dog groomers also provide this service.

Weight

Apart from checking your Cavalier's weight for the correct dosage when worming, it is a good routine to weigh him monthly. Spayed bitches and castrated dogs are prone to putting weight on easily and often need less intake than an intact dog. If weight is allowed to get out of hand, you could be shortening your Cavalier's life. Excess strain on internal organs, as well as strain on his spine and limbs, will contribute towards ill health. The Cavalier is, after all, a toy dog and therefore needs toy-sized meals of the correct nature.

The average Cavalier should weigh between 12-18lbs, but of course, there may be slight variations depending on the size of his frame. If you find that he has gained a pound or two, do take action. It is a very simple task to slim him down safely and painlessly. Feed two small meals daily rather than one big bowlout. Reduce each meal by about one teaspoonful of whatever you normally give him. Use a teaspoonful of bran for roughage, added to his meat instead of biscuit. This reduces calories in carbohydrate intake, and is so much better for him than biscuit anyway. Naturally, cut out all tit-bits in between meals.

Weigh him weekly, try to get about a pound reduction each week. If you find that he is not losing weight, you are obviously not reducing his intake sufficiently. The simplest way to weigh your dog is by standing on the scales alone and noting your weight. Then stand with your Cavalier. Work out the difference and there you have your dog's weight.

Exercise

Regular exercise is something that your Cavalier should have and enjoy. This also helps to keep weight regulated. However, keep the walks short to start with as he may not have been used to long walks. Slowly increase the distance and stop when you see that he is panting too much and look tired.

Everyone likes seeing their dog running round the park having fun, but until your dog has completely settled in and trained to come back to you when called, you must always take him on a lead. The extending leads give the dog freedom but you are still in control.

Grooming

Cavaliers are a natural breed and will shed their coats several times a year. If brushed and combed daily, you won't ever have the massive amounts of hair lying around noticed on an ungroomed Cavalier. His skin will be healthier and his coat shiny. Brush the coat thoroughly first, not forgetting tummy, feathering and ears. Then go over with a moulting comb. This will remove all the loose hair and will gently ease out any tangles that may be present. A well-kept Cavalier should not have tangles. If your Cavalier has not been used to regular grooming, bribery and corruption works wonders! Praise him and keep giving him the odd tit-bit whilst grooming, and you'll find he'll soon be asking for his grooming sessions!

Do keep an eye on claws. If your Cavalier has constant road walking, then his nails will wear down naturally, but if most exercise is taken on grass or soft ground, the nails will grow at an alarming rate and need clipping regularly. Overgrown claws can make walking painful, not to mention catching in the feathering if scratching. With Blenheims, the nail is pale and transparent and you can easily see the quick. With the other colours, the claw is darker and so to avoid cutting into the quick, ask your vet to perform this task.

Some breeders dock the dew claws whilst some prefer not too. Dew claws are like the 'thumbs' on your Cavalier. If the dew claws are present on your Cavalier, you must also keep an eye on the nails on them and clip them as you would do with the other nails.

Eyes

Cavalier eyes tend to weep, and tear staining on the surrounding hair and skin become sore. Wipe the corners daily with moistened cotton wool, and dry with a fresh piece of cotton wool. Your vet or pet store will sell eye cleaners which are effective for tear stains.

Ears

Check the inside of the ear weekly for excess wax or signs of infection. If waxy, clean gently with a drop of surgical spirit or a good ear cleaner from your vet, on cotton wool without poking down into the canal. In the summer, keep a check for burrs and grass seeds which can work their way down into the ear canal and cause pain and infection. Keep the ears well groomed, never allowing knotting to develop behind or inside the ear leathers. This can be very painful if your Cavalier tries to scratch his ear and invariably gets his claws caught up in the knots.

Teeth

Ideally your Cavalier's teeth should be cleaned once a day but a minimum is twice a week. Use toothpaste from a good pet shop and using a finger brush designed for dogs, gently clean your Cavalier.
