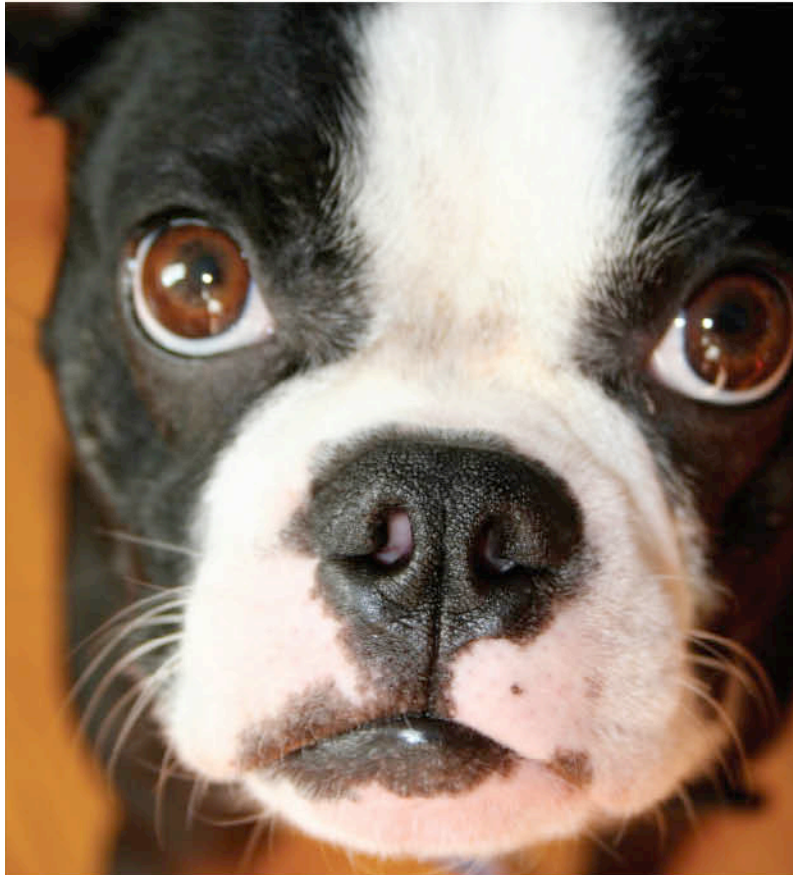


# Your Boston Terrier

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



## Boston Terriers: What a Unique Breed!

Your dog is special! She's your best friend and companion and a source of unconditional love. Chances are that you chose her because you like Boston terriers, and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Lively, with a friendly personality
- Requires very little grooming
- Small, but sturdy
- Good with people and other pets
- Loves to play games, especially fetch

No dog is perfect, though, and you may have noticed these characteristics, too:

- Can have an unstable temperament if not bred properly, including excessive barking, hyperactivity, or aggression
- Prone to several health problems
- Makes a lot of snorting, snuffling, and wheezing noises, and she snores
- Difficult to housetrain
- Can be gassy or drool a lot

Is it all worth it? Of course! She's got her own personality, and you love her for it.



**West Towne  
Veterinary Center**



[www.westtownevet.com](http://www.westtownevet.com) 608.828.3737

For more information on breed specific wellness visit:

[www.westtownevet.com/wellnessprevention-2/breed-specific-wellness/](http://www.westtownevet.com/wellnessprevention-2/breed-specific-wellness/)

Foundation site of breed specific wellness:

<http://www.upei.ca/~cidd/breeds.htm>

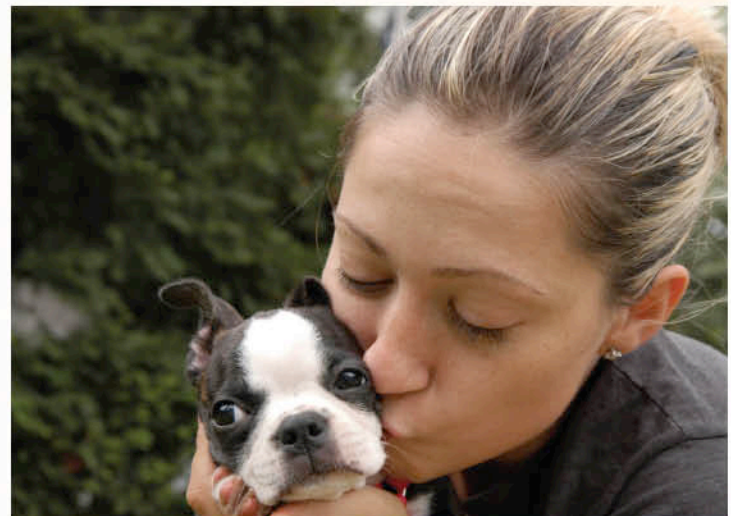
Dr. Ken's breed specific blog:

[www.breedspecificwellness.blogspot.com](http://www.breedspecificwellness.blogspot.com)

DNA/Genetic blood testing:

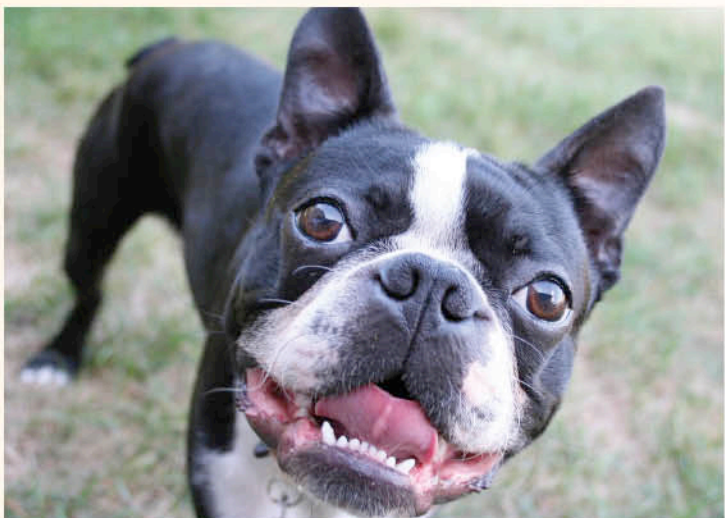
<http://www.facebook.com/DoggieDNA>

Your Boston Terrier



© 2010 VetThink, Inc. [www.Genesis4Pets.com](http://www.Genesis4Pets.com)





Your Boston terrier may inherit or develop a number of genetically linked eye conditions, including cataracts (where the cornea becomes cloudy and your dog loses his sight), dry eye (where the tear glands don't produce enough tears), glaucoma (extremely painful pressure in the eye that causes blindness), and cherry eye (where the third eyelid is sore and swollen and pops out of the corner of the eye). In addition, because your terrier has eyeballs that bulge, and that distinctive shape of head, he is more vulnerable to eye injuries and eye sores that don't heal. In other words, your dog's eyes can cause him all kinds of problems, and they can be painful! We will perform diagnostic testing and evaluate his eyes at every examination.

To help prevent injuries, don't let your dog ride with his head out of the window; this is a frequent cause of eye injuries. Some eye problems are medical emergencies and must be treated immediately, so call us right away if he has any problems with his eyes. Depending on the condition, medication and sometimes surgery is required.

## Your Boston Terrier's Health

We know that because you care so much about your dog, you want to take good care of him. That's why we'll tell you about the health concerns we'll be discussing with you over the life of your Boston terrier.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they're related to your pet's breed. That doesn't mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that he's more at risk than other dogs. We'll describe the most common issues for Boston terriers to give you an idea of what may come up. Of course we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide, along with the health evaluation schedule it contains, helps us and you plan for your pet's health-care needs. At the end of the booklet, we've included a description of what you can do at home to keep your Boston terrier looking and feeling his best. You'll know what to watch for, and we'll all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.

### *Dental Disease*

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. And unfortunately, dental disease and Boston terriers go hand in hand. It starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. If we don't prevent or treat dental disease, your buddy will lose her teeth and be in danger of damaging her kidneys, liver, heart, and joints. In fact, the disease may shorten your pet's life by one to three years! We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean.

### *Eye Problems*

### *Heart Disease*

Heart failure is a leading cause of death of Boston terriers in their golden years, and 75% of the heart disease is caused by valve deterioration. Pets with heart valve disease have a heart murmur that can be heard with a stethoscope. If your dog has a heart murmur or physical signs that suggest heart problems, we'll perform diagnostic testing to determine the presence and severity of the disease. We'll repeat those same tests every year or so to monitor the condition. If valve disease is diagnosed early, we may be able to prescribe medications that could prolong her life for many years. Remember that proper dental care and weight control go a long way in preventing heart disease.

### *Infections*

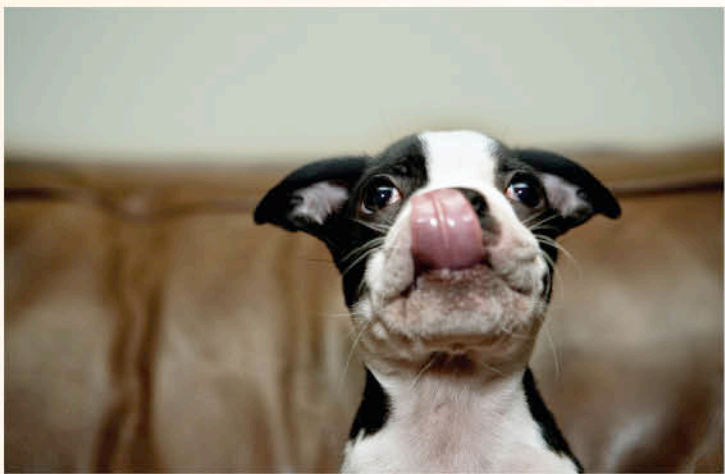
Boston terriers are susceptible to bacterial and viral infections—the same ones that all dogs can get—such as parvovirus, rabies, and distemper. Many of these infections are preventable through vaccination, which we'll administer to your dog based on the diseases we see in our area, his age, and other factors.

### *Knee Problems*

Sometimes a Boston terrier's kneecap will slip out of place (called patellar luxation). You might notice that she runs along and suddenly picks up a back leg and skips or hops for a few strides. Then she kicks her leg out sideways to pop the kneecap back in place, and she's fine again. If the problem is mild and involves only one leg, your friend may not require much treatment beyond arthritis medication. When symptoms are severe, surgery is needed to realign the kneecap to keep it from popping out of place. Rehabilitation and special exercises can be very helpful.

### *Obesity*





Obesity is a significant health problem in dogs and a serious disease that may cause arthritis, some types of cancer, back pain, and heart disease. Though it's tempting to give your pal food when he looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can love him to death with human food and treats.

### *Parasites*

All kinds of worms and bugs can invade your dog's body, inside and out. Everything from fleas to ticks to ear mites can infest her skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, heartworms, and whipworms can get into her system in any number of ways: drinking unclean water, eating or stepping on feces, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your friend, these parasites can cause pain, discomfort, and even death, so it's important that we test for them on a regular basis. We'll also recommend preventative medication as necessary to keep her healthy.

### *Respiratory Distress Syndrome*

This disease, also known as brachycephalic syndrome, affects dogs with a short nose, like your Boston terrier. He has the same amount of tissue in his nose and throat as other dogs, but there's no place for it to go. As a consequence, the soft palate, which is the soft part of the back of the roof of the mouth, is too long and hangs down into the airway. In addition, his nostrils may be too small, and it's possible that his trachea, or windpipe, is narrow and undersized. All these things lead to a narrow and obstructed airway. Many Boston terriers can barely breathe! Watch for exercise intolerance, loud breathing, coughing, bluish gums, and fainting. Ideally, we'll correct the problem surgically early on when we spay or neuter your dog, but we can also complete the surgery later in life.

With his short nose, he is also more likely to develop other

problems, such as flatulence from excessive air intake, pneumonia from aspirating food, and heat stroke. Being overweight also increases the likelihood of breathing problems, so be sure to keep him on the trim side.

### *Skin Infections*

Your terrier is prone to genetically linked skin diseases and underlying problems that cause hair loss, including pattern baldness and Cushing's disease. You'll want to watch for her licking or scratching her skin, smelly or reddened skin, and patches of hair loss. We will check for these conditions upon examination, but let us know if you see signs. Treatment is generally long term, and we'll likely try a combination of approaches to determine what is most effective with your dog. The earlier you call to have skin problems checked out, the less likely it is that you will end up with an itchy, bald, smelly dog to take care of. You don't want that, and neither does she!

### *Spaying or Neutering*

One of the best things you can do for your Boston terrier is to have him neutered (called spaying in females). In males, this means we surgically remove the testicles, and in females, it means we surgically remove the uterus and ovaries. Spaying or neutering decreases the likelihood of certain types of cancers and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted puppies. (Boston terriers are particularly likely to have difficulty birthing puppies, and we don't recommend breeding your dog.) Performing the spay/neuter surgery also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to evaluate and possibly address some of the diseases your dog is likely to develop. This is convenient for you and easy for your friend. Don't worry; we'll let you know what specific problems we'll look for when the time arrives.

### *Spinal Deformities*

Your Boston terrier is more likely than other breeds to be born with a deformed spine (a condition called hemivertebra), which may cause spinal cord damage and disability. The effects of this problem can worsen with age. We'll take X-rays when your dog is young to ensure that we identify problems early on. We'll rule out any other causes, such as a slipped spinal disc, and may prescribe rehabilitation.

## Taking Care of Your Boston Terrier at Home

Much of what you can do to keep your dog happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch his diet, make sure he gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush his teeth, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see “What to Watch For” below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for him. This is when we’ll give him the necessary “check-ups” and test for diseases and conditions that are common in Boston terriers. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures he will need throughout his life, and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

### *Routine Care, Diet, and Exercise*

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your Boston terrier live longer, stay healthy, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine. Overweight Boston terriers are more prone to cancer, back pain, arthritis, heart disease, and other problems.

- ✓ Boston terriers have serious problems with their teeth, so you’ll need to brush them at least three times a week!
- ✓ Keep your dog’s diet consistent, and don’t give her people food.
- ✓ Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for her age.
- ✓ Exercise your dog regularly, and don’t overdo exercise.

### *What to Watch For*

Give us a call immediately if you notice any of these signs in your Boston terrier:

- ✓ Vomiting or chronic diarrhea
- ✓ Weight loss or weight gain
- ✓ Lumps, bumps, and moles
- ✓ Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping
- ✓ Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes
- ✓ Limping or lameness
- ✓ Hair loss
- ✓ Coughing or difficulty breathing
- ✓ Episodes of weakness
- ✓ Pot-belly appearance
- ✓ Inability or straining to urinate
- ✓ Cloudiness, redness, itching or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- ✓ Change in appetite or water consumption
- ✓ Scratching or shaking the head, or discharge in the ear
- ✓ Dry, itchy, flaky, smelly, or oily skin
- ✓ Hopping or skipping while running
- ✓ Gums that aren’t pink

## Partners in Health Care

DNA testing is a rapidly advancing field with tests being developed to help diagnose conditions before they become problems for your friend. For the most up-to-date information on DNA and other screening tests available for your pal, visit [www.Genesis4Pets.com](http://www.Genesis4Pets.com).

Your Boston terrier counts on you to take good care of him, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that he lives a long and healthy life. Our goal is to ensure that your pal has the best health care possible: health care that’s based on his breed, lifestyle, and age. Please contact us when you have questions or concerns:

## Health Evaluation Schedule for Boston Terriers

Now that you’ve read about the health issues we’ll be monitoring, we wanted to give you an at-a-glance summary of what services we’ll provide to keep your Boston terrier happy and healthy. It may seem like your pet is prone to quite a few problems, but don’t worry; we’ll take the lead in keeping her healthy for a lifetime. We’ll review these health-care steps with you in more detail, but please feel free to ask questions or voice concerns at any time.

*Studies to determine the frequency of inheritance or disease in this breed either have not been completed or are inconclusive. There is a general consensus among canine genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners that the conditions we’ve described herein have a significant rate of incidence and/or impact in this breed.*



## How We'll Keep Your Boston Terrier Healthy

Puppy to Adolescent: Infant to 17 in People Years		(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide	Boston Terrier-Specific Problems We're Looking For
		○	6–8 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Internal parasite test and/or deworming Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home puppy care	Heart murmurs Hernias Proper dental alignment Parasites
		○	10–12 weeks	Brief physical examination Heartworm prevention Vaccinations Discuss caring for your dog's teeth at home	Proper growth rate Behavioral problems Parasites
		○	14–16 weeks	Brief physical examination Internal parasite check Vaccinations Discuss obedience training, nail trimming, and grooming Schedule spay/neuter surgery	Adult teeth coming in properly Skin infections Tonsillitis Parasites
		○	4–6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Presurgical diagnostics for spay or neuter surgery Soft palate surgery Gait and lameness examination X-rays of spine	Eye abnormalities Internal organ health prior to spay/neuter surgery Respiratory distress syndrome Knee problems Spinal deformities
		○	1 year	Head-to-tail physical examination Gait and lameness examination Tear test Heartworm test Internal parasite check Vaccinations Discuss diet, weight, and exercise	Excessive weight gain Eye abnormalities Skin infections Behavioral problems Knee problems Dry eye Heartworms and other parasites
Adult: 18 to 39 in People Years		○	2 years through 8 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Gait and lameness examination Internal organ health evaluation Glaucoma screening Tear test Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Healthy weight Eye abnormalities Skin infections Knee problems Internal organ health and function Glaucoma Dry eye Heartworms and other parasites
Senior: 40 to 59 in People Years		○	9 years through 11 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Senior internal organ health evaluation Cancer screen Glaucoma screening Tear test Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Healthy weight Eye abnormalities Skin infections Arthritis Internal organ health and function Signs of cancer Glaucoma Dry eye Heart disease Heartworms and other parasites
Senior: 40 to 59 in People Years		○	12 years and older	Head-to-tail physical examination Golden years internal organ health evaluation Cancer screen Glaucoma screening Tear test Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Healthy weight Eye abnormalities Arthritis Skin infections Internal organ health and function Signs of cancer Glaucoma Dry eye Heart disease Heartworms and other parasites

Note: We recommend twice-a-year examinations so that we may diagnose problems sooner.  
This approach also gives you the budget-friendly option of spreading preventive testing over two visits rather than one.