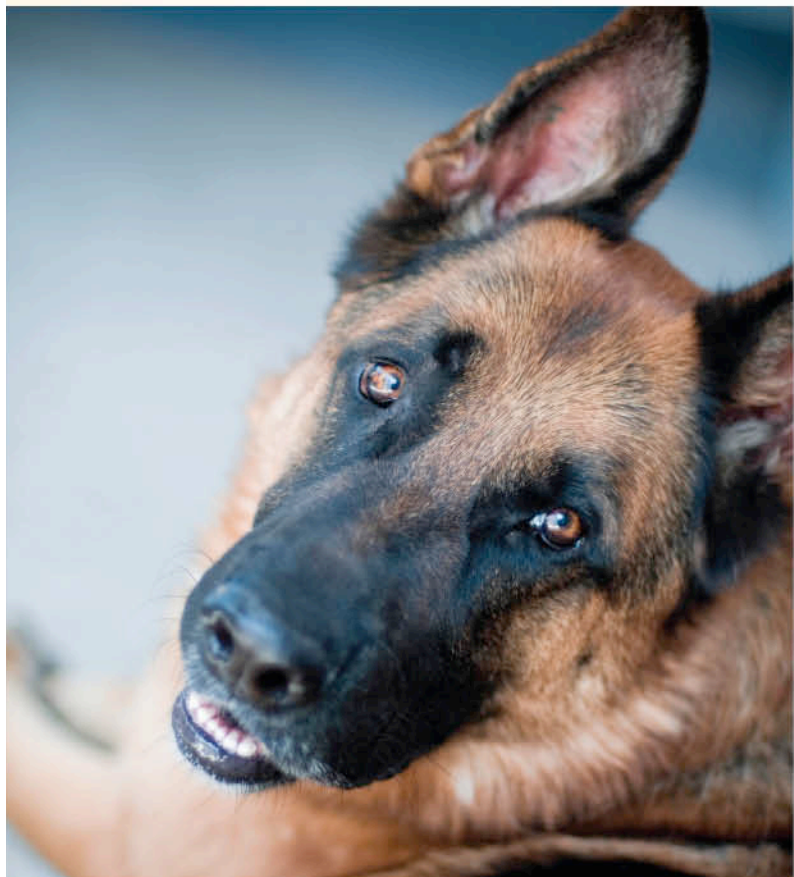


Your German Shepherd

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



German Shepherd Dogs: 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 German shepherds, and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Loyal and easygoing with the people she knows
- Protective; excellent guard dog
- Intelligent and easy to train
- Highly active and eager to have a purpose

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

- Overprotective of family and territory if not socialized properly
- Aloof toward strangers
- Needs to be exercised and groomed regularly
- May be aggressive toward people and dogs

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

Your German Shepherd'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 shepherd.

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.



**West Towne
Veterinary Center**



www.westtownevet.com 608.828.3737

For more information on breed specific wellness visit:
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

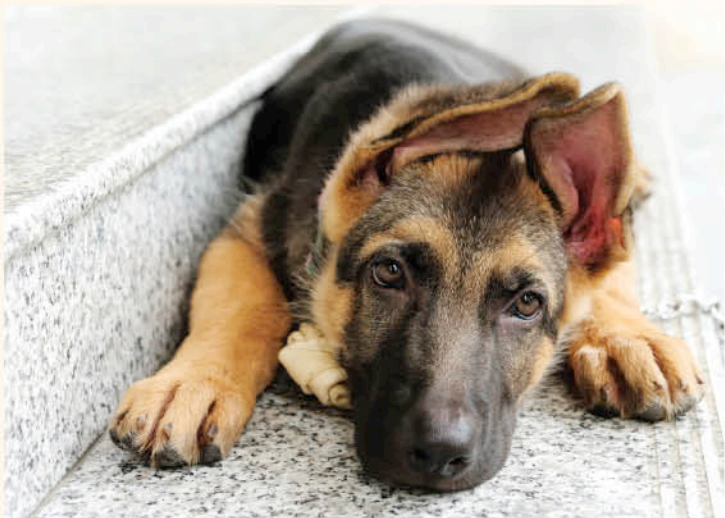
DNA/Genetic blood testing:
<http://www.facebook.com/DoggieDNA>

Your German Shepherd



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We'll describe the most common issues for German shepherd dogs 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, and the health evaluation schedule it contains, helps us and you plan for your pet's health-care needs. At the end of this booklet, we've included a description of what you can do at home to keep your shepherd 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.

Back Problems

Because her hind legs are sloped rather than straight up and down, your German shepherd is prone to lower back pain. If your dog is unable or unwilling to jump up or go up stairs, or seems to be slowing down, let us know so that we can investigate possible back injuries.

Bleeding Disorders

There are several types of inherited bleeding disorders that are more likely to occur in German shepherds than in other breeds, including one called hemophilia. Your pet may seem normal until she has a serious injury or we perform surgery, when severe bleeding results. We'll conduct diagnostic testing for blood clotting time before we perform surgery.

Bloat

Gastric dilatation and volvulus, also known as bloat, usually occurs in dogs with deep, narrow chests, including your German shepherd. When a dog bloats, the stomach twists on itself and fills with gas. Left untreated, the disease is quickly fatal, sometimes in as little as 30 minutes. Your dog may retch or heave (but nothing comes out), act restless, have a pot belly, or lie in a prayer position (front feet down, rear end up). If you see

symptoms, take your pet to an emergency hospital immediately! Preventive surgery in which the stomach is tacked down or sutured in place so that it cannot twist is an option.

Bone Pain

Growing shepherds can suffer from a painful inflammation of the long bones in the legs (a condition called eosinophilic panosteitis or eo-pan). We'll look for this condition upon examination. Eo-pan usually causes no permanent damage but requires pain medication.

Cancer

Cancer is the most common cause of death of older dogs, and your buddy is especially prone to lymphoma and cancerous tumors on the kidneys and uterus. Call us if he becomes suddenly weak or pale, or if you notice lumps on his skin, especially on the head or legs.

Degenerative Myelopathy

This neurologic condition causes weakness and poor nerve function in the hind legs, and it affects German shepherds more frequently than other breeds. If your dog has this disease, she will become more and more weak and disabled in the hind legs and will eventually suffer from paralysis of her hindquarters, along with incontinence. Rehabilitation, exercise, and dietary supplements can be helpful, but there is no cure.

Dental Disease

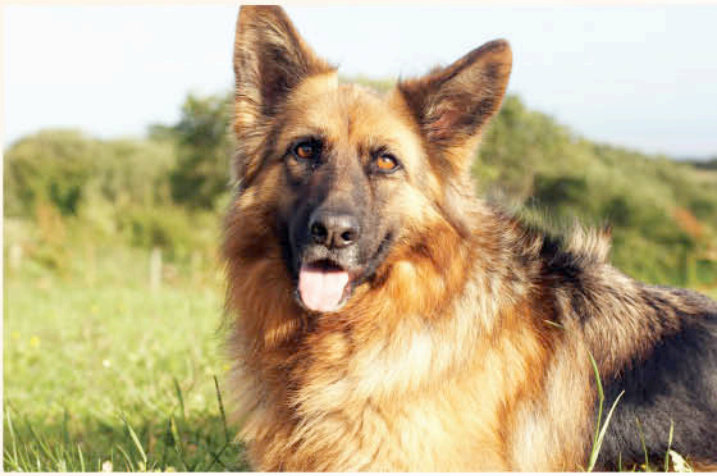
Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. It starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean. It's also important to prevent broken and damaged teeth by avoiding certain kinds of toys and treats, including chew hooves, tennis balls, bones, and ice cubes.

Digestive Disorders

There are several inherited digestive conditions that can cause recurrent or chronic vomiting, diarrhea, or weight loss in shepherds. To help prevent these problems, feed him a good quality pet food that we recommend. Most importantly, avoid snacks and table food. Treats that are high in fat (like pig ears), sodium, or artificial ingredients are bad for your buddy's digestion.

Dry Eye

Dry eye, also known as keratoconjunctivitis sicca or KCS, is a disease common in German shepherds. Shepherds have a distinct form of this disease, called pannus. Symptoms include dark pigmentation of the cornea; a dull, dry look instead of a glistening, shiny eye; or squinting accompanied by a thick discharge or pawing at the eye. We'll conduct a tear test each year. If she has this disease,



we'll prescribe eye ointment that you'll need to apply for the rest of her life.

Hip Dysplasia

You've probably heard of this inherited disease that causes the hip joints to form improperly and leads to arthritis; it's common in German shepherds. You may notice that he has lameness in his hind legs or has difficulty getting up from lying down. We can treat the arthritis—the sooner the better—to avoid discomfort and pain. Keep in mind that overweight dogs may develop arthritis two years earlier than those of normal weight, causing undue pain and suffering. Surgery is sometimes a good option in severe and life-limiting cases of hip dysplasia.

Infections

German shepherds 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. Your friend is also susceptible to skin and ear infections, which can be uncomfortable and painful. Watch for scratching, discharge from the ear, or foul-smelling skin or ears.

Joint Disease

If your German shepherd puppy is allowed to grow too quickly, the cartilage in her joints may not attach to the bone properly. Surgery may be required to fix the problem, known as osteochondritis dissecans, so it's best to prevent it by sticking to our recommended growth rate of no more than four pounds per week. Don't overfeed her, weigh your puppy every three to four weeks, don't give her calcium supplements, and feed a large-breed puppy diet rather than an adult diet.

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.

Perianal Fistula

Shepherds are prone to this painful, chronic condition in which one or more areas around the anus develop sores. Signs include straining or apparent pain when defecating, bleeding, constipation, fecal incontinence, licking of the area, and smelly discharge. The condition is difficult to treat, and typically we must perform surgery to remove the problem tissue.

Spaying or Neutering

One of the best things you can do for your German shepherd is to have him neutered (called spaying in females). In males, we surgically remove the testicles, and in females, 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. Performing this surgery also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to evaluate and possibly address some of the diseases your shepherd is likely to develop.

Taking Care of Your German Shepherd Dog 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 German shepherds. 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 shepherd live longer, stay healthy, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine. Overweight German shepherd dogs are more prone to cancer, back pain, arthritis, and other problems.

- ✓ Brush her coat at least weekly.
- ✓ Clean her ears weekly, even as a puppy. Don't worry—we'll show you how!
- ✓ Brush her teeth at least three times a week.
- ✓ Keep your dog's diet consistent and don't give her people food.
- ✓ Avoid high-fat and high-sodium dog treats, such as pig ears.
- ✓ Don't let your dog chew on bones, ice cubes, hooves, or tennis balls.
- ✓ 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 shepherd:

- ✓ 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
- ✓ Inability or straining to urinate
- ✓ Cloudiness, redness, itching or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- ✓ Itchy skin (scratching or licking)
- ✓ Change in appetite or water consumption
- ✓ Scratching or shaking the head or discharge in the ear
- ✓ Signs of bloat: retching or heaving (but nothing comes out), acting restless, pot belly, or lying in a prayer position (front feet down, rear end up)
- ✓ Weakness in the hind legs
- ✓ Discharge or bleeding from the anus, licking the anal area, constipation, or fecal incontinence
- ✓ Sudden inability or unwillingness to jump, go up

stairs, or walk

Partners in Health Care

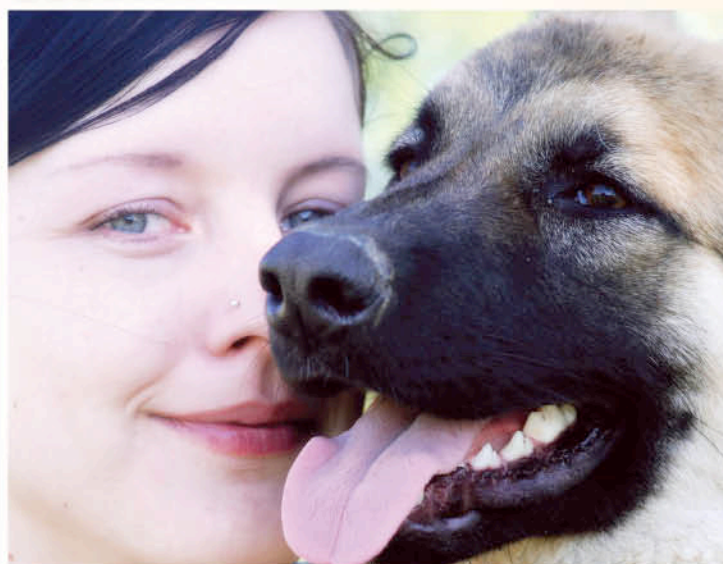
DNA testing is a rapidly advancing field with tests being developed to help diagnose conditions before they become problems for your friend. For the most up-to-date information on DNA and other screening tests available for your pal, visit www.Genesi4Pets.com.

Your German shepherd dog 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 German Shepherd Dogs

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 shepherd 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 German Shepherd Healthy

*Puppy to Adolescent:
Infant to 17 in People Years*

(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide	German Shepherd-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 and ears at home	Ear and skin infections 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	Ear and skin infections Adult teeth coming in properly Tonsillitis Parasites
○	4–6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Presurgical diagnostics for spay or neuter surgery Hip evaluation Blood clotting time test Possible stomach tuck	Joint disease Ear and skin infections Bone pain Internal organ health prior to spay/neuter surgery Hip dysplasia Bleeding disorders Prevention of bloat
○	1 year	Head-to-tail physical examination Hip evaluation Tear test Heartworm test Internal parasite check Vaccinations Discuss diet, weight, and exercise	Back pain Joint disease Ear and skin infections Bone pain Excessive weight gain Behavioral problems Hip dysplasia Dry eye (pannus) Heartworms and other parasites
○	2 years through 6 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Hip and back evaluation Internal organ health check Tear test Cancer screen Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Healthy weight Back pain Hip dysplasia Ear and skin infections Bone pain Perianal fistula Degenerative myelopathy Internal organ health and function Dry eye (pannus) Signs of cancer Heartworms and other parasites
○	7 years through 9 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Hip and back evaluation Senior internal organ health evaluation Tear test Cancer screen Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Healthy weight Back pain Arthritis Hip dysplasia Ear and skin infections Bone pain Perianal fistula Degenerative myelopathy Internal organ health and function Dry eye (pannus) Signs of cancer Heart disease Heartworms and other parasites
○	10 years and older	Head-to-tail physical examination Golden years internal organ health evaluation Tear test Cancer screen Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Healthy weight Back pain Arthritis Ear and skin infections Bone pain Perianal fistula Degenerative myelopathy Internal organ health and function Dry eye (pannus) Signs of cancer 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.