

How to puppy proof your home



RSPCA 
Pet Insurance

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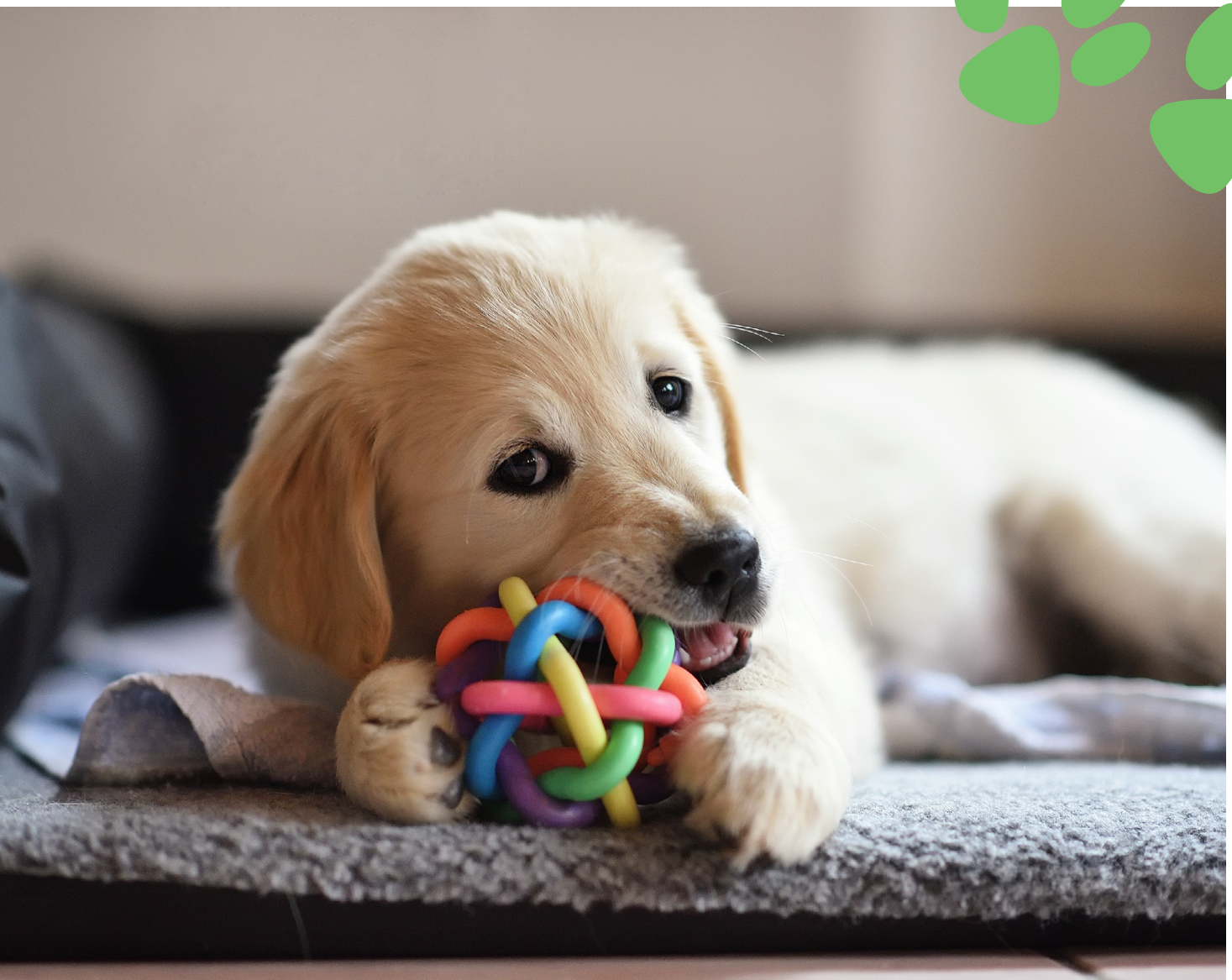
Introduction

Congratulations on your decision to welcome a puppy into your family! This is a very exciting time, but before you bring your bundle of furry joy home, it is essential to ensure you have the time and financial capacity to meet the animal's physical, behavioural and social needs for the years ahead.

If you do, that's great! Now it's time to prepare your home and garden, and plan a care routine for your puppy's daily life. This way you can keep your new family member safe and help them settle in well.

Puppy-proofing your home involves following a few simple steps to create a safe and comfortable environment for your new furry companion.

This eBook provides an easy-to-follow guide to puppy-proofing your home, and the benefits of establishing a routine during the first week and month as a new puppy parent.



Tips for puppy proofing your home



- Food and water. You may be able to continue on the same foods as fed by the shelter or breeder, however, ask your vet if you are unsure or need advice on transitioning gradually to a premium puppy food.
- Consider the use of a dog pheromone product (spray, diffuser or collar) which uses natural compounds to help reduce anxiety in dogs, and can be purchased from your vet.
- Keep enthusiastic family members away for the first little while, or inform them they need to be calm around the new puppy.
- If you have other pets, read about how to introduce your new puppy to your cat or dog [here](#).
- Ensure you take your new puppy for a vet checkup. It's a great idea to take a list of questions to ask the vet; this can be especially helpful if you are uncertain about any aspect of caring for your puppy or if this is your first pet.
- Vaccinations and parasite prevention are vital for your puppy's health. Depending on your puppy's age, they may need to receive additional vaccinations and flea/tick/worming prevention soon after adoption. Microchipping and desexing can be discussed with your vet.

Remember, every puppy is different, so adjust these guidelines as needed to fit your puppy's personality and needs.

Keep a close eye on your puppy and if you have any questions or concerns, speak to your vet.

The first week

Once you have prepared your home and garden, it's time to bring your new puppy home! To help them settle in, follow these steps:

- Have a quiet place ready (e.g., a crate or bed area) for the puppy to retreat to if they are feeling overwhelmed.

The first month

For a family with a new puppy, the first month is an extremely memorable, but busy time!

[In this first month](#), you should have taken your puppy to the vet, and your puppy should be up to date with vaccinations and parasite prevention. It is very important to make sure that your puppy is well socialised in a safe and positive way.

According to the [Australian Veterinary Association](#), you can start introducing your puppy to people and other dogs no sooner than 14 days after they've had their last routine puppy vaccination. If your puppy isn't fully vaccinated, you can still take them out for walks if you are carrying them, so they can safely learn about the world. To help create positive associations with people and other dogs, you can reward your puppy with treats and verbal praise each time you come across another dog or a person.

Socialisation is all about your puppy encountering new sights, sounds and experiences in a gradual, safe, positive, and controlled way.



Puppy preschool is one great way to learn about puppy care and socialisation in a supportive and safe environment.

Lots of positive reinforcement is needed for puppies to grow up confident and well-adjusted. Never force your puppy into frightening situations or scold them if they do something that you don't like. Remember, they are very young and still finding their way. In time, and with consistency and kindness, they will become more confident and calm. Speak with your vet if you have concerns about your puppy's behaviour.

Top tips for safety proofing your home for a new pet

There are many dangers lurking in our homes, and the last thing we want is for your puppy to become injured or unwell. For greater peace of mind, consider pet insurance to help you manage the cost of any unexpected vet bills. RSPCA Pet Insurance provides cover from puppies from eight weeks old, and lets you choose any registered vet in Australia. It is also a great idea to have the phone numbers of your closest vet and 24-hour vet emergency service stored in your phone and to know how to get to these if the need arises.

Puppy proofing main rooms of the home

Our homes have numerous dangers for young puppies. Puppy proofing needs to be done in all areas where the puppy has access. If you can't be absolutely sure the door to a room or area will be securely locked, then assume the puppy may get in there at some point!

Kitchens: Kitchens are full of hazards - boiling water, rubbish bins, food scraps, and getting under people's feet make this a high-risk zone for puppies.

Consider installing a baby gate at the entry to your kitchen, child proof locks on cupboards, and keep bins out of reach.

Bathrooms: Bathrooms have hazards such as medications, razors, water and chemicals. Keep toilet lids down (puppies may try to drink from the toilet bowl!) and keep all medications and sharp objects out of reach. Any bins should be kept safely out of the puppy's way.

Laundry rooms: Ensure detergents and chemicals are kept locked away, and any electrical cords are stored out of reach.

Bedrooms: Puppies naturally want to chew, which often includes objects that may be important to you, such as shoes, clothes, jewellery, and children's toys. Puppies may also want to jump on the beds, leaving paw prints and hair. If you don't want your puppy in the bedroom, keep the door shut.

Secure recycling and rubbish

Puppies' cute little noses have a fantastic sense of smell, and they love exploring. Rubbish bins are full of tempting odours, but may also contain many dangers. Eating decaying food or pieces of rubbish (such as meat wrappers or kebab sticks) is very dangerous and can lead to an obstructed bowel, perforation of the intestine, pancreatitis, or digestive upsets.

To avoid the risk of your puppy eating something they shouldn't, ensure you keep all bin lids (including bins for bathroom products, nappies and sanitary hygiene waste) secure and out of reach of curious noses and paws. Particularly dangerous items include cooked bones (which can splinter and puncture the intestines), corn cobs (which can cause blockage), batteries, and other foods that are toxic to dogs such as grapes, raisins, sultanas, chocolate, onion, garlic and mouldy foods.

Never feed your puppy fatty food leftovers, as this can lead to pancreatitis and digestive upsets. Speak to your vet about the best diet for your puppy.

Store household chemicals safely

It only takes a moment for puppies to get into mischief, so keep all household chemicals and cleaning products safely locked away. Painful skin and mouth irritation can occur from curious puppies touching or licking chemicals, or even serious illness or death if they ingest poisons. Rat, mouse and snail baits are extremely dangerous and are a common cause of companion animal poisoning. Look into more humane options of deterring rodents, insects and snails from visiting your property. Keep lawn fertilisers, weed killer, automotive chemicals, mulch, and

potting mix away from your puppy. If you think your puppy has eaten any household chemicals or poisons, contact your vet or vet emergency centre immediately. Time is of the essence, so act quickly to help your pet.

Protect cords and wires

Puppies are famously chewy when teething - in their minds, what can be more tempting than to nibble on an electrical cord that is dangling in easy reach, like a chew toy? The result of a nibbled electrical cord can be fire, serious injury, burns, electric shock, or death.





Contact hardware and electrical stores for advice on how to puppy proof electrical cords. Christmas lights are particularly risky for puppies left home alone. It may be best to install a baby gate at the entry to your home office or any room that has a large number of wires and cords present. Some people find electrical tape and cable ties can help secure wires and keep them out of the reach of puppies, but here are some other ways to puppy proof your electrical cords:

- Keep cords out of reach by hiding them inside or behind furniture
- Use chew-resistant covers to protect exposed outlets, cords, adaptors and extensions
- Keep cords out of reach by running them around doorways and windows, or by clipping them high up on the wall

DIY tip: instead of buying protective covers online or in-store, make them yourself by cutting down hose pipe or heavy duty tubing.

Block off restricted areas

Consider investing in childproof locks for cupboards and baby gates to keep your puppy safely out of hazardous areas such as the kitchen or the top and bottom of staircases. Balcony doors should be kept shut. Swimming pools should be fenced, making sure the puppy can't squeeze under or through any fence or gate.

Just like human babies, puppies explore the world with their mouth and tend to follow their nose when exploring. Small items like jewellery, hair ties, needle and thread, batteries, crayons, coins, and small toys can be a choking hazard or cause major gastrointestinal damage. A puppy pen is a great option to give your puppy a safe space to play and rest.

If you do want to allow your puppy free access to a room, make sure it is safe and contains an area for them to rest, eat, drink, and go to the toilet. If you can't be sure that your fences are puppy proof, then you need to be present to supervise when your puppy is in the garden. Fence off any part of the garden - such as a vegetable garden or compost area - that you don't want the puppy to get into because they might dig up prized plants, toilet near vegetables, chew on a toxic plant, or eat compost.

Secure cabinets and drawers

Furniture can fall and seriously injure or kill pets who climb or jump up on them, so secure televisions, drawers and bookshelves to the walls with special straps from hardware shops. Curtain and blind cords are dangerous as pups can become tangled in them, so avoid these or secure them well out of reach. Keep drawers

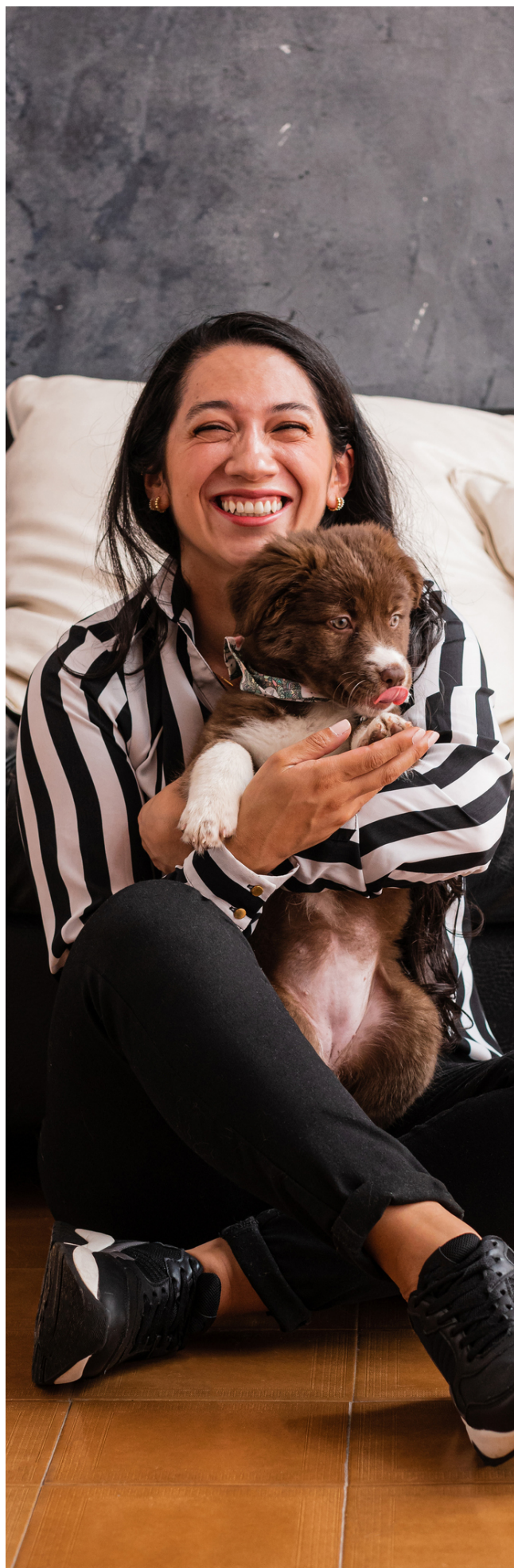
closed, as it can be tempting for puppies to climb inside or use them to climb. Puppies sometimes hide underneath recliner chairs and can be seriously injured when they are closed.

Keep food and medications secure

Keep food and medications securely locked away and remember to keep your handbag and school bags out of reach. Human medications (such as pain relief) and foods (including chocolate, grapes and chewing gum with xylitol sweetener) can be toxic to pets.

The [Animal Poisons Helpline](#) is helpful as a resource to refer to. Poisoning is a common reason for animals to require emergency vet care. Treatment can be expensive and lengthy and long-term issues such as kidney or liver damage can occur in pets who survive poisoning. Always contact your vet or vet emergency hospital immediately if your puppy has eaten anything that could be hazardous.

Puppy proofing doesn't stop once you have puppy proofed your house. Puppy proofing also needs to include your backyard, balcony, windows, and fences.



How to puppy proof outdoors

Puppy proofing balconies

Balconies are extremely dangerous for puppies who may climb over railings or manage to squeeze through or under. The best option is to completely prevent access to heights for puppies. Keep balcony doors shut and locked and never have any furniture or objects near balcony railings that puppies could use to climb on to get over the railings.

Puppy proofing the garden

To confine your pet safely and keep them away from traffic and swimming pools, check your fences are puppy proof. Check for the presence of toxic plants and remove or use fencing to prevent your puppy getting to them. Take care when using weed killer or fertiliser to ensure your puppy does not have access to the chemicals when being used. Before using

commercial mulch mixes in your garden, check the contents. While not commonly available in Australia, there have been reports of [‘Cocoa Bean Mulch’](#) or [‘Cocoa Shell Mulch’](#) byproducts being used in the UK and US, which has led to several cases of pets being poisoned due to chocolate being toxic for dogs.

In extreme weather conditions, puppies can become ill from heat or cold. Make sure your puppy has a safe, quiet space to retreat to, with fresh drinking water, durable chew toys and a comfortable bed.

Always be aware of where your puppy is when you are leaving or returning home. Your puppy may rush out to greet you, and it is devastating to know how often pets are accidentally run over by their owners.



When can you stop puppy proofing your home?



Puppy proofing needs to continue until you are confident your puppy has settled down and is no longer interested in chewing or escaping - this can last quite some time! Every puppy is unique, but in general, puppies are considered adult dogs between one and two years of age.

Puppy maturation is a gradual process and can vary from dog to dog depending on breed, size, socialisation, and other factors. Teething (and chewing everything in sight!) is usually over by around 6-7 months of age, when the adult teeth have emerged.

It is important to be a safety conscious pet parent throughout your dog's life as it isn't just puppies who get into trouble around the house and garden. Continue to secure hazards such as rubbish bins, household chemicals, and medications and electrical cords, and regularly check fences and gates throughout your pet's life.

When to get in touch with your vet

If you find your puppy is continuing to have issues with toilet training, chewing, or appears unsettled or distressed in any way, then please talk with your vet. A full physical exam is recommended to make sure your pup isn't ill or in pain. Your vet can also advise you on ways to help manage your puppy's behaviour.

How to start building a routine

Strategies to help your puppy familiarise themselves with their surroundings and new family

It is important to establish a routine for your puppy, as this will help your puppy feel confident and secure and will bring predictability to their day. It can also help minimise the risk of puppies having anxiety issues if they know the routine of the household.



Here are 8 easy tips to building a routine for your puppy:

- 1. Feeding schedule:** Be consistent and try to feed your puppy at the same times each day. Puppies generally need to be fed several times a day until they are older. Speak with your vet about their recommendations for your puppy's diet. The feeding routine you use will also influence your puppy's toilet training routine. Puppies generally urinate or defecate soon after eating.
- 2. Toilet training:** Decide where you would like to have your puppy go to the toilet - for example, outside in the garden, or on a puppy pad or synthetic grass mat inside. Be consistent and take your puppy to the toilet area first thing in the morning, straight after meals, after playtime, before bedtime, and immediately after they wake from a nap. Reward your puppy with praise and treats when they go to the toilet, and never scold them if they have a toileting accident inside. If you notice any sudden changes to your puppy's toilet habits, contact your vet.
- 3. Training sessions:** Training sessions should be short (just a few minutes) and fun. Start with basic directions such as 'sit', 'stay' and 'come', and have some puppy friendly treats handy to reward your pet. Several short sessions when you and your puppy are alert and well rested are the best idea. The RSPCA, the Australian Veterinary Association, and many other organisations support reward-based training as a humane training method for puppies. Never use punishment or cruel devices like shock collars to train any dog. Ask your vet if they offer puppy preschool in their clinic, or check if your local RSPCA offers puppy training classes. This is a great way for you and your puppy to meet other pet families and have fun whilst you learn.
- 4. Exercise and playtime:** Puppies have lots of energy and love to play. Remember to keep physical activity appropriate to your puppy's age and breed so you don't strain their young body. Only start gentle on-leash walks when your pup is fully vaccinated, and check with your vet when walks and trips to dog parks can start. Be aware of the weather conditions - on hot days, keep to the shade as much as possible, and remember that puppies have soft little paws that can be burnt when walking on hot pavement. Choose toys that will withstand plenty of chewing, and make sure they can't be torn apart - small pieces can be swallowed! Soft toys like teddy



bears with plastic eyes and noses should be avoided.

5. **Sleep:** Puppies need rest during the day and plenty of sleep at night, with [at least 11 hours of sleep](#) recommended each day. Create a comfortable, cosy place for them to sleep undisturbed. Some pet owners find that dog pheromones help to calm their puppy. These are available as plug-in diffusers, collars, or sprays.

6. **Bedtime routine:** Having a soothing bedtime routine will signal to your puppy that it's time to calm down and go to sleep. Try to avoid exercise or games in the hour before bed. Take them to the toilet area, then settle them into their bed with a familiar blanket and toy. It is up to you if you want your puppy to sleep in your bedroom or not, but be aware that it can be very stressful for them if you later change your mind and decide your puppy has to sleep away from you.
7. **Health care routine:** Regular vet visits are essential for puppy health. In the first year of life, your puppy will need to visit the vet several times for check-ups and vaccinations. Getting your puppy used to calm vet visits is a great idea! Take them in, say hello, weigh your puppy, give them a treat, and leave. This helps puppies learn that vet visits can be enjoyable and not scary.
8. **Home care routine:** A home care routine for a puppy could include teeth brushing (yes, really!) using a suitable pet friendly toothpaste and a soft dog toothbrush, grooming, checking for lumps and bumps, and checking the nails and ears. If in doubt, speak to your vet about the best home health care and grooming routine for your puppy.

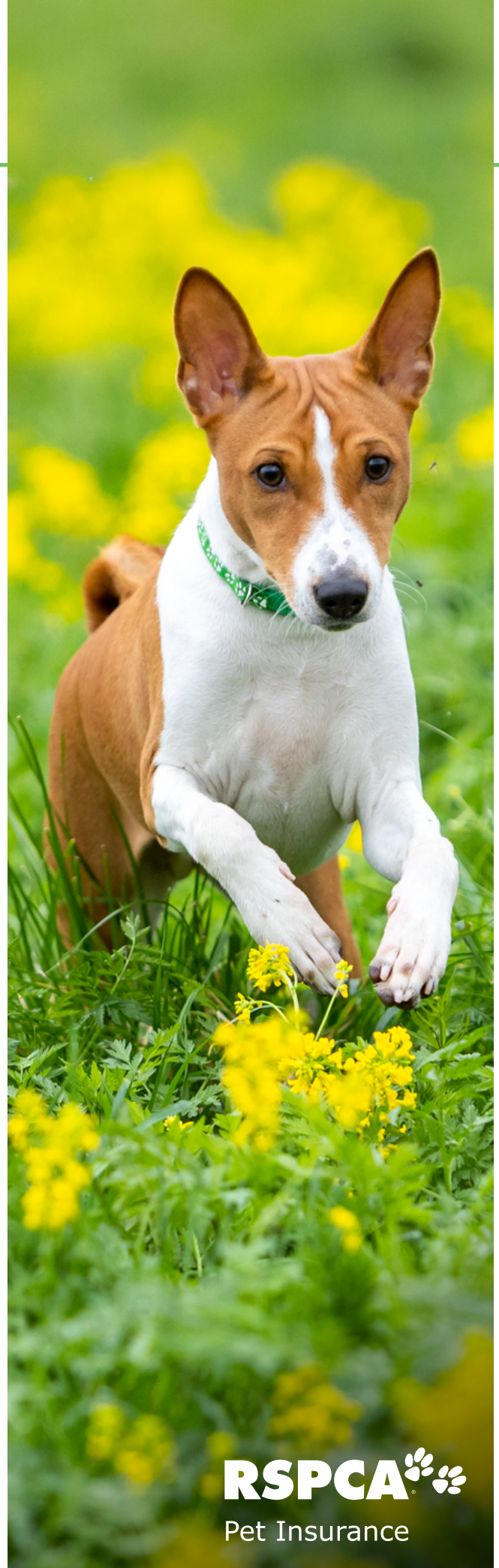


Conclusion

Remember, every puppy is unique, and you may need to adjust this routine based on the specific needs of your puppy. Patience, kindness, and consistency are key when establishing a routine. It can be tiring having a puppy in the house but rest assured, the effort you put in now will pay off later, helping your bouncy young pup to mature into a happy, social adult dog.

Adopting a puppy is an exciting time, but brings with it considerable commitments of time and money. Before adopting a puppy, it is essential to consider if you have the time and resources to meet the animal's lifelong needs for veterinary care, feeding, behavioural enrichment and socialisation. Vet care can be expensive, so it is definitely well worth investing in pet insurance to give you peace of mind if your puppy suffers an illness or injury.

For more information call
1300 855 150
between 8am - 8pm
Monday to Friday (AEST).



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Pet Insurance