

How can we help our dogs during COVID-19?

At this difficult and uncertain time, some of our furry friends may also be struggling especially with the sudden change of routine. Perhaps as well as keeping ourselves safe there could be things that we do to help them keep safe.

- ✓ With the family being at home all day, this can have a massive impact on your pet. Most dogs are left for periods in the day and this is when they catch up on their much needed sleep. A dog needs, minimum, double the amount of sleep/rest that we need. If they don't get this they can become grumpy or hyperactive and difficult to calm down (like an overtired toddler). If your dog has naughty habits like barking or stealing then this often gets markedly worse. So, put your dog away in its crate or rest area for a few hours both morning & afternoon and (contrary to what you would think) he or she will be calmer. If your dog naturally takes itself off for sleeps then continue to promote this.
- ✓ Great time to practice dog training – little and often in the garden and house. Make them think, use their brain – helps wear them out and keep them alert.
- ✓ When out – yes let them off the lead for a poo but then pop them back on lead. Get them to practice their slow lead walking. This is particularly useful for those dogs with injuries, arthritis and struggle with lead walking.
- ✓ For those who have had physiotherapy, keeping up with their massage, stretching and slow walking will help maintain your dog until they can be seen again.
- ✓ As most people are at home, we all should be mindful that the amount of exercise our dogs are having may increase. For older dogs (in general and with arthritis) and dogs recovering from injury or surgery, think of all exercise in terms of steps. Total steps include walking:
 - a. Around the house
 - b. Around the garden
 - c. Out on a walk

So, if the dogs are doing more steps in the house and garden, perhaps reduce the walk time or let them have a bit more rest in the house otherwise it can be too much, too soon for them.

- ✓ Reduce ball and stick throwing as this can reduce the risk of injury particularly when veterinary practices are seeing urgent cases only. It's not the running to the ball that causes the problem it is the repetitive twisting and sharp turns which puts pressure on their knees (e.g. cruciate injuries) and hips, elbows and shoulders.

Take care and stay safe, you are in our thoughts