

What To Expect When You're Expecting... A Wellness Appointment For Your Pet!

What is a Wellness Appointment?

A wellness appointment is an appointment that is made/attended when your pet is in good health. It is a key component to your pet's overall health and well-being. Your veterinarian will review many important aspects of your pet's health including recommendations for preventative care and routine health screening. Most pets should be seen at least once a year as adults and every 6 months as seniors. See below for more details!



1. History

Your veterinarian will want to know about any new changes with your pet as well as review previously identified medical problems. They may ask you about any changes in appetite or energy, changes in their urinary habits or water intake, the presence of any vomiting, diarrhea or coughing. You may want to make a list of observations or questions for your vet!

2. Complete physical exam

• **Weight assessment** - Your veterinarian will discuss if your pet is over- or under- weight and make recommendations for dietary changes as indicated. We recommend that most pets stay on a diet that is specifically formulated for their life stage. In dogs, we do not recommend grain-free diets unless your pet has a known health condition that would suggest a need for this.



• **Evaluation of oral health** - Just like in people, a healthy mouth is crucial to a pet's comfort and long-term health. Oral disease can not only lead to tooth loss, but also to internal organ damage. A consistent oral care routine at home is very important. We recommend incorporating 2-3 high quality home care products for your pet (visit VOHC.org for a complete list of approved products). Brushing is always best - ask your vet the best way to make this feasible at home - starting when your pet is young will help ensure success! When home care is no longer maintaining a healthy enough mouth for your pet, your veterinarian will discuss a dental procedure to assess your pet's oral disease as well as to clean and treat the disease that's present.

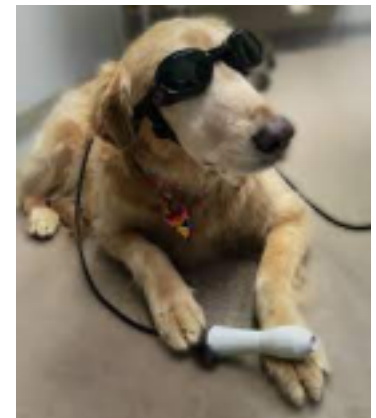
• **Evaluation of eye health** - Among many other conditions, pets can develop cataracts, dry eye and age-related changes that can affect eye comfort and vision.



• **Review of new lumps or bumps** - Lumps and bumps are common in pets especially as they age. Some of these may not be of concern, but your veterinarian will help figure out which lumps may need to be tested to rule out a more serious problem.

• **Assessment of internal organs** (including palpation of internal organs and auscultation of the heart and lungs) - Early intervention of organ disease is critical to management and this is one of the most important tools for detection. If your vet identifies any abnormalities, diagnostics such as x-rays or ultrasound may help narrow down the problem.

• **Evaluation of joint health** - Changes in your pet's energy, willingness to perform certain activities or overt lameness can suggest joint problems or arthritis. There are many treatment options available for mobility challenges that might arise with your pet.



3. Vaccines

Vaccines are one of the safest ways you can protect your pet from common infectious diseases. You and your veterinarian will discuss the vaccines most appropriate for your pet based on their lifestyle.

• **Dogs** - Vaccines are most commonly given behind the shoulders. Most dogs can be distracted and don't even notice when their vaccines are administered!

DA2PP - This is a vaccine that protects against distemper, adenovirus, parvovirus and parainfluenza. This is considered a core vaccine for most dogs. If you have an adult dog and would like to minimize vaccinations, ask your vet if blood titers might be appropriate for monitoring their protection against these viruses.

Rabies - This is considered a core vaccine and also legally required by the county for all dogs (outside of rare medical exemptions).





Leptospirosis - This vaccine protects against a bacterial infection that can cause kidney failure among other organ damage. It is spread most commonly from raccoons, skunks and other wildlife. Animals can become infected through contact with infected urine as well as through bite wounds, ingestion of infected tissues and contact with contaminated water sources, soil, food, or bedding. Given the potential severity of disease with infection, most dogs should be vaccinated against this infection.

Bordetella - This vaccine protects against one of the most common causes of canine infectious respiratory disease (aka, Kennel Cough) and is highly contagious amongst dogs (mostly through direct exposure from dogs that are sneezing or coughing). While the vaccine is not 100% protective, dogs that are vaccinated tend to show fewer clinical signs and be less contagious. Vaccination is recommended (and often required) for dogs that come into close contact with other dogs including those at dog parks, the groomer, day care or boarding environments. It should also be considered if your dog is just very social in your neighborhood!



Influenza - This vaccine protects against a highly contagious respiratory tract infection that is also most common in environments where dogs are in close contact and in higher volume situations. While signs can be self-limiting, dogs are more likely to develop significant illness with influenza over bordetella. Outbreaks have been variable since the virus first arrived in Northern California and seems to be less common than bordetella and other causes of canine respiratory infections. This vaccine is often required in boarding kennels.

Rattlesnake - This vaccine helps protect against envenomation from rattlesnake bites. The vaccine is aimed at neutralizing venom in the body and decreasing severity of side effects from the venom. Vaccination DOES NOT replace medical care after rattlesnake bites and patients can still become very ill (or even die) after a rattlesnake bite. Dogs who have been bitten should be evaluated by a veterinarian as quickly as possible after a bite. While vaccine efficacy may be variable in dogs, it may be recommended if your dog frequents areas where rattlesnakes are known to live.



- **Cats** - Vaccines are most commonly given in the lower limb.

FVRCP - This vaccine protects against rhinotracheitis/herpesvirus, calicivirus and panleukopenia. Both herpesvirus and calicivirus can affect the respiratory tract of cats and lead to sneezing, eye/nose discharge, fever, lethargy, inappetence and pneumonia. Herpes virus can become dormant in a cat's body and cause flare ups over its lifetime. Panleukopenia is a very serious infection that affects the immune system of cats. These viruses do not require direct cat to cat contact for infection to occur. For this reason, this is considered a core vaccine for cats.



FeLV - This vaccine protects against the leukemia virus. The leukemia virus is most commonly spread between cats by direct transmission through bite wounds, grooming, sharing food/water bowls and nursing. The virus can affect many organs systems and can be fatal. Cats who go outside, have a risk of escaping outside or have exposure to other cats with an unknown vaccine history should be vaccinated.

Rabies - While not required for cats in Contra Costa County, this vaccine should be considered a core vaccine for outdoor cats (and potentially even for indoor cats). It may also be required by grooming and boarding facilities.

4. Senior blood and urine screening

Lab screening can play an important part in the early detection of disease for your pet. The earlier disease is detected, the more likely we are to be able to treat your pet and provide a better quality of life. Lab work helps us assess internal organ function (including liver and kidney health and bone marrow function) as well as evaluating for hormonal disorders such as Diabetes and thyroid disease. It is much more likely that we can intervene with treating disease if pets are asymptomatic or minimally symptomatic.

- In small dogs (< 40lbs), lab work should be considered annually once they reach ~ 10 years of age.
- In large dogs (> 40lbs), lab work should be considered annually once they reach ~ 8 years of age.
- In giant breeds, lab work should be considered annually once they reach ~ 5 years of age.
- In cats, lab work should be considered once they reach ~ 10 years of age.

The above guidelines are just that, guidelines. Your veterinarian may recommend more frequent monitoring based on your pet's health or results of their initial lab work. They may also recommend other routine screening including annual or bi-annual chest x-rays (to evaluate heart and lung health) and ultrasound (to assess their abdominal organ health). This may be especially important if there is a genetic history of cancer or hormonal imbalance.



All of the veterinarians at Bishop Ranch are willing and excited to be a part of your pet’s health care. However, just like humans, it can also be beneficial to form a relationship with a vet who can provide long-term care for your pet. Your pet’s wellness visit is an opportunity for you to bond with your veterinarian and for them to get to know your pet!