

BluePath

SERVICE DOGS

Health and Veterinary Care

**If you need emergency advice, please call us immediately, anytime:
845-377-0477.**

BluePath puppies come from special lines of purebred Labrador and Golden retrievers. Parents, grandparents and great-grandparents are screened for the genes that cause some of the illnesses known to strike these breeds. However, it is not unusual for minor ailments to occur during puppyhood, just like in human toddlers. The following are the most common illnesses that puppies can suffer from:

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is the most common puppyhood issue reported by raisers. Almost all puppies will experience diarrhea at some time. The reason is two-fold. As puppies transition to new diets, the bacteria that live in their intestinal tracts changes to adapt to the change in food ingredients. During this adjustment period, diarrhea can be common. Also, and even more commonly, puppies often pick up items and ingest pieces of them before you can react. Twigs, leaves, grass, mulch, pebbles and so on are some of the most common items puppies will chew and possibly swallow. Monitor your puppy very closely when outdoors and remove any items from their mouths before they can swallow it.

Despite your careful observation, some of these objects will be swallowed and cause irritation to the stomach and intestines, causing diarrhea (or vomiting). Thankfully, this “oral phase” of puppy growth will end, in most cases by about six months of age.



Until that time, it is not uncommon that you will see periods of normal stool followed by periods of diarrhea.

Treatment protocol for diarrhea

First and foremost, do not panic! If your puppy is alert and active, this is not an emergency. The consistency of the stool can be any of the following:

- Normal - firm, formed and well defined
- Soft formed - formed but less defined and more soft in composition
- Pudding - unformed and the consistency of pudding
- Liquid - watery consistency that has no form at all, may be accompanied by some red blood streaks
- Mucous may sometimes also be present in any of these types of stool.

It is not uncommon to see streaks of blood in the stool of puppies and dogs that have diarrhea. As long as the blood is not excessive, there is no additional concern. However, if all you see is bloody liquid, then an immediate call to us or your local veterinarian is recommended. You should also call us for advice if your puppy has diarrhea coupled with lethargy. Our number is 845-377-0477.

Next steps

- Normal - Feed normally
- Soft formed - Feed normally
- Pudding - Feed normally and monitor for 24 hours
- Liquid - Skip the following meal to allow the puppy's digestive system to recover, but make sure water is available at all times. After skipping a meal, feed ½ the amount at the next meal before returning to the regular feeding schedule. If things do not improve, you can feed your puppy a bland diet of BOILED chicken and rice until the stools improve, then slowly transition back to dog food by mixing the bland diet half-and-half with dog food for two to three days. If diarrhea persists for more than two days, or if the diarrhea is coupled with vomiting, lethargy or a fever, please call us at 845-377-0477.

Vomiting

Vomiting in younger dogs and puppies is also often related to ingesting items that are not intended to be eaten, such as twigs, leaves, mulch, pieces of a chewed dog toy, etc. Vomiting that occurs at a few weeks of age is generally more concerning than when it occurs in an adult dog. Most vomiting is short-lived, meaning that it happens once or twice, or lasts for three to four hours. For young puppies between eight and 20 weeks of age, dehydration is a concern. Vomiting at any age that lasts for three to four hours or more is often accompanied by lethargy. Also note that depending on the cause of

the vomiting, it is common for diarrhea to develop within 12 hours of the last vomiting episode.

Treatment protocol for vomiting

- For dogs five months and older that vomit once or twice within a half hour:
 - If your dog vomited once or twice within a half hour and then no further vomiting occurred and they are active, SKIP the next meal (but continue to allow water free-choice) and resume normal feeding at the following normal meal time. For example, if your dog vomits once or twice at 2 PM, skip dinner that night and resume normal feeding at breakfast the next morning.
- For dogs five months and older that vomit intermittently for three to five hours:
 - Withhold all food and water while the dog is still vomiting. The stomach needs to remain empty.
 - Once there is no further vomiting for at least three hours, you can begin to offer water in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup increments every hour as long as vomiting does not resume. Do not be concerned if your dog does not want to drink at this point. Never offer a large bowl of water within six hours of the end of active vomiting; some dogs will gulp all of the water and vomit it back up. Continue to offer small quantities frequently to rehydrate for the first 12 hours.
 - Food should not be resumed until at least 12 hours or more after vomiting ceases and the dog is rehydrated. To resume feeding, start with $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of a bland diet every three to four hours. Do not start immediately on regular dog food. Bland diets can be purchased in kibble or canned form from a local veterinarian or you can home-cook a bland diet. (See below.)
 - Continue to feed small quantities of the bland diet for the first 12 to 24 hours after vomiting has ceased. If there is no further vomiting by 24 hours, you can increase the quantity of the bland diet to $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 cup twice a day for the next 24 hours, and then begin to transition back to regular dog food by mixing the bland diet with your dog food half and half in the bowl for a day or two.
- For puppies eight to 20 weeks of age that vomit once or twice within an hour and are active:
 - Withhold all food and water while the puppy is still vomiting; the stomach needs to remain empty.
 - Once there is no further vomiting for at least two hours, you can begin to offer water in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup increments every hour as long as vomiting does not resume. Continue to offer small quantities frequently to rehydrate for the first four hours, then resume free choice water.
 - Once there is no further vomiting for four hours and the puppy is rehydrated, offer a small amount of food (generally half of a normal feeding amount) every four hours for the day, then resume normal feeding the next day.

- For puppies eight to 20 weeks of age that vomit for more than two hours, please call us 845-377-0477 for advice.

Home-cooked bland diet

The home-cooked bland diet is used when there is stomach upset leading to vomiting and/or diarrhea. Bland diets are low in fat and low in fiber, making them easy to digest and less irritating to the already inflamed lining of the stomach or intestines. Bland diets also cause less stool to be produced, allowing the intestines to recover from the inflammation.

To prepare a home-cooked bland diet, you can choose one protein source and one carbohydrate source. All ingredients must be BOILED. Boiling cooks the meat and any fat in the meat floats on the surface of the water and can be drained away. We recommend using either lean ground beef or a boneless chicken breast boiled until well cooked (draining the water and fat away) and boiled white rice or boiled peeled potatoes. You may mix one meat with one carbohydrate (chicken and rice, for instance).

While these diets are not balanced nutritionally, they work well for periods of a few days with no ill effect. While eating a bland diet, your dog should not receive any additional food items - no dog food, treats or snacks. Typically, you should expect the diarrhea to subside within 48 hours. You may then see a short period of a day or so with little or no stool production. (This is not constipation.) This will be followed by a gradual return to normal soft formed stool. Once there is normal stool for at least 24 hours, you can then begin to mix dog food in with the bland diet, half and half, for two to three days before returning completely to dog food.

Since some dogs may need to remain on a bland diet for a few days, it is acceptable to boil a larger amount of the food at one time and refrigerate it for use over three to four days. Warm it in the microwave with a little water added before feeding, but make sure it is not too hot. Dispose of any remainder after four days.

As an alternative, a commercial prescription bland diet can be purchased from your local veterinarian.

Ear and skin issues

Ear problems can be common in the Labrador and Golden retriever breeds. This can be partly due to the floppy ears that prevent air circulation in the ear canals. Getting water in the ears during swimming can also lead to an ear infection. Genetics may play a role, too.

Ear infections that occur once a year are often no great concern and can be easily treated by a veterinarian. For dogs that have multiple infections (two or more a year), allergies are often the cause. Occasionally, other areas of skin are affected, leading to pimples, rashes and itchiness.

For dogs with infrequent ear problems, cleaning of the ears is not recommended as it changes the normal levels of bacteria and yeast in the ear canal. For dogs with frequent ear problems, veterinarians may prescribe occasional cleaning of the ears.

For your BluePath dog, we recommend a weekly check of your dog's ears for odor, abnormal redness, or heavy brown or black debris, coupled with head shaking and scratching at the ears. If you notice any of these signs, call us for advice.

For skin issues, including pimples, red patches, lumps, scabs, bald patches, hot spots and so on, take a clear picture with your cell phone camera, close enough so that we can see the spots you are referring too, and e-mail them to us at info@bluepathservedogs.org so that we can call you to discuss a treatment plan.

Home veterinary kit

We recommend that you keep a home veterinary kit as having these supplies on hand may help you in an emergency situation. The following items are recommended:

- Scissors
- A roll of gauze
- Gauze pads
- White adhesive tape
- Hydrogen peroxide
- A large (20 ml or larger) dose syringe for administering Hydrogen Peroxide, only if advised by a veterinarian
- A digital rectal thermometer. Normal canine temperature is 100.5 F to 102.5 F
- K-Y jelly or Vaseline (to lubricate rectal thermometer)
- A flashlight (for checking ears and eyes)
- Styptic powder (Kwik-Stop, a veterinary product)

The following items require approval from our veterinarian to use, but are good to have on hand:

- Benadryl (Diphenhydramine) tablets/capsules, 25 or 50 mg (for allergic reactions)
- Neosporin Ointment (for wounds)

The following items are NEVER recommended for use with your dog

- Ibuprofen (Advil), aspirin, Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or other human medications
- Home, Homeopathic or other alternative remedies