

# PAW LONE STAR LABRADORS PAW

---

## PUPPY CARE



**W**elcome to our puppy care guide. Here you will find more tips than there are twinkle stars in the West Texas skies.

Your veterinarian should be your first source of information about your pup, but this guide will help you start building a healthy, happy life for your pup.

---

### The Basics:

Here are a few things you'll need for your new puppy:

**A Name!** – Short and simple names are easier for your pup to recognize. For those who are not familiar with the AKC naming requirements, visit this site:

[http://www.akc.org/registration/register\\_namingofdog.cfm](http://www.akc.org/registration/register_namingofdog.cfm)

**Identification** - I can't tell you how many times we've received calls from one of our neighbors informing us they have our Addie. The wondering trait comes with her genes, so we firmly encourage you to find a good collar with a permanently attached nametag, including current address and phone number. As an added measure, you may also consider microchip identification.

**Collar and Leash** - Your pup will be growing pretty rapidly the first couple of months. If you plan to collar it, expect to replace the collar often. The collar should fit snugly but allow for 1-2 fingers width of space between collar and neck. Nylon collars work fine for pups. We recommend leather collars for grown Labs, I guess it's an aesthetics thing. Leather collars should be double-stitched and oiled for long life. They are our preference. See our Favorite Links Page for suppliers who offer this type of collar. They can be personalized with various nametags. Your leash should be of equal quality, and no more than 4-5 feet long.

**Grooming** - Labs don't need a bath often. That is a characteristic of the breed that makes them favorable. They do need (and love) an occasional brushing. Brushing helps simulate the oil glands that keep their coat clean and fresh. It also helps reduce the amount of hair found on your carpet and wherever else. Most Pet stores sell brushes suitable for Labs.



Their nails should be clipped regularly. Some Lab's nails need clipping more than others, depending on the rate they grow. If you look closely there is a dark vein down the middle of the nail (yellow Labs). Clip off the part where the vein isn't present. If you mess up and clip too close, it can be a messy situation, so be careful. We have found the scissor-type to be the best and easiest to use.

**Toys** - Chew toys can help spare your house and furniture from the wrath of your new pup. Balls and knotted rope work well too (but avoid tug-of-war and games that encourage your puppy to fight with you). Do not use training dummies for toys. We use 10-inch rawhide Retriever rolls to satisfy our dog's chewing habits and they love them. Visit <http://www.drsofostersmith.com> for 10-inch Retriever rolls at really good prices.



**Bedding** - Bedding must be washable. A radio or ticking can help soothe your puppy to sleep during the first few nights at his/her new home. Avoid bedding that can be easily chewed-up. Make sure the bedding is clean and dry at all times.

**Crate** - We highly recommend using a crate as a place for your puppy to sleep at night. Your pup will develop a sense of security with the crate and will readily use it when traveling. Many Lab owners I know use crates throughout their pet's lifetime. Labs require the size for Large breeds.



### Puppy-proofing Your Home:

**Off Limits** - Once you decide where your puppy will sleep, think about which areas of your house and yard are going to be off limits. It's a good idea to limit access that your pup has to your house and yard, not only to make the task of housetraining easier, but to also make it a safer environment. If you have a swimming pool, be sure your pup does not have access to it. We can't tell you how many horror stories we've heard of puppies drowning in family pools.

**Chewing** - Puppies are known to chew on anything. That could mean furniture, shoes, the siding on your house, carpet, etc. Chewing is normal behavior for a puppy, so provide safe toys to satisfy this need. Do not leave items out that can be misinterpreted as a chew toy.

**Hazards** - Put the kitchen trash in either the garage or high enough to be out of your puppy's reach. Be sure electric cords are not exposed; they can be hazardous. Some plants are toxic. Take an inventory of the plants in your house and yard and consult a local plant nursery to determine if any could harm your pet. Check all fencing for holes and gaps that a pup can squeeze through.

### Feeding Your Puppy:



**Food** - The food you choose to feed your puppy during the first year is critical to its adult development, health and growth. It is also important as your Lab becomes an adult. There are numerous brands claiming to be the best and each has many different formulas for various pet sizes and ages. In the past we fed such brands as Iams, Eukanuba, and Science Diet, but we have since learned more about canine nutrition and are more selective about the brands we use. We've also learned

the importance of occasionally switching nutritional foods to reduce the chance of your pet developing food allergies. See the following documents or visit this link <http://www.lonestarlabradors.com/PuppyCare/Pages/CanineNutrition.htm> to learn more about nutritional dog foods and what to look for when reading the ingredients.

Generally, puppies are fed a Puppy Food formula for their first year only. We recommend that you follow the advice of your vet, as well as the instructions on the bag as to when to start your pet on an Adult formula. Improper feeding can actually stunt your puppy's growth and may contribute to serious health problems like obesity, bone disorders, and heart or kidney disease.

**Treats** - Treats are a real good way to reward your Lab for favorable behavior. They are useful for some training purposes or just for fun, and Labs love them. I avoid overdoing them when training though for the simple reason they start to expect them. I believe praise is the best reward for reinforcing good behavior.

### Definite Don'ts on Treats!

Here are items to avoid:

**No Chocolate:** This can be dangerous for dogs.

**No Cookies:** High in fat, low in nutrition.

**No Dairy products:** Many dogs are lactose intolerant, which causes diarrhea.

**No Cooked Bones (from meat and poultry):** Can break into shards that may stick in the throat or intestine. Can also break teeth.

We used to highly discourage feeding table scraps, but have changed our thoughts on this matter somewhat. Some foods like vegetables and raw meat are nutritional for your pet. Bananas are good for them, but grapes can cause serious kidney problems. Avoid feeding them at the table, as this will teach them bad etiquette.

### Grooming Your Lab:

Keeping your new Lab well-groomed helps maintain its overall health.

**Brushing the Coat** - Labs don't require baths often, but frequent brushing helps reduce the baths they occasionally do need. Brushing stimulates the glands that provide the oils that keep a Lab's coat clean and odor-free. After a full day in the field with all the mud and the water, we brush our dogs to get them clean again. This also removes loose hair that otherwise may end up in your house.

**Baths** - When you bring your new pup home, he/she may not have ever had a bath. We can assure you though, it needs one. Consult your vet on when to bathe. When you do, be sure the water is warm, but not hot. Bathe your pup with a good quality shampoo, making sure not to get shampoo or water the eyes or ears. Wrap your pup in a towel, and dry it thoroughly before letting it go. This is a good time to prune the toenails too. Swab the outer ears out to make sure they are dry and in good shape. Be careful not to swab too deep, or you could damage the inner ear.

Labs usually only need baths every few months, and depending on their activity, maybe every six months. If you bring your Lab home wet and dirty, let it dry out and brush it down. You may be surprised that you won't have to give him/her a bath. Labs are known for not smelling bad, even when wet.

**Ears** - Oh Boy... this can be a sore subject with Lab owners. Labs love the water, and should be allowed to swim as often as possible; therefore, they will get ear infections. Often, the water they swim in is not clean, and fungi and bacteria have a hay-day breeding in their ears. You can help relieve the problem by using an ear-wash solution after each swim: ask your Vet about it. The wash helps by speeding the drying process inside the ear, making it less likely to harbor fungi and bacteria.

It's usually pretty obvious when an ear infection is underway. The first sign is a foul smell coming from the area around their ears. You will then notice your Lab starting to shake its head often, as though trying to get rid of something in its ears. You might even notice your Lab trying to extend its ears to an open position; possibly an effort to air them out. I had a Vet tell me once that if I taped the ears together on top the head the ears would dry out, thus eliminating the moisture that allows the infection to grow. When you've identified an ear infection, use cotton balls and a good cleaning solution to clean as far into the ear as you can easily see. Avoid using swab sticks unless you have been taught the correct way to use them in a dog's ear. Permanent damage can be caused to the inner ear by using swab sticks. If you aren't able to control an ear infection, take your Lab to your Vet for help. Chronic ear infections cannot only cause great pain, but loss of hearing too. Constant shaking of the head can also cause the inner ear parts to become unattached; thus resulting in hearing loss.

**Nails** - Your Lab's nails will require clipping every few weeks, and this will vary depending on how often it is on abrasive surfaces like concrete or rocks. Clipping nails is not everyone's cup of tea; some owners handle it better than others. The object is to clip only the dead part of the nail. If you accidentally clip beyond the dead area, be prepared for a bloody mess. Eventually, the nail will coagulate and stop bleeding, but your pet will likely have bad feelings about letting you clip nails in the future and make itself hard to find when the clippers are brought out again. If you look closely at your pup's nails, you will notice a dark vein in the middle. That is the blood supply. The dead area is anything beyond that. Position your clippers there and ...Clip!

We have found the scissor-type clippers to be the best. Go back a few pages to see a picture of them.

**Teeth** - Your Vet will offer a cleaning kit for keeping your pet's teeth in good shape. We recommend a professional exam every six months to a year. You can prolong the health of your Lab's teeth by providing a continuous supply of rawhide bones. Visit <http://www.drsfostersmith.com> for 10-inch Retriever rolls at really good prices. They are a healthy way to keep your Lab's teeth clean and breath fresh.

As Labs get older, their teeth may need professional cleaning by your veterinarian. The pet has to be anesthetized for this and we recommend doing it only when absolutely necessary. If your Lab ever has to be put under anesthesia for other reasons, talk to your vet ahead of time about cleaning its teeth.

### Parasites and Prevention:

**Be Responsible** - You might experience several types of parasites as you raise your Lab. We will have your pup on a good start when you pick him/her up, but after that, it is up to you to make sure your new pet is protected from harmful and sometimes deadly parasites.

#### External Parasites:

**Fleas & Ticks** - Fleas can be a real pain. If not controlled, they can cause a lot of discomfort to your pet and your family. I can remember (back in the old days) combing my son's hair for fleas before dropping him off at daycare. Pretty embarrassing. Today, it is a rare event to find a flea on our dogs or premises. Ticks are another critter you want to watch for. If your Lab is in the field a lot, ticks will likely be picked up. Consult your vet to get your pup started on a good flea and tick preventative.

**Ringworm** - Actually a fungal skin infection, it frequently attacks puppies and is easily passed to humans.

#### Internal Parasites:

**Intestinal Roundworms, Hookworms & Tapeworms** - A common problem in puppies. Puppies may be exposed to these parasites through their environment, mother's milk or even before birth. Keeping your yard clean helps prevent spreading them. We recommend a routine "Poop Patrol" to control these parasites. Effective treatment is available. Have your puppy's stool examined by your veterinarian.

**Heartworms** - Mosquitoes carry these guys; heartworm disease can be fatal. We will have your puppy started on filaribits, a heartworm preventative safe for puppies, and will provide you with a starter supply. Please keep your Lab current on treatments.

There is a once-a-month treatment for most of these parasites and more. We have used it for years and are very pleased. It is called Sentinel Flavor Tabs and it is available through prescription only. Consult your vet to find out when your pup will be old enough to start using it.

Sentinel by Novarits is a flea and heartworm control pill given to your pet once monthly. Sentinel controls heartworm disease, flea populations, hookworm infections, removes and controls adult roundworm and whipworm infections. It comes in 6-month supplies and four different dosages depending upon the size of your dog. Always consult a veterinarian regarding your specific dog's health and requirement before using this product.

## Spaying and Neutering:

**Why Spay or Neuter?** - Every year in the United States between four and six million companion animals end up in animal shelters. Many of these animals are euthanized, and many are Labs. I won't throw all the scary figures at you, but it's sad the number of animals disposed of. We work hard to make sure our pups are adopted by good homes. We also work hard to breed exceptional dogs and charge accordingly. Most of our pups will grow up to be excellent breeding dogs, but if an owner is not willing or able to take-on the responsibilities that go with breeding and raising Labs, we highly recommend spaying or neutering.

**Limited Registration** - Occasionally, an inferior pup will be born and we may decide to register the pup with a limited registration. This means though the dog qualifies to be registered, we will place a limitation on the papers that will disallow registering any offspring from the dog's litter. This helps preserve the integrity of the breed by discouraging owners from passing-on bad traits. We had a male pup with a small overbite once that we did this on. We will discount the selling price and request the owners spay or neuter the dog.

## Training, Discipline, and Exercise:

**Do it Yourself?** - We highly recommend you train your own Lab if you have the time and knowledge to do it. A good part of the training process concerns teaching the owner how to handle the dog anyway. There are many good books that teach you how to do this. It requires a lot of time to do a proper and thorough job. You can also join your local Retriever Club and get help from fellow members. There are many good professional trainers available too. Contact us at [info@lonestarlaboradors.com](mailto:info@lonestarlaboradors.com) if you need help.

**House training your puppy** - Please be patient. Housetraining begins with the first day. Always use a selected area of the yard.

Take your puppy out as soon as it wakes up in the morning, after naps, immediately after meals and drinking, and just before bedtime. If you don't have much space, you can train your puppy using newspapers, spreading them out on the floor and gradually reducing the covered area every 1-2 days.



If your pup chooses the bare area, mildly correct it and place it on the newspaper.

Don't expect your puppy to avoid expelling itself in its cage or confined sleeping area right away. Young puppies are rarely able to go through the night without the need to eliminate.

We cannot stress how important it is for you to be available for your pup during the housebreaking period. We also understand you can't be Super person and be everywhere at once. The best scenario for a Lab puppy is a small, confined area for sleeping and shelter from the elements with easy access to the great outdoors for peeing and pooping and exploring.

When your puppy has an accident in the house, immediately take it outside. Disciplining it is only effective if you catch the puppy in the act. If that is the case, promptly grab the pup and place its nose immediately in front of the area where it expelled. Firmly, but easily spank it once. Say "NO!" and put the pup outside. Be aware, most of the time it is the owner's fault when a pup expels in the house, not the pup's; so be consistent.

Praise your puppy often for good elimination habits. Consistency is necessary as your pup depends on going outside at the same time every day. You should be able to have your pet trained within a one-month period. Here is a good link to even more information on housetraining:

<http://www.akc.org/love/dah/candt/dbhbreak.cfm>.

**Exercising your Puppy** - Exercise is very important to the physical and mental health of your pup. Fitness is also the first step in avoiding obesity and the problems that come with it.

Labs love exercise - as well as the added attention they get from spending time with you. Be careful not to overdo it, or you could cause health problems ranging from exhaustion to heatstroke. Your Lab will be a great inspiration for you to stay fit as well. Whether you're into jogging, brisk walks around the neighborhood, daily workouts on training, or weekend hunts, your Lab will demand a lot of exercise and provide excellent company during these types of activities. This is a great opportunity for bonding.



I love coming home for lunch and spending 15-20 minutes exercising my Labs. It helps me escape my daily pressures and puts them in better shape. Maggie's a Frisbee nut; she's also my die-hard duck hunter and does a great job handling both tasks. During the off-season we spend a lot of time at our pond retrieving training dummies, sticks and whatever else is not attached to the ground.



Introduce your new puppy to water when it's young. When we can, we sometimes start this process for our buyers. Let your pup gradually get used to the water by paddling around in the shallow areas. Do not allow it in the deep end until it becomes familiar with paddling around. Before long it will become second nature. If you don't have a pond of your own, find a local park that has one and make routine visits there.