

The HEALTHY DOG AND CAT GUIDE Created for Your Vet's Office

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Summer 2012

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Boarding Pass

How to find the right kennel

Q ▶ My family is leaving for summer vacation soon. How do I choose the best kennel for our dog?

A ▶ “Don’t wait,” says Nana Will of Gold Hill, Colo., a dog trainer for more than 20 years. Will conducts seminars to train doggy day care staffers at her facility and does consulting work across the country. “Start checking kennels out now, not right before you have to leave. Ask your friends or your veterinarian for references. Visit the facility you’re considering and get a tour,” she says.

Ask the staff about the services they offer and if there are structured daily activities. Can you bring your own dog food to keep your dog on the same diet? See what the sleeping quarters are like,

and ask who provides the bedding. What’s their veterinary care? Take note of how they handle the dogs and the facility’s cleanliness.

If your dog hasn’t been at a kennel for a while, and you’re leaving on a long-term vacation, it’s probably best to board your dog for a night or two before you go to get him used to it, she adds.

ON THE COVER: BLEACHER + EVERARD PHOTOGRAPHY. RIGHT: PLATT/GETTY IMAGES; JULIA CHRISTE/GETTY IMAGES



Audrey Cook, BVM&S
WebMD PET HEALTH EXPERT

My dog’s nose is hot and dry today. Does that mean he’s sick?

The common belief that a healthy dog has a cold, wet nose and a sick dog has a hot, dry nose is FALSE.

Here’s why: The temperatures of dogs’ noses fluctuate day to day, even hour to hour. It’s hard to say exactly why (it could be the environment or it could be what they’ve been up to recently). But a dog can be perfectly healthy and have a warm, dry nose. A dog can be really sick (think heart disease or critically injured) and have a cold, moist nose.

The moistness of your dog’s nose is also not an indicator of health, says Steven Marks, DVM, clinical associate professor of critical care and internal medicine at North Carolina State University’s College of Veterinary Medicine. “In a very dehydrated dog, yes, the nose might be dry,” he says. “But dogs can have moist noses because they’re healthy, and they can have moist noses when they have a nasal disease. It’s just not a reliable sign.”

Better indicators of a dog’s health are symptoms such as not eating, not drinking, or behaving oddly.



Q ▶ My cat is more than 10 years old. How can I help her age well?

A ▶ Cats tend to age more gracefully than dogs, but as the years go by, they can’t jump to the top of the refrigerator anymore. Their appetites wane. They sleep more.

Marty Becker, DVM, a veterinarian at the North Idaho Animal Hospital in Sandpoint, Idaho, has this advice to help your cat age well.

Schedule twice-annual “wellness” visits.

“There’s a grace period for many illnesses: If you catch it early on, it’s usually less expensive and treatment is much more successful. We can do routine tests, such as blood tests or urinalysis, to pick up on the very earliest signs of health problems,” Becker says.

Make favorite spots easy to reach. Give her ramps or steps so she can get to the window to bird-watch.

Buy a litter box with shorter sides. A tall litter box can be hard for her to get in and out of.

Get your cat close to her ideal body weight.

Your cat may also need a special diet to treat specific health conditions, such as a kidney diet or a liver diet. Ask your veterinarian.

Make sleep and food appealing. Give her softer bedding. Heat her food to release the aromas. Cat fountains help encourage cats to drink, which can be a big problem with older cats.



Drew Weigner, DVM, ABVP
WebMD PET HEALTH EXPERT

Get more expert answers to your pet health questions.





Dog

Show

Maria Menounos' pooches make life entertaining

By Melanie D.G. Kaplan, WebMD Contributing Writer



It's slight consolation to us mere mortals to know that entertainment superstar Maria Menounos hasn't always had her act together. In fact, she freely admits she used to be a slob.

"After I moved to L.A., my boyfriend took it upon himself to clean out my desk, and he found ancient to-do lists" that never got done, she says. "He was genuinely sad. He said, 'It was such a mess! You poor thing, I don't know how you were living like that.'"

But thanks to her uber-organized man, writer and producer Keven Undergaro, Menounos now counts herself among the orderly. She says that's what has given her the time and peace of mind to fit so many fulfilling things into her life—including picking up stray pups on the streets of Los Angeles.

Today, the 34-year-old host of the TV entertainment news series *Extra* is so organized that nearly everything in her house—with the exception of her four rescue dogs and Undergaro—is neatly labeled. All of her dogs are white, but she quickly points out that she doesn't have a "white fetish."

"That's just a coincidence," Menounos laughs. "They all just came to me." Baby and Benjamin are bichons, Apollo (who was thrown from a moving car before he was rescued) is a German shepherd, and Athena (who was in a puppy mill) is a poodle.

"Benjamin has so many expressions, he's like a little person," she says. "And when Apollo gets jealous, he does this"—Menounos makes a high-pitched wailing sound. "But generally, he's the happiest dog you

will ever meet in your life—and he's a hero because he rescued the bichons from the pool." She says Athena is the "most soulful, appreciative lover on the planet." And Baby? "She's just like me—independent and very much a tomboy, but needs her hugs. She just loves to play. And be happy."

Born to Greek immigrants, Menounos developed a strong work ethic at an early age, helping her parents clean nightclubs in Boston. She studied broadcast journalism and film in college, and at 23, she became the youngest person ever to host CBS's *Entertainment Tonight*. She also holds the distinction of having conducted the only TV interview with the entire Obama family. She played herself in the film *Tropic Thunder*, starred in *Kickin' It Old Skool*, and did voice work for a James Bond video game. She's appeared on NBC's *Scrubs*, CBS's *Without a Trace*, HBO's *Entourage*, and The CW's *One Tree Hill*.

Most recently, Menounos and partner Derek Hough nearly made it to the season finale of *Dancing With the Stars* on ABC. "It was the most wonderful experience of my

life, hands down," she says. "Learning how to dance was something I'd always wanted to do. So with this show, I got to have my little-girl dance recital, with my costumes and fringe and glitter—and my parents sitting in the front row."

Menounos created the nonprofit Take Action Hollywood! (takeactionhollywood.com), which helps raise awareness for causes ranging from type 2 diabetes and autism to the environment and pet adoption. She also serves as a diabetes awareness ambassador for the Entertainment Industry Foundation.

On top of all that (and a dog allergy), Menounos manages to rove the city, looking for strays. She used to volunteer at the Glendale Humane Society, but now she just keeps water bowls, treats, and leashes in the trunk of her car. "I realized I needed something to catch these dogs when they were running," she says. "I'm usually lucky and figure out where they come from. Some have tags, but often, I've just had this crazy intuition and find the house where they belong. It's so sad to see them wandering."

As for Menounos' next big thing, there are a few "secret" projects she can't yet talk about. But no matter what's in the stars for this star, we can be sure she'll be on top of her to-do list. ■

Reviewed by
William Draper, DVM
WebMD PET HEALTH EXPERT



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Fur WARNING

Is your cat's grooming
excessive? Learn the signs

Cats are meticulous groomers, but what happens when the grooming goes into overdrive? Sometimes licking, scratching, and chewing can become compulsive, annoying you and damaging your cat's skin and coat.

If your cat is doing any of these things compulsively, you'll probably catch her in the act. If you don't, your first clue may be the disappearance of her fur, often in strips along her back or stomach. Although compulsive cat scratching, licking, or chewing behaviors can develop in any animal, they are more common in Siamese cats and other Oriental breeds. Female cats are more likely than males to lick, chew, or pull on their fur.

Several medical problems can also lead to compulsive grooming, so see your veterinarian to help determine the cause and the best course of action. Here are some of the most common culprits.

Parasites. Your cat can have fleas without your knowing it. Because they're excellent groomers, cats may remove all traces of fleas. If you notice your cat licking his lower back obsessively, with or without scabs on the neck, fleas might be the problem. Other parasites, including ticks, mites, and ringworm, can also prompt scratching, licking, or chewing.

Allergies. Just like people, cats may develop itchy, irritated skin if they're allergic to something in their environment.

Dry skin. Dry winter air or nutritional inadequacies can contribute to flaky skin that gets your cat started licking or scratching for relief.

Pain. If you see your cat licking or biting at the same spot over and over again, she could be feeling pain or discomfort in that area.

Boredom, anxiety, or compulsive disorder. Compulsive chewing, scratching, or licking behaviors often develop in cats who are bored, stressed, or anxious. This is more likely in indoor cats, who may get less exercise and stimulation than outdoor cats.

Compulsive disorders often begin with changes in a cat's environment, such as a move or a new animal or baby in the house.



By Hilary Parker, WebMD Contributing Writer

What can you and your vet do about compulsive grooming behaviors? Here are some ways to address the problem.

Get rid of parasites. Because it can be hard to diagnose flea infestation in cats, take your cat to your veterinarian for a checkup. If fleas, mites, or other parasites are present, your veterinarian can recommend the right treatment for your pet. Taking care of these parasites can eliminate your cat's problem behaviors.

Change foods. Putting cats on a six-week exclusion diet can help you determine whether food allergies are the problem. You may have to try several diets before you find one that works. Your veterinarian may prescribe certain fatty acids or other nutritional supplements if dry skin is to blame for your cat's scratching and licking.

Use medication. Depending on how badly your cat has damaged her skin, your veterinarian may prescribe steroids, antihistamines, or antibiotics. If your cat's compulsion is caused by psychological factors, a vet can prescribe clomipramine, an anti-anxiety medication, or amitriptyline, which helps fight anxiety.

Address anxiety or boredom. If you and your vet can find no physical cause for your pet's behaviors, try to improve your cat's state of mind. Make sure your cat feels safe, loved, and comfortable and is getting enough stimulation and exercise. You may find it helps to desensitize your cat by slowly and carefully exposing her to things she fears. Counter-conditioning—training your cat to associate something pleasurable, like a treat, with something she fears—may also help reduce anxiety. ■

Reviewed by
D. West Hamryka, DVM
WebMD PET HEALTH EXPERT



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pet health

Puppy Love

Which breed is best for your family?

By Sandy Eckstein, WebMD Contributing Writer

Your kids have been begging for a puppy for years. You've been able to temporarily appease them with some fish or a hamster. But this time, only a canine will do.

Although many people are happy to get a mixed-breed puppy, others want to know a little more about what that cute ball of fur will look like in a year. If that's the case, consider purebred dogs. How do you find the best one for your family? Gina DiNardo, assistant vice president of the American Kennel Club (AKC), offers these pointers.

Do your homework. Search the AKC website and look at the breeds that interest you. Determine exercise and grooming requirements, and the temperament and trainability of each. Once you've narrowed your choice down to a few breeds, talk to some experts who know these types of dogs. Attend a dog show and meet the breeders.

Consider the kids. Dogs that are highly trainable are usually eager to please and tend to be family-oriented, rather than attaching themselves to one person. For example, sporting breeds were once bred to work side-by-side with humans, taking direction from their owners. They're also among the most popular family dogs, like golden and Labrador retrievers. Some of the herding breeds are highly trainable as well, such as German shepherds and collies. But, DiNardo says, "all breeds—if socialized properly and brought up with children—will be fine with kids."

Assess your lifestyle. Think about your family's activities and lifestyle. If you want a quiet, mellow pet, don't get a dog that was bred for hunting. If you want a high-energy dog, consider the sporting, herding, and working breeds. Keep in mind that dogs bred to work usually need both physical and mental exercise, or they're going to be unhappy. An unhappy dog can be a destructive dog. Be honest with yourself about how much time you want to spend on your new dog. Lots of dogs don't require a great deal of exercise, but many others do.

Think about size. If you have young children, a larger, more durable breed might be best. When a small child pulls on an ear or steps on a foot, a large dog is more accepting of this kind of rough treatment. ●

Reviewed by
Mark J. Stickney, DVM
WebMD PET HEALTH EXPERT



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