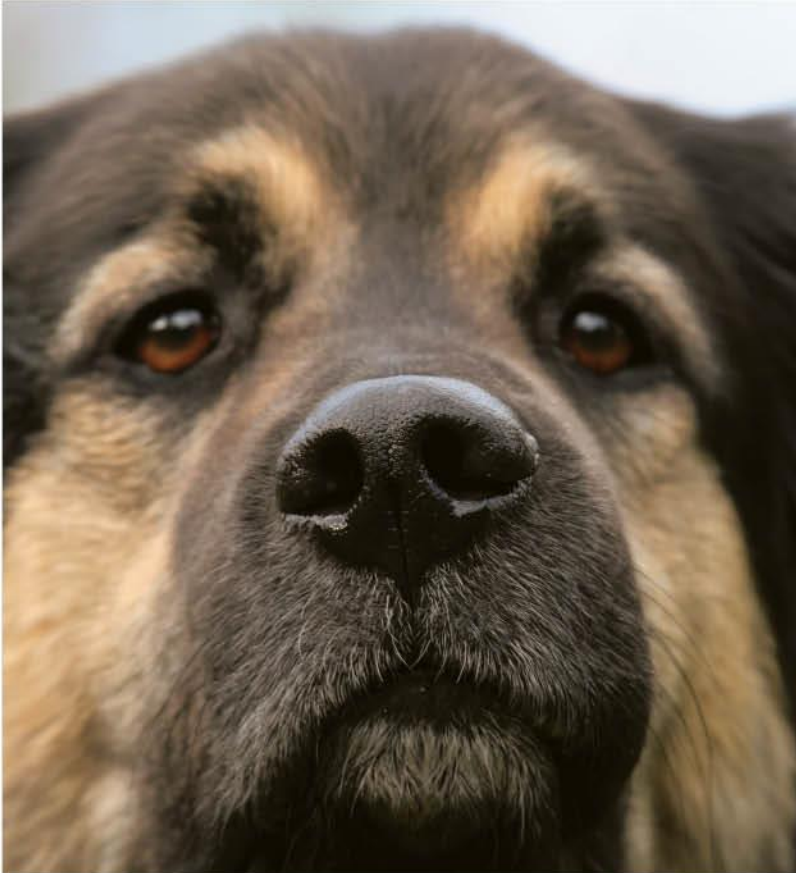


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# Your **Big** **Bowwow**

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Caring for Your Faithful Companion



## Large Mixed Breeds: They're Unique!

Your dog is special! She's your best friend and companion and a source of unconditional love. Chances are that you chose her because you like big dogs, and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Confident, steady, and fearless
- Well suited as a family or hunting dog
- Obedient and devoted
- Large, strong, and athletic
- Even temper and gentle disposition

No dog is perfect, though, and you may have noticed these characteristics, too:

- Easily bored or distracted if not given something to do
- Needs regular exercise and diet regulation to avoid weight gain
- Prone to separation anxiety and associated chewing and digging behaviors

Is it all worth it? Of course! She's got her own personality, and you love her for it.

## Your Mixed-Breed Dog's Health

We know that because you care so much about your dog, you want to take good care of him. That's why we'll tell you about the health concerns we'll be discussing with you over the life of your friend.

Knowing your pal's genetic make-up is an important step you can take to ensure his future health and



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happiness. Just because your pet looks like a golden retriever doesn't mean he is a golden retriever! And even if he is part golden retriever, it doesn't mean he'll have the same behavioral tendencies or health problems as a golden retriever. In fact, he could have inherited some of those traits from his parents or grandparents of entirely different breeds. We want to know which breeds your dog is so that we can tell you what to expect in terms of his behavior and health. That's why we recommend genetic testing for all mixed-breed dogs.

This guide, and the health evaluation schedule it contains, helps us and you plan for your pet's health-care needs. We walk you step by step through the health problems that are common in large dogs (between 51 and 90 pounds). At the end of booklet, we've included a description of what you can do at home to keep your dog looking and feeling his best. You'll know what to watch for, and we'll all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.

### *Allergies*

Dogs can get "hay fever" just like humans, which is an allergy to pollen, mold, mildew, or dust (called atopy). Your dog will get itchy: usually in the face, feet, and ears, though some dogs are itchy all over. Typically, you'll start seeing signs between the ages of two and five, and they tend to get worse every year. The good news is that there are many treatment options available for this condition.

### *Bloat*

Gastric dilatation and volvulus, also known as bloat, usually occurs in dogs with deep, narrow chests, like German shepherds. When a dog bloats, the stomach twists on itself and fills with gas. Left untreated, the disease is quickly fatal, sometimes in as little as 30 minutes. Your dog may retch or heave (but nothing comes out), act restless, have a pot belly, or lie in a prayer position (front feet down, rear end up). If you see signs, take her to an emergency hospital immediately! Preventive surgery in

which the stomach is tacked down or sutured in place so that it cannot twist is an option.

### *Cancer*

Cancer is the most common cause of death of dogs in their golden years, and some large dogs—such as golden retrievers and vizlas—are especially prone to certain kinds of cancer like lymphoma and hemangiosarcoma. Half of all cancers are cured by surgically removing them, and some types are treatable with chemotherapy. Early detection is critical! We'll do periodic blood tests and look for lumps and bumps when we examine your pet. If he is overweight, we'll discuss exercise and diet because obesity is a risk factor for some types of cancer.

### *Dental Disease*

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. It starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean. It's also important to prevent broken or damaged teeth by avoiding certain kinds of toys and treats, including chew hooves, tennis balls, bones, and ice cubes.

### *Ear Infections*

If your dog has floppy, hairy ears, she is likely prone to frequent ear infections that are painful and annoying. The earlier we catch this, the less discomfort and pain she suffers. Be sure to call us if you notice that she is scratching or shaking her head, there is a foul odor about the ears, or her ears seem painful to the touch. By monitoring for ear infections and treating them early, we also reduce the likelihood of ear-drum damage that can lead to deafness. We'll pay special attention to her ears each time we see her. No one likes an earache!

### *Eating Weird Stuff*

Many big dogs eat things they're not supposed to—rocks, coins, plants, and socks, among others. Your pet carries the item in his mouth to check it out or play with it, or he thinks it's food. When swallowed, these objects often get stuck and have to be surgically removed. Some of what your dog eats is toxic and can poison him. If you notice that he is vomiting or acting lethargic, call us immediately.

### *Heart Disease*

Heart disease is an inherited health problem in many large breeds, including English bulldogs, bull terriers, standard poodles, and boxers. If your dog has a heart murmur or physical signs that suggest heart problems, we'll perform diagnostic testing to determine the severity of the disease. We'll repeat those same tests every year or so to monitor the condition. Depending on the type of heart disease, we may treat it with surgery or medication.



### *Hip Dysplasia*

You've probably heard of this inherited disease that causes the hip joints to form improperly and leads to arthritis, and it is common in many large breeds such as boxers, Labrador retrievers, German shepherds, bulldogs, and chow chows. You may notice that she has lameness in her hind legs or has difficulty getting up from lying down. We can treat the arthritis—the sooner the better—to avoid discomfort and pain. We'll take X-rays of your dog's joints to identify the disease as early as possible. Keep in mind that overweight dogs may develop arthritis two years earlier than those of normal weight, causing undue pain and suffering. Good nutrition and proper exercise are also very important to help reduce bone and joint problems as a pet gets older. Surgery is sometimes a good option in severe and life-limiting cases of hip dysplasia.

### *Infections*

Your dog is susceptible to other bacterial and viral infections—the same ones that all dogs can get—such as parvovirus, rabies, and distemper. Many of these infections are preventable through vaccination, which we'll administer to your dog based on the diseases we see in our area, his age, and other factors.

### *Laryngeal Paralysis*

As she gets older, your dog may develop this disease in which the vocal cords become paralyzed and hang down into the airway. Watch for noisy breathing, especially when exercising or in hot, humid weather. Bring her in right away if you notice signs; don't wait until the necessary corrective surgery becomes an emergency!

### *Ligament Tear*

The cranial cruciate ligament is one of the four tough bands of tissue that hold each knee together. A torn cranial cruciate ligament is a common injury of active dogs, which may include your buddy. If not surgically corrected, he will eventually suffer from severe arthritis. Ouch! Keeping

him at the right weight, feeding a high-quality diet, and avoiding too much jumping (like playing Frisbee) are the keys to avoiding this painful injury.

### *Obesity*

Obesity is a significant health problem in dogs and a serious disease that may cause arthritis, some types of cancer, back pain, and heart disease. Though it's tempting to give your pal food when she looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can love her to death with human food and treats.

### *Parasites*

All kinds of worms and bugs can invade your dog's body, inside and out. Everything from fleas to ticks to ear mites can infest his skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, heartworms, and whipworms can get into his system in any number of ways: drinking unclean water, eating or stepping on feces, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your friend, these parasites can cause pain, discomfort, and even death, so it's important that we test for them on a regular basis. We'll also recommend preventative medication as necessary to keep him healthy.

### *Spaying or Neutering*

One of the best things you can do for your pup is to have her spayed (called neutering in males). In males, this means we surgically remove the testicles, and in females, it means we surgically remove the uterus and ovaries. Spaying or neutering decreases the likelihood of certain types of cancers and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted puppies. Performing this surgery also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to evaluate and possibly address some of the diseases your dog is likely to develop. This is convenient for you and easy for your friend. Don't worry; we'll let you know what specific problems we'll look for when the time arrives.

### *Thyroid Problems*

Many large dogs, such as golden retrievers and Rottweilers, are prone to a common condition called hypothyroidism in which the body doesn't make enough thyroid hormone. Signs can include dry skin and coat, hair loss, susceptibility to other skin diseases, weight gain, lethargy, mental dullness, sleeping excessively, fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes. We'll conduct a blood screening test annually to look for the disease. Treatment is usually simple: replacement hormones given in the form of a pill.

## Taking Care of Your Dog at Home

Much of what you can do to keep your dog happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch his diet, make sure he gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush his teeth, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see “What to Watch For” below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for him. This is when we’ll give him the necessary “check-ups” and test for diseases and conditions that are common in large, mixed-breed dogs. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures he will need throughout his life, and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

### Routine Care

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your dog live longer, stay healthy, and be happier during her lifetime.

- ✓ Supervise your pet as you would a toddler. Keep doors closed, pick up after yourself, and block off rooms as necessary. This will keep her out of trouble and away from things she shouldn’t put in her mouth.
- ✓ Brush her teeth at least three times a week.
- ✓ If your dog has floppy, hairy ears, clean her ears weekly, even as a puppy. Don’t worry—we’ll show you how!

### Diet and Exercise

We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine. Overweight dogs are more prone to cancer, arthritis, and other problems.

- ✓ Keep your dog’s diet consistent, and don’t give him people food.
- ✓ Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for his age.
- ✓ Exercise your dog regularly, and don’t overdo exercise.
- ✓ Don’t let your dog chew on bones, ice cubes, hooves, or tennis balls.

### What to Watch For

Give us a call immediately if you notice any of these signs:

- ✓ Vomiting or chronic diarrhea
- ✓ Weight loss or weight gain
- ✓ Lumps, bumps, and moles
- ✓ Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping
- ✓ Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes
- ✓ Limping or lameness
- ✓ Hair loss
- ✓ Coughing or difficulty breathing
- ✓ Episodes of weakness
- ✓ Pot-belly appearance
- ✓ Inability or straining to urinate
- ✓ Cloudiness, redness, itching or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- ✓ Itchy skin (scratching or licking)
- ✓ Change in appetite or water consumption

- ✓ Scratching or shaking the head, or discharge in the ear
- ✓ A foul odor about the ear
- ✓ Unusual behavior when you touch or rub the ear

## Partners in Health Care

DNA testing is a rapidly advancing field with tests being developed to help diagnose conditions before they become problems for your friend. For the most up-to-date information on DNA and other screening tests available for your pal, visit [www.Genesis4Pets.com](http://www.Genesis4Pets.com).

Your dog counts on you to take good care of her, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that she lives a long and healthy life. Our goal is to ensure that your pal has the best health care possible: health care that’s based on her size, lifestyle, and age. And remember, we can help you manage your dog’s health more effectively once we’ve identified her breeds through genetic testing. Please contact us when you have questions or concerns.

## Health Evaluation Schedule for Large Mixed-Breed Dogs

Now that you’ve read about the health issues we’ll be monitoring, we wanted to give you an at-a-glance summary of what services we’ll provide to keep your dog happy and healthy. It may seem like your pet is prone to quite a few problems, but don’t worry; we’ll take the lead in keeping her healthy for a lifetime. We’ll review these health-care steps with you in more detail, but please feel free to ask questions or voice concerns at any time.

*Studies to determine the frequency of inheritance or disease in mixed breeds either have not been completed or are inconclusive. There is a general consensus among canine genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners that the conditions we’ve described herein have a significant rate of incidence and/or impact in large mixed-breed dogs.*



# How We'll Keep Your Dog Healthy

*Puppy to Adolescent:  
Infant to 17 in People Years*

	(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide	Large Breed-Specific Problems We're Looking For
	○	6-8 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Internal parasite test and/or deworming Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home puppy care	Heart murmurs Hernias Proper dental alignment Parasites
	○	10-12 weeks	Brief physical examination Heartworm prevention Vaccinations Discuss caring for your dog's teeth and ears at home	Proper growth rate Behavioral problems Parasites
	○	14-16 weeks	Brief physical examination Internal parasite check Vaccinations Discuss obedience training, nail trimming, and grooming Schedule spay/neuter surgery	Adult teeth coming in properly Skin infections Tonsillitis Parasites
	○	4-6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Presurgical diagnostics for spay or neuter surgery Hip evaluation Stomach tuck Genetic testing	Internal organ health prior to spay/neuter surgery Hip dysplasia Prevention of bloat Breed composition
	○	1 year	Head-to-tail physical examination Hip evaluation Heartworm test Internal parasite check Vaccinations Discuss diet, weight, and exercise	Ear infections Excessive weight gain Behavioral problems Hip dysplasia Heartworms and other parasites
<i>Adult: 18 to 39 in People Years</i>	○	2 years through 6 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Hip evaluation Internal organ health evaluation Heart health check Thyroid testing Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Healthy weight Ear infections Hip dysplasia Internal organ health and function Heart disease Thyroid function Heartworms and other parasites
<i>Senior: 40 to 59 in People Years</i>	○	7 years through 9 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Hip evaluation Senior internal organ health evaluation Heart health check Cancer screen Thyroid testing Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Healthy weight Ear infections Arthritis Hip dysplasia Internal organ health and function Heart disease Signs of cancer Thyroid function Heart disease Heartworms and other parasites
<i>Senior: 60+ in People Years</i>	○	10 years and older	Head-to-tail physical examination Golden years internal organ health evaluation Heart health check Cancer screen Thyroid testing Glaucoma screen Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Healthy weight Ear infections Arthritis Internal organ health and function Heart disease Signs of cancer Thyroid function Glaucoma Heartworms and other parasites

Note: We recommend twice-a-year examinations so that we may diagnose problems sooner. This approach also gives you the budget-friendly option of spreading preventive testing over two visits rather than one.