

# Your Rottweiler

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



## Rottweilers: What a Unique Breed!

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 Rottweilers, and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Confident, steady, and fearless
- Protective of owners; excellent guard dog
- Well suited as a companion, family dog, or working dog
- Obedient and devoted
- Intelligent and easy to train
- Large, strong, and athletic

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

- Must be properly trained and socialized to avoid aggression as adult
- Does not easily make friends with strangers
- Needs daily exercise
- Easily bored or distracted if not given something to do
- Can be strong-willed

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



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## Your Rottweiler'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 Rottweiler.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they're related to your pet's breed. That doesn't mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that he's more at risk than other dogs. We'll describe the most common issues for Rottweilers to give you an idea of what may come up. Of course we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide, and the health evaluation schedule it contains, helps us and you plan for your pet's health-care needs. At the end of the booklet, we've included a description of what you can do at home to keep your Rottweiler 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.

### *Cancer*

Cancer is the most common cause of death of dogs in their golden years. Half of all cancers are cured by surgically removing them, and some types are treatable with chemotherapy. We'll do periodic blood tests and look for lumps and bumps when we examine your pet.

Your Rottweiler is especially prone to squamous cell cancer, which usually shows up as a lump on the toe, and osteosarcoma, or bone cancer. The symptoms of bone cancer are lameness and leg pain in a middle-aged or older dog. Early detection is critical! Call right away if you notice that your dog is limping or has a lump or bump. If your Rottie is overweight, we'll discuss exercise and diet because obesity is a risk factor for some types of cancer.

### *Cataracts*

Cataracts are a common cause of blindness in older dogs, but in Rottweilers we see them as early as age two. We'll watch for the lenses of her eyes to become more opaque—meaning they look cloudy instead of clear—when we examine her each year. Many dogs adjust well to losing their vision and get along just fine. Surgery to remove cataracts and restore sight is an option.

### *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.

### *Digestive Disorders*

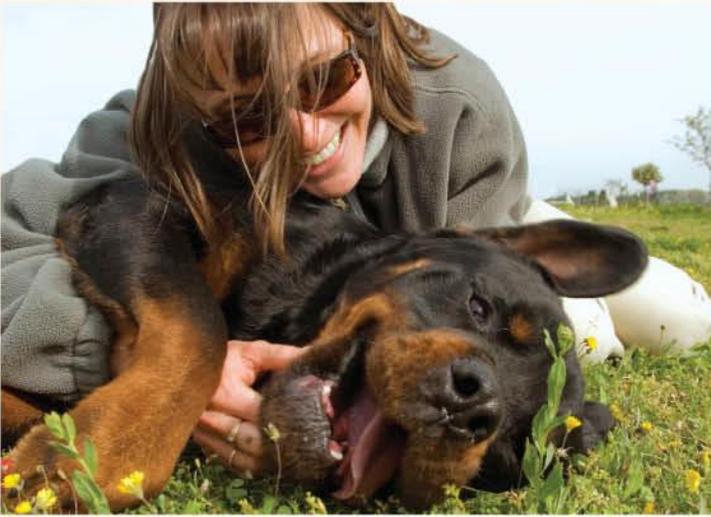
There are several inherited conditions or tendencies that can cause recurrent or chronic vomiting, diarrhea, or weight loss in your Rottweiler. These include diseases of the pancreas and intestines, plus food allergies or sensitivity. Some of these problems start very early in life. To help prevent symptoms, feed a high-quality pet food that we recommend. Most importantly, avoid snacks and table food. Treats that are high in fat (like pig ears), sodium, or artificial ingredients are bad for your buddy's digestion.

### *Eye Injuries*

The cornea is the clear window at the front of the eye, and it can be damaged by a scrape or puncture, or it can develop an open sore and become infected. Your Rottweiler is more likely than other breeds to develop problems with his corneas. To help prevent these injuries, don't let your dog ride in the car with his head out the window. Call us right away if he has any problems with his eyes, especially if he is rubbing or scratching an eye or holding it closed. A damaged cornea is painful and should be treated immediately. Medication and sometimes surgery is required.

### *Hip and Elbow Dysplasia*

You've probably heard of this inherited disease that causes the hip joints to form improperly and leads to arthritis, but did you know it can also be a problem in a Rottie's elbows? You may notice that she has lameness in her front 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 bones to identify the disease as early as possible. Surgery is sometimes a good option in severe and life-limiting cases of hip dysplasia. 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 she gets older.

### *Infections*

Rotties are susceptible to 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. Your dog is particularly susceptible to parvovirus, so we'll give him an extra booster when he's a puppy and annually (rather than every three years) when he's an adult.

### *Joint Disease*

If you allow your Rottweiler puppy to grow too quickly, the cartilage in her joints may not attach to the bone properly. Surgery may be required to fix the problem, known as osteochondritis desiccans (OCD), so it's best to stick to our recommended growth rate of no more than four pounds per week. Don't overfeed her, weigh your puppy every three to four weeks, don't feed calcium supplements, and feed a large-breed puppy diet rather than an adult diet or a regular puppy diet.

### *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 includes 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.

### *Neurological Disorder*

A genetically linked neurological condition that could occur in your Rottie causes a wobbly, drunken gait. This

condition, known as wobbler disease or wobbler syndrome, happens because there is a narrowing of the vertebrae in the neck, which pinches the spinal cord and associated nerves. If the nerves don't send signals to the brain the way they're supposed to, your dog can't feel his feet. The first signs you'll notice are unstable hind legs, stumbling, and sometimes falling. Medications, neck braces, rehabilitation exercise programs, and surgery are treatment options.

### *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 Rottie 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 Rottweiler 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*

Your Rottie is 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 do a blood screening test annually to test for the disease. Treatment is usually simple: replacement hormones given in the form of a pill.

## Taking Care of Your Rottweiler 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 Rotties.

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, Diet, and Exercise*

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your Rottweiler live longer, stay healthy, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine. Overweight Rottweilers are more prone to cancer, arthritis, and other problems.

- ✓ Brush her teeth at least three times a week.
- ✓ Keep your dog’s diet consistent, and don’t give her people food.
- ✓ Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for her 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 in your Rottweiler:

- ✓ 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
- ✓ Unstable or wobbly hind legs

## Partners in Health Care

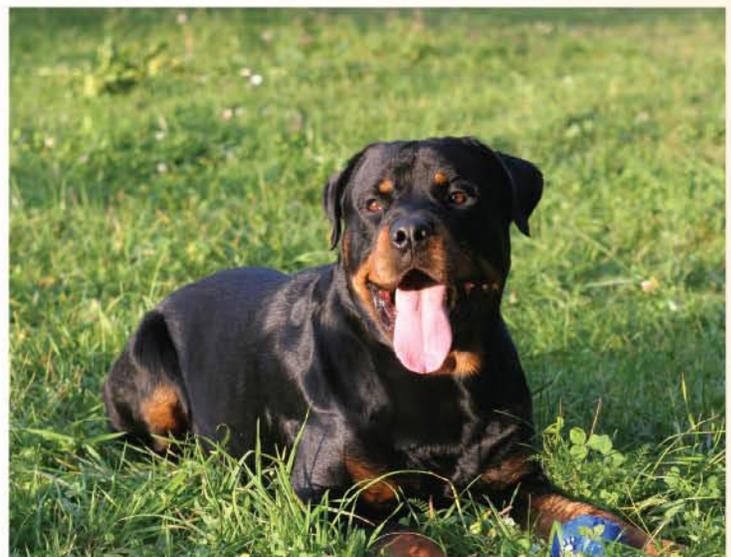
DNA testing is a rapidly advancing field with tests being developed to help diagnose conditions before they become problems for your friend. For the most up-to-date information on DNA and other screening tests available for your pal, visit [www.Genesis4Pets.com](http://www.Genesis4Pets.com).

Your Rottweiler counts on you to take good care of him, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that he 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 his breed, lifestyle, and age. Please contact us when you have questions or concerns:

## Health Evaluation Schedule for Rottweilers

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 Rottweiler 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 this breed 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 this breed.*



## How We'll Keep Your Rottweiler

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

|   | (✓)                   | Age                     | Services We'll Provide  | Rottweiler-Specific Problems We're Looking For  |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------------|---|---|
|   | <input type="radio"/> | 6–8 weeks               | Head-to-tail physical examination<br>Internal parasite test and/or deworming<br>Vaccinations<br>Discuss socialization and at-home puppy care  | Heart murmurs<br>Hernias<br>Proper dental alignment<br>Parasites  |
|   | <input type="radio"/> | 10–12 weeks             | Brief physical examination<br>Heartworm prevention<br>Vaccinations<br>Discuss caring for your dog's teeth at home   | Proper growth rate<br>Behavioral problems<br>Parasites  |
|   | <input type="radio"/> | 14–16 weeks             | Brief physical examination<br>Internal parasite check<br>Vaccinations<br>Discuss obedience training, nail trimming, and grooming<br>Schedule spay/neuter surgery  | Adult teeth coming in properly<br>Skin infection<br>Tonsillitis<br>Parasites  |
|   | <input type="radio"/> | 4–6 months              | Head-to-tail physical examination<br>Presurgical diagnostics for spay or neuter surgery<br>Hip and elbow evaluation   | Joint disease<br>Internal organ health and function prior to spay/neuter surgery<br>Hip and elbow dysplasia   |
|   | <input type="radio"/> | 1 year                  | Head-to-tail physical examination<br>Hip and elbow evaluation<br>Heartworm test<br>Internal parasite check<br>Vaccinations<br>Discuss diet, weight, and exercise  | Excessive weight gain<br>Joint disease<br>Behavioral problems<br>Hip and elbow dysplasia<br>Heartworms and other parasites  |
| <i>Adult: 18 to 39<br/>in People Years</i>  | <input type="radio"/> | 2 years through 5 years | Head-to-tail physical examination<br>Hip and elbow evaluation<br>Internal organ health check<br>Cancer screen<br>Heart health check<br>Internal parasite check<br>Heartworm test<br>Vaccinations                                | Dental disease<br>Healthy weight<br>Cataracts<br>Hip and elbow dysplasia<br>Internal organ health and function<br>Signs of cancer<br>Heart disease<br>Heartworms and other parasites                                  |
| <i>Senior: 40 to 59<br/>in People Years</i> | <input type="radio"/> | 6 years through 7 years | Head-to-tail physical examination<br>Hip and elbow evaluation<br>Senior internal organ health evaluation<br>Cancer screen<br>Thyroid testing<br>Heart health check<br>Internal parasite check<br>Heartworm test<br>Vaccinations | Dental disease<br>Healthy weight<br>Cataracts<br>Arthritis<br>Hip and elbow dysplasia<br>Internal organ health and function<br>Signs of cancer<br>Thyroid function<br>Heart disease<br>Heartworms and other parasites |
| <i>Senior: 40 to 59<br/>in People Years</i> | <input type="radio"/> | 8 years and older       | Head-to-tail physical examination<br>Golden years internal organ health evaluation<br>Cancer screen<br>Thyroid testing<br>Glaucoma screen<br>Internal parasite check<br>Heartworm test<br>Vaccinations                          | Dental disease<br>Healthy weight<br>Cataracts<br>Arthritis<br>Internal organ health and function<br>Signs of cancer<br>Thyroid function<br>Glaucoma<br>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.