

## **INTERACTING WITH AND EXERCISING YOUR DOG**

**INTRODUCTION:** Dogs come in all shapes and sizes, ages and temperaments so to produce an exercise plan for all is impossible. Things to consider include:

1. Age and health status e.g. a mature healthy one year old requires more exercise for longer periods verses an older, arthritic dog of the same breed which may require more frequent, shorter walks.
2. Body condition. Obesity can affect a dogs ability to exercise (often causing a vicious circle where poor exercise tolerance, slows the metabolism further and leads to more weight gain).
3. Breed predispositions including brachycephalic (short nosed) breeds e.g. Pugs which may have respiratory issues or breeds prone to joint and spinal problems such as Poodles or Dachshunds have different exercise requirements to the opposite extreme of over-active working dogs e.g. Border Collies or Huskies which need long walks several times a day.

**THE RIGHT GEAR:** choosing the correct exercise gear (collar, halter, harness and lead) is also key to ensuring your dog's comfort and your control during exercise. Choke chains or collars are considered a negative and cruel way to control dogs and can even lead to laryngeal and tracheal damage and are never recommended.

**EXERCISES FOR YOUR DOG:** take every opportunity to give your dog exercise, if possible take them whenever you go out and when at home encourage them to go up and down stairs (if available) and to follow you when you move from room to room.

***Warm Ups:*** always let your dog warm up, ideally you can give them a massage and help them stretch (great for relieving tension and stimulating blood circulation). Increase exercise gradually as fitness improves (sound advice for dogs and people!)

### ***Walking:***

*Regular walks:* take your dog around your neighbourhood or to designated dog friendly places.

*Resistance walks:* if possible walk on different surfaces such as sand, shallow water, rocky paths or a rough surface.

*Enhanced walks:* use obstacles such as benches and trees to jump over or choose steep gradients up and downhill to improve your and your dog's fitness.

**FUN AND GAMES:** can involve interaction/play-time with people or stimulating toys when you cannot be around.

***Interactive toys and tools:*** e.g. Kongs where you can place food such as peanut butter to keep your dog stimulated. Leaving the radio on or playing "dog" videos on the television (those designed specifically to occupy a dog's attention) can also help relieve anxiety and stress associated with being left alone.

***Companions:*** as with cats getting a companion can also help alleviate boredom but care must be taken to ensure compatibility, so stress levels do not rise!

***Play-time:*** playing "fetch" by throwing a ball or toy (no sticks!) or "hide and seek" by hiding a toy or kibbles and allowing your dog time to find it! You can also construct obstacle courses (indoors or outdoors) to exercise your dog e.g. slalom courses with buckets, tunnels and low hurdles.

**FOR FURTHER ADVICE ON INTERACTING AND EXERCISING WITH YOUR DOG  
PLEASE CONSULT WITH A VETERINARY SURGEON**