

McClelland Doodles

PUPPY GUIDE

A warm, practical guide for your puppy's first days home - and the months that follow.

Our goal

We work hard to give every puppy a thoughtful beginning. This guide is designed to help you continue that foundation with consistency, training, structure, veterinary care, and lots of love.

Please keep this guide handy during your puppy's first year.

Welcome Home!

Soon you'll be bringing your new puppy home! This is an exciting time, but it can also feel a little overwhelming. We've put together the information we most often share with our puppy families so you have an easy reference as you settle in together.

Every puppy is an individual. Please use this guide as a starting point, and work with your veterinarian and a qualified professional trainer whenever your puppy needs individualized medical or behavioral guidance.

Ongoing breeder support

We're always happy to help with questions about your puppy's background, lineage, transition home, our breeding program, and your health guarantee. Medical concerns should be handled by your veterinarian, and ongoing training or behavior concerns are best evaluated by a qualified trainer or behavior professional.

First-Week Quick Start

- ☐ Schedule your puppy's veterinary exam within 3 days of pickup, as required by the health guarantee/contract.
- ☐ Keep feeding the same food initially and make any food change gradually.
- ☐ Begin a predictable potty and crate routine immediately.
- ☐ Expect some whining, interrupted sleep, and accidents during the transition.
- ☐ Use a crate, pen, or puppy-safe space whenever you cannot supervise closely.
- ☐ Continue short, positive training sessions every day.
- ☐ Keep small objects, socks, wrappers, medicines, chemicals, and hand warmers well out of reach.

A Very Important Reminder

A large puppy is still a puppy.

Goldendoodles and Sheepadoodles can grow quickly, but emotional and behavioral maturity takes much longer. Jumping, mouthing, chewing, pulling, overexcitement, and testing boundaries can all be part of normal puppy and adolescent development. Consistent follow-through at home matters just as much as the foundation your puppy receives before go-home.

Feeding & Everyday Care

What your puppy is eating now

Continue feeding the same food your puppy has been eating when they come home. Feeding details will be provided at pickup.

At go-home, puppies are generally eating about 1/3 to 1/2 cup, three times daily, depending on size:

- 8:00 am

- 1:00 pm
- 6:00 pm

Approximate daily total: 1 to 1 1/2 cups.

You may adjust the feeding times to fit your family's schedule. Ask your veterinarian at checkups whether the amount should be increased as your puppy grows. Most puppies continue with three meals daily until around 6 months old and then transition to two meals per day.

Because larger, deep-chested dogs can be at risk for bloat, we prefer several appropriately sized meals rather than one very large meal. Ask your veterinarian about meal size, activity around mealtimes, and any individual risk factors for your dog.

Changing foods

We'll send home a small amount of your puppy's current food. If you plan to switch foods, transition slowly over about 1 to 2 weeks by gradually increasing the new food while decreasing the old.

Picky eating & body condition

Doodles may go through stages where they eat more or less, especially as they grow. Too many toppers, table foods, treats, or frequent food changes can encourage picky eating. Many doodles, especially those with more poodle in their background, stay naturally lean. Your veterinarian can help you monitor healthy body condition.

Digestive upset

Minor tummy upset can happen with stress, food changes, vaccines, or eating something unusual. Because puppies can become dehydrated quickly, contact your veterinarian if diarrhea is persistent, your puppy is repeatedly vomiting, seems lethargic, refuses food or water, or you are otherwise concerned.

Puppy Safety

Puppies - and even adult dogs - can swallow objects incredibly quickly. Foreign-body ingestion can cause a life-threatening blockage or toxicity.

Keep these out of reach

- Socks and small clothing items
- Children's toys and small household objects
- Food wrappers and trash
- Medications and supplements
- Cleaning products and chemicals
- Hand warmers and similar packets
- Chews that have become small enough to swallow

When you cannot supervise

Use a crate, exercise pen, or truly puppy-proofed room. Supervision and safe confinement are some of the simplest ways to prevent accidents.

Crate Training

We highly recommend crate training. A crate gives your puppy a safe place to rest, supports potty training, helps with separation skills, and protects your puppy when you cannot supervise.

Typical crate size: 36 inches with a divider for many puppies; some larger doodles may eventually need a 42-inch crate.

We begin introducing puppies to the crate before they leave us, but crate training must continue consistently at home. Many dogs use a crate for their first couple of years and later enjoy sleeping in it even with the door open.

A simple way to help your puppy build a positive association with the crate is to feed meals in it. You can begin with the door open, then gradually practice short, calm periods with the door closed. Treats, meals, naps, and quiet time can all help the crate feel like a safe, comfortable place rather than a punishment.

If you need a little more space during the early weeks, an exercise pen attached to the crate can also work well as a temporary puppy-safe setup. Some families use a pad area at first and then gradually transition fully to outdoor potty as the puppy matures and the family routine allows.

The first few nights

- Some whining or crying is normal while your puppy adjusts to being away from mom and littermates.
- Placing the crate near your bed at first can be reassuring.
- A partial crate cover may help some puppies settle.
- Keep nighttime potty trips quiet and boring, then return your puppy to bed.
- Use the scented toy we send home as an added comfort.

Most puppies settle more easily as they learn the new routine. Stay calm and consistent, and remember that the first few nights are a major adjustment.

Potty Training

Consistency matters more than perfection. Young puppies have very little bladder control, so frequent trips outside are normal.

Take your puppy out:

- Immediately after waking
- Shortly after eating
- After active play

- Before going into the crate
- Before bedtime
- About every 15 to 20 minutes during active play at first

Choose a consistent potty area and use a cue such as "go potty" or "do your business." Praise or reward your puppy immediately afterward.

As your puppy gets older, bladder control will gradually improve and the time between potty trips can increase. Until then, frequent opportunities outside are one of the best ways to prevent accidents.

Sample first-week routine

Time	What to do
Wake-up	Straight outside to potty
8:00 am	Breakfast, then outside about 15 minutes later
Morning	Play/training; potty often; nap
1:00 pm	Lunch, then outside about 15 minutes later
Afternoon	Play/training; potty often; nap
6:00 pm	Dinner, then outside about 15 minutes later
Evening	Family time; frequent potty trips; quiet wind-down
10:00 pm	Final potty trip and bedtime
Overnight	Young puppies may need one quiet potty trip

Note: Your puppy's needs may vary. This sample routine is only a starting point and can be adjusted as your puppy grows.

Training & Development

We begin age-appropriate early training and socialization before go-home, but your puppy is not a finished dog at eight weeks old. The habits you build during the months after pickup are extremely important.

What to expect as your puppy grows

- Jumping and overexcitement
- Mouthing and chewing
- Leash pulling
- Difficulty settling when overtired
- Testing boundaries
- Barking or attention-seeking
- Temporary fearfulness during developmental stages
- Puppy biting and mouthing are normal, especially during teething. Avoid encouraging play with hands; calmly redirect your puppy to an appropriate chew or toy instead.

- Early puppy classes can be a wonderful way to build skills and practice age-appropriate socialization. If you prefer to train at home, consistency and short daily sessions are key.

Training is part of puppy ownership

If a behavior is persistent, worsening, or difficult to manage, we strongly encourage families to work with a qualified positive-reinforcement trainer early rather than waiting for the behavior to become established.

Four skills to begin immediately

1. **Recall** - We begin pairing an enthusiastic "puppy, puppy, puppy!" call with something wonderful, usually food. Continue rewarding your puppy for coming to you and gradually transition to your chosen recall word such as "come."
2. **Auto Sit / Manding** - Do not reward jumping. Wait for four paws on the floor - or better yet, a sit - before offering attention, food, or affection. This helps teach polite ways to ask for what they want.
3. **Leash Skills** - Keep sessions short and positive. Reward your puppy for following beside you and checking in with you before expecting a perfect leash walk.
4. **Crate Skills** - Practice calm crate time even when you are home so your puppy learns that being apart from you is safe and normal.

Keep training positive. We recommend rewarding the behaviors you want with treats, praise, play, or attention and avoiding methods based on force or fear. The goal is to build confidence, communication, and a trusting relationship with your puppy.

Rest matters

Puppies need a lot of sleep. An overtired puppy can look like a badly behaved puppy. Structured rest in a crate or puppy-safe area is important, and training sessions should stay short - often 10 to 15 minutes or less.

As a rough rule of thumb, many young puppies do well with considerably more rest than active time - often a couple of hours of sleep after an hour or so of being awake. The exact rhythm varies by puppy, but overtiredness commonly shows up as extra biting, zooming, chewing, or difficulty listening.

Socialization

Early socialization is important, but socialization does not mean overwhelming your puppy. The goal is safe, positive exposure.

- Different people and calm children
- Household noises and everyday routines
- Car rides
- New surfaces and environments
- Gentle handling of paws, ears, mouth, and body
- Appropriate vaccinated dogs

- Experiences your puppy is likely to encounter as an adult

Watch your puppy's body language and avoid forcing an interaction when your puppy is frightened or overwhelmed. Ask your veterinarian about safe socialization practices in your area while your puppy is completing the vaccination series.

Keep interactions with young children calm and supervised. Fast movement and high-pitched voices can make puppies especially excited, and rough play can quickly become a habit.

Young puppies can also go through brief fear periods when something that seemed fine yesterday suddenly feels scary. During these times, keep exposures gentle and positive rather than forcing the puppy through a frightening experience.

Until your veterinarian says your puppy is adequately protected, avoid higher-risk areas heavily used by unknown dogs, such as dog parks and pet-store floors. Safe socialization can still continue through controlled experiences and healthy, vaccinated dogs you know.

Grooming

Doodle coats require regular maintenance. Depending on coat type and preferred length, many doodles will need professional grooming about every 6 to 12 weeks.

- Brush regularly and comb all the way down to the skin.
- Pay extra attention behind the ears, under the legs, around collars/harnesses, and other friction areas.
- Blow-dry thoroughly after bathing rather than allowing a dense coat to air-dry.
- Keep ears dry after bathing or swimming.
- Handle paws, ears, face, and tail regularly so grooming becomes normal.
- Consider a face, feet, and sanitary trim before the first full haircut to create a positive grooming routine.

A first full groom is often needed around 6 months, depending on coat growth and length. Choose a groomer who is patient with puppies and willing to make the early visits positive rather than overwhelming.

Ear concerns

Ear odor, redness, discharge, repeated scratching, or recurrent infections should be discussed with your veterinarian.

Veterinary Care

First appointment

Per the health guarantee/contract, your puppy should be examined by a veterinarian within 3 days of pickup. Veterinary offices can book up, so we recommend scheduling this appointment before go-home day.

What your puppy has received

- Three dewormings, given every two weeks beginning at about 2 weeks of age
- First puppy vaccination (DHPP), as listed on the health record you receive at pickup

Take your puppy's health and vaccination records to your veterinarian and follow your veterinarian's recommended vaccine, heartworm, parasite-prevention, and wellness schedule going forward.

- Microchip
- Thorough health examination by a licensed veterinarian at Lineberger Veterinary Hospital - 704-824-8451

Spay / neuter

Please refer to your signed puppy contract for the spay/neuter requirements that apply to your puppy. Our current pet-puppy requirement is no earlier than 9 months and by 18 months unless otherwise noted in your contract or discussed with your veterinarian.

When to call your veterinarian

- Persistent vomiting or diarrhea
- Lethargy or refusal to eat/drink
- Possible ingestion of a foreign object or toxin
- Injury or sudden pain
- Ear, skin, or allergy concerns
- Medication or supplement questions
- Vaccines, flea/tick, heartworm, or parasite prevention
- Nutrition, weight, or growth concerns

Who Should I Contact?

YOUR VETERINARIAN

Illness, injury, vomiting/diarrhea, ear or skin problems, medication questions, vaccines, parasite prevention, nutrition, or anything medically concerning.

A PROFESSIONAL TRAINER / BEHAVIOR PROFESSIONAL

Persistent jumping, leash reactivity, resource guarding, significant anxiety, aggression, excessive barking, difficulty settling, or behaviors that are not improving with consistent home training.

McCLELLAND DOODLES

Questions about your puppy's background or lineage, what we observed while your puppy was in our care, your transition home, our breeding program, your health guarantee/contract, or general resources that may help point you in the right direction.

One Last Reminder

Every puppy is an individual. Genetics, early development, training, socialization, environment, life experiences, and the family's continued involvement all contribute to the adult dog that puppy becomes.

There is no guarantee that any puppy will develop into a specific personality or behave exactly as someone imagined. What we can do is give our puppies the best beginning we know how to provide - and give their families a strong foundation to continue building upon.

Even after a doodle reaches adult size, emotional and behavioral maturity can continue developing for several years. Many dogs are still very much adolescents well into the first two years, and some do not feel fully mature until closer to age three.

Be patient. Be consistent. Celebrate the small wins.

Puppyhood passes much faster than it feels while you're in the middle of it. We hope this guide helps you enjoy the process and gives you a clear place to start.

First-Year Checklist

- ☐ Complete the first veterinary exam within the contract timeframe.
- ☐ Continue the vaccine and parasite-prevention plan recommended by your veterinarian.
- ☐ Keep a consistent crate and potty routine.
- ☐ Practice recall, polite greetings, leash skills, and calm alone time.
- ☐ Enroll in puppy classes or work with a trainer if you need more support.
- ☐ Maintain regular brushing and grooming appointments.
- ☐ Provide mental enrichment, appropriate exercise, and plenty of rest.
- ☐ Remember that adolescence is temporary - keep training.

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