

Boxer Secrets: The Ultimate Guide to Make Your Boxer Happy, Healthy And Obedient!

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Introduction

After all the frustration to find out the truth on how to make a Boxer healthy, happy and obedient, I have created ‘Boxer Secrets’.

I spent over 2 months just communicating with 93 boxer lovers (some are owners) to get their input and learn from their experiences.

Then, I searched the internet, burning the midnight oil to read articles and forum posts to find out more. And, of course, I did not forget about the tips I’ve gathered from books I’ve bought from the local bookstores.

Phew! It was a lot of work. But if you were to ask me whether it was worth the effort, I’ll say YES because I finally got my answers. It’s no longer a secret to me how to make a boxer dog happy, healthy and obedient the way you want it.

This is unlike ANY dog book you see on the shelf because it’s a researched book from people who personally own boxer dogs. This is information gathered that you can use and apply to your Boxer.

With that said, it’s time for to start reading ‘Boxer Secrets’ and see improvement in your dog!



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What Is A Boxer?



Boxers are a great all around breed.

They are a distinguished canine and the coolest, most lovable dog out there! It is a medium-built and strong breed that is so named because of its habit of standing on the hind legs to begin a fight and boxing with the front paws.

By nature, Boxers are working dogs. Throughout history it has been trained as:

- hunting dog
- police dog
- seeing-eye dog for the blind
- guard dog
- circus dog
- courier dog on the battlefields during World War I and World War II
- Fighting dog in the once popular sport of dog fighting.

The American Kennel Club (AKC) categorizes dogs into 7 groups:

- herding
- hound
- non-sporting
- sporting
- terrier
- toy
- working

And the largest breed registered in the working dog category is the Boxer.

No doubt the Boxer breed makes for great utility dog but the greatest advantage to owning one is that a Boxer can be your most outstanding companion on four legs and a great source of personal fulfillment.

By the way, the AKC registered over 150 different breeds totaling nearly one million dogs in 2003. To put that in perspective, the animal shelters in America rescue up to 12 million homeless dogs and cats every year and 25% of these are purebreds.

This little book is meant as a quick guide for Boxer owners like you to better understand your wisely chosen pet, how to take care and love it, make him happy, keep him healthy, so that he will better understand you and listen to you, love you and make YOU a better person during your incredible life journey together!

Devoted and glad owners of Boxers have come up with a long list of attributes and traits of their favorite pet that include:

- Alert
- Boisterous
- Boundless energy
- Brave
- Canine clown
- Courageous
- Devil dog

- Devoted
- Dignified
- Exuberance
- Family dog
- Fearless
- Friendly
- Hearing dog
- Highly trainable
- Intelligent
- Intuitive
- Keen judge of character
- Loving
- Loyal
- Patient with children
- People dog
- Poor swimmer
- Playful
- Quick learner
- Self-assured
- Smart
- Soulful
- Spirited
- Stoical
- Vigilant
- Working dog
- Wonderful pet

And you can add to the list...

The Boxer's history could be traced back to feudal Germany, where it was a small hunting dog that could tenaciously hold onto a bull, boar, or bear till the master

arrived. It was also a utility dog for peasants and shop owners, and even a performing dog in circus.

The Boxer as we know it today is a bigger breed – a mixture of the German Boxer with a taller, more elegant English import. The era of this modern Boxer began in the 1880s and became really popular in the United States in the late 1930s-1940s.

Handsome dog: Within the canine world, Boxer is a medium-sized dog standing at 21 to 25 inches at the shoulder for a full-grown female, and weighs some 50 to 65 pounds. The male can be taller and 15 pounds heavier.

It has a striking good look with chiseled head, square jaw and muscled body that make for a very handsome silhouette. The ears are cropped and erect that enhance its hearing – the Boxer's most developed sense. It is always alert and vigilant, an instinctive guard dog.

The shortened muzzle makes hot and humid weather uncomfortable for the Boxer.

The coat is short, hard and smooth, and possesses a natural sheen that can be enhanced with rubdowns with a chamois cloth (especially after a bath).

The short coat cannot protect him well from extreme elements of the weather and thus Boxer should definitely not be kept outdoors. It is a housedog, sensitive to temperature extremes, does not enjoy the draft, summer heat or cold.

Boxers come in attractive basic colors of fawn and brindle. The fawn varies from a tawny tan to an especially beautiful

stag red. The brindle (clearly defined black stripes on a fawn background) can be sparse, in between or dense.

A beauty standard for Boxers is that their white markings or “flash” should add to their look and may not cover more than one-third of the entire body. Some predominantly or all-white puppies (known as “check”) may be born in a litter.

In the US, however, the American Boxer Club members are pledged not to register, sell or use these “whites” for breeding so as to retain the beauty of the true fawn and brindle colors in the breed.

Personality-wise, Boxer is a cool dog that will not bark without cause. Its expressive face – the furrowed forehead and dark, soulful eyes - is a charming quality that sets the Boxer apart from other breeds.

It can mimic the moods of its master and adopting one could bring you 9 to 11 years of joyful companionship. In exceptional cases the Boxer can live up to 15 years.

Boxers as Pets

Pet Boxers, although low-maintenance, require your consistent attention, exercise, human interaction, consistent obedience training and lots of love. You cannot leave them to their own design for too long or they get lonely, bored and into trouble.

Being a big and strong dog as well as a highly intelligent one, Boxers need both physical and mental stimulations to keep them even-tempered and dignified while still keeping their impish spirit and fearless courage in tact.

How to keep Boxer out of trouble

Their high prey drive (some owners called it play drive) needs proper outlets or they could get destructive as house pets, and tend to fight among themselves especially if the other family Boxers are of the same sex. The female, it seems, is more aggressive than the male.

Keeping Boxers busy is the best way to keep them out of trouble! Tire them out with long walks, 3 times a day. Give them plenty of exercise, play with them, especially the inquisitive puppies or they would tear up your home out of boredom, pent up energy and frustration.

For all your love and caring, be prepared for wet slobbery drool and kisses and love in return.

What some proud owners say about their pet Boxers:

* “Having a Boxer is like having another human in a dog body with you. You can talk to Boxers and they would understand. They demonstrate feelings just like human does. If they are loved, they will love and protect you.”

* “Boxers are the most loyal companions. My Boxers bring me up when I am down. They are the canine clowns of the dog world. They are the only dogs for me.”

* “They are a gift! The two I have are always smiling and they cheer me up when I’m not too happy. They can be your friends for life!”

* “My Boxer can take up my moods or lay quietly by my feet for hours.”

* “Boxers are so intuitive, so easily bored and heartbroken. They are the definition of devotion and courage.”

* “If I treat my Boxer puppy as an intelligent animal and talk to him almost like he's human, he is more responsive and better behaved, as though he's picking up on my sentiments by the way I am speaking to him.”

* “Boxers can be very manipulative. They are a lot smarter than they look! Don’t get taken in by their innocent-looking face or let them walk all over you no matter how much their eyes make them look like they are truly sorry.”

* “Give up being house-proud and enjoy your “devil dog”. Don’t have potted plants because you’ll end up with empty pots. Don’t run to answer the phone because you’ll be rugby-tackled and end up flat on your face.”

* “Bringing a puppy or even an older dog into your home and your life is a major decision. It brings with it responsibility and commitment, but it also renders supreme joy, laughter, and sadly, but inevitably, tears. Not one of us who has ever shared his life with a Boxer would have it any other way.”

* “Boxer dogs think they are human. Treat them like one - love them, talk to them, cuddle them and value them and you will get your love back unconditionally 10,000 times.”

So are you ready for a Boxer?

The answer is “no” if you are the type who mostly leave your dog on a chain. Boxers require much of your love, attention and companionship although they are easy to take care of.

One Boxer-lover even said to never get one as pet if you work full time!

Another point to consider is that the costs for food, training, grooming, medical care, toys and other supplies do add up.

Still, for many years now, the Boxer has ranked in the top 10 of favorite purebreds by the American Kennel Club, numbering about 35,000 Boxers registered in 2003.

Boxers Crave Attention

Boxers need constant attention and love to be babied. Treat your Boxer as your best friend and play, play, play with him.

One three-month old Boxer loves her bath more when the owner sings to her. Be it playing, talking or singing to them or taking them for a walk, Boxers simply love the attention.

Shower them with love, affection and attention as well as some treats.

These keep Boxers happy. Left to their own devices, Boxers can become very destructive when lonely, bored and ignored. One is known to jump over 6-footer fences if the owner is gone for too long.

Give extra space when you have to leave Boxers alone over extended period. They don't like to be locked in a room. One owner gives a 4-year old male Boxer the run of the hall stairs, landing and its own bedroom and the dog is much happier and not destructive at all.

When you have to leave Boxers alone, you better make sure they have a toy they really like or they'll find something to do that you probably really won't like.

Destructive Streak in Boxers

Boxers are too smart and strong for their own good, and if they're bored and undisciplined they can be a disaster in the house.

That is why obedience training is important, in order to prevent the destruction of too many of your belongings. Training makes a happier dog.

The accepted temperament for Boxers rules out aggression, hyperactivity and extreme shyness in the breed. You want to have these under control in your pet.

Experts suggest that, when adopting a Boxer, you should at least check the parent dogs for these undesirable traits before even looking at the puppies.

Aggression

One owner said: "I love my Boxer girl, but she can be a terror sometimes and could get really hyper to where she'd attack us. I'd hate to think what all she'd get into without any training at all!"

By the way, there are more accounts, from owners, of aggression among their female Boxers, especially towards other female.

Hyperactive

Boxers have high play drive and they need their exercise or they'd get excitable and destructive.

Play, play and play with them. Give them extra space especially when you have to leave them alone for long period. Tire them out with long walks and play sessions but within a fenced area or on a leash.

When going for their walks, opt for body harness if you have a Boxer that pulls or strays.

Harness is the answer to the Boxer slipping out of the collar. The chain-harness combo looks good as well as trains the Boxer to walk without pulling or straying.

Extreme shyness (not to be mistaken with independence)

It's critical to socialize your Boxers. When they are still puppies, take them to public places like a pet store so they won't be so shy.

Begin training in an area that is familiar to your Boxer, where there is minimum distraction. Once both of you are skilled at several obedience commands, take him to practice at different areas with increasing amount of distractions present.

This may seem like starting all over again, but it's worth the effort. One family took theirs to the local mini-mart and practiced obedience training right outside, where there were distractions from people.

“Strangers came over and petted him and gave him treats. He met all kinds of people and learned to follow commands despite the distractions, and is a better dog today.”

Choosing your Boxer

An easier and more pleasant journey with your chosen Boxer starts with checking out the parent dogs for unbecoming traits like aggression, hyperactive and extreme shyness.

This is easier to do when you get your Boxer from a reputable breeder or from a pet shop that get their animals only from known breeders.

Exercise prudence if you are getting your Boxer puppy from pet stores, which often get their supply from breeders of unknown reputation.

These “puppy mills” as they are called are not known to put much emphasis on the quality and health of pups they are producing.

Reputable breeders would adhere to the accepted standards for Boxers in terms of uniformity in the breed, good health, temperament, size and color.

Reputable breeders would be able to show the pedigree and registration papers and/or pictures of the parent dogs that may reside somewhere else.

Professional breeders are also there to produce dog show champions or prospects.

Even if you are not looking to raise a show champion Boxer, known breeders can provide you with some “best buy” puppies because not all the puppies in a litter are show prospect/champion materials.

But the full litter would have had benefited from the same proven bloodlines, nutrition and medical care. So you can choose from among the good-looking brothers or sisters of potential champion for a bargain.

Your other source option is animal shelters that in the US alone receive up to 12 million homeless dogs and cats every year, and about 25% of them are purebred. Paying the adoption fee is a lot cheaper than the price you will pay to a breeder or pet store, and you will be saving a life.

The definition of good stock or purebred must include beauty, and in a Boxer good look means the coat is fawn and brindle, with the white markings or “flash” covering not more than one-third of the entire coat.

Sometimes the distribution of the "flash" alone may make the difference between a show champion and just a pet Boxer.

The all-white Boxer or “check” is prone to blindness and deafness, and the American Boxer Club members are not to register, sell or use the “whites” for breeding.

When it comes to choosing male or female Boxers, there are not much clear-cut differences in their personalities.

At times, the male is calmer, more tolerant of other dogs, willing to hold still for those hugs than the female. But at other times, the female can be so. One owner said the female Boxer is hyper and more aggressive especially toward other females, and that the aggression has increased as the female gets older.

Boxers and the Family

Boxers are very family-oriented and always love to be around people. Treat them as family members. Never underestimate their need for human companionship, which is the most notable trait of this breed.

The Boxer is happiest when it is with people. Its whole pelvis moves when a Boxer wags its tail in delight and exhilaration. It can adapt to any environment as long as it is with people.

They love being with their "families" and don't like to be alone. Include them in your gatherings when company is around.

They love to be your shadow. Boxers are intelligent and are quite capable of participating in many family adventures.

Boxer dogs are like humans and they need lots of love to feel like a part of the family.

Accept them for what they are and give them time to show how loyal they could be. They are very sensitive animals so never hit them.

Boxers and Kids

Boxers are gentle with children. Boxers love to play and are always ready for a romp or game, so make sure you have kids, said one owner.

Introduce the Boxer to the children early, as this will bond Boxer and child and stop jealousy. You will find the Boxer will be more protective towards that child.

Some owners found their Boxers love to be around children more than adults.

They are good-natured, accept friendly strangers and will calmly suffer the pokes and prods of children.

Boxers are also accepting toward other family pets.

One owner said: “My girl Boxer is wonderful to my daughter’s little half-rat terrier puppy. She lets the very hyper puppy do whatever to her and they sleep together.”

Boxers and Discipline

Most would agree that the day you bring the Boxer puppy home, you must already pick the direction in which you want to go with him.

Disciplining one is a matter of thinking and working a step ahead of your Boxer. Do it with love, gentleness but firmness as well.

Also, a Boxer that is well behaved today may not remain so forever. Dog's behavior constantly changes; new problems can always develop and existing ones could get worse. So make the discipline constant.

Training your Boxer is the most important thing you will do for him and for yourself in order to have a much better relationship together.

A trained Boxer will listen and can safely be allowed freedom more than an untrained one.

A disciplined and well-trained Boxer is more confident and makes a wonderful companion that is smart, soulful, most people-oriented dog and blessed with boundless energy - a pleasure to live with.

A poorly trained dog can be a loud and destructive nuisance around the house that weighs on you more like a commitment and responsibility rather than a blessing.

Teach them young when the Boxers don't know any better rather than stressing them out when they are older and more difficult to control.

It is not fair on your Boxer to let him pull on the leash when he is a small puppy and this doesn't hurt your hand, then to scold and shout at him if he does the same when he is big and strong and makes your arms feel like falling off the joints. It is not fair on the dog and certainly not fair on you.

Start the training some place that is familiar to your Boxer, where there is minimum distraction.

But remember socialization is also an important part of the training because you don't want to end up with a very shy Boxer.

So after both of you are skilled at several obedience commands, start taking him to different areas for practice, where there are increasing amount of distractions present. Examples are near a supermarket, busy parking lot and a busy park on Sundays. This may seem like starting all over again but you'll have a superbly trained dog at the end of it. So it's worth the effort.

Keep in mind Boxers are intelligent. Being an intelligent dog has its own advantages and drawbacks.

They are quick to learn.

It also means Boxers have a mind of their own that would sometimes show up as stubbornness. Thus, they can be harder to train than most other dogs due to their independence.

Understand Boxer's intelligence/stubbornness, handle it well, and you can avoid problems in disciplining and training them.

As owners, you must maintain respect between you and your Boxers. Respect goes both ways.

Respect their intelligence. Love them. Set the rules for behavior. Trust them. There is no need for extreme measures to show Boxers that you are the top dog.

Handle their hard-headedness with patient and don't give up on their training.

And because they are stubborn, conventional obedience training may not be the most effective way to get them to listen to you.

Utilize their high play drive for more effective obedience training.

Conduct "play training" where by the training tasks are made into fun games and the Boxer's high play drive is used as motivation. There are a lot of really good books available on this type of training.

Basically Boxers are intelligent and could be stubborn. So you have to outwit them!

While training your Boxer, you have to make him WANT to do what you want him to. You can't make him do stuff unless it is FUN. Otherwise you are wasting both your time and his.

Your Boxer's favorite activities should become training, so that training becomes his favorite activity.

Boxers LOVE to play! You will have the happiest Boxer in the world and most obedient if you will just spend some time, giving them your undivided attention everyday. Otherwise they feel ignored, bored and will tear or chew things up and will not listen to you.

Some tried and proven tactics you can use to make your Boxers listen to you more.

* When playing with your Boxer puppy, play at his level.

If play is encouraged at ground level, this builds your role as the dominant or top dog when you are standing and training your puppy. If the puppy is allowed to jump up and initiate play, then this can lead to unwanted jumping up as the Boxer gets older.

* From the very beginning, make sure your Boxers know you are the master.

However, it suffice to teach your Boxer to obey simple commands of raising a paw in a handshake, giving a hand lick for a kiss or doing a roll over to show his submission to you. Most Boxers love performing these simple tricks (obedience commands) for you.

There is no need for extreme measures to prove you are the boss. Obedience training should be fun and rewarding for you and your Boxer.

* Once it is established you are the boss, one owner declared: “Life with your Boxer will be just kidney bean dancin’ all the way!” Another reported: “My Boxer wanted to be class clown at obedience class until I got serious and showed him I was the boss.”

* The Boxer must always eat after you do.

This is the easiest way to show to your Boxer who is the boss. But this is easier said than done when there are many people in the family and not all would respect the rule.

* Very active young Boxers have short attention span.

It is best to have many short 5 to 10-minute lessons than a single, long 30-minute lesson. Keep the training session short and sweet. Lengthy session easily becomes dull, boring and tedious for both you and the Boxer.

* Start the training at quiet places familiar to your Boxer with very few things and people around to distract him.

Gradually move the training to places with more and more distractions so he will learn to obey your commands despite the distractions.

* Speak to your Boxer strongly but not in an angry voice.

Be kind but be firm while training and never give in to what they want. It seems cruel but in the long run you will have a much better relationship with you boxer.

* Celebrate after every training session for a good job done.

Have a big play by running and throwing his favorite toys. If you give them a lot of playtime with yourself they'd listen to you more.

* Use only one word like "sit," "down," "drop" and "stay" when teaching Boxers commands. For example, when your Boxer gets on the lounge with you, say "sit - down" and he should sit then lay down on your lap.

* To keep a Boxer from charging the front door, put up a door/gate that he can't see through or hop over.

Have him wait till people enter and come up the stairs then he gets a treat. This particular owner noticed that even when the gate is left open the Boxers don't usually go by unless they see a squirrel or cat!

* Finally, no matter how well trained you think your Boxer is, he has an attention span of seconds!

Don't let him run away because he'll just keep going and going. Always keep him leashed outdoors if not in a fenced area. He can run faster than you and you will not catch him if he runs for the road!

Boxers and Obedience Class

Discipline is one of the most important aspects of owning a Boxer.

Puppy school is not an option, it is a necessity to train owners, including children in the family, how to manage the Boxer and nurture it into becoming a well-adjusted member of the family.

Puppy school is for the Boxers to help develop good habits right from the start. Wait until your Boxer is at least 6 months old before putting him through any serious work.

Trainers with extensive experience and knowledge can deal with just about any behavior problems your pup might come up with.

Choose a trainer who is purposeful and patient. The well-trained Boxer is a sight to behold going through his paces in the class. Their innate intelligence makes many Boxers great successes in the obedience ring.

Of more importance is for you as owner to continue to practice the obedience lessons with your Boxers.

They will best remember the lessons when you incorporate them into your everyday routines with your dog.

For example you can tell your pup to “heel” while he follows you around the house, and to “sit” and “stay” while you prepare his dinner. As your wake up greeting in the morning he can do a “roll over”. Tell him to “go find the ball” while you get dressed and “go get the leash” before you go for walks together.

Of Leash, Harness and Crate

This is worth repeating. Your Boxer should not be allowed to run loose outdoors. He has short attention span and runs faster than you.

Though extremely tolerant of children by nature, a Boxer's effusive greeting could scare a small child. He could run into not so pleasant encounters with other dogs from the neighborhood or worse mishaps like road accident and poisoned stuff.

So exercise or play with your Boxer in a fenced area or on a leash.

If yours like to pull or stray while going on walks, opt for a body harness. The chain-harness combo looks good as well as trains the Boxer to walk without pulling or straying.

A harness is also the answer to the Boxer slipping out of the collar. And a properly protected screen door is the answer to one that is prone to unexpected house exit.

At home, a crate for your Boxer puppy can be his safe heaven, a place where he retreats to for rest.

It is not a prison. Place it in a warm corner, away from the draft, cold or summer heat, as Boxers are sensitive to extremes in temperature. Leave the crate door open and your puppy will usually enter when he wants to rest.

The crate is particularly useful when you are going out, leaving him alone for a while. Then you don't have to worry so much about your Boxer chewing up the furniture or electrical cords in the house. The crate is also an excellent housetraining aid, as the puppy doesn't like to soil his crate.

Potty-Training Your Boxer Puppy

Make sure you feed your dog at regular times everyday as this makes bathroom breaks regular as well. Feed your puppy 2-3 times a day.

As soon as he is finished eating, take him to a grassy "potty area". Speak the words "go potty" or "go in the grass" before and while he is eliminating. Be sure to praise him when he is done.

What you are doing is building word associations with the dog that will allow you to encourage his potty activity on command.

This comes in handy when you and your Boxer are at unusual locations and at pit stops during long haul travel. It also saves you from cleaning unwanted fecal material off the carpet at home.

It is a good idea to train your puppy to use a place where you can easily clean up and dispose of the droppings into the sewer. This is because worms that infect dogs and make them sick get spread around through the eggs or larvae found in the feces. Some, like the roundworm, can also infect children.

Reprimanding the Boxer

Talk to Boxers like you would to children when they do something wrong.

Tell them “no” and show them immediately what the correct behavior should be and reward them for doing it right. After a few times they'll know how to do it right.

For example, tell him “NO” when you catch him chewing the shoes. Then immediately give him his own toys to chew and cheer him on to chew on the toys. Praise him for doing so.

Use sparingly those reprimanding words like “No,” “Stop that,” “get off” and “bad dog!” Instead use more praises to reward good behavior in your Boxers and only then the reprimands will take on stronger meaning.

A correct reprimand is short, sharp and immediate.

Only reprimand when you catch your Boxer doing something wrong, and punish only with your voice.

Hitting, kicking, slapping or spanking your Boxer would create more problems and usually makes existing problems worse. You may just end up with a barking and chewing dog, one that is leery, hand-shy, fearful or aggressive.

If you really have to spank one with your hand, just slap him across the behind.

Repetition and Rewarding Your Boxer

Repetitions in doing the right things and rewarding your Boxer every single time are crucial in training.

The more often he is rewarded, the better and quicker he will learn. Create situations where your Boxer can get plenty of practice at doing the right things.

Be sure to praise when he does a good job.

This is simple but not always easy to do. Bad behaviors like biting, constant yelping and barking and tearing the house apart get our immediate notice. What we easily forget to acknowledge are the good parts – when the Boxer is lying down quietly, chewing on his own toys, leaving the carpet unsoiled.

Praise and reward are the most important part of maintaining your Boxer's good behavior and preventing him from getting into trouble.

Boxer's Toys, Games and Treats

Foods, treats or praise will bring out the best responses from your Boxers during training.

Treats can come in the form of their favorite food, toy or something the Boxer really loves to do.

Whenever practicing any obedience training and upon finishing, one owner and his Boxer will have a big play time by running and throwing his favorite toys. Other Boxers prefer to go for rides, enjoying the wind in their faces, or even playing football!

Some Boxers will take the commands in training with great joy knowing that they will get something to eat!

Some favorites are ice cream, cheese, ham and chicken. One Boxer fancies a handful of ice cubes to crunch on though he's not thirsty.

The all time dog favorites of fetching and hide and seek games can be made more treasured using your Boxer's favorite ball or toy, and giving him plenty of stroking in between throws.

Grooming the Boxer

Boxers are basically low-maintenance dogs that tend to keep themselves clean.

You need only to bathe and/or currycomb it occasionally and tidy up his short, hard coat with a soft brush as the coat does shed. To make a Boxer coat gleams after a bath, rub coat down with chamois cloth. It works and their coat stays so shiny!

Their nails require regular trimming or could also get naturally worn down by hard surface. Some Boxers are very sensitive about their paws and don't let you touch them.

Have your veterinarian remove tartar from your Boxer's teeth periodically, especially as it grows older. You can also learn to do this yourself.

Feeding Your Boxer

Giving your Boxer a raw, natural diet (as opposed to commercially prepared one) makes the feeding task flexible and you get to control the quality of the food your Boxer is getting.

The Biologically Appropriate Raw Food or “BARF” diet is easy to prepare. You are basically feeding him “bones and raw food”, adding in or taking out supplement as needed.

It is better to first understand the principles behind this feeding method. And there are excellent reference books available on this subject matter.

Basically, the BARF diet is made up of raw meat and raw meaty bones, raw processed vegetables plus dairy products, eggs, fish, offal, muscle meats, fruit and maybe some supplements. It is a very balanced diet and you get to control the ingredients as well as the quality. Some people leave out dairy products or grains.

On the other hand, an owner suggests that you keep a Boxer healthy with occasional yogurt treats.

Boxers tend to have lots of food allergies. One owner put an ailing and lethargic Boxer on a strictly venison diet and the dog finally thrived, gained weight and became very active.

There is also a recent concern about eating a large amount of grapes or raisins, since they can be toxic to dogs, leading to acute kidney failure.

The reports concerning this grape/raisin poisoning have only just surfaced and the information is still sketchy at best. The Animal Poison Control Center in the US is investigating this new medical development.

Some questions remaining to be answered are:

- How much grapes or raisins eaten could become toxic to your dog?
- What is the toxic substance?
- How does it affect the kidney?

To be safe, have your veterinarian check your Boxer if he has eaten a large amount of grapes or raisins because a healthy kidney is key to its survival.

How to Keep Your Boxer Healthy

Feed him a balanced diet.

Additional tips from owners include:

- Give an occasional yogurt treat
- Ask your vet about giving Boxers calcium tablets as they could have some problems later on in life!
- Keep him comfortable so his immune system can remain strong.
- Boxers are shorthaired and sensitive to extreme elements of the weather and thus must be kept a housedog. His shortened muzzle also makes hot and humid weather uncomfortable for him.
- Give Boxers lots of exercise and regularly.
- Remember that he is a big and strong breed and requires physical outlets for his boundless energy and high play/prey drive.
- Walk them three times a day or have play sessions. Provide plenty of space for them to bounce around. You want to keep their spirit up and not break it or they won't be the dogs you fall in love with in the first place. Healthy and happy Boxers are a joy to live with.
- Make a breeder your friend.
- Keep in touch with the breeder who sold you the Boxer. The breeder can advise you about care and health matters that are unique to the breed. Any Boxer breeder, for that matter, can be an invaluable ally to you throughout your Boxer's life.
- Guard your Boxer from fleas.

- Your Boxer has fleas if you find black specks in the fur or fleabite marks on the skin. A tip given by an owner is to give your Boxer garlic daily to prevent fleas.
- Boxers catch fleas from other animals. It is an every day problem that, at some time or another, you can expect to encounter in your Boxer.
- The fleas only go to the Boxer to feed on its blood.
- Fleas mostly live and multiply in your home. The comfortable living - central heating, double-glazing and, best of all, the fitted carpet – we create for ourselves and our Boxers also work best for the fleas.
- De-worm your puppy every month and your adult Boxer, every six months.

Worms

Worms is another everyday problem in Boxers but the puppy is more likely to get sick from worms than the grown up Boxer.

The sick one would lose weight and become weak, suffer from upset stomach, poor growth, listlessness or even lung trouble.

They may impede your puppy's growth and cause him to have a potbelly or be thin and have a shoddy-looking coat.

Your grown Boxer may not be showing any sign of worms but he could spread them more than the sick puppy, through large amount of larvae or eggs passed out in the feces.

If your Boxer has tapeworms, he has fleas too because part of the tapeworm life cycle occurs in flea as the host. As such, treatments against flea and tapeworm are normally prescribed together.

Some, like the roundworm, that infect dogs can also get passed on to children.

In more serious cases, your dog will catch cough, pneumonia and develop lung problems.

There are different types of worms that infect dogs such as tapeworm, roundworm, ringworm and heartworm. De-worm your Boxer puppy every month and your grown Boxer, every 6 months.

Puppies get sick from worms, more so than dogs.

But your infected grown Boxers help spread the worms more through their droppings that would contain large number of larvae and/or eggs.

Released into the surrounding, these larvae and eggs could infect other animals and even children.

The tapeworms have a flat, segmented body.

You see them as single segments or chains that resemble segments of rice in the droppings of infected canine.

Part of the tapeworm's life cycle occurs in the flea as the host. Therefore, if your Boxer has tapeworms, it has fleas too and the treatments for both are usually prescribed together by the vet.

The roundworms (toxocara) live and produce hundreds of eggs in the intestine.

They cause digestive upset in puppies, poor growth, and thin or out-of-conditioned coat.

The infected puppies may become listless, have a potbelly or tucked in appearance.

Once the roundworms migrated from the gut to the lungs, your Boxer can suffer lung damage, cough and pneumonia.

The roundworm eggs in the dog droppings get passed out and about.

These are very hardy eggs, resistant to heat and cold, and can survive up to 7 years in the soil. The eggs can pass on to children through ingestion and cause them to fall sick as well.

As precautions, you can toilet train your Boxer puppy to use a place where you can easily clean up and dispose of the droppings into the sewer. Have your children wash their hands every time after they handle the puppies and discourage your puppies from licking people hands or faces.

Taking Care of Your Sick Boxer

Boxers, unfortunately, are prone to several potential health problems like:

- skin allergy
- food allergy
- cancer
- hip dysphasia
- bloat
- heart ailments
- hypothyroidism
- fleas
- worms

Knowing what they are will help you to better monitor your pet's health and to gather the pertinent information, in case of an illness, that would assist your veterinarian to administer the correct diagnosis and treatment. Below are some common afflictions of Boxers.

Alapechia (Lost of hair on the trunk)

Seems to be more common in male Boxers.

One, which died at the age of 12 years and 4 months, was diagnosed with seasonal alopecia. "He used to go bald once a year but the hair always grew back on," said its owner.

Bloat

Gastric torsion or GDV or bloat in your Boxer can be life threatening so bring him to the veterinarian immediately.

The stomach gets filled with air and twisting and this can happen suddenly. The symptoms include restlessness, drooling and nausea and the stomach is bloated (distended abdomen). Your Boxer may vomit and continue to retch but nothing would come out.

Cancerous and benign tumors

Boxers are highly prone to cancer.

So any time you see a bump on your Boxer, you should check it out. About 20 out of 100 cases are cancerous.

Watch out for both external and internal lumps, eye ulcers or cherry eye as they called it, as well as dermodicosis or skin sores.

Mast cell tumors are malignant and they do not occur very often but can form either in the skin or within the body.

The related disorders reported along such tumors are round raised masses in the skin of your Boxer, lack of appetite, vomiting and abdominal pain. Check for tarry stools due to bleeding in the upper intestinal tract.

Boxers of any age can develop mast cell tumor but older ones, above 8 years, are more prone to it.

Never take tumors in your Boxers lightly, even a small one! The veterinarian would usually have them removed immediately because of their high susceptibility to cancer.

One owner noticed her Boxer had a bump the size of a mosquito bite that did not go away even after 10 days. The vet diagnosed it a malignant tumor and removed it the very next day. The owner felt so relieved that the tumor was removed before the cancer had a chance to spread.

Another owner found both his Boxer girls had lumps and had it checked out immediately. The vet removed the lumps due to their breed and the Boxers were all fine now!

Yet another owner was not so lucky.

“I have had the pleasure of raising two great Boxers but both passed away much too young of cancer. The last one, Nick, died one week after being diagnosed with anal cancer. It spread rapidly and he was only 7 years old!”

Cryptorchidism is peculiar to male dogs and a condition present at birth.

The testicle/s, which developed in the abdomen, fail to descend into the scrotum. The usually underdeveloped and non-functional testicle/s should be removed, as it could turn cancerous later in life.

If the condition remains after the puppy is more than 2 months old, then the chances are it will remain so permanently.

Eye ulcers, if caught early, are easy to treat. Late treatment can be expensive for you as well as painful for your Boxer.

Dermodicosis or non-contagious mange first appears as numerous patches anywhere on the Boxer's skin. The hair

will fall off, leaving bald patches in large areas, and the bald skin starts to break down, turning into crusty sores.

Atopy is itchy (pruritic) skin disease caused by allergy to something the Boxer breathes in or touch.

It cannot be cured and is the number two common allergic skin condition in dogs, after flea allergy dermatitis. Having fleas would make it worse for your Boxer.

A Boxer suffering from atopy would have itchiness particularly on the hands and feet.

He'd be chewing his paws, scratching his ears, shaking its head, scratching the muzzle or rubbing it on the ground. These same symptoms can also be brought about by food allergy.

Acne in young dogs shows as red bumps (papules) and blackheads (comedones) on the chin and lips.

Shorthaired dogs like Boxers are more likely to get them. And like in human, they start getting acne around puberty, but the problem would usually go away after one year old or so.

However, you may have to help with some topical gel medication similar to the one used by teenagers. Such lesions may become infected and develop pus, which becomes itchy for your Boxer and he starts rubbing his face in the carpet or against furniture.

Urinary incontinence in dogs can be due to a neurological lesion – something not normal with the parts of the nervous system that deal with urine regulation.

A Boxer with incontinence will dribble urine and if a neurologic lesion is the cause, then this has to be removed.

There are also other reasons not related to the nervous system like congenital defect and bacterial urinary tract infection, also known as bacterial cystitis or bladder stone.

If your Boxer leaves wet spots where he has slept and he has skin irritation from contact with the urine, then he may have incontinence.

However, wet spots around the house alone may simply mean that he drinks a lot more and needs to relieve himself often but you are not allowing him outside frequently enough. Straining while urinating and blood in the urine are two signs of bladder stone.

Deafness

Boxer is among the more than 35 breeds of dogs on record to have hereditary sensorineural deafness.

The condition cannot be reversed with medications, surgery or hearing aids. Dogs also could become deaf from old age, toxicosis or infection.

How do you tell if your Boxer is deaf?

He doesn't respond to spoken commands and only responds to you when he sees you.

He keeps shaking his head and pawing his ears or turns in the wrong direction when you call him.

He sleeps more than normal and would not wake up till you physically touch him.

But not to worry, you can still have a wonderful companion in your deaf Boxer through sign language.

Dogs have been known to learn as many as 65 command words in sign language. These include signs for, among others, “stop”, “potty”, “drop it”, “stay”, “lay down”, “sit”, “come” and “cookie”.

As extra measures, you want to keep the deaf Boxer in a safe environment as he cannot hear approaching dangers like an approaching car. So keep him on a leash and close to you when in traffic or out for walks.

On his nametag, add the word “deaf” so he will not be misunderstood if he ever gets lost. Some suggest putting a bell as well so you know where to find him if he gets lost.

And finally, if your Boxer tested positive for inherited deafness in one or both ears, do not breed him or her.

Epilepsy/seizure disorder

When your Boxer is between 2 to 5 years old, he may develop seizure disorder.

When he has an epilepsy attack, he'd be unconscious and like he is not breathing but he is. He is not suffering.

The information that would be important to your veterinarian regarding such episodes includes:

- > Duration of the attack
- > The type of muscular activity your Boxer exhibits during seizure
- > Any abnormal behavior during the attack
- > Frequency of the seizure

What you do in such instances is not panic and time the attack by actually looking at a watch or clock.

It may only take place for 30 seconds but may seem forever to you. You need a veterinarian if it lasts more than 5 minutes.

Emergency treatment is definitely called for if your Boxer goes into seizure for 10 minutes or longer, twice in the span of 24 hours, or if he has a second attack before he could completely recover from the first seizure attack.

Remain by your Boxer's side; be there when he comes out of the seizure to calm him. Stroke and comfort him.

To keep your Boxer from hurting himself during the seizure, move away furniture from the immediate area and protect him from water, the stairs and any sharp objects. If you can, place a pillow under his head to protect him from head trauma.

Unlike seizure attacks in human, animals do not swallow their tongue. So you don't have to put your hand or spoon or any other object into your Boxer's mouth when he has an attack. You might get bitten.

Also, keep children and other pets away from your sick Boxer.

Coming out of the seizure, your Boxer will be groggy, confused and feel like he has done something wrong. He may make unusual sounds and stumble around.

Do not allow him on the stairs until he has fully recovered. In the mean time, sooth him by talking to him softly, offer him some water, stroke and comfort him.

And if he doesn't recover fully after 30 minutes, consult your veterinarian or any emergency vet facility.

Flea-infected Boxers

Flea-infected Boxers can develop skin diseases especially those allergic to fleas.

Black specs in the fur and bite marks on the skin tell if your Boxer has them. To check further, spread some newspapers and place your Boxer on top. Brush him and look for the black specs falling off.

Fleas live up to 6 weeks, feeding on blood and during that time would have laid hundreds of eggs that mostly land on your Boxer's bedding, carpets and other favorable nests around your home.

The eggs hatch into larvae that seek nice, dark places while feeding on flea's droppings, dust, human shed skin, dandruff and other such tasty morsels.

The larvae turn into hardy pupae that could survive for months before changing into adult fleas.

Fleas are host to tapeworms. Both problems are likely to occur together in your Boxer and, therefore, the treatments are also usually given together by the vet.

A bit of garlic a day may keep the fleas away from your Boxer.

Heart ailments

-Bradycardia or slow heart rate may be a symptom of thyroid disorder in Boxers.

-Dilated cardiomyopathy constitutes a serious, emergency case.

Your dog may collapse from it or the back legs have sudden pain and paralysis.

It is a serious heart condition whereby the heart muscle is enlarged and thin walled. Your Boxer will experience shortness of breath, coughing and can't take to exercise.

Another serious heart condition is called **cardiac conduction disease** that is affecting Boxer's longevity. It was previously known as Boxer cardiomyopathy but the new term is used to differentiate it from dilative cardiomyopathy.

Cardiac conduction is difficult to deal with due to 3 factors.

-One is many Boxers will not show any symptom (asymptotic) but will just drop dead suddenly from it.

-The Boxers develop this disease later in life, often after they have been bred.

-There was no good screening method for it until the one recently developed by Ohio State University researchers, called the 24-hour Holter monitor test.

However, there is still no assurance that Boxers “cleared” now from cardiac conduction disease by the Holter test will remain so in the future.

Many breeders and Boxer experts are now working to refine the test procedures, expand the database and come up with a guideline to select only, for breeding purposes, those Boxers with high probability of being free of the disease.

There are also concerns elimination of too many dogs from the gene pool would be bad for the breed diversity and could cause more problems in the future. Some opinions hold that extensive culling should only get done after more studies on genetic diversity in Boxers.

Hip dysplasia

This is a bone disorder whereby there is an improper fit of the large femur bone with the hip socket, causing lots of pain and lameness.

It occurs more in male than in the female of primarily large breed dogs like Boxer.

Hip dysplasia is genetic and can be passed on. If you think your Boxer may have hip problem, take him for x-ray when he is 24 months old for a proper diagnosis. And then, if he is tested positive, do not breed him or her.

It develops in puppies and can show up as early as when the Boxer is four months old. Or it could show up much later when he is an old dog, and the hip weakens and becomes arthritic.

Hyperadrenocorticism

When the adrenal gland is hyperactive and starts producing too much cortisol into the blood, your Boxer may become sick.

He will then exhibit what is known as the Cushing's syndrome – he drinks more water (polydipsia), urinates more (polyuria) and has bigger appetite (polyphagia).

The stomach or abdomen may become distended or potbelly and he starts losing hair on the trunk.

Other symptoms of Cushing's syndrome are chronic skin infection, chronic urinary tract infection, excessive panting, lethargy, muscle weakness, and calcium deposits in the skin (calcinosis cutis).

Hypothyroidism

This disease concerns the thyroid gland that does not produce enough thyroid hormone, which can cause illness in the Boxer.

He becomes lethargic, sleeps a lot more, not interested to play, tires easily and experiences depression or mental dullness.

He may gain weight and become obese without having to eat more than the usual.

There are so many symptoms that vary and are non-specific and they all develop slowly. This is because not enough thyroid hormone produced affects the metabolic function of many organ systems.

Other signs of thyroid disorder are slow heart rate (bradycardia), infertility, constipation, diarrhea and your Boxer cannot stand cold, always seeking a warm place to lie down.

It may also result in chronic skin disorders like dry skin and excessive hair loss, as well as other neurological and hormonal abnormalities.

A single symptom may not point to thyroid deficiency but a combination of them should make your veterinarian more suspicious of it.

Intervertebral disk disease

The disease causes back pain and makes your Boxer clumsy and walk like a drunkard. He might not want to climb stairs or play and would yelp when he is handled, petted or lifted.

The disease affects his spinal disks and could end in paralysis.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

Boxers having IBS aren't gaining weight, seem lethargic and have pale color mucus membrane in the mouth (oral mucosa) and eyes (eye scleras).

Monitor their stool for frank or occult blood and start with a blood test to check for hematocrit (abdominal bleeding), which could save their life. This condition can be caused by food allergy.

One male Boxer diagnosed with IBS of the small intestine was failing to thrive and began to have syncopal episodes (fainting spells).

The owner put him on a strictly venison diet and he finally thrived, gained weight and is very active. The owner said many butcher shops sell venison and it is very reasonably priced.

Kidney problem

Preventing kidney damage is key to your Boxer's survival.

If you suspect your Boxer may have kidney trouble, take him to the veterinarian for aggressive treatment.

Remember the concern over too much grapes or raisins is toxic for dogs and could ruin their kidneys?

Aggressive treatment in such poisoning cases mean, if your Boxer had just overindulged in the grapes/raisins, the doctor will induce vomiting immediately and prescribe some activated charcoal pills.

There will be repeated blood tests to determine the status of kidney function plus hospitalization and intravenous fluid therapy if necessary.

The induced vomiting is to remove as much grapes or raisins as possible while the activated charcoal is to help prevent absorption of the toxic substance.

Two days of intravenous fluid therapy is often recommended to help prevent damage to the kidneys.

Blood test is usually repeated after 48 hours and 5 to 7 days to ensure the kidneys are functioning within the normal range.

Where kidney damage has occurred, the intravenous fluid therapy shall continue until blood tests indicate the kidneys have returned to normal function again.

Progressive axonopathy

This is a debilitating disease of the nervous system, which used to be common among Boxers but not anymore because of the due diligence practiced by breeders.

Medical Terms for Boxer's Health You Should Know:

Health Terms

Descriptions:

Alapechia

Hair loss of the trunk

Aortic stenosis

Heart ailment

Atopy

Itchy skin disease

Axonopathy

Disease of the nervous system

Bacterial systitis

Bladder stones

Bradycardia

Slow heart rate

Boxer cardiomyopathy	Cardiac conduction
Calcinosis cutis	Calcium deposits in the skin
Cardiac conduction	Heart ailment pertaining to irregular heart beat
Cardiomyopathy	Heart ailment
Cherry eye	Eye ulcer
Comedones	Blackheads/acne
Cryptorchidism	Undescended testicle
Cushing's syndrome	Adrenal gland disorder
Demodicosis	Non-contagious mange

Dilative
cardiomyopathy

Enlarged and thin-walled heart muscle

Eye sclera

Mucus membrane in the eyes

Gastric torsion/GDV

Bloat

Hematocrit

Abdominal bleeding

Hip dysplasia

Genetic disorder of the hip bones

Hyperadrenocorticism

Overactive adrenal gland

Hypothyroidism

Disorder of the thyroid gland

IBS

Irritable bowel syndrome

Incontinence

Poor control of urination

Intervertebral disk disease	Spinal cord disease
Mast cell tumor	Malignant tumor
Oral mucoso	Mucus membrane in the mouth
Papules	Red bumps/acne
Polydipsia	Increased water consumption
Polyphagia	Increased appetite
Polyuria	Increase urination
Syncopam episode	Fainting spell

Conclusion

In conclusion, spotting any ailment in your Boxer before the condition becomes serious, and supported by routine

checkups by the veterinarian, will help ensure you have a happy and healthy Boxer that loves and is loyal to you.

In return, during your life journey together with your Boxer, you also become a happier, healthy and loving person.

Some owners are so intrigued by this kind of shared life and are compelled to pen a story about it, so others can also enjoy and learn from the experience.

The author of *Bark If You Love Me*, Louise Bernikow of New York, is one such Boxer owner.

You too can be one in the making!

Bernikow was a single career woman, out jogging, when she came across a stray Boxer in the back of a police car. It was brown, starving and with a gimpy leg.

Louise had never owned a pet in her life and didn't even like animals that much.

In her own words: "But I found something familiar in this dog's eyes. He didn't seem alien, but more like a lost relative. I guess you could say we just clicked...Libro really opened up my world, introducing me to dog parks, dog owners, and about 300 new people, right around my neighborhood, who I'd never known."

One day soon you too could be proudly sharing your Boxer stories with others. And this book, if you apply the many tips given inside, will help you create many great moments with your Boxer that make for better stories for you to tell others.

In conclusion...

I hope you have gained new tips to make your boxer happier, healthier and more obedient now.