

"CARING FOR YOUR SUSSEX SPANIEL"

(Please feel free to SHARE)

REMINDER "CHECK EARS"... What a perfect time to check your Sussex BJs (Brown Job) ears. Lift the flap and stick your nose in there, a good sniff and if it is "sweet" it is likely good, if it is "cheesy" it needs a clean and if it is really "pungent" then probably a trip to the vet for a check-up would be a good idea. What could cost you only tens of pounds now could save you thousands in the future as many Sussex owners know only too well?

Also have a good look to see if they are clear of objects like "grass seeds" cleavers, and thistles as they can work their way into the ear canal and cause big trouble.

BJs are very prone to large mats (round in shape) of dead hair at the bottom of the ear opening just towards the back. You can usually feel it as a lump. These are a perfect harbour for bugs and nasties, so I recommend you very gently comb it out or use a "Coat King". DO NOT USE SCISSORS unless you really know what you are doing as they have a small flap of skin where the ball forms as well as the thin skin on the edges of the ear flaps, thus it is very easy to cut or even cut off thus causing a major bleed and a trip to the vet.

Old Sussex I find, more so with boys can appear very deaf, but sometimes it is down to the thick growth of hair inside their ears. A good groomer will clear this out for you, thus allowing air to circulate better and you can sometimes be surprised at the improvement in their hearing, bearing in mind of course that most Sussex have a very well developed trait of selective hearing. (Warning) If you show your Sussex make sure the hair is clipped out well before the next show is due as it can make them stop, shake their heads and scratch for a week due to the short hair itching.

Another very common issue is rotten food in the hair at the bottom of the outer ear flap. You may not realise it is there, but this can cause the skin to rot, crack, become very smelly and infect in bad cases. I recommend using a "Dog Snood" to keep the ears out of the food when they eat saving you a lot of washing. (You can search them on the Internet, if not they are easy to make. My mum had Afghans and used "Pop socks" with the toes cut off). In the summer they sweat profusely through their ears as this is a cooling mechanism, also they pant a lot and the saliva also transfers itself to the base of the ears, thus when it dries it becomes very powdery, stiff and smelly. Simply get a bowl of warm soapy water, drop their ear into it, swish it about, and then rinse with clean water.

DO NOT let your BJ dictate to you if they want their ears cleaned or not, if they won't let you near them, use a muzzle.

I always start with a puppy gently combing the ears and then looking into it. They will enjoy their ears brushed as long as you don't tug and hurt them when you get a mat. Usually they will go nuts and dive and roll all over the place when you first put the cleaner in, so give them a treat and they will soon get used to it, but rest assured if they stop you checking, they will certainly get ear problems.

I use Virbac Epi-Otic ear cleaner as it is alcohol free and Neutral PH (I have confirmed this with the manufacturers) and good for flushing. Beware of products containing astringents like boric acid and alcohol as they can have an allergic reaction (steer clear of secret potions that don't specify the ingredients), and I would only recommend stronger astringent cleaners if agreed by your vet.

When you put liquid ear cleaner into your BJs ears make sure it is up to body or room temperature otherwise it can give your dog a cold shock and they will soon be put off. Also hold their nose downwards towards their chest as it opens up the ear canals and gently massage the base of their ears for about 20 secs and you will hear the cleaner making a squelching sound. They will then shake their head frantically for a bit and this will throw the muck you have just flushed out of the ear. Then wipe the inside of the ear to remove the wet muck. Always wash/wipe the inside ear flap afterwards to remove the gunk avoiding unnecessary bugs.

It is always good to flush ears out after they have been in rivers or the sea, as these waters are full of bacteria and inside a BJs ear is the warm perfect environment for bacteria to develop.

TEETH & CHOPS

Sussex Spaniels are prime candidates for stinky teeth and smelly chops, especially the boys as they don't tend to be as enthusiastic at chewing bones etc.... as girls. BE AWARE that if your Sussex has extremely bad breath no matter what age they could have an infected tooth that will often lead to an infected gum

being caused by a breakage or foreign body sliding between the tooth and the gum. If this occurs visit the vet at the earliest opportunity as Sussex are extremely stoic and rarely show pain.

Sussex are often prone to excessive production of saliva (snodge). This is natural for spaniel breeds but if your Sussex doesn't chew bones etc., can lead to an extremely thick coating of stinky green calcium.

Experienced owners may scrape this off in various ways and there are a lot of products on the market to clean teeth. We have had to have several of our Sussex go to the vet over the years for a proper clean, that also enables them to remove any bad teeth at the same time. It involves a general anaesthetic and can be a bit pricy but, your Sussex will feel considerably better, also bearing in mind that bad teeth can significantly reduce the life of your Sussex, we consider it a good investment.

So encourage them to regularly chew Nylabones, fresh Beef marrowbones, Deer antlers, but DO NOT give them cooked bones, leather products like coloured treat sticks, pigs ears, hide bones, etc., as they are usually loaded with extremely harmful chemicals in their production process. When any chews or bones are worn down to about 3 inches (8cm) discard and replace them as they can become a danger if swallowed.

Also make sure that if they are left in the garden you pick them up and wash them in boiling water to kill any slug slime containing eggs thus preventing lungworm.

Lastly Sussex Spaniels like any dogs can suffer wheat allergies, just be aware that most dog treats and tooth cleaning chews will contain wheat and grains.

One other cause for smelly chops is Lip Fold Pyoderma. Sussex have a series of deep folds under their chins and old food, sweat and saliva can build up in these creases and get very irritating leading to infections. A good sign of a problem is when your Sussex scratches under their chin regularly. To reduce and eliminate this, regularly wash under their chins about once per week with a solution of Hibiscrub and warm water. Get a flannel, either boil it or dampen it and put into the microwave on high for 6 mins to sterilise it. Then wash your Sussex under the mouth getting into all the folds thus removing any gunge and reducing the smell. If it is really bad, repeat daily until it becomes clean and odourless. Sometimes they can get it inside the mouth as sores and possible bleeding. If this is the case a trip to the vet is advised.

HOTSPOTS

Another common issue with Sussex Spaniels are what we call "Hotspots" otherwise known 'wet eczema', 'acute moist dermatitis' or 'pyotraumatic dermatitis'. They are usually caused by an insect bite or snag on a thorn, barbed wire or something that turns into a nasty looking raw patch of skin that is often slimy and looks quite worrying. Often these occur on the face, neck, shoulders or base of the tail. They can be also be triggered by flea bites so if you see one at the base of the tail or on the neck brush the hair back and look at the skin to see if there are any small black dots (flea faeces). If you pick one of these off and put it on a damp cloth if it turns red it will be blood which is contained in the flea faeces. You then need to treat for fleas. Don't assume you will always see hotspots. If your Sussex runs around the room in panic and pancakes on the floor, gnawing, trying to scratch their sides, frantic licking of the feet, there is a good chance they have a hotspot inside the groin or inner leg. Bathing with ordinary salt water 3 times a day will help. If this occurs underneath, it can be very difficult to get your Sussex to allow you to treat this as they generally don't like being turned over especially the boy's so probably you are better off visiting the vet for some anti-biotics. Sometimes 'Hotspots' occur at certain times of the year. It is always a good idea to record in a diary when they occur in case there is some sort of consistency and you may be able to pin down the cause and prevent it. Even pollens can cause hotspots and rashes. But don't worry they are not as bad as they look but do need immediate attention to prevent stress in your BJ. Initially bath it in warm salty water or diluted Hibiscrub and it may dry up on its own accord after a couple of days. If you take your dog to the vet they will often prescribe some sort of anti-biotic that invariably is too weak and takes ages to take effect. There are many home recipes for hotspots and we used to use a very strong anti-biotic used for horses call Ubro Yellow Milking Cow Intermammary Suspension which comes in a syringe that you squirt directly onto the wound and usually gets control in 2 to 5 days. By all means mention this to your vet and he may give you something similarly effective. This will turn the wound into a hard scab. We have also used a treatment recommended by another breeder called Clorexyderm which effectively forms a skin over the open wound and prevents bugs getting in as well as promoting healing. At some

stage you may finish up with a hard scab which will be bald. If you apply Aloe Vera gel once or twice a day, it soothes the itchiness and makes the hair grow back quicker.

One other problem with Hotspots is trying to stop your Sussex scratching them. In many cases Hotspots appear on the top or sides of shoulders or neck. One way to prevent scratching is to use a plain cheap dog coat that comes down as low as possible and has a strap to go underneath and around the front. The higher the collar the better as this also can dissuade them from scratching their ears and chin. "Cool Coats" can also work, as long as you keep them dry in cold weather as if it is cold and you put a wetted cool coat on your Sussex could become too cold and this could lead to Pneumonia.

BARKING SUSSEX

Sussex can be quite vocal at times and emit a wonderfully musical repertoire of howls intermingled with barks, especially when you attempt to leave them alone. They are generally very territorial so they will often bark in the car or at home as this is their territory. But they are renowned for adopting anywhere as their territory as they see fit, even when you go on holiday your caravanning/camping plot will probably become theirs.

So how do you stop this? The first mistake you will probably make is shouting at them. In our experience this usually makes matters worse as they think you are endorsing their bad behaviour.

In the car or even at home one of the best deterrents we find is a squirt bottle of clean water. Just spray them in the face (try to avoid their eyes) with a quick squirt and after a while you will only need to point it at them and they will stop. Also a plastic bottle full of stones can be effective, as you shake it hard at them and they often dislike it.

You may find that when they get older they bark more, this can be down to deafness or even senility and often they simply want more attention.

Never, never, ever strike or hit your Sussex. If they go glassy eyed you are in for big trouble and they do not forget. If they become bad tempered just talk to them softly and wind them down (your own self-control is critical at this point as if they see you are stressed they will be the same. Do not do something you will definitely regret afterwards). It usually only takes about ten minutes to wind them down. If they fall out with another dog just keep them apart until the dynamic changes, don't try to repair the situation by instantly putting them together again.

I have experienced a few people that have physically punished their Sussex and noticed their dogs have been very aggressive to other dogs.

Never listen to anyone that say's "Oh just give them a good wack"...

PAPER

As funny as it is when you see your BJ marching around the house with a toilet roll, and they all seem to be total fanatics on paper, be very careful as we are convinced that paper from the Blue Paper towel rolls and toilet paper have caused serious hotspots from time to time with one of our boys, and on reflection the same with a previous boy whereby we were not aware at that time it could have been the cause.

Monty regularly ate tissue and toilet rolls, even though it was mounted 4 feet up the wall he would climb onto the bog seat and still pinch it, along with turning over the waste bins to rummage for similar. We noticed that he went quite dusty and dry skinned from time to time and started to get hotspots on his shoulders and rump. I made the connection with paper and removed any chance of him getting to it. Up to now he has not had one piece of paper for about a year and likewise not one hotspot.

FEET (commonly known as "Puds") :)

Many owners worry about the length of their BJs nails. The answer is "little and often" and start early with your puppy. There are many gadgets on the market and large nail files are the mildest.

Probably very few of us enjoy cutting nails and I expect most have nicked the quicks which of course leads to bleeding. If you do happen to cut the quick we always have Vetzyme Powder at hand which is not only good for any raw cuts and grazes, but also rapidly dries up a bleeding quick and disinfects at the same time. Of course you can get styptic pencils that work well and an old remedy that works if you have nothing else at hand is Baking Powder.

Check their paws and pads for cuts, grass seeds or other foreign bodies. BJ's often get mats between their toes which can harbour seeds and bugs which in turn can eventually cause the grass seed to enter the

skin and get infected, these mats can be very irritating as the hair pulls when they walk and often leads to incessant gnawing and again causing sores and infection...

Another common issue you sometimes find with BJ's is constant licking of their feet and this is often because their nails are too long, so check them out especially the "Dew" claws (the small hooky claw on the inside of the leg just above the foot) (Note: not all Sussex have Dew claws as they may have been removed at birth)

Dew claws can grow a complete circle and turn back into the leg causing intense pain and infection, so be vigilant with these.

Finally, make sure you regularly feel right up inside their front and rear armpits for mats as these are extremely uncomfortable to your BJ, mats cause the hair to pull and often you will find your boy will just pancake flat on the ground when you take him walking. Sussex pancaking is another common occurrence and usually because of mats in their armpits, their nails are too long or they have an enormous object hanging on them like a leaf. "Yes" a blade of grass or a leaf is enough for a boy BJ to pancake. So pull it off or even just a frisk underneath to make him think you have taken it off will suffice, and he will happily trot on until the next (real or imaginary) leaf attaches itself. :) Girls of course are far too tough to worry about such inconsequential objects.

Sometimes Sussex can get an abscess on or between the pads or toes. This can be caused by a sting, bramble thorn, or pretty much any sharp puncture. It usually starts by them licking and progresses to limping. It will look like a large lump often with a white centre. Initially bath it in a solution of warm water with Epsom Salts which will help draw out any foreign body or muck and sterilise the wound. It may burst and shed puss and blood. If so it may be raw with a small hole, but don't panic, bath it in the Epsom Salts solution about 4 times per day until it heals. If your Sussex looks in distress or you are really concerned then obviously a trip to the vet.

EATING GRASS & CLEANING TOYS LEFT OUTSIDE

Eating grass is quite normal and we find it more prevalent with bitches. Always try to deter your Sussex from eating grass by keeping it cut in the garden as it often carries snail and slug eggs which of course can cause lungworm. Make sure that you dowse in boiling water any toys, bones or chews that have been left outside especially overnight to kill any eggs they may have. Do not leave training toys that contain food treats outside as they are a magnet for slugs & bugs.

EYES

Sussex commonly have droopy lower eyelids, and is considered by many to be useful as it enable seeds and dirt to exit the eye easily rather than get trapped under the lid. Also it is very common for them to have quite watery eyes and jelly like eye bogies especially in the winter where they go from a hot room into a cold garden, so just wipe them with a soft tissue or cloth and this with usually suffice. There are a couple of other reasons Sussex can have watery eyes in my experience. One being Hay Fever which can be controlled with anti-histamine tablets like Piriton or cheaper equivalents. I suggest you consult your vet to confirm and they will generally say go ahead. A normal size Sussex would usually have up to 2*4mg tablets per day.

(These are also pretty good if your BJ gets stung by a wasp or bee. Boy dogs quite often get stung on the testicles by either bees or especially Red ants. A good sign that your Sussex has copped it, is when they charge around the place then pancake flat on the ground repeatedly)

The second and fairly common reason for watery eyes are narrow or blocked tear ducts. Usually tears drain through the nasal cavity but if these are restricted they spill down the cheeks. It can smell quite vinegary and pungent but usually a soft, slightly damp micro-cloth will clear away the gunk and make them more comfortable. Avoid old wives tales as the eyes are obviously very sensitive. In some cases gently massaging them from the eye to the nose can help clear the ducts. If they are that bad that you are worried, your vet can test them by dropping a dye into the eye and see if it drains through the nose. There is an operation to flush them but it is expensive and often temporary.

One other important point on this subject is to keep your BJ's Dew Claws clipped as the weeping eyes can cause them a slight irritation and if they try to scratch it with their paws, long Dew claws will cut their face and can even tear the edge of their eyelid.

WILLY LICKING

No this is not the name of a relation to a famous British cricket player, but for those of you that are lucky enough to have Sussex Boys this is a common pastime. You will often see this large pink slug appear on their underside, it is quite normal and often they will bury their head into their groin and make a pretty loud slurping noise of which they seem to acquire great pleasure from. I mention this simply as I have been asked several times by folk that were rather embarrassed when their Sussex boy was being petted by a complete stranger and this large pink object appeared from nowhere. Believe me your Sussex isn't in the slightest embarrassed and that is all that counts.

ANAL GLANDS

Common symptoms for loaded anal glands are dragging their bum on the floor, turning their head towards their bum and sniffing, and in extreme cases knawing at the base of their tail until it is raw. This is very common with all Sussex Spaniels and in most cases is nothing to worry about. They emit a nasty dead fish smell from their anus. Both dogs and bitches have this occur from time to time and it is the dog's natural mechanism for scent marking their stools. If required, you can express them yourself quite easily and there are plenty of videos on www.youtube.com showing how to do it. If you are worried about them, visit your vet and usually a nurse or vet express them for you. On rare occasions they can become impacted and require surgery to flush them out and usually an anti-biotic to alleviate any infection. If you have constant problems we have found a daily additive to their meals called "Protexin Pro-Fibre" works wonders and our vet recommended it to us after one of our bitches had the surgery and she has had no problems since. The fibre makes the stools harder thus purging the anal glands properly. If your dog has consistently soft stools this can lead to issues with their glands so be aware.

FEEDING

This is the most common subject we are asked questions about. There are no set rules to feeding Sussex. Before I begin I will point out one thing that is common with Sussex. They will on the occasion vomit a small amount of yellow frothy bile. Don't panic, it is often an indication that they are hungry, unless of course they have recently eaten grass.

We have a group of Sussex and they are all on different diets. They are generally quite gregarious but can be totally the opposite. Now let me start by saying that some dogs are motivated by food and others are not. Those that aren't can cause you extreme stress and concern. So here are some basic ground rules. When you buy a Sussex puppy you will generally get an information sheet from the breeder on how to raise and feed your puppy.

After they are 18 months we feed all our Sussex once per day around early evening. (Some owners may feed twice per day and that is fine). The reason we feed once per day, and we have done this with all our Sussex for 40 years, and as many of you know, our Sussex are in fabulous condition is because they are hungry enough to eat all of their dinner in one session. Many eating problems are caused by too many treats in the day, and sometimes feeding twice daily reduces their enthusiasm for the second meal. Sussex are quite prone to wheat allergies so buying wheat and gluten free food is a good idea and very easy these days. I am not going to recommend specific foods but all I say is that if it works stick with it. But some Sussex do go off certain foods and need a change from time to time. BE AWARE they are very clever dogs and will play the "Nope I need to try something else game" thus being very enthusiastic to a specific food only to turn it down after a few days so you go and buy something different.

*****DO NOT exercise your dog heavily 1 hour before or 1-2 hours after eating*****

(Read below the section on BLOAT)

*****Make sure that your Sussex ALWAYS has access to clean fresh water***** and scrub out the water bowls each day as their snodge and algae can build up especially if it is left outside. Blue/Green algae is highly toxic and can kill.

When you put their feeding bowls down make them wait for a few minutes before letting them eat just to reinforce your control over them.

After they have finished always pick up the bowl. Do not let them browse, and also food left down encourages flies to lay eggs on the exposed food.

OK WORSE CASE SCENARIOS... yes we have been there and it can be very distressing and challenging. So your Sussex will not eat. The worst case we had was to force feed for nearly 18 months. One breeder we know had this problem for 3 years. It sounds bad but it isn't that bad, it simply becomes a routine and the dog does not suffer in the slightest. You need a firm food that you can cut into strips, and simply hold your dog's head up and mouth open, push the food straight down the throat with one finger (ensure your nail is cut so as not to scratch the throat)

Quite often just a few pieces of food will get your Sussex juices flowing and they will happily eat the rest. This is not a battle of wits, DO NOT under any circumstances take advice from idiots that say "Just starve it and it will eat eventually". It will not, and you will risk illness and vets bills.

You will often find that a single Sussex is a lot fussier than those owning several simply because it has no competition for the food thus can guard rather than eat whereas several Sussex will eat it at the same speed thus preventing the other to get it.

Please note that bitches coming into season often lose their desire to eat. This is normally temporary and can last a week or two so try encouraging them by hand feeding initially to get them started.

These are a few pointers to feeding but it can be a very complex issue, and I would always recommend you speak to experienced Sussex owners and breeders, or your vet, before parting with your hard earned money on animal mind benders and behaviourists. In our experience of many owners these ventures have rarely paid off.

POISONOUS FOODS AND PLANTS FOR DOGS

It is often tempting to give your precious Sussex your leftovers or snacks but you must be aware that many of the foods you eat could make your Sussex very ill even leading to death.

This is a list of popular foods you must never give your Sussex...

FOODS...

CHOCOLATE

Chocolate contains a stimulant called Theobromine, and is very poisonous to dogs. The amount of theobromine depends on the type of chocolate and mainly affects the guts, heart, central nervous system, and kidneys. Signs of the poisoning are likely to occur between 4 and 24 hours after your dog has eaten the chocolate. And is likely to bring on vomiting, diarrhoea, restlessness, hyperactivity and seizures. Get to the vet and take any wrappers and try to establish the quantity your dog has eaten as this is essential to establish the intensity of poisoning.

CAFFEINE

Caffeine is also a stimulant and another danger to dogs. They are more sensitive to the effects of caffeine than humans. A couple of laps of tea or coffee are unlikely to do any harm, but if your dog chews a bag of coffee beans or tea leaves and swallows a handful they could be in danger. The same symptoms and procedure are practically the same as Chocolate.

ALCOHOL

Alcohol is more dangerous to dogs than it is to us. There is nothing smart or funny about letting your dog drink beer or wine. Don't do it as even tiny quantities can lead to vomiting, diarrhoea, decreased coordination, central nervous system depression, difficulty breathing, tremors, blood changes, coma and even death.

Do not put your drink down on the floor beside your chair as they will certainly drink it.

FRESH DOUGH

Anything with fresh yeast can ferment in your dog's gut and cause gas to build up. This in turn can cause a blockage in the intestine and prove fatal. Fresh baked bread doesn't present the same dangers but this can also swell when it hits the dog's intestine and absorbs any liquids. The safest bet is not to feed your dog bread.

BONES

Dogs love bones and they seem the natural thing to give, but there are dangers. Under no circumstances give your Sussex cooked bones as they can prove fatal if they splinter and pierce their intestines. Make sure they are large and discard them when they become small as they can be swallowed and choke or block the digestive system. Also large marrow bones can chip off, even break their teeth. So although I always recommend Nylabones, always be vigilant and if your Sussex becomes constipated it may be because of the bones.

XYLITOL AND ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS

Xylitol is found in many foods, including some sugar-free gums, diabetic cakes and diet foods. It causes insulin release in many species (but not in humans) leading to potentially fatal hypoglycaemia (lowered sugar levels). If your dog consumes this let your vet know immediately as it can create a rapid serious illness.

MILK & CHEESE

Dogs cannot deal with lactose in milk as they do not have the enzymes to break it down. Feeding milk, or milk based products can cause diarrhoea or upset tummy.

We often give dogs cheese and in very tiny amounts it is not usually a problem, but the fact is that they cannot break it down like we can so it is not good for them. Common sense prevails here.

On the other hand, BLUE VEINED CHEESES ARE EXTREMELY DANGEROUS and if your dog eats even a small amount contact your vet or emergency vet immediately.

MOULDY FOODS

Sussex Spaniels may eat like vultures but they certainly don't have a similar digestive system. DO NOT give them rotten, out-of-date, mouldy foods. It is a myth that they can deal with bad foodstuffs. Often Sussex have very sensitive digestive system so any food that is off or mouldy, whatever it is, should be discarded. Do not think that you would rather give it to your dog than waste it. This is a false economy as the following vet's bill will soon allay that ideology. Chuck it in the bin and when it arrives at the tip there will be plenty of willing mouths in the form of Seagulls with adequately designed internals to gorge on it.

PLANTS

Before I start on plants I need to point out that your Sussex will almost definitely eat grass at some stage. This is quite natural for dogs and as I understand there is no definitive reason why, but being a Sussex spaniel it is more likely they do it just to attract your attention and cheese you off. This little habit will often result in vomiting the grass and a frothy bile. They generally go for the long grass so try to make sure you have cut it down in your garden if it is practical to do so. You will find the girls tend to eat it more than boys. Either way it is not good for your dog. It can cause irritation to the mouth throat and gut. But the most dangerous issue is that slugs and snails lay their eggs on the grass and when ingested can lead to lungworm. If your dog is likely to have access to long grass make sure you keep your worming treatment up to date and check with your vet that it actually covers lungworm as many treatments don't.

ONIONS, GARLIC AND CHIVES (ALLIUM SPECIES)

Whether fresh, cooked, dried or mixed with other ingredients, sauces, in take-aways, keep these away from your dog, and especially if there is any in food scraps you put down or you have left food, sandwiches etc., in their sights. These plants are very toxic and can cause stomach and gut irritation and potentially lead to red blood cell damage and anaemia with symptoms appearing a few days afterwards. If your dog seems different, look at their gums and if they are pale they may be anaemic. Go straight to the vet.

GRAPES AND DRIED FRUITS

Grapes, raisins, sultanas are highly toxic to dogs. They can cause kidney failure in sensitive individuals. Dogs that already have underlying health problems are at greatest risk and just one raisin can be severely toxic. There is no known safe amount and so steer clear and if your dog happens to eat some watch very closely for 48 hours to see if they are out of the ordinary and their poop changes it's consistency even with blood in it. If so get straight to the vet.

NUTS

Just like us dogs can suffer nut allergies some mild and some can have a very severe reaction to certain nuts. If you suspect your dog has eaten a quantity of nuts, ring your vet and let them know and they will advise.

(Corn on the cob)

Do not let your dog anywhere near corn cobs. Although many dog foods contain maize, it is not considered dangerous even though it isn't digestible. But the cobs kill. They can get stuck in the stomach and block it.

EXERCISING

Over exercising of puppies are a big concern with Sussex Spaniels. We know you want to get your rare Sussex spaniel out to show everyone, that is only natural BUT so often new owners are oblivious to the basic exercising ground rules for puppies.

Do not over exercise your puppy for the first 8 months as the damage caused is irreversible, so take heed. It will prevent the proper structural development of your Sussex such as leg and hip joints, may cause early onset of arthritis and also preventing the massive strong bone development especially in the legs that Sussex are renowned for. Stay away from free running, long group walks, field training for the gun, hill climbs and generally long walks.

Sussex are very slow developers so typically you would want to exercise for the first 3 months twice per day to a maximum of 15 mins per trip. A typical good rule of thumb (as endorsed by the Kennel Club of which they have very useful information on their website) is a ratio of five minutes exercise per month of age (up to twice a day) until the puppy is fully grown, i.e. 15 minutes (up to twice a day) when three months old, 20 minutes when four months old etc. Once they are fully grown, they can go out for much longer. (A Sussex puppy will be fully grown after 18 months and typical body weight would be 17-20 kgs for a girl and 22-25kg for a boy)

Always take plenty of fresh water with you and some sort of portable bowl. We NEVER let our dogs drink out of water bowls other than their own. Many shop keepers put out water bowls with the best of intentions but these days there are many dogs with illnesses that can transfer them via the water, and simply nutters than could slip something into the water. It happens...

HOT WEATHER and HEATWAVES

This can be quite trying for Sussex especially when they get older. They have very heavy coats so there are a few precautions you can take. Always make sure your dog has plenty of cool water and change it regularly also making sure you wash any water and food bowls daily as they build up with saliva which in turn smells and puts them off drinking. It is not good for your dog to "tank up", so regular small drinks are way to go.

I would like to point out to you that as your Sussex gets older it is more likely to drink more water, and when they get really old they drink even more so. This is quite normal, so don't be surprised if they get you out of bed in the middle of the night for a pee.

I know I said it before and I will say it again... NEVER let your Sussex drink from unknown sources like streams, puddles and water bowls outside shops or at events as vermin also drink from these and other dogs that may be carrying diseases or illnesses can drink from them at the same time releasing their saliva back into the bowl ready for your treasured Sussex to lap it up. Always take your own.

A "Cool Coat" is an amazing asset to have, and these can be purchased from most good pet stores or Online stores. We always keep them with us whether going on trips or dog shows, and if you are going out in the car they work well to keep your Sussex calm. You simply put the coat into a bowl of cold water or hold it under a running tap, wring it out and put it over your dog securing with the Velcro straps. They will last for several hours. (A word of warning with "Cool Coats", if you see your dog shivering, take it off) Sometimes they can drop the core temperature, so if your dog is already cool or even if the outside temperature drops.

Another useful item is an oscillating fan, especially at night as it keeps cool air moving around the room and we find it works well with the veterans. If you decide to purchase a fan make sure you get them in before the hot weather arrives as retail stores will be out of stock very quickly due to panic buying.

One small trick, if your Sussex is not that keen to drink water away from home is to add a small amount of Goats milk (25% less lactose than cow's) or Coconut milk (Lactose free) to flavour the water in your bottle. Thus making a little more enticing to your Sussex.

NEVER EVER leave your Sussex unattended in the car when you go away from it, even if you leave the windows ajar. The air is static and will just increase in temperature and if any harm comes to your Sussex you could finish up with a criminal record. The answer is simple take them with you.

BLOAT

You may or may not have heard of "Bloat", it is a serious killer of dogs. We have been unlucky enough to experience it twice in the last 40 years of our Sussex, in fact in the last 6 months. Thank goodness on both occasions we got our dogs to the vet within 45 mins as this is critical. It appears to be more prevalent in large deep narrow chested dogs and Sussex do fall into this category. There are a lot of theories around as with most dog issues, but there are a few simple precautions you can take to try and prevent it.

Steer clear of leather products like cowhide chews and pigs ears etc. If swallowed they can block the gut.

Also keep an eye on any bones, chews or toys your dog has chomped down to a size that can be swallowed. Throw them away and replace them.

Here is a list of general guidelines to prevent bloat but there are no guarantees...

- DO NOT exercise for at least 1-2 hours before or 2 hours after eating.
- Feed twice daily. (this reduces the chance of too much gas and filling of gut)
- Use a slow feeding bowl if your dog is liable to gulp. (We put a small S/steel bowl upside down in feeding bowl)
- Maintain a healthy weight, over or underweight dogs are more susceptible.
- Feed a mix of wet and dry foods.
- Avoid dry dog foods that have fat as one of the first 4 items or citric acid.
- Avoid brewers yeast, alfalfa or soybean products.
- Keep Carbohydrates to a minimum (Barley, Oats, Brown rice, Whole wheat, Whole corn, Ordinary/Sweet and Millet)
- DO NOT let you dog drink water too fast.

In October 2020 we had one of the scariest moments in our 40 years of Sussex. Our DIBBLE who many around the world adore along with us is a very young 3 year old Sussex spaniel. We practice what we preach and never let our dogs exercise 1 hour before and 2 hours after a meal. On this particular evening Dibble ate his dinner as normal and had a drink. At the time we had our 18 month old grandson Elliot with us. Dibble opened the door (as he usually does) and ran into the garden. He then started playing with Elliot, only for a matter of a few minutes, and then wandered into the workshop where my son Alex was working. Suddenly there was a scream from Jan (my wife) ...“Greg call the vet immediately”... Alex brought Dibble indoors and it looked like he had swallowed a Basketball (literally his whole abdomen was huge). We knew immediately the problem so as our vet was 30 mins away I said to Jan just put him in the car and go. So they went like the clappers as I was trying to raise our vet. Ironically he had 2 other calls and was sadly putting another dog to sleep so he couldn't answer our call. I was pulling my hair out but thank goodness he was at the surgery and immediately came out and could see Dibble was in a serious condition. I knew we only had about an hour before Dibble would likely have passed away. Well I have to say that was the scariest period of my life, and we are forever grateful to our vets for getting him Xrayed and on the operating table within 45 mins from Dibble leaving home. He stayed in overnight to monitor him, and “Yes” we still have our Dibble as right as rain and the vet told us he stitched his tummy inside to help reduce the chances of it happening again. So now we put him on a lead indoors if there are any distractions for at least 2 hours after a meal. In most cases he will just settle down without a worry. It

shows you have to be alert at all times. This is a very common problem among heavy deep chested breeds so please take heed as we know of at least two Sussex that suffered this dreadful fate. Thank goodness we were one of the lucky ones.

Another real case describing the symptoms of one spaniel owner that suffered this dreadful Bloat are as follows: the dog trying to throw up or have a bowel movement & can't. Hind end down, can't stand (due to loss of blood flow to the rear body.) Cold gums, ears, etc. indicate shock. Extreme sign, press on gum & look for immediate return to red, if not, already in shock. Run to the Vet immediately. Saved my Spaniels life by noticing these symptoms. She lived another 8 yrs."....

This is only a guideline we have constructed using our many years of experience with Sussex Spaniels and also other Sussex breeder/owner friends we have the pleasure of knowing. I know only too well how BJs can be awkward but it has to be done.

If my incessant reminders of "CHECK EARS" save one of our beloved breed from ear ache and a life of misery, then it has done the job.

NOTE: All maintenance jobs on your BJ's should be much easier if you start when they are puppies. If you get other people like vets, groomers etc., to do these simple jobs, your BJ will likely play on it and do the utmost to prevent you from participating. So persevere and you will be in control, happier and save money. (No guarantees)

Please "SHARE" this on any Sussex related sites you are associated with as it is very useful for new owners as well as us oldies... and please feel free to print or save your own copies.

This is only a guide related to Sussex Spaniels and if you have any concerns with your dog's health then contact your Veterinary practice.

Also I receive no advertising revenues from any product names I mention as these recommendations are purely from my own experiences.

Wishing you many happy Sussex BJDays ... Greg Smith