

Marcy Mountain Mastiffs

Mastiff Care Guidelines

General:

The English Mastiff (referred to by the AKC as simply the Mastiff) has its origins in some of the oldest breeds of dog known to man. There is much debate about the original origins of the Mastiff, but certainly the breed as we know it today comes primarily from the breeding programs that took place in Great Britain over the past few hundred years. Unfortunately, World War I and World War II almost took the breed to extinction. It is believed that the number of Mastiffs left in England by 1947 had fallen to seven. Luckily, with the additional Mastiffs in the USA and Canada, and the dedication of Mastiff fanciers in all three countries, the breed has been brought back so that we may now enjoy these tremendous and most noble of all dogs.

Mastiffs are often referred to as “gentle giants” – loving, slobbery gentle giants. They are the largest of the dog breeds, and can weigh anywhere from 140 lbs to 220+ lbs. They resemble a Great Dane in height, and a Saint Bernard in bulk, and typically weigh more than either. Despite their great size, they are extremely gentle, docile, and sensitive.

Mastiffs are loving and loyal companions. They are “inside the house” dogs, not backyard dogs. They crave human companionship, and want to be treated as members of the family. Without this social interaction with their family, they can be prone to behavioral problems. A large house works out best, but they can exist just fine in a smaller home as long as they can get out for adequate exercise. They tend to be very well behaved in the house, but you need to watch out for the wagging tail that tends to be at just the right height to knock over the can of soda sitting on the coffee room table. In general, adult Mastiffs are not prone to stealing food off the table or other such indiscretions; although you may need to pay attention while they are still puppies.

Mastiffs do slobber, some more than others. They all will drool after eating or drinking, or if they are waiting for a tasty treat. You will tend to keep plenty of slobber rags placed at strategic locations around the house, and always wipe them off after they eat or drink. It is surprising how quickly you will get used to this Mastiff phenomenon. Mastiffs snore, sometimes quite loudly. Mastiffs also shed. Although they have short hair, it tends to fall out fairly regularly and accumulate in the corners of your house. It can be easily kept under control by combing it out once or twice a week. Cutting nails is also important and should be done regularly.

In general, Mastiffs do not bark a lot. They often seem totally oblivious to what is going on around them, however they are in fact paying close attention to what is normal and what is not. When they perceive something not quite right, they will sit up at attention to check things out. They may bark if they hear a strange sound from outside, or if a stranger comes to the door. Once you accept the stranger or guest however, your Mastiff will as well. If your Mastiff is apprehensive about somebody, there may be a good reason for it that your dog has a sixth sense for. Mastiffs are not guard dogs in a pure sense, but they do pay attention to their surroundings. When let outside, they will often go on a perimeter journey around the yard to make sure everything is OK. They become somewhat territorial, and protective of their family and home.

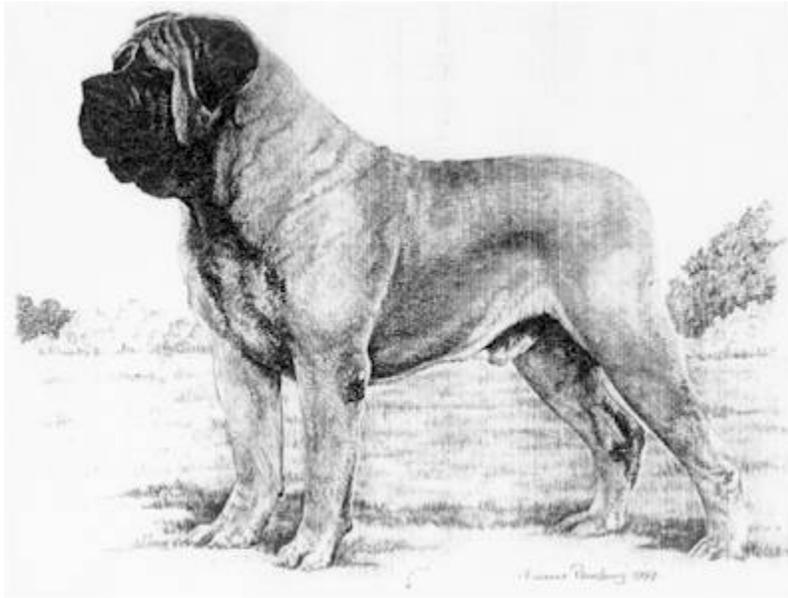
Mastiffs are excellent dogs around children, and seem to have a special sense of the fragile nature of

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small children. They are very tolerant of the abuse that small children can inflict upon them, including pulling their ears, sitting on them, tugging at the tails, etc.; and they love to lick the faces of children. They will become protective of children in the house; often wanting to place themselves between children and strangers that may come to the house. They will never intentionally hurt a child, but because of their size you do need to be careful with small children that may get bumped by a Mastiff walking by, or swatted by a Mastiff's wagging tail.

Mastiffs are expensive to purchase, raise, and maintain. While they don't eat as much as you might think for such a large dog, they do eat a lot of food, especially while they are gaining up to five pounds of weight per week. A Mastiff may go through 40 to 80 lbs of dog food in a month. Mastiffs are also more expensive when it comes to veterinary and medical costs. Most medicine and antibiotic dosages are based on weight, and Mastiff's are the heaviest breed of dog. Also, not every veterinarian is prepared to treat a Mastiff. You need to consider the size of medical equipment, knowledge of giant breeds especially in regards to anesthesia, and even the needs for sufficient staff to move an injured 200 lb Mastiff onto a surgical or x-ray table.

A Mastiff is not for everyone, due both to its size and its need to be an active member of your family. Owning a Mastiff is a big responsibility, but it will reward you a million times over with its love and devotion. Many times, the biggest problem with Mastiffs is the "potato chip" syndrome – you can't just have one. They are the most noble of all dog breeds – the lion of dogdom.



Eng. Ch. Hollesley Medicine Man

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Feeding:

For the first 6 months, we want you to feed your puppy Nutro Natural Choice Puppy (chicken meal, rice & oatmeal formula). After 6 months, we want you to switch to an ADULT food. Preferably a Nutro brand or another good quality Adult, dry dog food (kibble) such as Eagle Pack, Diamond, or Back-to-Basics, you may. Feed the Adult Dog or Maintenance Series. **DO NOT FEED THE PUPPY FORMULA**, as it is too high in protein. Giant breed dogs, including Mastiffs, need to grow slowly and the adult dog food formulas have the correct protein balance (approximately 21% - 23%) required by the puppies.

When you first pick up your puppy, it should be fed three (3-4) times a day, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 cup per feeding. You must add a small amount of lukewarm water to the kibble, stir, and let soak for a few minutes before feeding. This allows the dry kibble to expand slightly in the dish instead of it the puppy's stomach.

Gradually increase the amount of food based on your puppy's appetite and appearance (refer to the chart below). Mastiff puppies should be kept on the lean side to ensure a slow, proper bone growth. You should be able to see a hint of the last couple of ribs on your puppy, but no hipbones. Your puppy should not have swollen wrist joints, sloppy feet, or be extremely high in the rear. These signs and/or occasional limping may mean the puppy is growing too fast, and you should cut back on its food intake. In general, you cannot hurt your puppy by keeping it slightly lean, however you can certainly hurt it orthopedically by overfeeding or by feeding a non-recommended food. This chart will provide a guideline for feeding:

Months Old	Cups Per Day
2	2 to 4
3	3 to 5
4	4 to 6
5	5 to 7
6	6 to 8
7	7 to 9
8	8 to 10
9	9 to 11

This chart is based on a moderate calorie and protein level food, such as Diamond, and assumes that the dog may be crated or less active during the day while the owner is at work. Using these guidelines will help to prevent growth diseases. The most sensitive time for growth is from 3-6 months.

This is only a general guideline so that your puppy does not consume too many calories or get too much protein before six months of age, which can disrupt its growth pattern, causing accelerated growth and potential bone problems. Visually inspect your puppy as described above. If he is too lean, try feeding one more cup per day. When your puppy is about six months old, you may reduce the number of

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feedings to twice a day. It should be kept at four then to three feedings a day until then. If you have any questions regarding feeding, please call us.

Young adult males may eat as much as 12 to 14 cups per day until they mature. If this occurs, you may want to switch to a higher protein food, for example 25% protein, 15% fat to and reduce their food intake, so that they need to process less food. Again, please call us if you have questions.

At maturity, bitches may eat approximately 6 to 8 cups per day, and mature males approximately 7 to 10 cups per day. Older dogs may drop to about 5 to 6 cups per day. Older dogs and growing puppies should never be placed on a low protein diet. This should be done only due to a specific disease and upon the advice of your veterinarian. You should normally adjust the amount of food rather than switch to a lower (or higher) protein level diet.

Except for occasional special treats or for training purposes, it is best not to feed table scraps, or anything other than dry food, to your puppy or it may become a finicky eater. At mealtime, if your puppy has not eaten within about 15 minutes, remove the food and try again at the next feeding time. They will not starve, and you do not want to get into the habit of begging your puppy to eat. Do not let them linger or be distracted at feeding time. If they don't eat right away, they are either simply not hungry, or something may be wrong. Monitoring their food intake is an excellent way of telling when they are not feeling well. Young females will often go off their feed during hormonal changes, as will young males.

Force-feeding is extremely stressful on your puppy (or older dog), and does not allow for the hydrochloric acids and digestive juices to kick in to aid proper digestion. Stress can also be a trigger for bloat, which is something you want to avoid at all costs.

Do not allow lots of running around or exercise for about 1 to 2 hours after feeding. This will aid in digestion.

When you do feed treats, make them small. Break a milkbone into several pieces instead of feeding 5 a day. You can also use carrots, a slice of apple, and berries as treats. Do not feed grapes as they may damage a dog's kidneys.

Always keep lots of fresh water available both inside and outside so that your puppy knows there is water always around. This will help him to not over-consume; worried that it won't be there the next time. Do not withhold water to help housebreak your dog! Don't let them drink too much at one time however. If they have been running around, and start drinking, monitor them. Give them just a little, and when they have calmed down they can have some more. Use common sense. You may want to take away any water from the crate at night when they are sleeping so that they don't spill it accidentally. But during the day, always have water available - clean, fresh, non-slobber water.

The following supplements are recommended:

- Kelp (Sea Blend) – The Wholistic Pet, www.thewholisticpet.com
- Cran-Tri-C - Natures Farmacy inc, www.naturesfarmacys.com OR
- Sodium Ascorbate – Beowulf, www.beowulfs.com
- Alfalfa – Any vitamin store
- Prozyme – KV Vet Supply, www.kvvet.com OR
- Fastrack Canine Gel – www.michiganmicrofeeds.com

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Basic Training:

You should place a small, flat buckle collar on your puppy right away so that it gets used to having something around its neck. Don't give in when it whines, scratches the collar, or rolls around. Soon enough, the puppy will get used to the collar and forget about it. After he gets used to the collar, you may attach a "Flexi-lead" leash, and let your puppy outside. A "Flexi-lead" is a retractable leash that is available at most pet shops, and it helps to make leash training simple.

At first, let the puppy lead you around, sniffing and exploring, while getting used to the slight pressure of the leash. The next step would be to walk away from the puppy, tugging lightly on the leash. Bend down, call his name, and offer him treats and praise, and make a big deal out of him coming to you. Make this a fun experience for your puppy, and giving treats is always helpful in boosting the puppy's confidence in any stressful situation.

The puppy can be taught quite easily to come at your call. Let him be distracted in your house or fenced yard, and then call his name in a pleasant voice while running away a few steps. It is a natural response for your puppy to chase. When he gets to you, bend down and praise him happily. Give treats and a hug to your puppy, and make it fun for him to come to you.

It is important to never lose your temper with your puppy. It doesn't do any good for either of you. Never call your puppy to punish him; you will only teach him not to come when his name is called. Mastiffs (puppies and adults) are very sensitive dogs. Physical punishment is NEVER necessary. A Mastiff is almost always willing to please, but simply does not always understand what is expected of him. To correct for misbehavior, it is best to shake him slightly by the collar, and speak in a disapproving tone of voice, much like the way a mother dog corrects her puppies. But when it's all over, be forgiving and do not hold a grudge. Always end your training session, or any other time with your puppy, on a good note – praising and playing with him. Be gradual with your early training, as your puppy will tire easily.

One of the best ways to socialize and train your puppy is by enrolling him in a "puppy" class. In a puppy class, you and your puppy will start basic obedience training, socialize with other dogs and humans, and learn how to deal with subjects such as housebreaking and other specific problems. It's fun for you and your puppy. It brings the two of you closer, and makes the puppy a better member of society. The chance to socialize and play with other dogs is very important. Afterwards, you may want to continue with additional beginner obedience classes, and eventually more advanced classes.

It is much better to begin training with a Mastiff early, while he is still relatively small, than waiting until you have a 200 lb. dog to train. You definitely want to teach your dog the basics of the sit/stay, down/stay, coming when called and walking on a leash. These are the primary behaviors tested for by the AKC Canine Good Citizen (CGC) test, which you may want to have your Mastiff obtain. We will refund \$25 of the purchase price of your puppy for enrolling in and completing a training class with your puppy; and will refund another \$25 for attainment of a CGC title by your Mastiff.

You should practice touching your dog all over, and be able to do anything you want with him. Clip his nails, play with his feet, play with his ears, touch him while eating, check his teeth, etc. Getting him used to this early will be much better than waiting for later.

If your puppy shows aggression of any type towards anyone of anything, besides reasonable playing, it is important to deal with it right away. Grab the puppy by the scruff of its neck, roll him over, and stare

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into his eyes. Growl, scold, and tell him how ashamed you are of him. Don't give up until he gives in and looks away. Then let him up, but ignore him for a few minutes. After a few minutes, you can completely forgive him and act as if nothing happened. Again, this is how his mother would have scolded him if he went too far.

When leaving your puppy at home alone, confine him to a safe area – a crate, an exercise pen, etc. – with shelter and plenty of water. When he is reliable in the home, you may allow him to be loose in the house while you are gone. If crate trained, keep the door open so he can get into his crate if he wants to. NEVER tie or chain your dog. This is a violation of your contract and can cause behavior problems

Socialization:

It's very important to get your puppy out as much as possible. Your puppy may have a tendency to be unsure of new things or situations. Their confidence in such situations needs to be developed. After two or three days of adjusting to its new home, you should get your puppy out to visit new places at least three times a week. Studies show that the earlier the socialization starts, the better adjusted the puppy is. Shopping centers, malls, schools, obedience classes, other homes, parks, etc. are all great places to visit. Get your puppy used to different situations and people. Visit with children, women, and men; wearing uniforms; wearing hats; with beards; carrying items, etc. Never frighten or force your puppy in these situations, but let him gradually get used to the commotion and activities. Reassure the puppy with lots of praise and treats. Never let your puppy off leash in these situations. Socialization should always be fun and positive. Scold for aggressive behavior, and praise loudly for positive behavior.

Housetraining:

The key to housebreaking is consistency! Your puppy needs to be placed on a routine. He will need to go outside after eating, sleeping, playing, and approximately every 2 to 3 hours in-between. A puppy's bladder control improves as he matures and gets older. You should pick a spot where you want your puppy to relieve himself. Always taking him to the same spot makes it easier for your puppy to understand. If he goes where he is supposed to, praise him happily and make him feel good for doing the right thing. Take the puppy immediately back inside so that he makes the connection that outside is the place to go to the bathroom. If your puppy makes a mistake, don't spank, scream, or rub his nose in it. Just say "No" firmly, and take him outside for a while. Clean the mess thoroughly to remove any odors or scent. It is important to get on a schedule. Take the puppy out often, and praise for a job well done.

When you need to leave the puppy at home alone, it is best to confine him to a small area, such as a crate or a small pen, with a securely fastened water dish. Dogs, and especially Mastiffs, do not like to soil their den. If your puppy has been walked before you leave, and not left alone too long, you should come home to a clean crate. If you have to leave for more than a few hours, either take the puppy with you in its crate, so you can let him out every few hours; find someone reliable to look after the puppy and let it out regularly; or leave him in a slightly larger "pen" with papers at one end. This latter alternative will hinder housebreaking slightly, but if you must be gone for more than a few hours you should consider the puppy's comfort.

If your puppy cries or whines while he is in his crate, don't give in and soothe him or let him out. Once he learns it doesn't get him anywhere, he'll give it up eventually. Leave a radio playing, a light on, a Nylabone or Kong toy in his crate, and don't forget to leave water. You should make sure the crate is

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cushioned with foam cushions, sheepskins, or other similar materials. Eventually, his crate will become your puppy's "safe" place.

At night, let the puppy sleep in its closed crate, next to your bed if you want. As soon as he is reliable, you could leave the door of the crate open and allow your puppy to go in or out of his crate as he wants. Letting your dog sleep in your bedroom will help him bond to you even more, but Mastiffs will also do quite well sleeping in another part of the house. It is not recommended to let your puppy sleep on your bed. It may be cute, but when he gets to be 200 lbs you may regret the decision. Also, the chances of your puppy falling off and getting hurt are too great.

Exercise:

Due to the fast growth rate and weight of the Mastiff puppy, no structured exercise would be given. Normal playing and socialization should be enough to keep him fit, and tire him out. Never push him, or you will end up with a lame puppy. If by chance, he does overdo it and becomes lame, a few days of rest will usually clear it up. If not, consult your veterinarian.

Do not take your puppy on long walks; you must keep them very short. Mastiff puppies have a tendency to just lie down once they get tired. If this happens, it's time to pick him up and carry him the rest of the way. Again, don't let your puppy overdo it. Don't play too rough with your puppy, as this can also cause structural damage; and avoid your puppy playing too energetically with other dogs or animals while he is still young.

Don't let your puppy jump up or down from high places (couches, high steps, vehicles, etc.). Jumping down from things is especially hard on their joints. You should always help them up or down from high places, even when adults. Also, don't let them jump up on you or others. This can seem cute while it is a puppy, but isn't as cute when it's older, especially if it tries this with an elderly person or a small child. You also risk the dog's health by letting it jump on people.

Your Mastiff puppy will love toys to play with, but don't throw them too far or repeatedly. Leaping and twisting can be very dangerous for dogs this size, stressing their joints and especially their knees. Keep things in moderation, and you'll be fine. Eventually, as your puppy grows older you can extend the length of time playing with him.

It is best to keep Mastiffs on carpeted areas, as this will reduce the amount of callusing on their knees and joints from getting up and down. Chasing and sliding on slick floors is particularly bad, and asking for trouble. Keep dog cushions and beds around in various places for your puppy to lie down on.

Toys:

A Mastiff's sheer strength can destroy average dog toys in seconds, so be careful in choosing the toys for your Mastiffs. It is best not to provide toys that the Mastiff can tear apart, but if you do be ready to pick up all of the pieces once he has done so. The last thing you want is to have your Mastiff choke on a small piece of toy, or have to have him swallow a piece that would need to be surgically removed. Be careful of toys that squeak; once the squeaker comes out, you must find it and throw it away. Puppies love to chew and swallow these.

Mastiffs tend to love toys like the "Jolly Ball". This is a large plastic ball with a built-in handle. They

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can kick it around like a soccer ball, and carry it by the handle. Large “Kong” toys are also great. These typically have a hole in them in which you can place treats. Mastiffs also like large rope toys that they can play tug-of-war with, and large fleece toys. Whatever you get, be prepared to replace them as they get worn, tattered, or shredded. Nylabones also make good toys.

Do not get rawhide toys; and do not get pig or cow ears, hooves, snouts, etc. Rawhide is not digestible, and is usually treated with lye or other chemicals that are not good for your dog to be eating. Pig and cow ears, hooves, etc. are often carriers of salmonella (very bad bacteria). They can also splinter, and puncture the intestine or cause an obstruction.

Some of the toys that are safe for Mastiffs are:

	Kong Toys		Big Bounce XL Tennis Ball
	Fleece Toys		Romp-n-Roll
	Nylabones		Tricky Treats
	Jolly Ball		Kong Bounzer Ball
	IndestructaBall		Action Basketball

Health:

Like any other dog, Mastiffs require the usual series of puppy vaccinations. Your puppy’s first round of vaccinations will have already be given by the time you pick him up; and you will be informed about the next set of vaccinations that you should provide for. We prefer not to vaccinate regularly after the puppy series of vaccinations. Instead, we take titer tests to determine the dog’s the state of the dog’s immunity

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system. Titer tests can actually be more expensive than vaccinating, but it is better not to over vaccinate. You should either perform titer tests, or vaccinate to ensure your dog's continued good health. You must, of course, vaccinate regularly for rabies. You should also continue de-worming your dog based on your veterinarian's input, and discuss with your veterinarian about the need for heartworm preventative.

Many vets encourage giving rabies vaccines too early, which can cause immune problems in puppies. We like to wait until the dog is six months or older before giving it the first rabies vaccine, and never give it at the same time as other vaccines. It also helps to have your dog on Vitamin C supplements while going through the vaccine process, as it helps to prevent unwanted reactions.

Hip dysplasia occurs in many breeds, large and small, and the Mastiff is no exception. A positive diagnosis of hip dysplasia can only be made using x-rays, and often only after the dog is mature. The Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) can provide a preliminary diagnosis before 24 months, but will not provide full certification until supplied with x-rays taken after the dog is 24 months old. Puppies from dysplasia-free parents are much less likely to become dysplastic, but are certainly not immune. Environment, nutrition, and general care can be just as important factors to hip dysplasia as genetics. It is important to purchase your puppy from a reputable breeder that places the welfare of the dogs and improvement of the breed above financial gain.

Many large breeds are susceptible to gastric torsion or "bloat." Bloat occurs when the stomach becomes overfilled with gas. The stomach can flip over (torsion), causing the ends to constrict, trapping food and gases inside, and restricting blood flow to the heart and other tissues. This can quickly lead to death, if not immediately corrected (usually surgically). The causes of bloat have not been positively identified. Several theories exist, among them: individual stomach digesting patterns, exercise too close to meals, stress, consuming too much food too rapidly, consuming large quantities of water after eating or exercise, and others. Just to be safe, it is best to avoid feeding large quantities of food or water at one time, or feeding immediately after exercise. We recommend elevating food and water dishes (although there is debate both ways on this). Symptoms of bloat include distress, panting, restlessness, pacing then lying down very still then pacing, foaming excessively, vomiting with nothing or just foam coming up, and a swollen, tight stomach. If any of these conditions occur, take your Mastiff to the veterinarian IMMEDIATELY.

Choosing a Veterinarian:

You will want to take some time to select the appropriate veterinarian for your Mastiff. Mastiffs are not that different from other dogs – they all have the same parts that work in essentially the same ways. However, giant breeds and particularly Mastiffs can require specialized knowledge to be cared for properly. Most important is not whether your veterinarian has treated Mastiffs before, but how willing he is to learn about Mastiff health issues and care, and how comfortable you are in talking with your vet.

You should find out how your vet handles emergencies. Does he see emergencies himself or refer them to an emergency clinic? Is he, or another vet at this practice, on call 24 hours a day? Does he perform surgery? What emergency and surgical equipment does he have? Has he seen cases of bloat, hip dysplasia, skin problems, etc., and how did he deal with them?

Some veterinarians may become annoyed at such questions, and if they do you should probably find yourself another veterinarian. Mastiffs are rather unique, and your vet should at the least be comfortable

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in describing his experiences with Mastiffs or other giant breed dogs, and certainly be willing to describe how he would consult with other Mastiff specialists when the need arises.

Mastiffs are particularly sensitive to anesthesia, and your vet needs to understand this peculiarity. The Mastiff is so large, and their chest cavity is so huge that the heart is in general more sensitive to certain drugs. Also, due to the Mastiff's large body mass, drugs are distributed a little slower and therefore result in a slower onset and reaction. Too much or the wrong type of anesthesia being applied are very common, and very dangerous situations for Mastiffs.

The most important thing is to be comfortable with your vet, and assured that he will call and ask for advice when needed. There are plenty of vets around the country that are extremely knowledgeable and experienced with Mastiffs and perfectly willing to help other vets that may not have the same level of experience working with these large dogs. Please call and talk to us if you have questions concerning your vet.

Additional Reading:

The following are some recommended books about Mastiffs.

The Mastiff: Aristocratic Guardian, by dee dee Andersson (GREAT BOOK)

The Complete Mastiff, by Betty Baxter and David Blaxter

The Ultimate Book of Mastiff Breeds, by Douglas Oliff

The Mastiff: An Owner's Guide to a Happy, Healthy Pet, by John M. Becknell

Mastiff, by Marie A. Moore

The Mastiff and Bullmastiff Handbook, by Douglas Oliff

How to right a dog gone wrong, by Pamela S.Dennison (GREAT BOOK)

