

# Exercise restraint: Veterinarian says starting slow is way to go when introducing dog to physical activity

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New dog owners anxious to take their dog for a walk or run are encouraged to introduce exercise gradually.

Consider a dog's breed, size, age, health and capabilities, said Susan Nelson, a veterinarian and clinical associate professor in the Pet Health Center at the Veterinary Health Center at Kansas State University.

Nelson says [dog owners](#) should be realistic in their expectations. For example, a new puppy will need training in walking alongside his or her owner on a leash; if running together is a goal, that, too, will take time -- and training.

Start with a short walk or run, and gradually increase the distance, said Nelson, who offered general guidelines -- or goals -- for exercising a dog:

\* A small to medium-sized dog should be able to build endurance for at least a 20- to 30-minute walk.

\* A large dog should be able to build endurance for at least a 30- to 40-minute [exercise](#) schedule.

Nelson added that the dog's breed also should be taken into account when it comes to exercise. A stubby-nose dog, such as a pug, will have

less respiratory efficiency and less capacity for exercise than a dog with a longer snout -- and more respiratory efficiency.

Nelson also suggested introducing a pet to a walking or running surface gradually to toughen their paw pads because running on hard surfaces such as concrete or gravel, which also is irregular, can injure their paws.

Seasonal weather changes affect walking and running surfaces, in that excessive heat on concrete, asphalt or tarred surfaces can burn paw pads. Winter snow and ice may cause frostbite, cuts or scrapes.

Nelson said it's also very important to have your dog checked out by your veterinarian first to ensure it is healthy enough to start the type of exercise you would like it to do.

Provided by Kansas State University

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