

NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 5 - Dogs and cats in animal boarding establishments

Preface

This code is designed for everyone involved in the holding and care of dogs and cats for boarding. By adhering to the code, people involved in the animal boarding industry demonstrate to the general community their concern for the welfare of the animals in their care.

Animal welfare can be thought of as the way an animal's health and well-being are affected by its interaction with its physical and social environments. Since humans can alter or control an animal's environment, animal welfare means that people have duties and responsibilities towards animals. The greater the level of interference with, or control of, an animal's environment, the greater our responsibilities.

The code is neither a complete manual on animal husbandry, nor a static document. It may be revised to take account of advances in the understanding of animal physiology and behaviour, technological changes, changing industry standards, and the community's attitudes and expectations about the welfare of animals.

Compliance with the code does not remove the need to abide by the requirements of any other laws and regulations, such as local government or National Parks and Wildlife Service legislation.

The code has been prepared in consultation with the Boarding and Grooming group of the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) representing a number of those involved in dog and cat boarding, and is endorsed by the NSW Animal Welfare Advisory Council

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This code sets standards for the care and management of dogs and cats in animal boarding establishments.
- 1.2 It applies to the welfare of dogs and cats held and cared for at an animal boarding establishment.
- 1.3 Establishments which provide commercial boarding services, Council Pound services and veterinary hospital services must comply with the standards of this code.

2. Responsibilities of the manager

- 2.1 The Manager of an animal boarding establishment is responsible for:
 - (a) provision of accommodation and equipment which suits the physical and behavioural requirements of the animals held
 - (b) the protection of animals from people, other animals or adverse environmental conditions
 - (c) provision of sufficient space for animals to stand, move around freely, stretch fully and rest
 - (d) provision of sufficient quantities of appropriate food and water to maintain good health
 - (e) protection of animals as far as possible from disease, distress and injury
 - (f) provision of prompt veterinary or other appropriate treatment in cases of illness or injury.
 - (g) maintenance of hygiene of the premises and health of the animals held.
 - (h) supervision of daily feeding, watering and inspection of animals held to ensure their well-being.
 - (i) supervision of staff, whether working full or part-time and whether or not working for fee or reward.
 - (j) collation and maintenance of relevant records.

3. Animal housing

3.1 Location

- 3.1.1 Animal boarding establishments should be located away from sources of excessive noise or pollution that could cause injury or stress to animals.
- 3.1.2 Animal boarding establishment sites must have an adequate water supply and should be sewerred or on a septic system.

3.2 Construction

- 3.2.1 Where kennel buildings/housing are constructed outdoors, they must:
 - protect from rain and wind
 - provide adequate shade
 - be partially enclosed to provide a sheltered sleeping area.

3.2.2 Where kennels are constructed indoors, temperature, humidity and ventilation must be considered.

3.2.3 Kennel housing may be separated by either solid partitions, which help reduce noise, or by galvanised mesh or chain wire dividers. Advice should be sought on suitable construction materials for reducing noise and fighting injuries between kennels.

3.2.4 The internal surfaces of kennels and cat housing should be constructed of impervious, solid, washable materials. Wall/floor junctions should be sealed to facilitate cleaning and disinfection.

3.2.5 Floors of animal housing areas of kennels and cat housing should be made of an impervious material to assist cleaning and drainage. Sealed concrete is ideal, or sealed brick may be acceptable. Grassed or landscaped sections may form part of large outdoor runs but must be adequately maintained and not allowed to deteriorate into bare earth, which is unacceptable.

3.3 Size

3.3.1 Animal housing areas, whether for single or group housing, must provide enough space for each animal to feed, sleep, sit, stand, lie with limbs extended, stretch and move about, and sufficient additional space for bedding as required by Paragraph 3.9.

3.3.2 Dog kennels and housing should be of sufficient height to permit easy cleaning.

3.3.3 Cats may be housed either in banks of cages in walk-in modules that include a sleeping compartment and an exercise area, or in colonies consisting of no more than three cats in a pen.

3.4 Drainage

Floors of kennel and cat housing should be sloped to enable wastes and water to run off (but methods of cleaning cat housing must be such that, at completion all surfaces are dry). A collection drain may be provided and fitted with fine mesh wire baskets to trap hair and waste. The baskets should be cleaned daily.

3.5 Temperature

3.4.1 Animals must be protected from extremes of temperature and the environmental temperature controlled to minimise distress to animals.

3.4.2 Very old and very young animals which are more sensitive than others to changes in temperature may require provision of heating or cooling.

3.6 Noise

3.6.1 Noise from barking dogs must be managed to comply with noise regulations and may be reduced using these methods:

- siting kennels so that they do not face each other
- limiting external stimulation, e.g. by partitioning between kennels or using blinds
- holding dogs singly or in compatible pairs
- turning lights off after feeding

3.6.2 Cats should be housed away from dogs as they may be disturbed by barking.

3.7 Lighting

3.7.1 Lighting should be as close as possible, in duration and intensity, to natural conditions.

3.7.2 Sunlight is the preferred means of lighting, provided shaded areas are available.

3.7.3 Artificial light should be provided, where needed, to allow animal housing areas to be thoroughly cleaned animals to be checked.

3.8 Ventilation

Ventilation should be adequate to keep animal housing areas free of dampness and noxious odours without draughts.

3.8.1 All kennels should be provided with a raised sleeping area and sufficient bedding, appropriate to the breed, or trampoline-style beds.

3.8.2 Bedding provided for animals must be changed frequently and kept clean and dry.

3.8.3 Cats must be provided with bedding.

3.9 Bedding

3.9.1 All kennels should be provided with a raised sleeping area and sufficient bedding, appropriate to the breed, or trampoline-style beds.

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3.10 Security

3.10.1 Buildings housing dogs and cats must be securely lockable.

3.10.2 Each individual kennel, cat cage, module or colony must be fitted with a secure closing device that cannot be opened by the animals held.

3.10.3 Any security methods used must allow for ready access by staff to animals and ready exit of staff and animals from the premises in the event of an emergency.

3.10.4 Firefighting equipment must be readily available.

3.10.5 A security barrier must prevent escape of animals or unauthorised entry. The kennel or cattery compound wall may form part of the security barrier, which must be fitted with at least one lockable gate.

4. Hygiene

4.1 Cleaning and disinfection

4.1.1 Housing and exercise areas must be kept clean so that the comfort of animals can be maintained and disease controlled.

4.1.2 Faeces should be removed at least once daily.

4.1.3 Kennels and associated housing or exercise areas should be cleaned daily, and disinfected at least once each week, before new dogs or puppies are introduced and after an outbreak of infectious disease.

4.1.4 Cat housing should be cleaned daily and working surfaces disinfected weekly, before new cats are introduced and after an outbreak of infectious disease.

4.1.5 Cleaning and disinfecting agents should be chosen on the basis of their suitability, safety and effectiveness. Some common disinfectants, particularly those derived from or containing coal or wood tar products, are toxic to cats. Pine oil, phenol, cresol and chloroxylenols are such products, and must be avoided where cats are kept.

Manufacturer's instructions for the use of cleaning and disinfecting agents must be followed, since too dilute a solution may be ineffective and too concentrated a solution may be toxic.

4.1.6 After cleaning, animal housing areas should be left dry. Kennels and cat runs should be dried with a mop or squeegee.

4.2 Pest Control

4.2.1 Pests, including fleas, ticks, flies, lice, mosquitoes and wild rodents, must be controlled.

4.2.2 Chemicals used for pest control must be registered where required under the Pesticides Act and used only in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

4.2.3 Because dogs and humans may be adversely affected by pest control agents, expert advice should be sought before pest control operations are carried out.

4.3 Waste Disposal

4.3.1 Droppings, bedding, food wastes and animal bodies must be disposed of promptly and hygienically and in accordance with the requirements of the local government authority.

4.3.2 Use of a trade waste service for collection and disposal of wastes is preferred. Wastes should not be incinerated on site.

4.4 Litter Trays

4.4.1 Cats must be provided with litter trays.

4.4.2 Sufficient depth of suitable litter material, such as commercial cat litter, sawdust, shavings, sand or shredded paper, is to be provided. Litter should be checked, scooped and replenished or changed. All litter must be changed at least once a week, when trays should be washed and disinfected. Fresh litter must be provided for new cats when they are admitted for boarding.

5. Management

5.1 Care of Animals

5.1.1 Animals are to be protected from distress or injury caused by other animals.

5.1.2 All animals must be identified.

5.1.3 The following information must be recorded relating to each animal admitted for boarding:

- the animal's name
- name, address and telephone number of its owner
- contact telephone number
- expected date of collection by owner
- a description of the animal including:
 - sex
 - breed or type
 - colour
 - age
 - distinguishing features
- vaccination status
- heartworm prevention status (dogs)

- name and contact telephone number of a veterinarian who normally attends the animal.
- details of medical, dietary, bathing and grooming requirements
- the animal's condition and preferably weight on arrival
- any collars, leads or belongings brought in with the animal

5.1.4 Collars or leads which are likely to become entangled and endanger the animal should be removed on admission.

5.1.5 Cats should not be kept in the same cage or run as dogs, even if they come from the same household, unless appropriate dual accommodation is provided for families of mixed species.

5.1.6 Cats should preferably be housed singly except in the case of compatible cats from the same household.

5.1.7 Where cats are housed in groups, additional floor area per cat is required than when cats are housed singly, and increased attention is needed to prevent disease.

5.1.8 Dogs should preferably be housed singly or in compatible pairs.

5.1.9 Dogs which should be housed singly include:

- bitches with puppies
- very aggressive dogs
- old or frail dogs

5.2 Staff

5.2.1 Staff should respect animals and should have experience in handling them. Formal training, such as a technical college qualification in animal care, is encouraged.

5.2.2 Staff should be aware of their responsibilities and be competent to carry them out.

6. Health care

6.1 Disease Prevention

6.1.1 For dogs, vaccination against distemper, hepatitis, parvovirus and canine cough is required. A current vaccination certificate (certifying that vaccination was done in the preceding 12 months) must be produced for each dog before admission. Checking for heartworm infection is recommended before admission.

6.1.2 For cats, vaccination against feline infectious enteritis and feline respiratory disease is required. A current vaccination certificate (certifying that vaccination was done within the preceding 12 months) must be produced for each cat before admission.

6.1.3 Animals known or suspected to be suffering from an infectious disease should not be admitted for boarding.

6.1.4 Dogs and cats presenting worms will be wormed at the owner's expense.

6.1.5 Dogs less than 4 months old and cats less than 3 months old should not be admitted for boarding other than in exceptional circumstances.

6.2 Health Checks

6.2.1 Each animal shall be checked at least once daily to monitor its health and comfort.

6.2.2 The person checking the animals should note whether each animal:

- is eating
- has a normal coat
- is drinking
- is defecating
- is urinating
- is behaving normally
- is of normal appearance
- is able to move about freely

6.2.3 Any changes in health status should be reported promptly to the animal boarding establishment manager.

6.3 Veterinary Care

6.3.1 Owners of boarding animals must be asked to sign an agreement authorising provision of necessary veterinary treatment.

6.3.2 The animal boarding establishment manager should establish liaison with a veterinary surgeon who is able to attend to any animals in his or her care, and is also able to advise on disease prevention measures.

6.3.3 Veterinary attention must be sought by the animal boarding establishment manager or their nominee for any animal showing any of the following conditions:

- runny nose
- runny, discharging or inflamed eyes
- repeated sneezing
- coughing
- vomiting

- severe diarrhea, especially if bloodstained
- lameness
- inability to stand or walk
- bleeding or swelling of body parts (other than the vulva of bitches on heat)
- weight loss
- no appetite
- apparent pain
- fits or staggering
- bloated abdomen
- inability to urinate or defecate.

6.4 Isolation

6.4.1 Facilities must be available either at the animal boarding establishment or at veterinary premises for isolation of animals that are suspected or have been diagnosed as having an infectious disease.

6.5 Euthanasia

6.5.1 Euthanasia should be considered where an animal becomes seriously ill or injured during boarding and where it is recommended by a veterinarian who has examined the animal.

6.5.2 Permission from the animal's owner or nominee, preferably in writing, should be obtained.

6.5.3 Euthanasia should only be performed by a veterinarian.

7. Diet

7.1 Food

7.1.1 Animals must receive appropriate, uncontaminated and nutritionally adequate food according to the accepted requirements for the species, breed and age. The food should be in sufficient quantity and of appropriate composition.

7.1.2 A variety of foods should be supplied. Canned and dry foods will form the staple diet in most cases, but fresh meat and fish may tempt fussy eaters.

7.1.3 Pregnant and lactating animals require approximately twice the amount of food required normally.

7.1.4 Adult dogs and cats should be fed daily. Pregnant and lactating animals, pups up to 6 months of age, and kittens up to 8 months of age should be fed twice daily.

7.1.5 Food should be prepared hygienically and served in clean, unspillable containers.

7.1.6 Food should be stored appropriately, with dry food kept in a rodent-free place and fresh meat kept refrigerated.

7.1.7 Food containers should be preferably non-chewable and non-spillable. They must be readily accessible, positioned to avoid spillage and contamination by urine or faeces, and must be cleaned at least daily.

7.1.8 Uneaten food should be removed and disposed of promptly so that it does not spoil or attract vermin.

7.1.9 Cats should be monitored for the first 3-4 days after admission to check that they are eating.

7.2 Water

Fresh water must be available at all times.

8. Exercise

8.1 Dogs must have the opportunity for exercise to:

- 8.1.1 allow them to urinate and defecate
- 8.1.2 give them contact with humans and, if appropriate, with other dogs
- 8.1.3 allow them to be checked over
- 8.1.4 let them stretch their limbs.

8.2 Exercise for dogs

8.2.1 Exercise can be provided by:

- allowing dogs access to an exercise area for at least 10 minutes twice daily
- walking dogs on a lead for at least 10 minutes twice daily

Very active or old dogs may require more or less exercise than specified.

8.2.2 Dogs should not be walked on busy roads, but preferably confined on the premises for safety reasons.

8.3 Exercise for cats

8.3.1 Cats must have sufficient room to enable them to stretch and to move about freely.

8.3.2 Cats should be checked daily for normal posture and mobility.

9. Transport

9.1 Animals should be transported in the shortest practicable time. They must not be kept in parked vehicles in the sun or in hot weather unless adequate ventilation and shade is provided.

9.2 Any vehicle especially designed or regularly used for transporting animals should:

- protect animals from injury
- have non-slip floors
- be easy to clean and disinfect
- provide easy access and operator safety
- protect against extremes of temperature
- protect against unauthorised release of animals
- be supplied with clean, secure cages or carry baskets for cats or very small dogs, and with separate compartments or partitions for larger dogs.

Transport cages should permit an animal to turn around, but otherwise be small enough to avoid trauma during transport.

9.3 For more detailed information about animal transport, refer to the companion publication in this series entitled "The Care and Management of Animals by Companion animal Transport Agencies".

10. Disposal of animals

10.1 Animal boarding establishment managers must have a policy for dealing with unclaimed animals, which gives owners a reasonable opportunity to collect boarded animals.

10.2 Owners must be made aware of this policy when animals are admitted, by reading and signing a standard form which sets out the terms under which animals are accepted for boarding.

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