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Consultation on Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs

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Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR
Telephone 020 7238 6000
Website: www.defra.gov.uk

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Information about this publication and further copies are available from:

Defra
Animal Welfare Act Implementation Team
Area 8B, No 9 Millbank
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR
Tel: 0207 238 5991

Email: [Animal Welfare Consultations \(FFG\)](mailto:Animal Welfare Consultations (FFG))

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Preface

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (“the Act”), if you own or are responsible, whether on a permanent or temporary basis, for an animal, you have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to ensure its welfare needs are met. This code explains what you need to do to meet the standard of care the law requires. If you are a parent or guardian of a child less than 16 years old, you are responsible for any animal that child is in charge of or owns.

Breach of a provision of the code is not an offence in itself, but if proceedings are brought against you for a welfare offence under the Act, the court may take into account the extent to which you have complied with the code in deciding whether you have committed an offence or have met the required standard of care. You should not cause any unnecessary suffering to your animal; this could constitute a serious offence under the Act.

You will also find reference in the code to ‘pet care specialists’. These are people who, through qualification or experience, can provide expert advice on welfare and some aspects of health for one or more types of pet animal. Examples are animal behaviourists, veterinary nurses and dedicated welfare organisations. Owners should look to their veterinary surgeon for advice on their animal’s health and later refer to pet care specialists.

To find out more about the Animal Welfare Act 2006, your responsibilities under it, and other legislation relating to dogs, see Annex 1 at the end of this code. For further sources of information, see Annex 2.

You should be aware that the legislation cited in the code and Annex 1 is correct at the date of issue but may be subject to subsequent change.

This preface is not part of the code but is intended to explain its purpose and broad aims. Similarly Annex 1, which provides information on the relevant legal requirements and Annex 2, which lists some additional sources of information, are not part of the code.

Introduction

Owning and caring for a dog is great fun and very rewarding, but it is also a big responsibility and a long-term caring and financial commitment. You control your dog's lifestyle; it is your responsibility to make sure that its needs are met, whatever the circumstances. The law requires that you must take reasonable steps to ensure that it:

- Has a suitable environment to live in;
- Has a healthy diet;
- Is able to behave normally;
- Has appropriate company;
- Is protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease

These are explained in more detail in sections 1-5 of this Code. For further advice, speak to your vet or a pet care specialist. Other sources of information are listed in Annex 2.

Every animal is different and as you get to know your dog, you will recognise familiar characteristics. It is important that you are able to notice any changes in behaviour, as these might indicate that your dog is distressed, ill, or is not having its needs met in some other way.

This Code of Practice is issued under section 14 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (the "Act"). This Code applies in England only and has been issued by the Secretary of State. The purpose of this Code of Practice is to provide advice on how to meet the needs of your dog to the extent required by good practice under section 9 of the Act. Serious failure to meet such needs could also constitute an offence of unreasonable suffering under section 4 of the Act. It covers all dogs for which a person is responsible.

This Code of Practice is split into two parts. Part 1 is a summary of the detail contained in the main Code of Practice.

It is your responsibility to read the complete Code of Practice to fully understand your dog's welfare needs and what the law requires you to do.

Part 1 - Summary of the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs

Section 1 – Environment

Make sure your dog has a suitable place to live

Sleeping and resting

You should provide your dog with a comfortable, dry, draught-free resting area to which it has constant access and where it will feel safe.

Keeping a dog outside

If you keep your dog outside ensure that it is also kept within a secure space to prevent it from escaping or roaming and to stop other animals getting in, unwelcome visitors or even theft. If your dog is kept outside you must still ensure all of its needs are met, including security, adequate comfort, shelter from adverse weather conditions, companionship and interaction and protection from injury.

Hazards

Ensure your dog is kept away from potentially harmful substances

Travel

Make sure your dog is transported safely

Dogs should not be left unattended in a vehicle. In warm weather, **this can be life threatening**

Section 2 – Diet

Make sure your dog has a balanced diet that meets its nutritional needs

Your dog must have access to fresh clean water at all times

How often to feed your dog

Your dog must be fed at least once a day, but generally, it is advised to feed your dog twice a day.

Leave your dog in peace while it is eating

Your dog must have access to fresh water at all times.

Healthy weight

Your dog should not be too fat or too thin. Ideally you should just be able to feel its ribs and clearly see its waist when viewed from above. **Obesity is a serious welfare concern in dogs as it increases the risk of developing certain health conditions later in life.**

Other dietary needs

Some dogs have different dietary needs. Your vet is the best person to advise you about the care of your dog in these circumstances

Section 3 – Behaviour

Its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns

Your dog should be able to behave normally

Training

It takes time and effort to train your dog properly. Reward good behaviour with something that your dog finds enjoyable and make sure that you respond immediately

Exercise

It is very important that your dog receives a suitable amount of exercise. If you are in doubt about what exercise your dog needs, seek professional advice

Signs of Stress

Watch your dog closely for signs of stress or changes in behaviour

Going to the toilet

Toilet training is an essential part of early learning. You should provide your dog with regular access to an appropriate place where it can go to the toilet.

Section 4 – Company

Make sure your dog's social needs are met

Socialisation

Dogs are a social species and need the company of people, dogs, or other animals

You should be aware of how your dog responds to other animals and keep it under suitable control if it does not mix well with them

Relations with other animals and people

Your dog should have plenty of things to stimulate it mentally which can be provided by contact with humans or another dog and by providing safe and suitable toys to play with.

Socialisation with people, dogs and other animals is an essential part of early learning. The important period of learning is from approximately 3 weeks to 8 weeks of age, but can continue for considerably longer

When you are away from home

You must arrange for your dog to be cared for if you are away from home

Dogs should not be routinely left on their own for prolonged periods as they are likely to become stressed and bored, leading to barking or destructive behaviour

Number of animals

Large numbers of animals need a great deal of care and you should not keep a large number of dogs if you cannot meet their welfare needs

Section 5 – Health & Welfare

You must ensure your dog is in good health

Health care

You should regularly examine your dog for signs of injury and illness. You must ensure your dog is treated promptly by a vet if it is injured or ill. Your dog's vet will also be able to advise you about routine health care, such as neutering, vaccination, and parasite control (e.g. fleas and worms), as well as any health problems it may have

Grooming

You should ensure that your dog's coat is properly groomed. A pet care specialist may be able to advise you about coat care.

Identification

You must not allow your dog to stray; it must wear a correctly fitted collar and identity tag when in a public place and should also be permanently identified, preferably with a microchip.

Part 2 - Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs

Section 1: Environment

Its need for a suitable environment (Section 9(a) of the Act)

1.1 This section offers guidance on providing your dog with a suitable place to live.

Sleeping and resting

1.2 Dogs need:

- their own bed, with comfortable bedding, to which they can retire and which should be sited in a quiet place;
- their bed to be placed in a dry, draught-free area;
- their bedding to be regularly cleaned, washed or removed and replaced; and
- a bed with no sharp corners or splinters as these may cause injury.

Keeping a dog outside

1.3 If your dog is to be kept outside the home there are a number of additional considerations that should be taken into account. These include:

- security;
- adequate comfort and shelter;
- companionship and interaction;
- injury; and
- nuisance to neighbours.

1.4 The environment that your dog is kept in should be absolutely secure with good quality fencing to prevent it from escaping or roaming and to prevent the intrusion of other animals, unwelcome visitors, or even theft.

1.5 When considering the type of fencing, consideration should be given to the size and weight of your dog and its ability to escape by jumping, climbing or digging. Gates should be secured with good quality fixings to ensure that they cannot be accidentally unfastened. Further, there should be no sharp edges or corners on any surface that could cause your dog injury.

1.6 Outside housing should consist of a kennel and run and there should be protection from adverse weather conditions including heat, cold and damp. The kennel should be large enough for your dog to lie comfortably both in and beside its bed and it should be provided with clean comfortable bedding.

- 1.7 Any area that you provide for your dog should be large enough for it to stretch, walk and turn around in and the run should be large enough for it to be able to relieve itself without needing to walk through the soiled area to return to its kennel. All faeces and urine should be removed at least daily and the run should be regularly cleaned.
- 1.8 Dogs that are kept outside and away from people or other animals, and denied mental stimulation, can suffer appreciable emotional problems such as excessive chewing, or a range of other unusual behaviours. Therefore care should be taken to ensure that your dog is provided with enough company, exercise or other stimulation to ensure that it remains well balanced and free from stress. You should also regularly visit your dog to ensure that it receives social interaction whilst also providing the opportunity to check on its welfare. Where dogs are kept together, they must be compatible. You should ensure that there is sufficient room for all dogs to be alone when necessary.
- 1.9 You should also remember that dogs kept outside may react to sights and sounds that they may not normally see or hear inside the home. Your dog may bark, howl or cry for extended periods if it is bored or stressed and this can cause a nuisance to your neighbours.

Hygiene

- 1.10 Part of providing a suitable environment is making sure that it is safe, clean and hygienic. It is good hygiene practice to clean up after your dog at home using a plastic bag or 'pooper scooper' and to dispose of any faeces in the waste bin, particularly where there are children around. This not only makes the environment cleaner, but also helps to prevent the potential spread of disease.

Hazards

- 1.11 Dogs, and especially inquisitive puppies, may eat things that are poisonous to them. Some examples are:
- poisonous foods such as raisins, grapes and chocolate. It is important to keep these foodstuffs out of the reach of dogs at all times.
 - poisonous plants. Such plants should be avoided or placed where your dog cannot reach them. Make sure that any large plants are in a stable container that cannot be knocked over;
 - poisonous chemicals. A dog may drink or eat poisonous substances either by accident or because they find them palatable. Such chemicals should be kept out of reach and any spillages cleaned up

immediately. Examples of poisonous substance that are commonly used and may be attractive to dogs are slug pellets, rat poison and anti-freeze; and

- medicines intended for people or other animals. It is important that your dog is only given medicines that have been specifically prescribed or advised by your vet.

You should always consult your vet if you are concerned that your dog has come into contact with anything that could be harmful.

Travel

1.12 Dogs are regularly transported by car or other vehicles. During transportation:

- you should make sure that your dog is not able to move freely. In the event of an accident or sudden and unexpected manoeuvres, an unrestrained dog can be seriously injured or cause injury to other passengers. A safety harness, specifically for use in a car, or a secured, purpose built cage of adequate size and with good ventilation, will keep your dog in one place. You should ensure, however, that when securing your dog in a restricted area, it is not constantly subjected to direct sunlight; and
- long journeys must be planned so they have as minimal an impact on a dog's feeding regime as possible.

1.13 Dogs should not be left unattended in a car or other vehicle in warm weather. **This can be life threatening and you could be prosecuted for causing unnecessary suffering.** The temperature in the vehicle can become very high extremely quickly and cause heat stroke or death.

Section 2: Diet

Its need for a suitable diet (Section 9(b) of the Act)

- 2.1 This section offers guidance on providing your dog with a suitable diet.
- 2.2 Your dog must always have access to fresh clean water from a clean bowl. This is essential for all dogs unless your vet tells you differently. Many dogs may not drink large amounts but their thirst may increase in hot weather or if you feed dried food. Changes in the amount of water your dog drinks may also indicate illness.

Balanced Diet

- 2.3 It is essential to provide a nutritionally balanced diet from early in a dog's life to ensure it receives essential nutrients in the correct quantities for good health. A good diet can help prevent the effects of many diseases.
- 2.4 Dogs need a diet containing high quality protein, fat, carbohydrate, vitamins and minerals which can either be given in the form of prepared foods or home-made meals. When feeding prepared foods, you should follow the food manufacturer's instructions closely and avoid feeding your dog between meals.
- 2.5 An alternative to a prepared dog food is a home-made diet. Unlike cats, dogs are not totally carnivorous and will, therefore, enjoy some green vegetables added to their food. Providing a homemade diet requires a good understanding of your dog's nutritional needs and if you choose to feed it this way you should obtain advice from your vet or pet care specialist.
- 2.6 It is important that your dog has the correct diet in appropriate portions and, if you have more than one dog, that each is fed according to its needs. You should also clear away any uneaten food after each mealtime.
- 2.7 Leave your dog in peace while it is eating as disturbing it or repeatedly taking its food bowl away can cause anxiety and may lead to food related aggression.

Healthy weight

- 2.8 Dogs should not be given more food than they need as overeating leads to obesity. **An obese dog is an unhealthy dog** and pet obesity is the most frequent nutritional problem seen by vets. If a dog eats too much and exercises too little, it will put on weight leading to a reduced quality of life. It may also lead to health

problems such as heart disease and diabetes. Remember that if you are using food rewards for training purposes you may unwittingly overfeed your pet. You will need to adjust the amount of food your dog has at meal times to take this into account.

- 2.9 An underweight dog may also be ill so you should know the best weight for your pet and try to make sure that this stays approximately the same throughout its adult life.

Body Condition

Too thin

- Ribs and other bony areas can be seen from a distance – less obvious in longhaired breeds;
- Skinny looking and tummy looks empty - be aware of what is normal for the breed;
- Loss of muscle mass - small amount of muscle over the back and hips, upper legs muscles feel “stringy”, skull bone very obvious when stroking the head. feels “bony” when stroked; and
- Waist narrow and small but be aware of what is normal for the breed.

Ideal

- Learn what is normal for the breed;
- Well muscled;
- Ribs can be easily felt without feeling like you are pressing directly on the ribs; and
- Waist can be seen from behind the ribs - narrower than the chest when looking from above and from the side.

Too heavy

- Ribs not easily felt as covered with a lot of fat.
- Lots of fat on the loin area and base of tail.
- Waist can barely be seen; and
- Belly may be sagging.

How often to feed your dog

- 2.10 The number of meals per day will depend upon the age of your dog and how much work or exercise it takes. Generally, it is better to feed an adult dog twice a day rather than the traditional once.
- 2.11 If you do feed your pet twice a day, the food may be divided up into two equal portions, or a third and two-thirds division. Part of the diet may also be offered in dried food ‘puzzle feeders’ that release food gradually and so provide mental stimulation for dogs indoors.

- 2.12 If you have more than one dog it is important to give each animal the opportunity to eat in privacy
- 2.13 If your dog stops eating it may be a sign of illness. You should consult your vet if the problem persists or if there are other signs of disease.

Other dietary needs

- 2.14 Dogs that are pregnant, feeding their puppies, ill, old or young may well have different dietary needs from the average healthy adult dog. Specially formulated life-stage foods are available on the market to address these varying nutritional needs. Your vet is the best person to advise you about the care of your dog in these circumstances.
- 2.15 Puppies require about two and half times as many calories per kilogram bodyweight as an adult dog while they are growing. Food for this age group should be higher in calories, protein and other necessary nutrients.
- 2.16 You should avoid feeding your dog from the table or your plate as this can encourage your dog to beg and bark, and do not feed your dog immediately before travelling, to avoid travel sickness. Dogs should not be fed within an hour before or after vigorous exercise as this can lead to bloating which can be painful and dangerous for the dogs health.
- 2.17 If you need to change your dog's diet, do it gradually, over a week or so, unless your vet tells you otherwise.

Section 3: Behaviour

Its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns

(Section 9(c) of the Act)

- 3.1 This section offers guidance on your dog's behaviour. Although this section focuses on puppies, many of the principles equally apply to older dogs.

Early experiences

- 3.2 Socialisation with people, dogs and other animals is an essential part of early learning. The important period of learning is from approximately 3 weeks to 8 weeks of age, but can continue for considerably longer. The first few weeks when your puppy is in your home are also very important in terms of it learning how to react to other dogs, people and the environment. It will also learn to interact and understand how dogs communicate with each other by mixing with them, and your vet will tell you when it is safe to allow this. Your dog should continue to have a range of social and environmental stimuli throughout its life.
- 3.3 Your puppy should be carefully introduced to as wide a range of noises, objects, other animals and people as possible. If puppies learn at an early age that these items are not a threat, then they will probably be happy in their presence for the rest of their lives. However, it is important not to overwhelm your puppy, and you should always allow it an escape route from things that it finds frightening and stressful. Forcing your puppy to interact may lead to behavioural problems so it is important to make situations as relaxed and positive as possible so that it wants to investigate and interact.
- 3.4 A puppy needs long periods of rest to develop a healthy body and temperament. A sleeping puppy should not be disturbed but allowed to awaken naturally.
- 3.5 Veterinary practices, pet shops and other pet care businesses may run 'puppy parties' for owners to seek advice about how to care for their new puppy.
- 3.6 Children, and adults who are not familiar with dogs, need to be aware that a dog should not be disturbed when resting, sleeping or eating, nor should it be forced to play or be carried around. Such interaction can encourage aggressive behaviour. There are various programmes available to teach children how to interact with dogs correctly.

Training your dog

- 3.7 Social training is important from an early age. It is easier to change the behaviour of a puppy that nips than to deal with a dog that bites. Training a dog should be based on positive reinforcement. You should avoid punishment when training your dog as it teaches response out of fear; this is bad for its welfare and can cause behavioural problems later in its life. Good dog training classes can show you positive training techniques that can prevent and correct different types of unwanted behaviour. There are a number of suitable training schemes.
- 3.9 As puppies have very short attention spans, it is best to train them for short periods on a regular basis.

Exercise

- 3.11 The amount of exercise your dog needs will vary according to its age and breed. For example, as your dog gets older it may prefer a more sedentary life, or your vet may recommend a restricted exercise regime, where toys for mental stimulation perhaps replaces physical exercise.
- 3.12 If you over-exercise a growing puppy, you can damage its developing joints, but obviously puppies need sufficient exercise to provide outlets for their physical and mental energy. If you are in any doubt about what exercise your puppy needs, seek professional advice.
- 3.13 Your puppy is not fully protected from disease when it is first vaccinated. Always ask your vet when it will be fully protected, and do not exercise it outside your home until then.
- 3.14 It is advisable to keep your dog on a lead in a built-up area and when near livestock; not only are there dangers from the traffic, but also from other dogs. Let it off the lead only when you are sure that it is safe and legal to do so, and it is also important to train it when off the lead to return to you when called.
- 3.15 You should also avoid walking your dog during the hottest part of the day. Early morning or in the evening are the best times to walk your pet during periods of hot weather.

Boredom and frustration

- 3.16 Dogs are social animals with active minds and so they need mental stimulation to be happy. This can be provided by contact with humans or another dog, by providing toys to play with or an

environment where a lot is going on. However, this should not be too overwhelming.

- 3.17 Interacting with your dog by playing games using appropriate toys will provide the best mental stimulation for it. It is not advisable, however, to leave it alone with flimsy toys, especially if it chews very vigorously, as if it swallows small parts of them it may develop serious intestinal problems. Toys should be checked regularly to ensure they are not dirty or damaged. Changing them often means that your dog will not become bored with an individual toy.

Signs of stress

- 3.18 Dogs will generally convey contentment through looking calm and relaxed; they will be happy to approach and interact with people, dogs and other animals. It is important that you recognise any changes in the behaviour of your dog as this may indicate stress, which can vary from dog to dog. Signs of stress include:

- panting, salivation, licking of the lips;
- excessive activity, such as pacing around;
- fouling or urinating indoors;
- barking;
- excessively seeking out contact, both with people and other pets;
- hiding or cowering;
- flattening the ears and lowering the tail; and
- yawning, unless tired.

Some of the above may also be signs of illness, however, and if you are concerned, you should contact your vet who will be able to advise you on the best course of action. This may include referring your animal to an animal behaviourist.

Toilet training

- 3.19 Toilet training is an essential part of early learning. If your dog is introduced to a suitable outdoor location early on, and is rewarded for using this as a toilet area, it will use it as a matter of routine. Do not punish your dog when it makes a mistake as this can make it fearful and lead to problems later on in its life. Submissive urination, which can be caused by a number of emotions including excitement or intimidation, should not be mistaken for normal urination. This is common in small puppies, especially bitches, There are many available sources of useful information about toilet training your puppy (see Annex 2 - Sources of Information).

- 3.20 A dog owner, or the person responsible for the dog, has a legal obligation to clean up after it (use either a 'pooper scooper' or a plastic bag) when in a public place under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environments Act 2005.

Section 4: Company

Any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals

(Section 9(d) of the Act)

- 4.1 This section offers guidance on providing your dog with suitable company.

Socialisation

- 4.2 Dogs learn 'good manners' by interacting with other dogs. All dogs learn social skills from other dogs, which is why it is important for your puppy or dog to socialise with good tempered adult dogs, within a secure and safe environment.

- 4.3 You should also be aware of how your dog responds to unfamiliar dogs, cats and other animals and keep it under suitable control if it does not mix well with other pets.

Relations with other animals and people

- 4.4 Your dog should have plenty of things to stimulate it mentally which can be provided by contact with humans or another dog and by playing with safe and suitable toys.

- 4.5 Children and adults who are not familiar with dogs, need to know that a dog should not be disturbed when resting, sleeping or eating, nor should it be forced to play or be carried around.

When you are away from home

- 4.6 You have a responsibility to make sure that your dog is cared for properly if you are unable to take it with you. This may be done by a dog sitter who lives in your home while you are away, somebody licensed to board dogs or by taking your dog to stay with a friend or relative who knows how to look after it. When someone else is looking after your dog they have a legal responsibility to protect its welfare and you should ensure that they understand its needs and any special requirements that it may have.

- 4.7 Dogs should not be routinely left on their own for more than a few hours during the day as they are likely to become bored, leading to barking or destructive behaviour. Many animal welfare organisations recommend a maximum of four hours. A possible

solution if you are regularly away from home is to employ a responsible dog walker. Remember that it is an offence to allow your dog to roam.

Number of animals

- 4.8 Owners should think carefully about the size of their property and the financial and time implications of having more than one dog. It is also important to take into account your dog's likely acceptance of other dogs within its home territory. Your vet or pet care specialist will be able to offer further advice on this. Keeping another dog is not an alternative to providing regular exercise outside the living area. All dogs should be exercised routinely.

Section 5: Health& Welfare

Its need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease
(Section 9(e) of the Act)

5.1 This section offers guidance on the health and welfare of your dog.

Health care

5.2 Good health is an essential part of good dog welfare. Your dog's vet is the best person to advise you about routine health care, such as neutering, vaccination and internal and external parasite control, as well as any health problems your dog may have.

As the person responsible for your dog's welfare you need to consider:

- prevention of disease. There are various vaccinations that are designed to protect your dog from certain diseases, some of which are life-threatening. Puppies are very susceptible to some of these diseases. You should discuss with your vet the best age at which to start vaccinations. ;
- prevention of parasite problems. All dogs (including puppies) need regular –treatment to prevent them developing a worm infestation. Many worming and flea preparations are available and your vet or pet care specialist will be able to advise you on which are most suitable for your dog, depending on its age and lifestyle. provision of a healthy, balanced diet (see section 2);
- provision of the right environment that minimises the risk of injury and disease (see section 1);
- prompt action if your dog becomes ill or begins to behave in an unusual way; and
- good dental hygiene.

Illness

5.3 It is important that you are aware of the signs of illness in your dog, and that you consult a vet promptly if these occur.

Indications of illness include:

- sickness and diarrhoea;
- significant weight change (in either direction) over a short period;
- lack of appetite;
- drinking much more or less than normal;
- lack of energy;
- unusual swellings;
- skin conditions;
- limping;
- coughing;
- unusual bleeding;
- signs of pain, such as sensitivity to touch.

This list is not exhaustive and any change in your dog's behaviour should alert you to the possibility that it may be ill. If you think that there is anything wrong with your dog, call your veterinary practice for advice.

Obtaining a dog

- 5.4 The future health and welfare of your dog may be affected by the circumstances under which it was bred. Not all dogs are bred with appropriate care for their physical and behavioural well-being and health. It is best to take advice from your vet or other relevant organisations (see Annex 2) about where to obtain your dog. This will help to ensure that it is fit, healthy and of good quality.

You should check as far as is possible with the breeder, pet shop, rescue centre or sanctuary:

- that the dog's parents have been appropriately screened for inherited defects commonly found in the breed (for example hip scores for hip dysplasia or eye screening for inherited eye conditions); and
- the dog's medical history and background where available to ensure that you are able to meet its needs. Some rescue dogs, for example, require special care.

Where possible, you should ask to see the puppy with its mother, and see its father too. This gives a good guide to temperament and the size to which the dog may grow. You should be aware that this information is less likely to be available for dogs from sanctuaries and rescue shelters.

- 5.5 Take your new dog or puppy to a veterinary surgeon for general health care advice within a couple of days of welcoming it into your home. Follow your vet's advice about continuing healthcare throughout its life.

Grooming

- 5.6 A long-haired dog will need more coat attention than a short-haired one and will need grooming daily to keep its coat free from matts and tangles. However, all dogs need regular grooming and occasional bathing to keep their skin and coats well maintained. You will need a brush and comb suited to your dog's type of coat. A pet care specialist will be able to advise you about coat care.

Neutering

5.7 One particularly important consideration is preventing the birth of unwanted puppies. You should, therefore, consider having your dog neutered. Your vet will be able to advise you about the best age to have this done. There is evidence that neutering has some positive health benefits in addition to preventing the birth of unwanted puppies:

- neutered bitches will not develop a life threatening womb infection called pyometra;
- neutered bitches are thought to be less prone to mammary tumours;
- neutering male dogs prevents testicular cancer;
- neutering male dogs reduces the incidence of problems with the prostate gland
- neutering male dogs may help prevent some unwanted behaviours such as inappropriate mounting, aggression and straying; and
- un-neutered animals which are prevented from breeding may suffer frustration leading to behavioural problems.

If you decide not to have your dog neutered and wish to breed from it, there are a number of considerations to be taken into account which include:

- finding suitable homes for the puppies; and
- health screening to ensure that the parents do not carry any inherited defects which may be passed on to their offspring. You should carefully consider whether your dog is a good candidate for breeding and you should discuss this with your veterinary surgeon.

You will also need to consider the potential problem of unplanned matings.

Help is often available from various charities who offer neutering at a discounted rate for those on benefits or low incomes.

You should discuss with your veterinary surgeon the pros and cons of neutering your dog and the best timing of this procedure.

Dental care

5.8 Care of your dog's teeth should be part of its routine grooming schedule. Special canine toothpaste, dental chews and toys are available and can also help keep your dog's teeth and gums healthy.

Identification

5.9 Your dog must wear a collar and identity tag when in a public place and should also be permanently identified. There are many different

collars and leads available and it is important you choose a collar that fits your pet correctly. By law (Control of Dogs Order 1992) the collar must carry a tag with your name and address and, if possible, a contact telephone number on it.

- 5.10 It is also recommended that you have your dog microchipped by a suitably qualified person. The 'chip' provides unique indelible identification so that if your dog is lost or stolen, when it is found the 'chip' can be scanned by a vet, dog warden or rescue centre and this will assist in re-uniting you and your pet. Your dog will still have to wear a collar and tag, however.

What to do if your dog is missing

- 5.11 You should contact local authority dog wardens who are responsible for dealing with stray dogs, vets, local rescue centres as well as those in a wider area as dogs can travel for some distance if lost; you can also put up notices locally.

Annex 1 - The Law

The Animal Welfare Act 2006

The following sections of the Act are referred to in the code and are set out here for ease of reference:

The boxes below contain extracts from the relevant sections of the Act.

The box shaded grey summarises the relevant offences and penalties in the Act.

Section 3 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 provides:

Responsibility for animals

- (1) In this Act, references to a person responsible for an animal are to a person responsible for an animal whether on a permanent or temporary basis.
- (2) In this Act, references to being responsible for an animal include being in charge of it.
- (3) For the purposes of this Act, a person who owns an animal shall always be regarded as being a person who is responsible for it.
- (4) For the purposes of this Act, a person shall be treated as responsible for any animal for which a person under the age of 16 years of whom he has actual care and control is responsible.

Section 4 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 provides:

Unnecessary suffering

- (1) A person commits an offence if –
 - (a) an act of his, or a failure of his to act, causes an animal to suffer,
 - (b) he knew, or ought reasonably to have known, that the act, or failure to act, would have that effect or be likely to do so,
 - (c) the animal is a protected animal, and
 - (d) the suffering is unnecessary.
- (2) A person commits an offence if-
 - (a) he is responsible for an animal,
 - (b) an act, or failure to act, of another person causes the animal to suffer,
 - (c) he permitted that to happen or failed to take such steps (whether by way of supervising the other person or otherwise) as were reasonable in all the circumstances to prevent that happening, and
 - (d) the suffering is unnecessary.

- (3) The considerations to which it is relevant to have regard when determining for the purposes of this section whether suffering is unnecessary include –
- (a) whether the suffering could reasonably have been avoided or reduced;
 - (b) whether the conduct which caused the suffering was in compliance with any relevant enactment or any relevant provisions of a licence or code of practice issued under an enactment;
 - (c) whether the conduct which caused the suffering was for a legitimate purpose, such as –
 - (i) the purpose of benefiting the animal, or
 - (ii) the purpose of protecting a person, property or other animal;
 - (d) whether the suffering was proportionate to the purpose of the conduct concerned;
 - (e) whether the conduct concerned was in all the circumstances that of a reasonably competent and humane person.
- (4) Nothing in this section applies to the destruction of an animal in an appropriate and humane manner.

Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 provides:

Duty of person responsible for animal to ensure welfare

- (1) A person commits an offence if he does not take such steps as are reasonable in all the circumstances to ensure that the needs of an animal for which he is responsible are met to the extent required by good practice.
- (2) For the purpose of this Act, an animal's needs shall be taken to include-
- (a) its need for a suitable environment,
 - (b) its need for a suitable diet,
 - (c) its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns,
 - (d) any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals, and
 - (e) its need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.
- (3) The circumstances to which it is relevant to have regard when applying subsection (1) include, in particular –
- (a) any lawful purpose for which the animal is kept, and
 - (b) any lawful activity undertaken in relation to the animal.
- (4) Nothing in this section applies to the destruction of an animal in an appropriate and humane manner.

Section 14 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 provides:

Codes of Practice

(3) A person's failure to comply with a provision of a code of practice issued under this section shall not of itself render him liable to proceedings of any kind.

(4) In any proceedings against a person for an offence under this Act or an offence under regulations under section 12 or 13 –

(a) a failure to comply with a relevant provision of a code of practice issued under this section may be relied upon as tending to establish liability, and

(b) compliance with a relevant provision of such a code of practice may be relied upon as tending to negative liability.

Offences and Penalties

A person who is convicted of an offence under section 4 of the Act may be imprisoned for a maximum period of 6 months* and/or fined up to £20,000. If they are convicted of an offence under section 9 (failing to ensure the animal's welfare) they can be imprisoned for the same maximum period and fined up to level 5 on the standard scale.

Proceedings may be brought up to 3 years after the offence was committed. Prosecutions under the Act are brought by the local authority in the Magistrates Court. Private prosecutions can be brought by any party, such as the RSPCA.

* The maximum period of imprisonment will be 51 weeks when section 281 (5) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 comes into force.

Other legislation affecting dogs

As well as the Animal Welfare Act 2006 there are a number of other laws that affect the way you keep your dog. The ones most likely to affect the owner or keeper of a pet dog are summarised below.

- **Breeding and Purchase**

The **Breeding of Dogs Act 1973** and the **Breeding and Sale of Dogs (Welfare) Act 1999** provide that anyone who is in the business of breeding and selling dogs needs to be licensed. The aim of the Acts is to control 'puppy farming' where dogs are bred in poor conditions. If you think the person from whom you are buying a puppy may be breeding dogs on a large scale and not just as a hobby you should ask to see their licence or ask the local Council if they have one. If dogs are being sold commercially, such as in a pet shop, the seller also has to have a licence under the **Pet Animals Act 1951**.

- **Controlling your dog**

Although the dog licence was abolished in 1987, it is still a legal requirement under the **Control of Dogs Order 1992** for a dog to wear a collar with the owner's name and address on it. Two other pieces of legislation, the **Dogs Act 1871** and the **Dangerous Dogs Act 1991**, require you to have proper control of your dog. The penalties if you do not have proper control of your dog include a fine, imprisonment and the possible compulsory destruction of the dog. The Dangerous Dogs Act also prohibits the ownership of four types of dog that have been traditionally bred for fighting: Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino and Fila Brasileiro. It is also illegal to sell, advertise for sale or give away any of these types of dog.

Local Councils now have the power under the **Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005** to introduce Dog Control Orders. The Orders may specify that dogs must be kept on a lead or be banned from designated areas, that the person in charge of a dog must pick up any faeces, that an authority officer can order a dog to be put on and kept on a lead and that the Council may place a limit on the number of dogs that can be walked by a person at any one time. Where Orders are in force there should be clear signs so you should keep an eye open for them.

The 2005 Act also transferred all responsibility for **stray dogs** from the police to local authorities. A local authority may impose a fine on the owner of a dog picked up as a stray and also charge the owner kennelling costs. A stray dog that is not identified and re-claimed within seven days may be sent to a re-homing agency or destroyed.

Under the **Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953** a dog owner commits an offence if their dog worries (attacks or chases) livestock on agricultural land. In the case of a field or enclosure where there are sheep, dogs must be on a lead, or otherwise under close control.

The **Animals Act 1971** creates liability (subject to certain defences) for damage done by dogs to livestock or other forms of damage done by an unrestrained dog under certain circumstances.

The **Guard Dogs Act 1975** imposes certain requirements on those responsible for guard dogs including the need to keep them under control or secured at all times and for a warning notice to be displayed at all entrances to the guarded premises.

- **Your dog during holidays**

If you are away from home and need to put your dog in kennels, you should check that the kennel has been licensed by the local Council under the **Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963**. The Act can also apply to people taking dogs into their homes if they do so for reward (usually referred to as 'home boarding').

If you wish to take your dog with you on a holiday abroad, other than to the Republic of Ireland, there are very strict rules about what treatment your dog will need before it can return to the UK. It takes 7 months minimum to comply with the rules so you need to plan well ahead. You should ask your vet about the details of what you have to do or look at the Defra website on the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) page (see Annex 2).

Under Article 4 of the **Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2007** it is an offence to transport any animal in a way which causes, or is likely to cause, injury or unnecessary suffering to that animal.

- **The Pet Animals Act 1951**

The Pet Animals Act 1951 (as amended in 1983) protects the welfare of animals sold as pets. The Act requires any person keeping a pet shop to be licensed by the local authority. Before granting a licence the local authority must be satisfied that the animals are kept in accommodation that is both suitable and clean; that they are supplied with appropriate food and drink; and are adequately protected from disease and fire. The local authority may attach any conditions to the licence, may inspect the licensed premises at all reasonable times and may refuse a licence if the conditions at the premises are unsatisfactory or if the terms of the licence are not being complied with.

Local authorities are responsible for enforcing the law in this area and anyone who has reason to believe that a pet shop is keeping animals in inadequate conditions should raise the matter with the local authority who will decide what action to take within the range of its powers.

Under section.2 pets cannot be sold in the street, including on barrows and markets.

- **Working dogs**

The docking of dogs' tails is banned in England under section 6 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 unless the dog is a certified working dog or where docking is performed for medical treatment; further details are set out in **The Docking of Working Dogs' Tails (England) Regulations 2007**.

There are exemptions from the ban for certain types of working dog, that allow for the dog's tail to be docked by a vet when the dog is not more than 5 days old. The vet will issue a certificate to prove the dog has been docked legally and the dog must be microchipped before it is 3 months of age.

The types of dogs that can be docked (upon production of evidence that it is likely to be used as a working dog) are:

- Hunt point retrieve breeds of any type or combination of types.
- Spaniels of any type or combination of types.
- Terriers of any type or combination of types.

There is also a ban on the showing of dogs docked on or after 6 April 2007 at events where members of the public have paid an entrance fee. This ban does not apply where a dog is shown only for the purpose of demonstrating its working ability.

Owners and keepers wishing to have a working dog's tail docked must ensure that this is undertaken in accordance with the law.

Annex 2

Sources of information

- Your vet.
 - The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF: www.rcvs.org.uk The website has a 'find a vet' facility.
- Local libraries and bookshops for up to date books on dog care.
- Websites such as:
 - Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors: www.apbc.org.uk
 - Blue Cross: www.thebluecross.org.uk
 - Dogs Trust: www.dogstrust.org.uk
 - PDSA: www.pdsa.org.uk
 - Petlog: www.petlog.co.uk
 - Pet Care Trust: www.petcare.org.uk
 - Pet Health Council: www.pethealthcouncil.co.uk
 - Pet Food Manufacturers Association: www.pfma.org.uk
 - RSPCA: www.rspca.org.uk
 - The Kennel Club: www.thekennelclub.org.uk
 - Defra website for information on the Animal Welfare Act 2006, Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) and to download a copy of the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs: www.defra.gov.uk