

Code of Practice
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Code of Practice
FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF

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**Dogs and
Cats in
Shelters
and Pounds**

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Introduction

This Code is made under the provisions of Section 59 of Division 4 of the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994 ('The Act').

The purpose of the Code is to specify the minimum standards of accommodation, management and care which are appropriate to the physical and behavioural needs of dogs and cats housed in shelters and pounds.

The Code and its provisions are to be observed by owners and operators ('the proprietor') of shelters and pounds and by people who work in them. All shelters and pounds must comply with State and Local Government legislation and permits.

The Code is designed to cover all animal welfare shelters and pounds, and includes any holding facilities used by these establishments. Holding facilities for the short term housing of animals prior to transportation to a pound or shelter must comply with this code.

This Code does not apply to wildlife shelters operated by persons holding an authorisation under Section 24A of the Wildlife Act 1975 to establish a shelter for the rehabilitation of native wildlife.

Definitions

Isolation pens are pens for animals with infectious diseases.

Holding pens/facilities are for the short term housing (less than 24 hours) of dogs or cats prior to transportation to a pound or shelter.

GENERAL

1 Staff

1.1 Manager

The proprietor of a shelter or pound is responsible for the overall management and conduct of the establishment and for the welfare of the animals therein. Preferably a proprietor should have completed a course in animal care. In particular, the proprietor is responsible for:

- the well-being of all animals in the establishment;
- the supervision of staff;
- the maintenance and collation of records and statistics;
- supervision of daily feeding, watering and inspection of all animals;
- supervision and examination of animals upon entry;
- the overall level of hygiene in the establishment, including the disposal of waste materials;
- provision of prompt veterinary attention of animals when required;
- developing a plan for an emergency situation.

1.2 The Veterinarian

The proprietor of the establishment must have a written agreement with sufficient veterinarians to be on call for humane euthanasia where an overdose of barbiturate is used and for the treatment of animals other than first aid. The veterinarian is responsible for deciding on a vaccination program for the facility in the event of an outbreak of the following diseases:

Dogs

- canine distemper
- infectious canine hepatitis
- canine parvovirus.

Cats

- infectious feline enteritis
- calicivirus
- herpes virus.

This agreement must include the use of the veterinarian's facilities for the treatment of animals and the provision of isolation pens if the pound or shelter does not have a separate first aid and treatment area or isolation pens.

1.3 Animal Attendants

The proprietor must ensure that animal attendants who work at the shelter or pound are trained and experienced to properly manage the type of animal held. The equivalent of one full-time animal attendant must be employed for every 50 animals housed. Animal attendants are responsible to the Proprietor for:

- daily feeding, watering and inspection of all animals;
- daily cleaning of facilities, ie. hose out, replace bedding, litter trays, feeding and watering utensils;
- reporting to management animals showing any of the following symptoms;
 - runny nose
 - runny or inflamed eyes
 - repeated sneezing
 - coughing
 - vomiting
 - diarrhoea, especially if bloodstained
 - lameness
 - inability to stand or walk
 - bleeding or swelling of body parts
 - weight loss
 - inappetence
 - apparent pain
 - fits or staggering
 - bloating of abdomen

- difficulty or inability to urinate or defecate
- red or brown coloured urine.

- exercising dogs as required by the manager.

1.4 Staff health

Some hazards exist with certain species of animals which are known to harbour disease-causing organisms which can be transmitted to man (zoonoses).

Staff health must be protected by the provision of appropriate work clothing, adequate hand washing facilities and tetanus immunisation. Information must be supplied on disease-causing organisms which can be transmitted to humans (zoonoses) as well as personal hygiene.

All personnel working with cats, especially women of child-bearing age, must be made aware of the risk of contracting toxoplasmosis.

1.5 The vehicle driver

The driver of an animal shelter or pound vehicle must be an experienced or trained animal attendant, responsible for the following tasks:

- the care and welfare of all animals during transport, except where a veterinarian also travels with the consignment;
- the hygiene and cleanliness of the vehicle.

2 Handling and treatment of animals

2.1 Capture

Capture methods must be as humane as possible with minimum risk to operators, bystanders and animals. The behaviour of the species concerned must be taken into account when deciding on the methods used. Capture (tranquilliser) guns must not be used.

2.2 Transport

Animals must be transported for the minimum time practicable.

Cats and small dogs may be placed in secure carrying baskets, cages or boxes, large dogs may be restrained but all animals must be physically separated.

Where the pick-up of stray or injured animals is conducted on a shuttle basis the timetable must be based on ensuring minimum time in transit for distressed or injured animals.

Badly injured animals should be euthanased or transported to the nearest point of veterinary attention as soon as possible.

The driver is responsible for the welfare of animals in the vehicle during transportation.

2.3 Handling and treatment

2.3.1 Admission

Every animal admitted to a shelter or pound must be examined by a veterinarian, or by an experienced person, who is responsible for classifying animals into the following categories for attention:

- a** Healthy animals
- b** Moderately or slightly injured animals – to be given prompt first-aid to relieve pain and preserve life, and held for observation;

- c** Severely injured animals, unidentified cats that are wild or uncontrollable or unweaned animals – to be promptly and humanely euthanased.
- d** Animals with infectious disease – to be held in isolation pens.

2.3.2 Vaccination

All dogs sold from a pound or shelter must be vaccinated to cover the following diseases:

- canine distemper
- infectious canine hepatitis
- canine parvovirus.

All cats sold from a pound or shelter must be vaccinated to cover the following diseases:

- infectious feline enteritis
- calicivirus
- herpes virus.

2.3.3 Quarantine

All vaccinated animals are required to be held in quarantine for certain periods of time before being made available for rehousing (unless previously reclaimed by their owners). Quarantine periods are:

Dogs 8 days

Nil if previously vaccinated, presented with current vaccination certificate and free from infectious disease.

Cats 8 days

Nil if previously vaccinated, presented with a vaccination certificate and free from infectious disease.

At the end of the quarantine period, all animals must again be examined by the proprietor or a veterinarian to assess their suitability for sale. Pounds and shelters should develop and practice standard procedures for assessment of health and temperament in selecting animals for rehousing.

2.3.4 Isolation

All animals confined in isolation pens must be under veterinary supervision and the fate of an animal should be decided by the veterinarian.

2.3.5 Euthanasia

At the conclusion of the mandatory eight days period specified in the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994 for stray animals, animals may be euthanased because of disease, injury, temperament, age, unsuitability for sale or in accordance with the Act.

The preferred method of euthanasia is barbiturate overdose, which must be carried out by a veterinarian.

Euthanasia must be performed in an area that is separated from animal accommodation at the shelter or pound and must not be carried out in view of any other animals.

2.3.6 Maintenance procedures

NUTRITION

All dogs and cats must be fed at least once a day. Puppies and kittens between three and four months of age require minimum of three feeds a day and between four and six months of age must be fed a minimum of twice daily with a nutritionally balanced diet. The food provided must contain acceptable nutritive values in sufficient quantity to meet appropriate daily requirements for the condition and size of the animal.

All animals must have a permanent supply of fresh, clean water.

Food and water containers must be non spillable and of a design that can be easily cleaned and sterilised and does not cause injury to the animals.

For dogs and weaned puppies, one feeding bowl must be provided per individual animal.

For cats, there must be one feeding bowl per adult and one feeding bowl per three kittens (less than 12 weeks).

DISINFECTION AND HYGIENE

An important management requirement is the maintenance of a hygienic facility to prevent build-up of disease causing organisms including viruses and parasitic worm eggs. The establishment is to be clean and hygienic at all times. All pens must be cleared out at least once per day (twice daily if inspection shows it is required) by hosing or other appropriate means. All used, contaminated bedding and litter and all uneaten food must be removed prior to hosing. Used litter and uneaten food must be placed in sealed plastic bags for disposal.

Pounds and shelters must have an adequate water supply and must be sewerod or on a septic system, or have some other adequate method of disposing of faeces.

Waste disposal must be in accordance with the requirements of the appropriate statutory authority. Use of a trade waste service for collection and disposal of wastes is preferable. Wastes must not be incinerated unless the incinerator is registered with the Environment Protection Authority.

After cleaning, sleeping areas must not be allowed to remain wet.

Cats must be provided with clean litter trays daily and litter trays must be disinfected regularly. Sufficient suitable litter material, such as commercial cat litter, sawdust or shredded paper, must be provided.

Disinfection of pens and cages must be done whenever the pen/cage is vacated or every eighth day with hospital grade disinfectants. Utensils must be rinsed after disinfecting to avoid poisoning. Phenol must not be used for cats. Manufacturer's instructions for the use of these agents must be followed.

All watering and feeding utensils must be cleaned daily.

Pests including fleas, ticks, flies, mosquitoes and rodents must be effectively controlled. Chemicals used for pest control must be either prescribed by a registered veterinarian and/or registered by the National Registration Authority (NRA) under the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code (Commonwealth) and used only in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

INSPECTION

Animal attendants must inspect every animal daily, noting its general appearance and behaviour.

It is the responsibility of animal attendants at animal shelters and pounds to report any animal that appears sick or injured, or is behaving oddly, to the proprietor or veterinarian as soon as possible. Animals suspected of having an infectious disease should be placed in isolation for treatment by a veterinarian.

EXERCISE

The proprietor of a shelter or a pound that sells dogs may exercise/socialise up to two dogs together following the quarantine period provided that:

- (i) the dogs are within a securely fenced area, and
- (ii) a person is in the pen with the dogs at all times.

Care must be taken to ensure that dogs being exercised cannot escape and are not in danger of attack or other injury. Dogs must not be walked on roads but confined within the premises for safety reasons.

2.3.7 Rehousing (Sale of Animals)

All animals sold from a pound or shelter must be wormed, desexed and vaccinated.

Sick, aggressive, pregnant, unweaned, anti-social or deformed animals, or animals with known vices such as excessive barking,

fence jumping (dogs) must not be made available for sale.

New owners must be supplied with a vaccination certificate and be given literature about feeding, housing and responsible pet ownership. They should also be encouraged to seek advice about problems with the pets from veterinarians or people with experience in animal care and management.

If an animal is not acceptable to a purchaser because of health or other reasons that are supported by a statement from a veterinarian, excluding accidents within seven days of purchase, pound or shelter proprietors must take the animal back and refund all monies or offer a replacement animal with the same guarantee. If an animal is returned within three days for any other reason, the pound or shelter proprietor must refund 75% of the purchase price or offer a replacement animal with the same guarantee. If the animal dies or is euthanased as a result of a disease that is traceable to the point of sale, the pound or shelter proprietor must refund the purchase price or offer a replacement animal with the same guarantee.

The maximum time any animal selected for sale can be held at a shelter is four weeks. At the conclusion of this period, the animal must be euthanased or permanently removed from the facility, for example, by placement in a foster program.

2.3.8 Public Access to Pounds and Animal Shelters Serving as Pounds

Reasonable periods for public access to pounds and shelters must be provided during working hours and include reasonable times after hours or at weekends. Public access at pounds may be by appointment with the Ranger.

2.3.9 Release of Animals to Research Institutions

Pound animals may only be released to research organisations under the provisions of the Code of practice for the use of animals from municipal pounds in scientific procedures.

3 Responsible pet ownership

Animal shelters and pounds which sell animals should assist in promoting responsible pet ownership in the community by the following methods:

- a Providing new pet owners with advice on pet care and information leaflets about veterinary attention that is required for animals after purchase (such as follow-up vaccination), and current legislation covering the registration of pet animals.
- b Providing prospective buyers with advice on the most suitable type of dog for their environment (consider yard size, exercise requirements, children etc.)

Note: Section 13 of the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994 requires the proprietor of a pound or shelter that sells an unregistered dog or cat to notify the Council of the sale of that animal and where the animal will live.

4 Buildings and facilities

4.1 Animal transport vehicles

Vehicles used for the transport of animals must have the following features:

- provision for animals to be physically separated and restrained;
- no protrusions or sharp edges in the framework, doors, partitions, etc;
- a design that is both escape-proof and prevents the protrusion of head and/or limbs of any animal carried;
- floors which are strong enough to bear the weight of the animals being transported, and have a non-slip surface to minimise the likelihood of injury;
- weatherproof with adequate ventilation of vehicles both when stationary and in motion;
- facilities for ease of loading and unloading of animals with minimal risk of injury to the animals and humans;
- materials and a design that allow for effective cleaning and disinfection.

4.2 Food storage and hygiene

Facilities for the storage and preparation of food must be separate from any animal accommodation. Feed storage facilities in establishments must be vermin proof and available to hold a minimum of five days requirements under peak conditions.

4.3 Housing facilities

This section contains general requirements for all pounds and shelters.

Housing facilities at animal shelters or pounds include isolation pens for animals with infectious diseases. Isolation facilities must be physically separated by an impervious barrier or a distance of at least 10 metres from other animal accommodation at the shelter or pound. Pounds using the facilities of a veterinary practitioner to treat injured or unhealthy animals will not require isolation pens.

Facilities must have appropriate fire extinguishers or other fire protection.

Note: In totally enclosed buildings where forced ventilation is the only form of air movement, the following is required:

- An air change rate of 8-12 changes per hour to prevent the build up of foul odours;

- Ventilation devices must avoid draughts and distribute fresh air evenly to all of the boarding areas;
- Temperature must be maintained in the range of 18-21°C;
- Air recirculation units incorporating effective air cleaning and filtration to ensure the removal of infectious organisms and chemicals;
- A back-up and alarm system in case of power failures or breakdown of ventilation and temperature control mechanisms.

a Housing pens – for the housing of animals in the pound, shelter or holding facility.

Floors of all pens must be constructed of an impervious material and must be sealed and free of cracks. All pens must be able to be secured to prevent accidental escape of animals and must be completely enclosed, having either a solid or wire roof.

Where pens are constructed outdoors, a cyclone wire fence with a lockable gate must encircle each section. Sleeping quarters must be weatherproof. Outside pens and runs must provide the animals with protection from extremes of climate and weather.

Housing facilities for dogs and cats must be physically separated by an impervious barrier.

Dog pens must be constructed of impervious, washable materials optimally curved at the wall/floor junction to facilitate cleaning and disinfection.

The line of drainage must not run from pen to pen. Individual drainage outlets must be incorporated in each pen and connected to a completely enclosed drain or pipe. Floors must be graded to the outlet.

An impervious partition one metre high and sealed to the floor must separate all pens and exercise areas. Preferably pens should not be built to face each other as this will increase the noise and spread of diseases

between pens. Noise barriers must be used to minimise noise to acceptable levels. Where pens are built facing each other and the drainage line is toward the centre walkway, an impervious partition one metre high must be centrally installed in the walkway to reduce the possibility of the spread of disease into opposite pens during cleaning.

b Examination, treatment and euthanasia facilities

If the pound or shelter does not have a written agreement with a veterinarian for the use of facilities then a separate first-aid treatment area must be provided with a table which can be readily cleaned and disinfected, lighting and shelving, and first-aid materials including dressings, disinfectants and medicines to treat open wounds. Restricted drugs kept on the premises must be stored in accordance with the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances legislation, and can only be used by or at the specific direction of a veterinarian.

Hot and cold running water must be available. Euthanasia must be carried out in an area separate from where animals are housed.

4.3.1 Pen Sizes

Dogs

All adult dogs must be housed one to a pen.

NOTE:

- 1 One third of the area of each pen must be weather proof and include raised sleeping quarters.
- 2 Up to four weaned pups (6 - 16 weeks) can be housed in any of the pens outlined in the table providing that the pups are from the same litter or, if from different litters, at the conclusion of the quarantine period following vaccination. During the quarantine period, compensatory human socialisation should be considered.

DOG PEN SIZES

Minimum pen sizes for each dog older than four months

HEIGHT OF DOG AT SHOULDER (CENTIMETRES)	MINIMUM AREA (SQUARE METRES)	MINIMUM WIDTH (CENTIMETRES)	MINIMUM HEIGHT (CENTIMETRES)
Above 70	3.5	120	180
40 to 70	2.4	100	180
Below 40	1.5	90	180

Cats

Cats must be housed individually in cages or pens constructed of impervious, washable materials during the quarantine period.

Cages used to hold adult cats must be at least 70 cm wide, 70 cm deep and 50 cm high. This size cage can accommodate up to three kittens (less than 12 weeks of age) providing that the kittens are from the same litter or, if from different litters, at the conclusion of the quarantine period following vaccination. During the quarantine period, compensatory human socialisation should be considered. Cats must not be kept in cages of this size for more than eight days.

Cats kept for longer than eight days must be provided with accommodation that meets the following criteria.

- Cages that have a minimum floor area of 1.5 square metres and a minimum height of 900 millimetres, or
- Walk-in modules that have a minimum floor area of 0.8 square metres, a minimum width of 900 millimetres and a minimum height of 1.8 metres. The module must contain at least two levels including raised sleeping quarters. The higher level(s) must be connected to the floor by means of a ramp or pole.
- After desexing, vaccination and quarantine, cats may be multiple housed in holding

pens. A maximum of eight cats can be held in a pen and each cat must have a floor area of two square metres and an individual sleeping area.

5 Records

The proprietor of the establishment shall ensure that the following details are recorded and retained in compliance with the requirements of the Public Records Office:

For Animals Handed in by Owners:

- species of animal
- the name of the animal
- contact telephone number and address of the owner or the owner's nominee
- a description of the animal including:
 - sex and whether the animal is desexed
 - breed type
 - colour
 - age
 - details of medical, dietary, bathing and grooming requirements
 - vaccination status
 - heartworm treatment (dogs)
 - any behaviour problems
 - any permanent identification.
- reason the animal was handed in.

For Animals Seized Under The Act:

- species of animal
- location where animal was seized
- date animal was seized
- name and address of person who seized the animal (business address of authorised officers or Council contractors)
- reason why animal was seized
- a description of the animal including:
 - sex and whether the animal is desexed
 - breed type
 - colour
 - age
 - any behaviour problems noted during seizure, eg aggression
 - any permanent identification.

Outcome

- fate of animal, including (where appropriate),
 - name and address of person who claimed the animal
 - date animal euthanased
 - date animal sold, name and address of purchaser and municipality where the animal will be registered.
- in the event that the animal is sold
 - date animal desexed
 - date animal was vaccinated and matching vaccination certificates.



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