



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs

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## Preface

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (“the Act”), if you own or are responsible for an animal, you have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to ensure its welfare needs are met. You are always responsible for your animal’s needs. If you are unable to care for your dog at any time, you must make arrangements for another suitable person to look after it on your behalf. You remain legally responsible even when you are away. The person with whom the dog is left is also responsible in your absence.

There is no one ‘perfect’ way to look after a dog as every dog and situation is different but all have the same fundamental needs. 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 the child is in charge of.

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 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/keepers should look to their veterinary surgeon (vet) for their primary source of advice on their animal’s health.

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

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

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

This Code of Practice was updated with the assistance of the Animal Welfare Network for Wales. The Welsh Government is grateful to the Network for their time and expert recommendations.

## Introduction

Owning and caring for a dog can be 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 its needs are met, whatever the circumstances. The Animal Welfare Act 2006 requires that you must take reasonable steps to ensure your dog:

- 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 pet care specialist. Other sources of information are listed in Appendix 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"). A Code of Practice was first issued by the Welsh Ministers and came into force on 28 November 2008. This updated version came into force on 12 November 2018 and it applies in Wales only. The purpose of this Code of Practice is to provide advice on how to meet the needs of your dog and therefore ensure compliance with the Animal Welfare Act 2006. It covers all dogs for which a person is responsible.

The key things you need to know are summarised in the 'Welfare of Dogs' document.

It is your responsibility to care for your dog as described in this Code. It is important that you read the complete Code of Practice to fully understand your dog's welfare needs and what the law requires of you.

## The Duty of Care

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 animal owners and keepers have a legal duty to care for the animals for which they are responsible, whether on a permanent or temporary basis. A person could therefore be responsible for an animal if they are in charge of it, whilst an owner has ongoing responsibility for their animal even if another person is in charge of it. A parent or guardian of a child under 16 years old is responsible for any animal that is cared for by the child. This ensures that an adult can normally be identified as a person responsible for an animal. If a permanent keeper leaves an animal in the care of another person, it is

the permanent keeper's duty to ensure the temporary keeper is competent and has the necessary authority to act in an emergency.

Responsibility for an animal includes having an understanding of its specific health and welfare needs and having the appropriate knowledge and skills to care for the animal. Those responsible for animals must also comply with legislation, be aware of the appropriate Code of Practice and know when and where to seek qualified advice and help, e.g. from a veterinary surgeon.



## Section 1: Environment

1.1 The environment available to a dog should be appropriate for its needs. There should be enough space, or access to an area to allow for exercise and toileting. There should be at least one area in which the dog feels safe and secure to which it can withdraw and be undisturbed if it chooses to do so. The dog should always be able to find an area where it will be comfortable.

### Sleeping and Resting

1.2 Dogs need:

- Their own comfortable space, with clean bedding, where they can go to rest and sleep, and which should be in a quiet place.
- Their bedding to be in a dry, draught-free but ventilated area.
- Their bedding to be regularly cleaned, washed or removed and replaced.
- A resting area free from such things as sharp edges and splinters that can cause injury.

1.3 Any sleeping area that you provide for your dog should be large enough for it to comfortably stretch and lie out flat. Your dog should be able to walk and turn around and wag its tail without it touching the sides.

### Use of Cages/Crates

1.4 If using a cage, commonly referred to as a 'crate', this should be in a positive manner and should be an appropriate size for your dog.

1.5 Crates should never be used as a place in which your dog spends all of its time or as a form of punishment. If you use a crate to confine your dog it is important that the crate is a place where your dog is happy to be and feels safe and relaxed. It should not be in there unattended for any period of time that is likely to cause distress.

1.6 It is important that the crate is the right size for your dog and not used for more than one dog. As a minimum, the crate must provide enough space for your dog to be able to sit and stand at full height, turn around, stretch out and lie down in a natural position. Your dog will probably outgrow the crate it had as a puppy. As your dog grows you must replace its crate with one of a suitable size.

1.7 The crate needs to be located where it is quiet and away from things that may frighten or worry your dog, and away from draughts, sources of heat or direct sunlight, but there does need to be good air circulation. There should be fresh clean drinking water, bedding and toys or other items to prevent your dog from becoming bored. Regular opportunities for playing with other dogs and people, exercise and toileting need to be provided.

1.8 Many welfare organisations offer advice and information on the use of crates for dogs.

### Prevention of Roaming

1.9 It is an offence to allow your dog to roam. The area that your dog is kept in should be absolutely secure with a good quality boundary to prevent it from escaping or roaming. It should be secure enough to prevent other animals getting in and to deter unwelcome visitors, including those intent on theft. Gates should be well secured.

1.10 The type of boundary, and the material from which it is made, should be suitable for your dog. Consider the size and weight of your dog and its ability to escape by jumping, climbing or digging. There should be no sharp edges on any surface that could cause your dog injury. If wire is used consideration must be given to the gauge of the mesh to avoid trapping injuries.

1.11 Invisible fences that emit a shock via a collar are prohibited under the Animal Welfare (Electronic Collars)(Wales) Regulations 2010.

## Keeping Your Dog Outside

1.12 If your dog is to be kept or left outside there are a number of additional considerations that should be taken into account.

These include:

- Security (including protection from theft)
- Adequate comfort and shelter
- Companionship and interaction
- Protection from injury (including from rubbish/litter and hazardous substances)
- Nuisance to neighbours.

1.13 Outside housing should consist of separate sleeping and activity areas. There should be protection from adverse and extreme weather conditions including heat, cold and damp. The sleeping area should be large enough for your dog to lie comfortably both in and beside its bed and it should contain clean comfortable bedding. Insulation and temperature control in the sleeping area should aim to keep the ambient temperature between 10°C and 26°C.

1.14 The activity area should be large enough for your dog to be able to relieve itself without needing to walk through the soiled area to return to the sleeping area. All faeces and urine should be removed at least daily and the area should be regularly and frequently cleaned and disinfected.

1.15 Dogs that are kept outside and away from people or other animals, and denied mental stimulation, from toys and chews for example, can suffer significant psychological problems. These may be associated with a range of other problem behaviours such as excessive chewing and signs of aggression. Care should be taken to ensure that your dog is provided with enough company, exercise or other

stimulation to ensure that it remains happy and free from negative states such as fear, anxiety or frustration. You should regularly visit and interact with your dog and check 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 they choose to be and that there are sufficient resources, such as bedding, food and water bowls, to prevent competition.

1.16 Dogs kept outside may react to sights and sounds that they do not normally see or hear inside the home. Your dog may bark, howl or cry for extended periods if it is bored, frightened or anxious. Not only does this mean that your dog might be unhappy and more motivated to escape, it can also cause a nuisance to your neighbours. If you require advice on managing such problems you should speak to your vet or another suitably qualified person.

## Hygiene

1.17 An important part of providing a suitable environment is making sure that it is safe, clean and hygienic. Clean up after your dog at home and dispose of any faeces in a waste bin (or other suitable disposal system) on a daily basis, particularly where dogs share the same environment as children. Ensure any disinfectant used is safe for pets. This not only makes the environment cleaner, but also helps to prevent the potential spread of disease.

## Hazards

1.18 Dogs, and especially inquisitive puppies, will explore and may eat things that are poisonous or dangerous to them. The following are examples:

- Raisins, grapes and chocolate are poisonous to dogs. A full list is available on the British Veterinary Association website (link at Appendix 2). It is important to keep them out of reach at all times.

- There are many household and garden plants that are poisonous to dogs (see Appendix 2 for links to websites that include lists of poisonous plants). Poisonous plants should be avoided or placed where your dog cannot reach them.
- Poisonous chemicals. A dog may drink or eat poisonous substances either by accident or because it finds them palatable. Chemicals should be kept out of reach and any spillages cleaned up immediately. Examples of poisonous substances that are commonly used and may be accessible to dogs include slug pellets, rat poison and anti-freeze.
- 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.
- Open windows and balconies.

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

## Travel

1.19 Dogs are regularly transported in vehicles. You should make sure that your dog is suitably restrained when being transported. In the event of an accident or sudden and unexpected manoeuvres, an unrestrained dog can be seriously injured or cause injury to others. 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 is away from heating vents.

1.20 Long journeys should be planned so they have minimal impact on your dog's feeding regime. To avoid travel sickness do not feed your dog immediately before travelling. Water and opportunities to toilet should be provided on a regular basis.

1.21 Dogs should never be left unattended in a car or other vehicle even on a seemingly mild day. The temperature in vehicles can become very high, very quickly, causing heat stroke or death and you could be prosecuted for causing cruelty.

## Section 2: Diet

2.1 Your dog must always have access to fresh clean drinking water from a clean and suitable container. If away from your home you should ensure access to clean water, carrying a supply with you where necessary. 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 should be monitored as it may also indicate illness.

### Balanced Diet

2.2 It is essential to provide a nutritionally balanced diet at all stages of a dog's life to ensure good health.

2.3 Dogs need a diet containing protein, fat, carbohydrate, vitamins and minerals. This is usually in the form of commercially available prepared foods. When feeding prepared foods, you should read and be guided by the food manufacturer's instructions.

2.4 If you have the specialist knowledge to formulate a balanced diet, an alternative to a prepared dog food is a home made diet. Unlike cats, dogs are not totally carnivorous and will enjoy and benefit from vegetables being added to their food. Providing a suitable homemade diet requires a good and detailed understanding of your dog's nutritional needs. If you wish to feed your dog this way and do not have the requisite specialist knowledge, you should obtain advice from your vet or pet care specialist.

2.5 A dog's dietary needs will change during its life both with age but also at other times, e.g. during illness. It is important that your dog is fed a diet that meets its nutritional needs, taking into account its age, health, reproductive status, body condition, weight and activity level. If in doubt consult 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.

2.7 Allow dogs to eat undisturbed.

### Healthy Weight

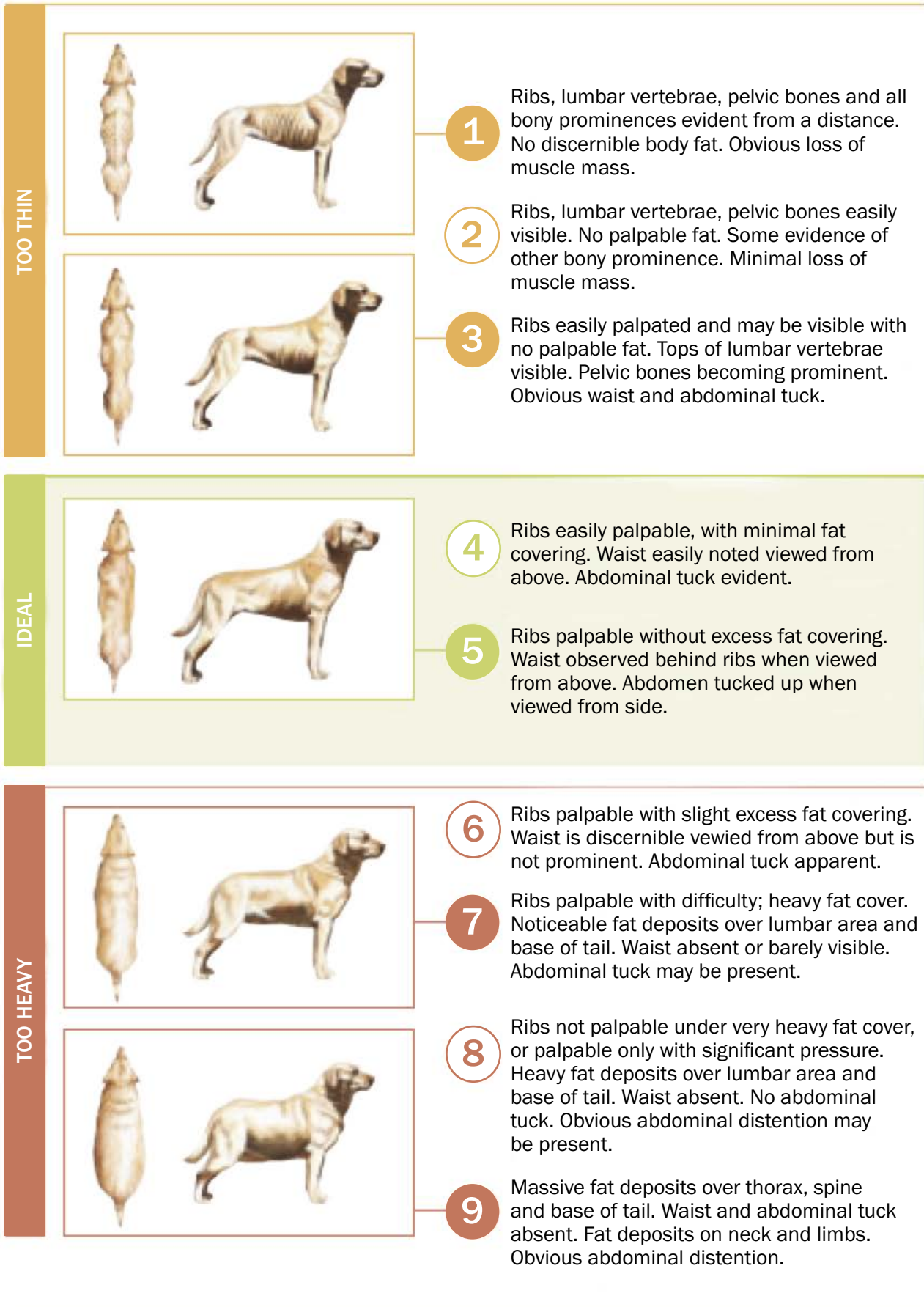
2.8 Dogs should not be given more food than they need as overeating leads to obesity. The feeding instructions on dog food packaging are a good guide, or seek advice from your vet or pet care specialist if you are unsure. An obese dog is an unhealthy dog and pet obesity is the most frequent nutritional problem seen by vets. If a dog eats too much and exercises too little, it will put on weight which will reduce its quality and length of life. Increased weight may 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 dog. You will need to adjust the amount of food your dog has at meal times to account for this.

2.9 You should know the best weight for your dog and try to maintain its ideal body condition throughout the different stages of its life. Changes to the way your dog eats or drinks may be a sign of ill health – seek advice from your vet.

### Body Condition

2.10 Know what is the ideal body condition for your dog and age. The diagram below provides a guide to body condition scoring. If you need further advice you should contact your vet.





## Feeding Regime

2.11 The number of feeds per day will depend upon the age of your dog and how much exercise it has. Generally, it is best to feed an adult dog twice a day unless advised otherwise by your vet.

2.12 If you do feed your dog twice a day, the food may be divided up into two equal portions, or a third and two-thirds division.

2.13 If you have more than one dog it is important to give each animal the opportunity to eat undisturbed.

2.14 An unexplained increase or persistent loss in appetite may be a sign of illness. You should consult your vet if the problem persists.

## Other Dietary Needs

2.15 Dogs that are pregnant, feeding their puppies, unwell, old or very young may well have different dietary needs from the average healthy adult dog. For example, puppies need more frequent feeding than a healthy adult dog. Your vet is the best person to advise you about the care of your dog in these circumstances.

2.16 Do not feed your dog within an hour before or after vigorous exercise as this can lead to bloating or other potentially serious medical conditions.

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

3.1 This section offers guidance on your dog's behaviour.

### Early Experiences

3.2 Puppies learn most readily about other dogs, people and animals when they are very young. This is called socialisation. It is important that puppies are provided with opportunities for socialisation from three to 14 weeks of age so that they develop into well adjusted and happy dogs. A lack of opportunities for, or inappropriate contact with, dogs, people and other animals can lead to the development of behavioural problems. This key period encompasses the time at which puppies are usually given their initial course of vaccinations and your vet will tell you when it is safe to allow your puppy to mix with other dogs and animals.

3.3 Puppies should be carefully and positively introduced to a wide range of noises, objects and activities in the environment; this is known as habituation. If puppies learn at an early age that these are not a threat, then they are more likely to be comfortable in their presence for the rest of their lives. However, it is important not to overwhelm or frighten your puppy, and you should always allow it a safe 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. Do not disturb a sleeping dog; instead, allow it to wake up of its own accord.

3.5 You should seek advice about how to care for a new puppy from your vet or another suitably qualified person.

### Training

3.6 Dogs continue to learn throughout their lives, and do so in many different circumstances. Formal training is important, especially from an early age. Training should begin with simple tasks such as teaching your dog to respond to its name and to come when called. It is important to be consistent and positive when training your dog. Reward good behaviour with something that your dog finds enjoyable, such as play, food or attention, and make sure that you respond immediately.

3.7 It is best to train dogs on a regular basis for short periods. Take every opportunity to praise your dog for behaviour you want. Your dog is less likely to perform unwanted behaviours if it is ignored.

3.8 Good dog training classes will show you reward-based training techniques that teach your dog desirable behaviour and prevent or modify different types of unwanted behaviour. Negative punishment-based training can cause unnecessary suffering and confusion to dogs. The use of any collar capable of administering a shock to a dog is banned in Wales. Further information on training can be found in Appendix 2 – Sources of Information.

### Exercise

3.9 The amount of exercise your dog needs will vary according to its age, health and breed. For example, as your dog gets older it may prefer a more sedentary life, or your vet may, for health reasons, recommend a restricted exercise regime, where toys for mental stimulation perhaps replace physical exercise. Unless your vet advises otherwise, your dog needs regular exercise, at least once a day, so it can run, play, explore and investigate. This will keep your dog active, fit and stimulated.

3.10 Puppies need exercise and stimulation, provided in short bursts of activity. Over-exercising a growing puppy can damage its developing joints. If you are in any doubt about what exercise your puppy needs, seek advice from your vet.

3.11 Puppies are not fully protected from disease when first vaccinated. Always ask your vet when your puppy will be fully protected, and, until then, only exercise it outside if in a private garden or enclosed space.

3.12 It is against the law to allow your dog to be dangerously out of control anywhere; not only are there dangers from traffic and livestock, but also from other dogs. Let your dog off the lead only when you are sure that it is safe and legal to do so. It is important to train your dog, when called, to return to you when off the lead. Even when off the lead your dog should remain under your control.

3.13 Your dog's collar/harness should not be too tight nor should there be opportunity for it to slip. Ensure that it fits comfortably so as not to cause your dog irritation or pain. Prong and pinch collars, as well as choke chains are not acceptable as they can cause pain suffering and/or injury.

3.14 You should avoid walking your dog during the hottest part of the day. Early morning or in the evening are the best times to walk your dog during periods of hot weather.

## Play and Interaction

3.15 Dogs are social, playful and intelligent animals with active minds – they need mental stimulation to be happy. This can be provided by contact and playing with humans or other dogs, by giving them toys to play with or an environment with lots of opportunities to explore and investigate. However, take care not to overwhelm your dog. Part of their diet may also be offered in dried food 'puzzle feeders' that release food gradually, providing mental stimulation for dogs when indoors.

3.16 Interacting with your dog by playing games using safe and suitable toys is a good way of keeping your dog entertained. Do not leave your dog alone with flimsy toys, especially if it chews very vigorously – there is a risk it could swallow small parts and develop serious intestinal problems. Toys should be checked regularly to ensure they are not dirty or damaged. Changing toys often means that your dog will not become bored with an individual toy.

## Recognising and Understanding Behaviour

3.17 Dogs experience a range of different emotions including happiness, fear, anxiety and anger. It is important that you recognise and understand the signals your dog uses to show you how it is feeling. Any changes in the behaviour of your dog may indicate it is unhappy or ill. Signs of stress can vary from dog to dog but may include:

- panting, salivation, licking of the lips;
- excessive activity, such as pacing around;
- fouling or urinating indoors;
- barking (unless there is good reason from the dog's perspective);
- excessively seeking out contact, both with people and other pets;
- hiding or cowering;
- flattening the ears and lowering the tail.

Some of the above may also be signs of illness or pain and you should contact your vet if you are concerned.

3.18 Give your dog access to a safe hiding place so that it has somewhere to go if it is feeling afraid.

3.19 It is advisable to seek advice from your vet if you are unsure how to deal with any sudden behaviour changes or if you notice uncharacteristic and/or sudden fearful or aggressive responses.

## Going to the Toilet

3.20 Dogs need access to an appropriate place, away from their resting and feeding area, which they can use as a toilet regularly and at least every few hours.

3.21 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 it as a toilet area, it will use it as a matter of routine. Do not tell your dog off, or use other forms of punishment, when it makes a mistake as this can make it fearful and lead to problems later on in its life. There are many available sources of useful information about toilet training your puppy (see Appendix 2 – Sources of Information). Some puppies will urinate as part of greeting behaviour. If it persists speak to a qualified behaviourist.

3.22 A keeper of a dog, or the person responsible for a dog, has a legal obligation to clean up after it (use either a ‘pooper scooper’ or a plastic bag) when in a public place unless exempt (see Appendix 1). Under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, a Local Authority can introduce Public Spaces Protection Orders which vary in their requirements and may impose additional obligations on dog owners. You should be aware of the requirements that apply in the areas in which you walk your dog.



## Section 4: Company

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

**Any dog has the potential to bite in certain circumstances. Therefore, never leave your dog unsupervised around children or other animals.**

### Relationships with Dogs, Other Animals and People

4.2 Dogs learn how to behave appropriately in social situations through careful positive introduction to varied situations involving different people and other animals including, for example, friendly dogs. Dogs that have had negative experiences might not react well in social situations. You should be aware of how your dog responds to unfamiliar people, other dogs and animals and act accordingly.

4.3 If your dog is friendly towards other dogs then it should have plenty of opportunities to play with other friendly dogs. Your dog should also have regular opportunities to interact with people.

4.4 You should ensure that everyone who interacts with your dog does so in a kind, gentle and consistent way. Do not allow people to frighten, scare or worry your dog.

4.5 Children and adults who are not familiar with dogs need to know that a dog should not be approached when resting, sleeping, eating, playing with a favourite toy or when it is ill. Dogs should not be forced to play or be carried around. Your dog should be provided with a quiet rest area to which it can go and rest or hide undisturbed.

### When 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 are legally responsible for its welfare and you need to ensure that they understand its needs and any special requirements that it may have.

4.7 Dogs are sociable animals and enjoy the company of people. The length of time a dog can be left on its own varies according to its age, experience, housing situation etc. Some dogs can become bored and others, which haven't been taught to cope when left alone, or which have suffered a traumatic experience will become distressed even if left for short periods of time. Many animal welfare organisations recommend dogs are not left alone for more than four hours.

### Number of Dogs

4.8 Owners/Keepers should think carefully about the individual needs of each dog, the size of their property and the financial and time implications of having a dog. It is also important to take into account your dog's likely acceptance of other dogs and animals within its home territory. Your vet or pet care specialist will be able to advise.

4.9 Where multiple dogs are kept together make sure there is enough space for them to get away from one another if they want to and there are enough water bowls, toys, beds etc. for each dog to avoid competitive or guarding behaviour.

4.10 Some Local Authorities have orders in place stipulating the maximum number of dogs that can be walked in public by a single person. Owners should check with their Local Authority to ensure they comply with any such orders.

## Section 5: Health

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

### Health care

5.2 Good health is an essential part of good dog welfare. Your dog's veterinary practice is best placed to advise you about routine health care, such as neutering, vaccination and internal and external parasite control, as well as any health problems it may have. You should familiarise yourself with the of the out-of-hours arrangements of your practice.

5.3 The cost of maintaining your dog's health and welfare can be significant and you should consider how these costs will be met. You may wish to consider purchasing pet healthcare insurance from one of the many available commercial providers.

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

- Prevention of disease. There are various vaccines that are designed to protect your dog from certain important, and some potentially fatal, diseases.
- Prevention of parasite problems. All dogs need regular worming and flea/tick treatment. It is particularly important that the former includes treatment for tapeworm in dogs that are kept in rural areas or visit rural areas frequently. Untreated flea and skin problems can cause significant suffering. Many worming and flea preparations are available and your vet will be able to advise you on which are most suitable for your dog's specific circumstances.
- 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, suffers injury or begins to behave in an unusual way.
- Good dental hygiene.
- It is important to undertake appropriate preventative health care measures if travelling overseas with your dog. There are diseases found overseas that are not encountered in the UK. Further advice is available in the "Useful Sources of Information" at Appendix 2.

### Illness

5.5 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 may include:

- sickness and diarrhoea;
- constipation or difficulty passing urine;
- 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 such as loss of hair;
- limping;
- coughing;
- breathlessness;
- unusual bleeding;
- discharge from eyes or ears;
- 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, seek advice from your vet. Failure to seek advice from a vet in a timely manner can lead to unnecessary suffering which is an offence.

## Getting a Dog

5.6 Dogs vary greatly in both their physical characteristics e.g. shape, size, coat type etc. and non-physical characteristics, e.g. behaviour and temperament. Take time to research different types of dogs and ensure that you find one that is a good fit for your specific circumstances. There are many sources of good advice available including those listed in the "Useful Sources of Information" at the end of this code.

5.7 Many puppies and dogs are advertised for sale on online classified websites. It is important to carry out thorough research before buying a puppy or dog via an advert. The Pet Advertising Advisory Group offers a list of Minimum Standards each advert should have as a starting point for your research. Pre-purchase advice is available from welfare organisations listed in "Useful Sources of Information" at the end of this code.

5.8 The future health and welfare of your dog is influenced by many factors including the circumstances under which it was bred and the previous environments in which it was kept. Not all dogs are bred with appropriate care for their physical and behavioural well-being or health. It is best to take advice from your vet or other relevant organisations (see Appendix 2) about where to obtain your dog.

5.9 You should check, as far as is possible, that the dog's parents have been appropriately screened for inherited conditions commonly found in the breed (for example hip scores for hip dysplasia or eye screening for inherited eye

conditions); and ensure that you are able to meet its needs. Dogs with inherited conditions are likely to require special care and may need expensive veterinary treatment.

5.10 If buying a puppy, you should always ask to see it with its mother and litter mates in circumstances that allow you to observe interactions between them. Where possible, you should also see the puppy's father too. This is important for a number of reasons; it can give a good guide to temperament and the size to which the dog may grow. You should be aware that this may not be possible for dogs in animal welfare establishments i.e. sanctuaries and rescue shelters.

5.11 If you decide to get a puppy, a good way to ensure that the important considerations are met is through a 'Puppy Contract'. Examples are available from welfare organisations listed in "Useful Sources of Information" at the end of this code.

5.12 Puppies born at a licensed breeding premises must remain on those premises and not be sold until they are at least 56 days (eight weeks) old. All puppies must be microchipped by the age of eight weeks under The Microchipping of Dogs (Wales) Regulations 2015 (see Appendix 1). The breeder should be the first registered keeper and you will need to register yourself as the new owner when you purchase your puppy. You also need to ensure your details are kept up to date should you change your phone number or address etc.

5.13 Take your new dog or puppy to a vet 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

5.14 Certain coat types will need more attention than others and will need grooming daily to stop it from matting or tangling. 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. Seek advice from your vet or pet care specialist if you are unsure about grooming your dog.

## Breeding and Neutering

5.15 You should consider having your dog neutered. Not only will this avoid the consequences of unplanned matings but there are other benefits too. These include the avoidance of infections and cancers of the tissues that are removed, for example infections of the uterus and ovarian cancers in bitches and testicular cancers in male dogs. There may also be behavioural benefits. There are, however, also risks against which these benefits should be balanced. These include the risk of infection associated with the surgery itself and also increased risk of obesity, some forms of urinary incontinence and some forms of cancer. The balance between potential benefits and harms will vary from one case to another and you should seek advice from your vet. Other sources of guidance are listed in Appendix 2.

5.16 The decision to breed from or neuter a dog is not a simple one. The health and welfare of the individual animal must always be considered. Before breeding, you should consider the health of the parents, avoidance of inherited defects, how you will ensure appropriate socialisation and habituation, and the likelihood of finding suitable homes for puppies. If a decision is taken to breed then the health and welfare of the puppies should also be considered. The decision to breed is a significant commitment and should not be undertaken lightly. Every effort should be made to avoid unplanned matings.

5.17 As a dog owner you should make every effort to ensure that you make informed decisions

about breeding from or neutering animals in your care. After all, you will be responsible not just for the decision itself but also for managing the consequences.

## Dental Care

5.18 Care of your dog's teeth should be part of its routine grooming schedule. Special canine toothpaste and brushes are recommended for daily use and are now widely available from vets and pet shops. There are also special dental chews and toys that can also help keep your dog's teeth and gums healthy.

## Identification

5.19 Your dog must wear a collar and identity tag when in a public place, unless exempt under the Control of Dogs Order 1992. There are many different collars and harnesses 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.

5.20 Your dog must also be microchipped once it is eight weeks of age, unless exempt under The Microchipping of Dogs (Wales) Regulations 2015. Your details must be registered on an approved database and the record updated if you move or the dog is rehomed. Scanning the microchip of a lost or stolen dog will assist in reuniting it with its owner. If you have any questions about microchipping please speak to your vet or pet care specialist.

## What to do if your dog is missing

5.21 If your dog goes missing, you should report it to the database to which its microchip is registered. You should also contact your Local Authority's dog warden. It is also worth notifying local vets, animal hospitals, rehoming centres, registering your dog on missing pet websites and putting up notices. Be aware that dogs can wander some distance if lost.

## Appendix 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. Below are extracts from the relevant sections of the Act. The box shaded grey summarises the relevant offences and penalties in the Act.

#### 3 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.

#### 4 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 another 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.



## 9 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 purposes 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.

## 14 Codes of practice

- (1) The appropriate national authority may issue, and may from time to time revise, codes of practice for the purpose of providing practical guidance in respect of any provision made by or under this Act.
- (2) The authority responsible for issuing a code of practice under subsection (1) shall publish the code, and any revision of it, in such manner as it considers appropriate.

- (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) 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 51 weeks and/or fined. 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.

### 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 keeper of a pet dog are summarised below.

## Breeding and Purchase

The Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014 provide that anyone who owns three or more breeding bitches and meets one or more of the listed criteria as set out in the legislation needs to be licensed. The aim of the Regulations 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 Authority 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

It is a legal requirement under The Microchipping of Dogs (Wales) Regulations 2015 for all dogs over the age of eight weeks to be microchipped and keepers' details registered on an approved database. It is also a legal requirement under the Control of Dogs Order 1992 for a dog to wear a collar with the keeper's name and address on it when in a public place. 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 makes it illegal to own, sell or give away a dog of four types that have been traditionally bred for fighting: Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino and Fila Brasileiro.

The Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 gives enforcers the powers to tackle antisocial behaviour, including instances involving dangerous or nuisance dogs, in a flexible and responsive way. It also amends the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 to extend the offence of a dangerously out of control dog to all places, including private property where the dog has right to be, and makes an attack on an assistance dog an aggravated offence.

Local Authorities also have powers 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/keeper of a dog picked up as a stray and also charge the keeper 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 keeper 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 Animal Welfare (Electronic Collars) (Wales) Regulations 2010 make it an offence for a device capable of emitting an electric shock to be attached to a dog or cat. Devices include anti-bark collars, remote training collars and 'invisible' fences that emit a shock via a collar.

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.

### **Kennelling when you are away**

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 Authority 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’).

### **Taking your dog abroad**

There are statutory controls governing the movement of dogs between countries:

- In the case of movement within Europe these are currently covered by the Pet Travel Scheme;
- Keepers must familiarise themselves with the requirements of the scheme and allow plenty of time to ensure that they and their dogs are compliant with its requirements;
- There are significant penalties for non-compliance;
- Advice and guidance is available online at [www.gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/ahw/importsexports/pettravelscheme/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/ahw/importsexports/pettravelscheme/?lang=en).

Under Article 4 of the Welfare of Animals (Transport) (Wales) 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.

### **Tail docking**

The docking of dogs’ tails has been banned in Wales since March 2007 under The Docking of Working Dogs’ Tails (Wales) 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 five days old. The vet will issue a certificate to prove the dog has been docked legally. The types of dogs that can be docked (upon production of evidence that it will be used as a working dog) are:

- Spaniels: English Springer Spaniel, Welsh Springer Spaniel and Cocker Spaniel.
- Terriers: Jack Russell Terrier, Cairn Terrier, Lakeland Terrier and Norfolk Terrier.
- Hunt Point Retrieve: Braque Italiano, Brittany, German Long Haired Pointer, German Wirehaired Pointer, Hungarian Vizsla, Hungarian Wire Haired Vizsla, Italian Spinone, Spanish Water Dog, Weinmaraner, Korthals Griffon, Slovakian Rough Haired Pointer, Large Munsterlander and Small Munsterlander.

### **Microchipping**

The Microchipping of Dogs (Wales) Regulations 2015 came in to effect on 6 April 2016, requiring the compulsory microchipping of dogs in Wales.

### **Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966**

The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 provide a means of regulating the veterinary profession for the purposes of protecting animal health and welfare and safeguarding public health.

## Appendix 2: Useful Sources of Information

Association of Dogs and Cats Homes: [www.adch.org.uk](http://www.adch.org.uk)

Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors: [www.apbc.org.uk](http://www.apbc.org.uk)

Battersea Dogs and Cats Home: [www.battersea.org.uk](http://www.battersea.org.uk)

Blue Cross: [www.bluecross.org.uk](http://www.bluecross.org.uk)

British Small Animal Veterinary Association: [www.bsava.com](http://www.bsava.com)

British Veterinary Association: [www.bva.co.uk](http://www.bva.co.uk)

Dogs Trust: [www.dogstrust.org.uk](http://www.dogstrust.org.uk)

PDSA: [www.pdsa.org.uk](http://www.pdsa.org.uk)

Petlog: [www.petlog.co.uk](http://www.petlog.co.uk)

Pet Care Trust: [www.petcare.org.uk](http://www.petcare.org.uk)

Pet Health Council: [www.pethealthcouncil.co.uk](http://www.pethealthcouncil.co.uk)

Pet Food Manufacturers Association: [www.pfma.org.uk](http://www.pfma.org.uk)

RSPCA Cymru: [www.rspca.cymru](http://www.rspca.cymru)

The Kennel Club: [www.thekennelclub.org.uk](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk)

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons: [www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk)

Welsh Government website for information on the Animal Welfare Act 2006, welfare during transport and to download a copy of the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs:  
[www.wales.gov.uk/animalwelfare](http://www.wales.gov.uk/animalwelfare)

Pets and poisons information: [www.animalwelfarefoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Pets-and-Poisons-1.pdf](http://www.animalwelfarefoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Pets-and-Poisons-1.pdf)