

# PAWPRINTS AWARDS

## KENNELING CRITERIA 2026 - MUST



### GENERAL POINTS OF GOOD PRACTICE

In order to house dogs, all premises <b>must</b> be licensed under the Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963, where appropriate, and act in accordance with the licensing conditions set out by the local authority. Where licensed, they <b>must</b> meet the minimum legal requirements.
The establishment's licence holder and employees <b>must not</b> have any previous convictions under relevant animal welfare legislation. Please note that this includes convictions under older legislation that has since been repealed.
The seizing body e.g. police, local authority or RSPCA, etc. <b>must</b> reserve the right to arrange for inspections of all kennel facilities, and carry out routine kennel inspections as and when required during the contract period, including inspections without prior notice.
The establishment licence holder <b>must</b> maintain a satisfactory level of security at the premises.
Adequate contingency steps <b>must</b> be in place for the protection and/or evacuation of the dogs in case of fire or other emergencies (as per the 1963 Act). The name, address and telephone number of the licensee <b>must</b> be permanently displayed on the premises and also logged with the police and fire and rescue services. Fire protection advice <b>must</b> be sought from the local Fire Prevention Officer and then implemented.
When staff are caring for and working with the dogs they <b>must</b> give them their undivided attention. For example, mobile phones <b>must</b> be switched off except for breaks and lunch. This helps ensure better staff interaction with the dogs, improving the animals' welfare, and also ensures better health and safety for staff.

## 1. ENVIRONMENT

*Making sure dogs have a suitable place to live*

### 1.1 Kennel construction

a) All kennels <b>must</b> be of substantial construction and provide protection from drafts, wet, cold and hot weather. For example, where concrete or other building blocks or bricks are used, they <b>must</b> be sealed so that they are smooth and impervious (i.e. do not let water in) and then resealed as necessary. Wood should not be used for new builds; however, when it appears in existing constructions it <b>must</b> be smooth and treated to render it impervious for hygiene and safety reasons.
b) Products <b>must not</b> be used for kennel construction if they contain substances that are toxic to dogs.
c) All kennels <b>must</b> be secure to prevent escape. For example, doors <b>must</b> be close fitting and able to be secured effectively.
d) Kennels <b>must</b> be free from hazards. For example, there <b>must</b> be no projections or rough edges liable to cause injury.
e) All internal surfaces used in the construction of walls, floors, partitions, doors and doorframes <b>must</b> be durable, smooth, impervious and easily cleaned.
f) Materials used in the construction of partition walls (i.e. walls between adjacent kennels) <b>must</b> ensure the safety of the dogs and prevent injury to any body parts. For example, wire mesh should be of a diameter that prevents access to neighbouring dogs and protects noses, paws and claws. Where mesh is used, consideration may be given to double-skinning (i.e. using two mesh panels with a gap in-between) to ensure safety and prevent injury.
g) When a dog poses a health and safety risk to other dogs, he or she <b>must</b> be kept in a kennel with solid partition walls.
<b>Partition Walls</b> - Solid walls can affect an animal's welfare as the height may restrict the dog's control over visual access to his/her surroundings and other dogs. Where partition walls are needed, they <b>must</b> be of a suitable height and structure to ensure dogs cannot attack or injure each other or themselves. In kennels such as these, some dogs exhibit repetitive behaviour e.g. bouncing or spinning, management plans <b>must</b> be implemented giving consideration to aspects of the dog's environment that could be making it difficult to cope and includes seeking

advice from a suitably qualified behavioural expert and veterinarian (see Appendix II) who can help carry out an assessment on how to resolve the problem. Where appropriate and possible, changes **must** be implemented.

i) Flooring **must** be of a non-slip, urine-resistant material. It **must** be laid in a way and at a fall that avoids the pooling of liquids. Slatted or wire mesh floors **must not** be used.

## 1.2 Kennel design

e) Every dog **must** be provided with continual access to a comfortable, dry, draught-free, clean and quiet place to rest.

f) Every dog **must** be provided with somewhere he/she can go to avoid things that frighten him or her. This could be the sleeping area or underneath a sleeping platform, however, to ensure safety for humans and dogs, platforms **must** be hinged on one side to allow easy and safe access to the animal if needed. Or a short partition wall across the activity area could be provided, behind which the dog can retreat.

g) Bedding of a suitable material, e.g. shredded paper or fleece material, **must** be provided. Chewing or destruction of bedding should not result in restricted access, rather alternative materials **must** be trialed. If it is found that a dog persistently chews or destroys bedding then advice should be sought from a suitably qualified behavioural expert (see Appendix III) or veterinary surgeon and an assessment made of how to resolve the problem. For example, consideration should be given to the aspects of the dog's environment that could be making it difficult for the dog to cope, and changes implemented where appropriate.

## 1.3 Kennel size

a) The kennel area **must** be large enough to allow separate sleeping and activity areas.

b) The kennel **must** be sufficiently large to allow each dog to be able, as a minimum, to walk, turn around and wag his or her tail without touching the sides of the kennel; to stand on his/her hind limbs, and to stretch and lie down in a natural position without touching another animal or the sides of the kennel. It **must** also be large enough to allow dogs to interact, play, go to the toilet and feed.

c) For all new builds, the minimum kennel size **must** be at least 4m<sup>2</sup> for dogs under 20kg, and 8m<sup>2</sup> for dogs over 20kg. This should be increased in relation to the size and number of dogs, so that both the length and width are sufficient for each and all the dogs to lie outstretched at all angles, with neither their tail nor snout touching the walls or another individual. Current constructions should be of this minimum size.

d) If housing more than one dog in one kennel, the kennel **must** be large enough to allow adequate resources to avoid competition and monopolisation in the kennel e.g. sufficient beds, toys, etc. for each dog.

## 1.5 Temperature

a) Kennels **must** be insulated to avoid extremes of temperature.

b) At all times there **must** be some part of the kennel where the dog can experience temperatures above 10°C (50°F) and below 26°C (79°F). If necessary, heating and/or automatic cooling/ventilation **must** be provided to achieve this.

## 1.6 Ventilation/humidity

a) Ventilation in the dogs' indoor accommodation **must** provide sufficient fresh air of an appropriate quality; this **must** keep down the levels and spread of odours, noxious gases, dust and infectious agents of any kind, and provide for the removal of excess heat and humidity.

## 1.7 Noise

a) High levels of noise can be stressful to dogs and **must** be avoided. Numerous sources can contribute to the noise within a kennel establishment, including other dogs. Measures to mitigate noise **must** be explored and where possible, implemented, for example, changing metal buckets and bowls to plastic can significantly reduce noise levels (see sections 1.2c and 5.3e for information on how to minimise the disturbance of other dogs).

## 1.8 Access to an outdoor area for exercise and interaction

a) All adult dogs and puppies over six weeks of age **must** have daily access to outdoor safe and secure areas, away from the kennel area and this should be for at least 30 minutes per day, whether this is lead exercise and/or in an exercise run and unless a vet indicates otherwise. This should be in addition to opportunities for toileting. Consideration should be given to the siting of the outdoor enclosure to ensure it is in a suitable position.

d) Outdoor areas where animals exercise and interact cannot have strict temperature regulation. Dogs **must not** be restricted to such areas when climatic conditions may cause them distress. They **must** have constant access to fresh clean water, shade and shelter so they can avoid rain, wind, snow, ice or direct sunlight, etc.

e) When dogs are housed outdoors, there **must** always be a cool shaded area available to them. They **must** also have constant access to fresh clean water.

## 1.9 Transport

a) Dogs **must not** be left unattended in a vehicle where the temperature may pose a risk to them. It is also important to ensure that any vehicle used for transportation has the correct ventilation and temperature control so that the dog remains comfortable during the journey whatever the outside temperature.

b) Whenever dogs are transported they **must** be fit and healthy for the intended journey. Injured and/or diseased dogs **must not** be transported unless they are being taken to a veterinary surgery or under veterinary advice. The transporting of distressed dogs should be avoided whenever possible.

d) During a journey dogs **must** be securely and comfortably confined. If a dog is transported alone in a container, he or she **must** have enough space to stand, sit erect, lie in a natural position and turn around normally while standing up. If transported with other dogs, there should be sufficient space for all the dogs to carry out all these behaviours without touching other dogs. It is recognised that this might not always be possible in urgent or emergency situations.

## 1.10 Crating

a) Crating **must not** be used to house seized dogs permanently.

b) Crating can be useful for habituating puppies to be left alone to aid recovery following an injury or operation or during transportation. Where a crate is used in these circumstances, it **must** be large enough to allow the dog to stand, turn around normally while standing up, sit erect and lie down in a natural position. Take the dog out regularly to allow him/her to toilet, but do not leave the dog inside for so long that he or she becomes distressed, or generally for more than four hours at a time.

## 2. DIET

### *Making sure dogs have a healthy diet*

#### 2.1 Food and water

- a) All dogs **must** be provided with continuous access to fresh, clean drinking water, except when being transported.
- b) All dogs **must** receive a palatable diet that fulfills their nutritional requirements and is matched to their age, breed, health, reproductive status, body condition score\*, and weight and activity level. A veterinary surgeon should assist with devising an appropriate diet, and manufacturers' advice should be read and followed.

#### 2.2 Feeding regime

- a) Adult dogs **must** be fed at least once a day unless advised otherwise by a veterinary surgeon. Consideration should be given to the feeding regime the dog has been used to in his or her previous home/accommodation.
- c) If more than one dog is housed together, each dog **must** be fed from a separate bowl to reduce potential competition.
- d) If a dog's eating or drinking habits change, the dog should be closely monitored by trained and competent staff. A veterinary surgeon should be consulted if there is no improvement within 24 hours and **must** be if the animal's condition worsens.
- e) The body condition and/or the weight of all dogs **must** be monitored regularly and diets adjusted to ensure the correct body condition score and weight is achieved and maintained.
- f) To achieve e) above, kennels **must** have weighing scales available for staff to monitor the dogs' weight. Dogs should be weighed at least once a week, with the information recorded in a suitable place i.e. the individual dog's daily care sheet (see Appendix V for an example). A number of companies provide body condition score charts, which can be useful in assessing a dog's body condition.

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\* It is important that any Body Condition Scoring (BCS) system used is validated. The BCS systems developed by Purina and Waltham have been validated and are suitable to use.

### 3. BEHAVIOUR

#### *Making sure dogs behave normally*

#### 3.1 Exercise

a) Dogs **must** be provided with the opportunity to exercise away from their kennel at least once a day and this should be for a total of at least 30 minutes – unless veterinary advice suggests otherwise.

#### 3.2 Toy and food enrichment

a) Dogs show a natural drive to chew and **must** be provided with safe, suitable toys, bones or other items as an outlet for this behaviour, appropriate for the individual dog.

e) Toys **must** be checked daily to ensure they are safe and **must** be replaced when necessary.

f) Toys **must** be disinfected before being given to another dog.

#### 3.3 Monitoring of behavioural signs

a) Staff **must** be familiar with and able to recognise signs of stress, fear and anxiety to determine whether the dog is experiencing good or poor welfare.

b) The behaviour of all dogs, and in particular any changes, **must** be recorded during daily inspections. For example, the use of a daily care sheet placed on the front of the kennel can be of benefit, particularly when different staff deal with the same dog (see Appendix V for an example).

Changes in behaviour are often the first signs of illness or injury, so possible causes for these signs in individual dogs **must** be investigated. Veterinary advice **must** be sought where significant or persistent changes in behaviour are noted and if/when advised, the advice of a suitably qualified behaviour expert (see Appendix III) **must** be sought.

c) Where multiple dogs within an establishment show signs of stress, fear and anxiety e.g. exhibiting repetitive behaviours, the housing and husbandry routines of the establishment **must** be reviewed (see also section 1.1h). Advice from a veterinary surgeon and/or suitably qualified behaviour expert (see Appendix III) **must** be sought where necessary. If the kennel fails to adhere to the advice, the dogs should be removed to another kennel and the contract terminated.

d) When an establishment has concerns about a dog's behaviour, it should inform the seizing authority and it **must** provide information on these concerns to the recipient, for example, when the animal is returned to his/her owner or transferred to another organisation for rehoming.

#### 3.4 Socialisation and habituation of puppies

##### 3.4.1 Socialisation of puppies

a) In addition to handling the puppies during regular husbandry procedures, staff **must** ensure that they are handled regularly on a daily basis from three weeks of age. The handling over the following weeks should be conducted by a variety of people of both sexes, of different ages and appearances, especially children, and be exposed to different environments.

##### 3.4.2 Habituation

a) Where possible, puppies and previously unhabituated dogs **must** be gradually introduced to a full range of normal sounds, including household ones, through supervised daily exposure. The level of exposure to such sounds should be increased very gradually to avoid causing fear. Household sounds may occur naturally in domestic environments but for puppies in kennels, recordings of the sounds could be played.

### 3.5 Handling, training and training devices

a) A suitable flat collar, harness or head collar should be used to walk dogs and they **must** be correctly fitted and used.

**Fitting a Harness** - Harnesses **must** be fitted appropriately and not cause irritation to any body parts. Head collars **must** also be fitted properly so as not to cause irritation to the dog's eyes and lips, and must be introduced gradually in a positive way. Head collars should always be used with a flat collar; this ensures that the dog cannot escape and enables the appropriate use of the head collar. When two leads or a single double-ended lead are used, the dog can be walked predominantly on the flat collar, with pressure applied to the head collar to turn the dog around only as required. Pressure on this lead can then be released immediately.

c) Slip leads can also be used when staff are concerned about a dog potentially slipping its collar but **must not** be used in a way that restricts the dog's airway. If a dog is a flight risk, then a harness with a double attachment lead must be used. The slip lead can be used as a safety measure, but must not be used in a way that restricts the dogs' airway and must only be used in conjunction with a harness and double attachment lead.

d) Punishment-based training has been linked to an increased incidence of behaviour problems in dogs, including fear, anxiety, decreased confidence, overexcitement and fear aggression. Electric shock devices (which are illegal to use in Wales, see Further sources of information), choke/check chains, pinch collars, spray collars and other punishment-based methods **must not** be used when training seized dogs. Instead, reward-based training methods **must** always be used.

f) Equipment to catch and control dogs **must** be kept on site. For example, all kennels should have slip leads and dog graspers, with staff trained in their use. Kennels that house dogs seized under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 should also have some form of propellant-based distraction device, e.g. fire extinguisher for use in emergencies. However, to safeguard dog welfare and their own health and safety, staff **must** be trained and competent in how to use such equipment and in which circumstances it is appropriate to use it as well as recognise that some devices have the potential to escalate aggression. Where devices such as graspers and fire extinguishers are used, and in recognition that these have the potential to increase fear and anxiety, their use must be fully justified and all other options considered.

## 4. COMPANY

### *Making sure dogs have the company they need*

**The Importance of Company** - Dogs are sociable animals and most need and enjoy company. While experiences can influence how they interact with other dogs and people, in general dogs have an inherent desire for contact with their own species and form strong social bonds with humans. For many dogs, one of the greatest stressors upon arrival into a kennel environment is the separation from their familiar social group. Numerous studies have shown that the provision of contact with other dogs and humans has a positive benefit for welfare. In fact, the level of contact with people may be as important, if not more than, the physical kennel environment for the welfare of dogs. Therefore, it is important that where appropriate for the individual dog, individual circumstances, and it is safe to do so, company with other dogs and humans **must** be provided.

### 4.1 Group or separate housing

a) Where it is practical and safe to do so, for example there are no biosecurity or health and safety concerns, dogs should be pair- or group-housed. For example, consideration **must** be given as to whether it is possible to house dogs seized from the same household in this way – see section 4.1f below.

b) Decisions to pair- or group-house dogs **must** be made by suitably trained and competent staff and, where necessary, with advice from a veterinary surgeon or suitably qualified behaviour expert (see Appendix II), giving due consideration to all the human safety and animal welfare implications.

c) Where dogs are housed separately it is important to ensure that their welfare is maximised. Where there are concerns about an individual dog's welfare, advice from a veterinary surgeon or suitably qualified behaviour expert (see Appendix III) should be sought to ensure optimal welfare. Any dog housed in isolation **must** be provided with alternative means of enrichment and social interaction (see sections 3.1, 3.2 and 4.2).

e) Some minor or temporary signs of aggression such as growling or raised hackles may occur on the first introduction of unfamiliar dogs. However, where more severe or persistent signs of aggression are shown (e.g. biting, chasing, pinning down, blocking movement), dogs **must not** be housed together.

g) A dog **must not** be housed with another dog if he or she tries to avoid them or appears fearful of them, for example, one of the dogs avoids contact, persistently hides or cowers.

h) Where dogs are housed in the vicinity of other dogs, each dog **must** be able to control their visual access to every other dog (i.e. retreat from view) to avoid situations that they find fearful or frustrating.

i) Dogs **must** never be muzzled in their kennels to facilitate pair- or group-housing.

j) Pair- and group-housed dogs **must** have sufficient space and adequate resources to minimise competition and monopolisation and to be able to move away from one another if they so choose (see also section 1.3d).

l) Where facilities or circumstances prevent the pair- or group-housing of dogs, dogs **must** be provided with regular opportunities to exercise with other friendly dogs, as long as it is safe and appropriate for the individual dog and individual circumstances (section 4.1c is relevant here).

m) To ensure biosecurity and appropriate controlled socialisation (see section 3.4.1), bitches with puppies and litters of puppies **must** be housed in separate facilities to other adult dogs.

n) Puppies that remain in the care of enforcement bodies after weaning should be housed with their littermates or with other puppies of a similar age and size. They should remain as a group unless their behaviour dictates otherwise and if the needs of each dog can be met. For example, establishments **must** ensure that the kennel is sufficiently large to allow each dog to be able to walk, turn around and wag his/her tail without touching the sides of the kennel, play, stand on his/her hind limbs and lie down without touching another animal or the sides of the kennel.

### 4.2 Human company

a) Depending on past experiences, many dogs find human company rewarding and calming. Contact with humans **must** include activities such as grooming, exercise, playing, petting and training but at a level that is suitable for the individual dog.

b) Dogs who enjoy human contact get more benefit from exercise if people are involved, so whenever possible such dogs should be exercised in the presence of people (see also section 3.1a). It is important that when staff

are interacting with dogs, they are able to concentrate fully and so use of mobile phones or other distractions **must not** be allowed.

c) All staff must strive for a positive relationship with each and every dog and negative interactions **must** be avoided.

d) Staff **must** be able to identify a dog that is anxious or fearful about contact with people from his/her body posture. Photographs and videos of some of the behaviours described above can be found at <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/vetscience/services/behaviour-clinic/dogbehaviouralsigns/>. Such dogs should be slowly and patiently introduced to people and rewarded for calm behaviour. During this process, and until human contact becomes rewarding, additional enrichment should be provided, e.g. exercise, toys and feeding devices.

#### 4.3 Staff training/competency

a) The establishment licence holder is responsible for ensuring that they and their members of staff have adequate knowledge and skills that **must** be kept up to date, so that they can implement the guidelines in this document and ensure the well-being of dogs in their care. The contract holder should check this prior to the contract being agreed.

## 5. HEALTH

*Making sure dogs are protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease*

### 5.1 Health inspection responsibilities

b) All staff <b>must</b> be familiar with, and able to recognise, signs of illness, injury and disease.
c) Advice from a veterinary surgeon <b>must</b> be sought and acted upon immediately whenever a dog shows signs of disease, injury or illness.
f) Each dog <b>must</b> , at the very least have a daily visual inspection to check for any signs of illness or distress (see also section 3.3b) but ideally this should be a physical inspection. This <b>must</b> be recorded, for example on a daily record kept on the front of the kennel (see Appendix V for an example).
g) During normal working hours dogs <b>must</b> be observed at regular intervals and at least three times each day. Out of normal working hours, dogs should not be left for more than 12 hours without being checked. The frequency of visits should be balanced against the possibility of disturbing the dogs, although exceptions will arise when dogs are ill or injured.
j) All dogs should have routine control of ecto- and endoparasites (e.g. worms, fleas, ticks, etc.) as directed by a veterinary surgeon. Records <b>must</b> be kept for veterinary and seizing body inspection.
k) Any medication given <b>must</b> be prescribed for the individual animal by a veterinary surgeon, and each instance should be recorded.
l) Dogs <b>must</b> be groomed regularly to ensure their coat is kept in good condition, although exceptions may arise, for example when dogs have any injuries, pain or skin conditions or are fearful of or display aggression towards people.

### 5.3 Hygiene

a) All places that dogs have access to (i.e. living accommodation, corridors, common areas, kitchens) <b>must</b> be kept clean and free from accumulated dirt and dust to minimise disease transmission and to ensure the dogs are comfortable.
c) A cleaning schedule for the dogs' accommodation should be implemented and displayed; this should outline daily, weekly and monthly cleaning and disinfection duties. The cleaning <b>must</b> incorporate a recognised formulation effective against micro-organisms responsible for canine diseases; for example, bleach <b>must not</b> be used as it is harmful to dogs. However, any disinfectant used <b>must</b> be parvocidal. This programme should be included in the health plan developed with veterinary advice.
d) Spot cleaning is permitted so long as it doesn't pose a risk to the dog's health and each kennel <b>must</b> be deep cleaned with an appropriate disinfectant (see section 5.2c) when the dog permanently vacates the kennel.
<b>Spot Cleaning</b> - The daily use of disinfectant can be stressful for dogs as it removes familiar scents from their environment. In some cases it can lead to increased marking as dogs re-mark their territory. It is therefore recommended that the daily use of disinfectant is avoided with spot cleaning to remove urine and faeces as required so long as it doesn't pose risk to the dog's health. A deep cleaning <b>must</b> occur at the change of occupancy.

### 5.3 Husbandry routines

a) Dogs <b>must</b> always have access to a dry, clean area and be able to avoid wet floors after cleaning. This could be achieved through the provision of a sleeping platform (see section 1.2a).
c) Dogs housed in kennels <b>must</b> be removed during high-pressure and steam cleaning and any other cleaning procedures likely to be frightening.

### 5.4 Isolation facilities

b) Veterinary advice <b>must</b> be sought for any animal with a potentially infectious disease. Where advised, the dog should be isolated immediately and the procedure documented.
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c) Procedures **must** be in place, and understood by all staff, to prevent the spread of infectious disease between isolated animals and the other dogs.

## 5.5 Identification

a) All dogs **must** be easily identifiable and, whenever possible, microchipped.

b) There **must** be a system in place to ensure the correct identification of the dogs housed.

c) Each kennel **must** be clearly and permanently numbered and **must** carry a notice that details relevant information (see the example of a daily care sheet in Appendix V for an example of the type of information that should be recorded).

## 5.6 Record keeping

a) The establishment **must** keep a register of all dogs boarding and information about them. Care sheets, etc. can be useful in assisting with this (see Appendix V for examples). The register **must** include the following information, although this list is not exhaustive:

- date of arrival and kennel number
- name of dog (if available), and any other identification marks
- description, sex, breed, and age/estimated age
- name and address of appropriate veterinary surgeon
- health, welfare and nutrition concerns and requirements (if applicable)
- reference information
- microchip number if implanted
- a photograph taken on arrival and at the point of the dog's departure
- record of the dog's behaviour
- record of veterinary treatment
- record of food, including quantities and times
- record of exercise given
- regular record of the dog's weight and body condition score throughout his or her stay; the frequency of recording will be determined by the individual dog and individual circumstances.

b) All original records **must** be kept by the establishment for the length of time defined by the licensing authority and seizing body and thereafter stored/ disposed of as required.

## 5.7 Euthanasia

a) Any animals ordered by the court as unable to be returned to their owner or animals deemed unsuitable for rehoming due to health or behavioural problems **must** be humanely euthanased. This decision should be made at as early an opportunity as possible to ensure animal welfare and **must** involve appropriate experts and relevant bodies. Euthanasia **must only** be carried out by or under the direction of a veterinary surgeon.

## 5.8 Restoration to owner

b) When a dog is returned to his or her owner, the kennels **must** provide the owner with information about the care and treatment of the dog while in kennels. A dog return sheet or similar could be used (see section 3.3d, and Appendix V for an example).