



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

How to look after your dog

Following the code





Introduction

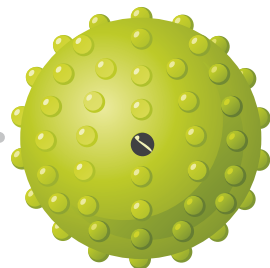


Owning and caring for a dog is great fun and very rewarding, but it is also a big responsibility and a long-term caring and financial commitment. You control your dog's lifestyle; it is your responsibility to make sure that its needs are met, whatever the circumstances. The law requires that you must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

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

These are explained in more detail in sections 1-5 of Part 2 of this Code. For further advice, speak to your vet or a pet care specialist (e.g. a veterinary nurse, suitably qualified behaviourist or animal welfare organisation). Other sources of information are listed at the end of the leaflet.

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

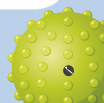
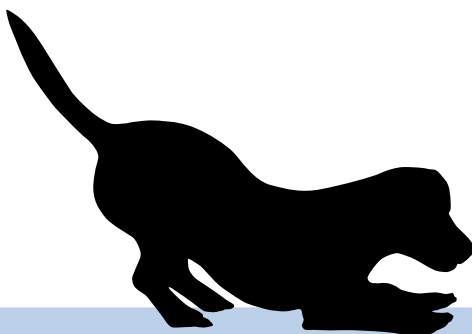


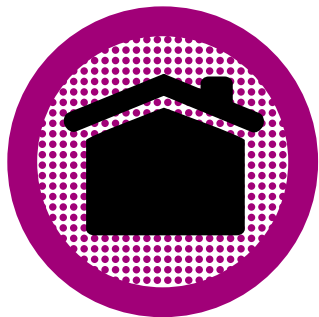
This Code of Practice is issued under section 14 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (the “Act”). This code of practice applies in Wales only, is issued by the Welsh Ministers and comes into force on 28th November 2008. The purpose of this Code of Practice is to provide advice on how to meet the needs of your dog. It covers all dogs for which a person is responsible.

This Code of Practice is split into two parts. This is Part 1. Part 1 is a summary of the details contained in the main Code of Practice, Part 2.

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

To find out how to get a copy, please see the Sources of Information section at the end of this leaflet.





Environment



Make sure your dog has a suitable place to live

Sleeping and resting

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

Keeping a dog outside

If you keep your dog outside ensure that it is also kept within a secure space to prevent it from escaping or roaming and to stop other animals getting in, unwelcome visitors or even theft.

Hazards

Ensure your dog is kept away from potentially harmful substances.

Travel

Make sure your dog is transported safely.

Dogs should not be left unattended in a vehicle in warm weather. This can be life threatening.





Diet



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

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

How often to feed your dog

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

Leave your dog in peace while it is eating.

Healthy weight

Your dog should not be too fat or too thin. Ideally you should just be able to feel its ribs and clearly see its waist when viewed from above.

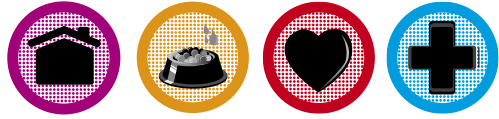
Other dietary needs

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





Behaviour



You dog should be able to behave normally

Training

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

Exercise

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

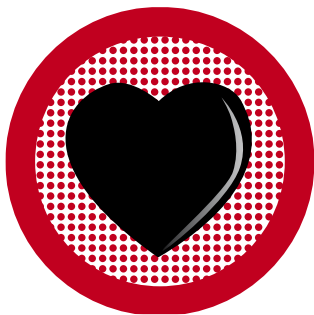
Signs of stress

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

Going to the toilet

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





Company



Make sure your dogs social needs are met

Socialisation

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

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

Relations with other animals and people

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

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

When you are away from home

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

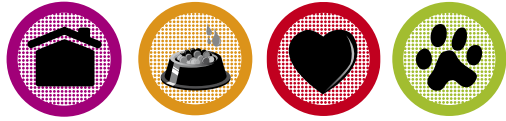
Dogs should not be routinely left on their own for more than a few hours during the day as they are likely to become stressed and bored, leading to barking or destructive behaviour.

Number of animals

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



Health & Welfare



You must ensure your dog is in good health

Health care

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

Grooming

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

Identification

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





The law



Animal Welfare Act 2006

See www.wales.gov.uk/animalwelfare for full act

This Code of Practice has been issued under Section 14 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Breach of a provision of this 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 also be aware that failure to meet your 'duty of care' may cause unnecessary suffering, leading to the more serious offence of cruelty under the Act.

Section 4(1)(a) of the Act states that "A person commits an offence if an act of his, or failure of his to act, causes an animal to suffer".

Section 9 of the Act states that "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".





Further information



Useful contacts and website information

Sources of information

- The Welsh Assembly Government's Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs. To obtain a copy, please email: companionanimalwelfare@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Your vet

- Local libraries and bookshops for up to date books on dog care.
- Websites such as:
- Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors: www.apbc.org.uk
- Blue Cross: www.thebluecross.org.uk
- Dogs Trust: www.dogstrust.org.uk
- PDSA: www.pdsa.org.uk
- Petlog: www.petlog.co.uk
- Pet Care Trust: www.petcare.org.uk
- Pet Health Council: www.pethealthcouncil.co.uk
- Pet Food Manufacturers Association: www.pfma.org.uk
- RSPCA: www.rspca.org.uk
- The Kennel Club: www.thekennelclub.org.uk
- The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons' website has a 'find a vet' facility: www.rcvs.org.uk
- Welsh Assembly Government website for information on the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and to download an electronic copy of the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs: www.wales.gov.uk/animalwelfare