

# Working dog welfare during kennelling

## What is this note about?

This note provides guidance on how to enhance the welfare of working dogs during kennelling. It brings together information from scientific literature, including the Practitioner's Guide to Working Dog Welfare [1] and government guidelines, such as the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs [2]. Although this note focuses on kennelling, it is also important to consider dog welfare during training, transport and when working. Further guidelines relating to dog welfare can be found in the 'Associated guides and information' section.

## Who is this note relevant for?

All dog handlers, trainers, kennel staff and personnel involved with, and managers responsible for, the care of working dogs. This note applies to both working dogs kennelled in a home environment (e.g. within a kennel at their handler's home) or at a centralised location.

## What is animal welfare?

Animal welfare is generally defined as animal wellbeing, which incorporates two equally important components: mental and physical health. A more detailed discussion of animal welfare can be found on the World Organisation for Animal Health website [3].

## Why is working dog welfare important?

All dog handlers, trainers, kennel staff and personnel involved with the training, transport and care of working dogs must be adequately trained and competent in ensuring that there is good provision for canine welfare and safe handling, for the following reasons:

- **To prevent animal suffering**  
We have a moral obligation to prevent animal suffering, and it is widely acknowledged within scientific literature that many dogs do not adapt well to being kennelled [4].
- **To comply with the Animal Welfare Act (2006) [5]; the principal UK animal welfare legislation**  
Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act places a 'duty of care' on people to ensure that they take reasonable steps to meet the welfare needs of their animals.
- **To maintain an effective working capability**  
Dogs with a good state of welfare tend to perform better during training, and may have a better ability to learn certain tasks. Fear and aggression caused by poor welfare can also lead to withdrawal from working roles which can have a detrimental operational impact [6].

## How can I monitor working dog welfare?

Animal welfare is difficult to measure; no single physiological or behavioural measure can be used alone to accurately assess a dog's welfare. However, there are several signs of good and poor welfare which can be used as general indicators; examples are provided in the sections below.

Several factors can also impact welfare. For example, fear and anxiety in working dogs can result from inherited characteristics, environmental influences (e.g. handler relationship) and/or previous life experience; all of which will vary from dog to dog. It is therefore important to consider the following points when monitoring working dog welfare:

- The suitability of the individual dog's environment and daily routine and whether these fulfil the dog's needs.
- The individual dog's life history (e.g. assessing prior training records and speaking with previous handlers/owners).
- The individual dog's physical health (veterinary advice should be sought to effectively monitor this).

## How can I ensure working dogs have a good standard of welfare?

A useful framework to help ensure working dogs have a good standard of welfare in kennels is to meet the '**Five Needs**' throughout their lives, as required by the Animal Welfare Act (2006) [5]:

1. **Need for a suitable environment**  
Including sufficient space, shelter, appropriate environmental temperature/humidity and a comfortable resting and sleeping area.
2. **Need for a suitable diet**  
Including ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
3. **Need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns**  
Space, facilities and opportunity to carry out normal behaviours including movement, feeding, play, socialising and resting, and be mentally stimulated.
4. **Need to be housed with, or apart, from other animals**  
Appropriate amounts of social companionship as required by the individual animal.
5. **Need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease**  
By prevention, rapid diagnosis and treatment of health issues and by ensuring conditions and treatment avoid mental suffering.

## What are key signs of poor welfare in kennelled dogs?

If one or more of the 'Five Needs' is not adequately provided for, dogs may show signs of poor welfare. Observing dogs for specific stress-related behaviours and any changes in their usual behavioural routines and repertoire can be a useful and relatively simple way to assess welfare. Some behavioural changes can also indicate underlying health problems. DEFRA's Code of Practice suggests a minimum of daily observations [2].

Behavioural observations can take place during kennelling, exercising, training sessions, operations and/or during transport. Identifying key places and times when particular behaviours occur may aid in understanding what is causing them. As human presence/absence can influence the presentation of some welfare indicators, remote monitoring using video cameras can be a useful way to observe dog behaviour in the absence of people. A range of behaviours that indicate poor welfare (based on scientific research) are summarised in Table 1.

Abnormal behaviour	Description
<b>Pace</b>	Dog repeatedly (more than 3 times consecutively) paces around kennel in a fixed route.
<b>Wall bounce</b>	Dog repeatedly (more than 3 times consecutively) jumps up kennel wall from side to side.
<b>Tail chase</b>	Dog chases tail repeatedly (more than 3 times consecutively) for reasons other than discomfort or grooming.
<b>Circling</b>	Dog walks around in small circle repeatedly (more than 3 times consecutively).
<b>Play bow</b>	Dog repeatedly (more than 3 times consecutively) displays the play bow posture (i.e. dog lays front paws on ground as if to initiate play)
<b>Chew bedding</b>	Dog chews its own bedding.
<b>Self-lick</b>	Dog licks its own body repeatedly (over 5 minutes per session). Licking may be related to an injury or as a psychological coping mechanism
<b>Lip-lick</b>	Dog licks lips repeatedly (over 5 minutes per session).
<b>Pant</b>	Dog pants for reasons other than physical exertion or a warm ambient temperature (only recorded if temperature is less than 25°C).
<b>Hide</b>	Dog attempts to escape from the view of kennel staff behind its bed or other kennel furniture for prolonged periods when not asleep (over 2 minutes); may be accompanied by a low posture or trembling.
<b>Chew bars</b>	Dog repeatedly chews and bites at the wire of the kennel (over 20 seconds).
<b>Self-bite</b>	Dog repeatedly bites its own body (over 10 seconds).
<b>Yawn</b>	Dog opens mouth wide while taking a deep inhalation. Occurs frequently (even when the dog is active/alert), or more often than is usual for the individual dog, or mainly in specific circumstances.
<b>Paw lift</b>	Dog raises one forelimb off the ground for a prolonged period of time (over 5 seconds).
<b>Body shake</b>	Dog's entire body shakes (similar to when a wet dog dries off).
<b>Startle</b>	Dog jumps and shows concern by looking around and being alert to the surroundings.
<b>Polydipsia</b>	Dog drinks large volumes of water in excess of what is normal.
<b>Lack of appetite</b>	Dog does not eat more than 50% of the food that is presented.
<b>Excessive vocalization</b>	Dog barks for prolonged periods (over 1 minute) in the visual and auditory absence of people and other dogs.
<b>Listless</b>	Dog is withdrawn and unresponsive to commands.
<b>Escape attempt</b>	Dog attempts to escape kennel in a forceful manner whenever the kennel door is opened and closed.

Table 1: Examples of behaviours that may indicate poor welfare, adapted from Stephen and Ledger (2005) [7]

Figure 1 illustrates some examples of behaviours indicative of poor welfare (stress/anxiety) that have been observed in kennelled working dogs and which may be related to inappropriate kennelling [7]. These behaviours can occur in both the presence and absence of people.



Figure 1: Some examples of behaviours observed in kennelled dogs that indicate stress.

The behaviours shown in Figure 2, often referred to as ‘stereotypies’, are highly repetitive and appear to serve no obvious purpose (though they may be a way in which the dog attempts to cope with an unsuitable kennel environment) [4, 7]. They typically occur in the presence of people but can also occur when people are absent.



Figure 2: Examples of repetitive behaviours observed in kennelled working dogs.

Whilst these behaviours are typically regarded as signs of frustration due to an inadequate environment, scientific research has highlighted that there may be a distinction between dogs showing repetitive behaviours only when people are present (or at times of high arousal, e.g. when other dogs in an exercise area/training session are in view of kennelled dogs), and dogs performing repetitive behaviour when people are absent. Dogs that exhibit repetitive behaviour in the absence of high arousal events may be experiencing chronic stress. This emphasises the value of observing dog behaviour using video cameras, to identify how dogs behave in the absence of high arousal events including the presence of people [8].

Fearful behaviour can also indicate poor welfare and is sometimes less obvious than the repetitive or destructive behaviours described above. Fearful behaviours can include withdrawal (Figure 3), hiding, trembling and low body posture [7]. Fearful behaviours can occur both in the presence and absence of people.



Figure 3: Withdrawal behaviour

## What are some key signs of good welfare?

Despite extensive research into the signs of poor welfare in dogs, there has been considerably less investigation into signs of good welfare (i.e. signs that dogs are happy and showing positive emotions).

Signs of good welfare include play behaviour, active exploration of the environment and friendly social interaction with other dogs and/or people. Resting is also sometimes used as a good welfare indicator [9]. However, excessive resting can also indicate poor welfare, for example if the dog's environment is insufficiently stimulating or if they are feeling unwell.

## How can I ensure that kennelled working dogs' welfare is good?

Listed below for each of the '**Five Needs**' are suggestions to help meet these. These methods:

- Are based on recommendations within scientific literature and the DEFRA Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs [2].
- Are divided into 'quick wins' (low-cost methods which can be implemented relatively easily) and 'policy and design' methods (requiring longer-term planning such as kennel building enhancements).

### 1. Need for a suitable environment

There are three main pieces of UK legislation that apply to kennelling: the Animal Welfare Act 2006 [5], the Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963 [10] and the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 [11]. The latter two documents apply to all boarding establishments that require licencing under the local authority. The Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963 requires that "accommodation is suitable as respects construction, size, number of occupants, exercising facilities, temperature, lighting, ventilation and cleanliness".

Kennels should also be "safe, secure and free from hazards, and minimise the risk of injury to a dog, or escape of a dog" [12]. Further sources of guidance and advice on good kennel design include the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) Model Licence Conditions, Guidance for Dog Boarding Establishments 2016 [12], the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 Guidance notes for conditions for providing boarding in kennels for dogs [13] and an RSPCA guide covering the kennelling of seized dogs [14].

### Quick wins

#### Protect from weather extremes

Dogs are particularly vulnerable to heat stress. Kennelled dogs should therefore be protected from hot weather and cold temperatures; kennels should have effective ventilation and temperature control systems. The ambient temperature

in the sleeping area of the kennel should be kept between 10°C and 26°C [12]. To protect kennelled dogs from wind and rain, part of their kennel should be weatherproof, allowing dogs to shelter in a dry, draught free and comfortable area.

#### Provide comfortable bedding

It is important for working dogs to sleep comfortably at night and rest comfortably during the day. The use of bedding, such as veterinary bedding (industry standard bedding for veterinary practices, groomers and boarding kennels), can increase comfort, as well as provide warmth during the colder months. Scientific literature highlights that bedding materials, such as straw [1], can also be used to provide mental stimulation in the kennel, because it provides a new odour and novel material for dogs to explore.

Bedding should be a suitable material that is safe for dogs. Some dogs may destroy their bedding (and potentially eat it). The condition of the bedding should be regularly monitored and changed if the material becomes hazardous. These dogs may be particularly in need of additional stimulation so, rather than removing the bedding, additional forms of enrichment (as discussed elsewhere in this guidance note, e.g. toys, raised platforms, access to enriched free runs) should also be considered and trialled.

#### Provide relaxing audio in kennels

Dogs have more sensitive hearing than humans and can be disturbed by noises, including other barking dogs. Therefore it is important that the kennel environment is as calm and quiet as possible. The playing of audiobooks [15] and calming classical music [16] has been found to increase resting behaviour amongst kennelled dogs and also decrease vocalisations (including barking, howling or whining). During one study, it was found to be most effective if played between the hours of 0900 and 1200. Sessions of audio may also have a beneficial effect at other times of day but, in the absence of specific scientific evidence, should not be used at night-time to avoid disturbing the dogs.

Built-in sound systems can provide good sound quality throughout a kennel block and within each individual kennel. Portable sound systems can alternatively be used to provide audio enrichment. Consideration should be given to sound quality and whether the volume is appropriate in each kennel (not too loud or quiet). Portable sound systems need to be placed in a dry part of the kennel block to prevent the equipment getting wet during cleaning. Any equipment (including cables) should also be placed in an area which is inaccessible to the dogs.

#### Accessing kennels from one side only

Whilst not tested scientifically, single side access is practiced in some UK rescue shelters with anecdotal positive effects on welfare. Typically, kennels are made up of two compartments, inner and outer, which are each accessed by a door. Accessing a kennel using one of these doors only can allow dogs to rest more fully in the non-accessed compartment.

## Policy and design

### Avoidance of kennelling large numbers of individually-housed dogs in a row

In large kennel blocks, each time a dog is taken out of a kennel a number of other dogs are disturbed, resulting in vocalisations and what is interpreted as distress/frustration in other dogs. Designing the layout of kennel blocks in such a way that fewer dogs are disturbed each time the block is accessed can therefore be beneficial [17].

### Gradual introduction to kennel environment

Many dogs find the initial introduction to the kennel environment challenging. Dogs that are used to living in a home environment are likely to find a sudden move to living in kennels particularly stressful. It is therefore strongly recommended that, starting at an early age, dogs are gradually and carefully introduced to the kennel environment, using positive reinforcement techniques in order to encourage them to associate the kennel with pleasant experiences.

### Example of a kennel habituation programme

In one study [18], puppy walkers initially accustomed the puppies (8 weeks of age) to spending short periods in a puppy crate kept in a room in their house. The crate was used as the puppy's bed, and provided an intermediate phase between indoor and kennelled living, allowing the puppies to become gradually accustomed to the restricted access to space and people. The crate was furnished to appeal to the puppies by providing comfortable bedding, as well as being covered on the back and sides with a sheet to make it a safe, secure, 'den-like' place for the puppy to retreat to. Within their first week, they were encouraged to enter the crate 6 times a day, including for their 4 meals. This process used positive reinforcement (i.e. a treat) to encourage them to calmly enter the crate. Initially at night, the crate door was left open to allow the puppy free access around the room, but any doors within the room were shut to prevent access to the rest of the house.

The next step was to accustom the puppies to being left alone in the closed crate. Once inside the crate, they were left for 30 seconds before being rewarded and allowed out. This step was repeated 5 times throughout the day. As they became calmer in the crate, the puppy walker gradually moved further away from the puppies and left them for progressively longer periods of time in the closed crate.

Once settled and able to spend longer periods in the crate (approximately 4 hours during the day and all night), the puppies were moved to an outdoor kennel with an attached run. They were introduced to the outdoor kennels using a similar gradual process to the crate introduction.

Throughout the process, it was at the discretion of the puppy walker to assess when the puppy was ready to be moved on to the next stage. After 11 months, all of the puppies could spend at least 8 hours calmly in a kennel during the day and sleep there all night. Dogs that were gradually habituated to kennel living in this way were found to have lower levels of stress-related hormones than non-habituated puppies that were placed straight into kennels.

## 2. Need for a suitable diet

### Quick Wins

#### Provision of suitable diet

Most working dogs will be fed a diet authorised by their employing organisation, or prescribed by their veterinarian. The quantity of diet fed should be correct for the target weight of the dog (not their actual weight if they are, for example, slightly overweight or underweight). Food storage areas must be kept clean and free from pests. Food should be stored according to manufacturer recommendations and use-by dates adhered to. Changes to the diet should only occur if approved by the appropriate person. Training treats should be agreed by the organisation, or approved by the veterinarian if the dog is on a specific diet for a health condition. Dogs must also have access to fresh, clean drinking water at all times when kennelled.

#### Provision of feed via robust chew toys and anti-gulp bowls

Providing all or a proportion of feed in this manner, as opposed to giving all feed via a standard bowl, can help to improve digestion and provide a more mentally-stimulating feeding experience [1] (Figure 4).

Regularly changing the type of robust toy can help to maintain the dog's interest in using toys. Toys need to be suitably robust, of a size appropriate to the dog and non-toxic.

It is important to note that the provision of suitable toys in kennels has previously been shown to have no measurable negative impact on the working ability of dogs [19].



Figure 4: Kennelled working dog using a food toy

### 3. Need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns

The way that dogs behave can indicate their physical and psychological welfare, including how well they are coping in the environment. Giving dogs access to objects or structures can provide them with opportunities to exhibit normal behaviour patterns. There are a wide range of commercial products specifically designed for dogs to interact with and some examples of product types which have been shown to improve welfare are included in this section. Any objects or structures used should be suitable for dogs and should not present a risk of injury to them.

#### Quick Wins

##### Provide platforms as permanent kennel furniture

The addition of raised platforms is a very good, simple way to enrich the kennel environment and improve dog welfare by encouraging natural behaviours and providing more options for resting and movement (Figure 5). Platforms have been found to be beneficial in a range of kennel environments [4, 20].



Figure 5: Kennel platform

Platforms are typically used as beds within the sleeping compartments of working dog kennels. Placing an additional platform within the external kennel compartment can:

- Encourage resting behaviour in the part of the kennel where many working dogs typically show behavioural signs of poor welfare.
- Allow dogs to make a choice about their resting location.
- Provide a small physical challenge that maintains strength.
- Allow dogs to carry out natural 'look out' behaviours.
- Provide protection from a cold floor.

Two-tiered platforms provide dogs with the choice to rest at two different heights. Care should be taken to ensure dogs can access and leave the top tier safely.

##### Allow dogs to urinate/defecate in a separate area to their kennel

Dogs must be taken out of kennels regularly and given regular opportunities to use a toilet area. Dogs naturally prefer not to urinate or defecate within their kennel and can become distressed if they have to do so.

#### Policy and design

##### Minimise time spent in the kennel

DEFRA's Code of Practice states that 'dogs need regular exercise and regular opportunities to walk, run, explore, play, sniff and investigate' [2]. This is best achieved through regular and sufficient time outside of the kennel unit. Training sessions and walking on and off the lead are good examples of activities within this category. However, if you are undertaking an activity that reasonably allows your dog to accompany you then all opportunities should be considered. The benefits include keeping your dog fit, active and stimulated. The Code of Practice indicates that 'if time alone is excessive, you can expect behavioural problems that are distressing for both you and your dog' [2].

##### Allow dogs regular access to enriched exercise areas

Providing groups of compatible dogs with regular access to large, enclosed areas allows social contact, exercise and an opportunity to explore an environment different to that of the kennel. Exercise areas can be enriched further by changing features of the environment to make it more challenging or stimulating.

Environmental enrichment can include variations to the [4, 19]:

1. Physical environment - platforms, layout, physical features/structures
2. Degree of social contact - other dogs and humans
3. Sensory stimulation - auditory, visual, tactile, olfactory and taste
4. Food presentation - schedule, frequency, portion size, type of food and container
5. Cognitive engagement - puzzles, tasks, novel activities

To increase the complexity of the outdoor exercise area, and therefore benefit dog welfare, a variety of safe, robust structures (e.g. tunnels, platforms and toys) and substrates (e.g. grass and sand) should be provided (Figure 6). Some UK dog rescue charities use sand as a flooring substrate in outdoor areas. This is both practical for husbandry staff who need to clean the area and also beneficial for the dogs, providing them with an opportunity to dig. To maintain the benefits of providing outdoor exercise areas, the contents of the environment should be changed and moved around regularly to reduce boredom. It is also important that dogs always have access to clean water, shade and shelter while using outdoor exercise areas, and that the climatic conditions are monitored.

### Kennel enrichment

In potentially restrictive environments (both physically and socially) such as kennels, enrichment can help to encourage natural behaviour and provide mental stimulation, including allowing dogs to make choices or explore something new [4, 19, 20].

Dogs housed in enriched kennels show less alert and pacing behaviour than dogs housed in non-enriched kennels; they also show increased resting behaviours [4]. Enrichment can be used to promote the 'Five Needs' set out in the Animal Welfare Act 2006 [5]. Some examples of effective kennel enriching items include audiobooks (Section 1), chew toys (Section 2) and platforms (Section 3). Dogs should be provided with toys and/or feeding enrichment unless a veterinarian advises otherwise [11].

By having a good understanding of your dog's natural behaviour, temperament, instincts and physical needs you can tailor the enrichment so that it is appropriate for them. Monitoring responses to enrichment and recognising changes in your dog's physical and mental state that may require more or less enrichment is also critical (e.g. during socialisation, illness, injury or pregnancy) [4, 12].

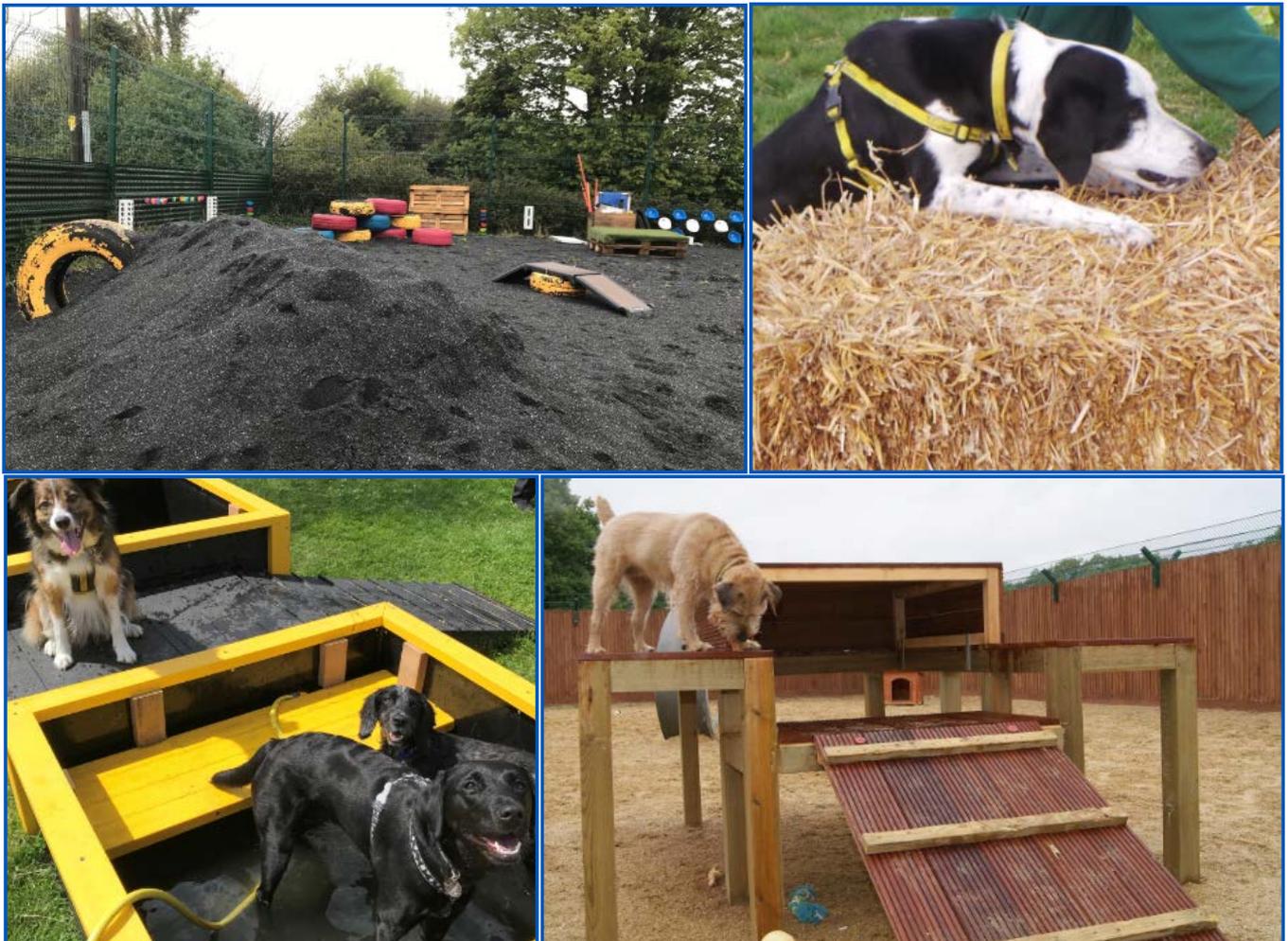


Figure 6: Examples of outdoor exercise area enrichment. Photographs reproduced with permission from the Dogs Trust.

## 4. Need to be housed with, or apart, from other animals

### Quick Wins

#### Provision of positive human and dog contact

Dogs are social animals and generally find interaction with humans and other compatible dogs very rewarding. Providing positive interactions on a daily basis, both inside the kennel and external to the kennel environment, can therefore benefit dog welfare.

The provision of daily activities involving people and/or other compatible dogs (e.g. group walks and group exercise in free runs involving dogs which are known to interact in a friendly manner) can also help to reduce fear and distress by helping to ensure dogs are socialised and familiar with a range of kennel staff and their neighbouring animals. It is important to assess what type and amount of interaction each individual dog finds rewarding to meet their needs. Dogs which do not enjoy social interaction should not be forced to do so, but should be provided with environmental enrichment as an alternative.

## Policy and Design

### Pair housing

Dogs may find being left alone distressing. Pair housing carefully-chosen compatible dogs greatly enhances their welfare [21] (Figure 7). Pair housing has been successfully and widely adopted within research, rescue and working dog kennels.



Figure 7: Pair housed dogs

### Tips for pairing dogs

1. Provide adequate space and resources appropriate for the number, size and breed of dogs. Space requirements should be increased according to the number of dogs housed together and should allow all dogs to lie outstretched at the same time at any angle within the kennel [11-14].
2. Ensure that the health requirements of all dogs are considered to prevent suffering and minimise the risk of disease spread.
3. Assess individual temperament for pairing suitability; dogs that find social contact with other dogs rewarding may adjust better to paired housing. It should be noted that a dog's motivation for human contact may not indicate their motivation for contact with other dogs. Do not mix dogs that show aggressive traits towards other dogs. As a general starting point, try to match dogs based on temperament, size, sex and neuter status.
4. Staged introductions should take place to assess compatibility and gradually introduce dogs. This could include housing dogs in adjacent kennels, repeated direct contact meetings (supervised and on a leash), increasing durations of time socialising together (e.g. within an outdoor exercise environment) and preferably kennelling in a neutral housing space (not previously inhabited by either dog) [6]. Regular monitoring for undesirable behaviours both inside and outside of the kennel environment following introduction is advised, including (but not limited to) growling, snapping, biting and lunging.
5. Observe interactions between dogs relating to resources to ensure that resource guarding (i.e. dogs aggressively defending food, toys etc.) is not an issue. There should be multiples of all resources equal to or greater than the total number of dogs in the kennel to allow access by all of the individuals. Separation during feeding, and in the presence of toys or chews, may be advisable to avoid aggression or rapid ingestion of food.

## 5. Need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease

### Quick Wins

#### First aid and emergencies

Employing organisations should have Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in place for emergency care. It is important to be familiar with these SOPs, to know how to carry out basic first aid and to have immediate access to the necessary first aid equipment in an emergency. Up to date information regarding access to veterinary services (including out-of-hours provision) should always be available so that no time is lost in the event of emergency requiring veterinary advice or intervention. This is particularly important if working in an unfamiliar area or part of the country and details of local veterinary services should be identified prior to deployment. Plans should also be in place to protect dogs and staff in case of fire or other emergencies.

#### Know when and where to go if you have health concerns

It is important that dogs are presented to a veterinary surgeon if there are any concerns over their general health. Routine healthcare, as defined by the employing organisation, such as vaccination/worming protocols, must be kept up to date.

#### Recognise 'normal' in your dog

In order to know when a dog is unwell it is necessary to know what 'normal' is for that individual dog. All dogs will be slightly different, so it is important to be familiar with their individual behaviour and demeanour. Dogs should be checked at regular intervals throughout the day for signs of illness, injury and/or abnormal behaviour. A dog's normal weight, eating/drinking habits, urination/defecation routine (frequency, volume, colour, smell and consistency) and, for entire bitches, season interval and length should be identified and recorded. It is also useful to monitor resting heart and breathing rate, gait patterns and general energy levels. This information should be readily available within the dog's records.

#### Recognise trends

When spending nearly every day with an animal it may become difficult to recognise subtle changes. For monitoring changes over time, some handlers use a 'Black/Red' recording system. On regular weighing if the weight is the same, or has gained, the entry is made in black ink. If the weight is less than last weight then the entry is made in red ink. Several red entries could signal progressive weight loss which should trigger investigation (for example, if weighing monthly then more than three consecutive red entries should initiate a consultation with a veterinary surgeon for a check-up). Similarly, more than a defined number of black entries could indicate weight gain which should be investigated.

### Policy and Design

#### Kennel design and maintenance

As previously mentioned in Sections 1 to 4, modifications to kennel design can help to prevent or minimise suffering. Materials used for the construction and contents of the kennel should not be detrimental to the dog's health, including if it is chewed, damaged or destroyed by the dog. In addition, a regular schedule of detailed kennel inspections should be in place at a time when the kennel is empty to monitor it for physical features that could lead to pain, suffering, injury or disease. This includes leaks, sharp edges, loose or broken fixtures and fittings (e.g. panels, wiring, hinges etc.) and inadequate security.

#### Emergency isolation facilities

The Animal Boarding Establishments Act states that all reasonable precautions should be taken to prevent and control the spread of infections/disease. There should be housing available for sick or injured animals to minimise the risk of transmission to other dogs and assist recovery.

#### Health examination

Regular health examinations to assess for skin conditions, oral complaints (redness, swelling or ulceration), feet pad/nail condition etc. may help to identify areas to be monitored or treated at an early stage. Reward-based training (e.g. provision of food treats) can be used to reduce stress associated with physical examinations and other handling/husbandry procedures and makes these into positive experiences for dogs [22].

## Seek expert welfare advice and support

Welfare issues are often complex to resolve and involve a range of factors. If you have concerns about your dog's welfare or behaviour that are not resolved through changes in their kennel environment or routine (as discussed above), it is important to seek further, expert advice.

Your veterinary surgeon is an important first point of call in order to rule out any health-related issues. Further expert advice on welfare and behavioural issues can be obtained from organisations such as the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour (ASAB) [23] or the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (APBC) [24]. These bodies certify a network of appropriately qualified and experienced clinical animal behaviour experts, who will work with you to identify problems and suggest structured treatment plans to try to resolve them.

### Keeping effective records

In order to keep track of dog welfare and solve any problems rapidly, it is important to keep clear, up-to-date and easily accessible records. These should cover areas including:

- Vaccination history
- Veterinary treatment received/ongoing
- Weight
- Kennelling provisions (e.g. toys, other enrichment, furniture, access to outdoor exercise areas)
- Any behavioural/welfare issues including:
  - Frequency/circumstances of occurrence
  - Any significant incidents (e.g. aggression, bites)
  - Possible causes
  - Previous attempts to resolve
  - A behaviour modification plan to resolve any issues (agreed and reviewed with trainer/veterinary surgeon/clinical animal behaviourist as appropriate)

## Associated guides and information

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