

# VETERINARY SURGEONS BOARD OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

## CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE OPERATION OF BOARDING ESTABLISHMENTS

The following standards apply to all veterinary practices where commercial boarding of cats and dogs is carried out. The Veterinary Surgeons Board aims to ensure that boarding establishments provided by veterinary practices provide a high standard of care and are consistent with the requirements for maintaining animal health and welfare. The Code of Practice presents a minimum standard, and is endorsed under the Veterinary Practice Act 2003. Veterinarians not meeting all standards in this Code of Practice may be in breach of the Act.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of the Code is to specify the *minimum* standards of accommodation, management and care that are appropriate to the physical and behavioural needs of dogs and cats housed in commercial boarding establishments.
- 1.2 For the purposes of this code a boarding establishment is any establishment where a fee is paid for the housing of dogs and/or cats for the specific purpose of boarding, and excludes hospitalization or training facilities.
- 1.3 Boarding establishments must provide secure, healthy and humane short-term accommodation for companion animals and accept the full responsibility for the welfare of the boarders for and on behalf of their owners.
- 1.4 This code applies to the welfare of dogs and cats held and cared for at all commercial boarding establishments, which includes shelters and veterinary practices.
- 1.5 Compliance with the code does not remove the need to comply with State and Local Government legislation and permits.

### 2 ANIMAL ATTENDANTS

- 2.1 The proprietor of a boarding establishment is responsible for the overall management and conduct of the establishment and for the welfare of the animals boarded therein.
- 2.2 Responsibilities of the proprietor include:
  - ▷ the mental and physical well-being of all animals in the establishment, taking into account the accommodation and equipment;
  - ▷ provision of sufficient space for animals to move around freely;
  - ▷ the protection of animals from people, other animals or adverse environmental conditions;
  - ▷ protection of animals as far as possible from disease, distress and injury;
  - ▷ overall level of hygiene in the establishment;
  - ▷ supervision of attendants, whether working full or part-time and whether or not working for fee or reward;
  - ▷ ensuring that staff employed by the establishment are sufficiently trained and experienced to properly manage the type of animal boarded;
  - ▷ ensuring the maintenance of relevant records; and
  - ▷ developing a plan for emergency situations (which may include such things as power failures, disease outbreak, fire, etc).

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- 2.3 Animal attendants must respect animals and have experience in handling them. Attendants are encouraged to have formal training, such as a technical college qualification in animal care.
- 2.4 Animal attendants are responsible to the proprietor for:
- ▷ general inspection of the animal on entry, including identification of the animal, recording of details and requirements (which may include: administration of medication, feeding of special diets, bathing and grooming);
  - ▷ daily feeding, watering and inspection of all animals;
  - ▷ daily cleaning of facilities, i.e. hosing out, replacing bedding, litter trays, cleaning food and water bowls;
  - ▷ exercising dogs as required;
  - ▷ reporting promptly to the manager animals showing any undesirable symptoms and ensuring the provision of prompt veterinary or other appropriate treatment if required;
  - ▷ maintaining records; and
  - ▷ ensuring that the owner signs an agreement acknowledging the inherent risk when their animal is housed in shared accommodation, or shares an exercise pen with another animal(s).
- 2.5 Staff health should be protected by the provision of appropriate work clothing, adequate hand washing facilities and tetanus immunisation.
- 2.6 Information should be supplied to all staff on disease-causing organisms which can be transmitted to humans (zoonoses) and personal hygiene procedures must be such that transmission should not occur.

## **3 HUSBANDRY**

### **DIET:**

- 3.1 Animals must receive appropriate, uncontaminated and nutritionally adequate food according to the accepted requirements for the species and breed, age and condition.
- 3.2 Adult dogs must be fed at least once daily. Adult cats should be fed twice daily or have ad-lib access to dry food. Pregnant and lactating animals, pups up to 6 months of age, and kittens up to 8 months of age should be fed at least twice daily or have ad-lib access to dry food.
- 3.3 Food must be prepared hygienically and served in clean containers that are readily accessible, positioned to avoid spillage and contamination by urine or faeces, and cleaned at least daily.
- 3.4 Food must be stored appropriately, with dry food kept in a rodent-free place and fresh meat kept refrigerated.
- 3.5 Uneaten food should be removed and disposed of promptly so that it does not spoil or attract vermin. Uneaten dry food should be removed at least every other day and replaced with fresh dry food.
- 3.6 Animals housed together must be monitored to check that each is eating.
- 3.7 Fresh water must be available at all times.

### **HEALTH CARE:**

- 3.8 Dogs less than 4 months old and cats less than 3 months old must not be admitted for boarding other than in exceptional circumstances.

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- 3.9 Each animal shall be checked at least twice daily to monitor its health and comfort.
- 3.10 The person checking the animals should note whether each animal:
- ▷ is eating; drinking; defecating; urinating; behaving normally; is of normal appearance; is able to move about freely; and has a normal coat.
- 3.11 Any changes in health status should be reported promptly to the animal boarding establishment manager.
- 3.12 For dogs, pre-vaccination against distemper, hepatitis, parvovirus and kennel cough including bordatella is strongly recommended. It is essential that a current vaccination certificate be produced for each dog prior to admission.
- 3.13 For cats, pre-vaccination against feline infectious enteritis and feline respiratory disease is strongly recommended. It is essential that a current vaccination certificate be produced for each cat prior to admission.
- 3.14 Dogs and cats should have been treated for gastrointestinal worms and fleas before admission. Animals that have not been wormed or de-fleaed should be treated on admission at the owners cost and the owner be advised accordingly prior to admission.
- 3.15 All reasonable special requirements requested by the animal's owner or attending veterinarian must be complied with.
- 3.16 Animals known or suspected to be suffering from an infectious disease must not be admitted for boarding unless into an isolated quarantine kennel/cattery.
- 3.17 Owners of boarding animals must sign an agreement authorising provision of veterinary treatment if considered necessary.
- 3.18 Each establishment must have an arrangement with a veterinary practice or practitioner to be available and be responsible to the manager for the health and treatment of the animals, especially:
- ▷ to be on call for emergencies;
  - ▷ to provide treatment other than first aid as necessary, including euthanasia;
  - ▷ to advise on housing, nutrition, hygiene and disease control; and
  - ▷ to provide clear warning and treatment of infectious and zoonotic diseases.
- 3.19 Veterinary attention must be sought by the boarding establishment manager or his or her nominee for any animal showing symptoms including but not limited to the following:
- ▷ inability to stand or walk
  - ▷ bloating of abdomen
  - ▷ inability to urinate or defecate
  - ▷ fits or staggering
  - ▷ severe diarrhoea, especially if bloodstained
  - ▷ apparent pain
  - ▷ bleeding or swelling of body parts (other than the vulva of a female on heat)
  - ▷ coughing
  - ▷ vomiting
  - ▷ lameness
  - ▷ weight loss
  - ▷ evidence of skin disease or excessive scratching
  - ▷ runny nose
  - ▷ runny, discharging or inflamed eyes
  - ▷ repeated sneezing

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- 3.20 Facilities must be available either at the boarding establishment or at veterinary premises for isolation of animals that are suspected of, or have been diagnosed as having an infectious disease.

## HYGIENE:

- 3.21 The establishment is to be clean and hygienic at all times. All pens must be cleaned out at least once per day. All used, contaminated bedding and litter and all uneaten food must be removed. Used litter and uneaten food must be disposed of appropriately.
- 3.22 Kennels, catteries and associated housing or exercise areas must be cleaned daily, and disinfected at least once each week or before new animals are introduced and after an outbreak of infectious disease.
- 3.23 All watering and feeding utensils must be cleaned daily.
- 3.24 Cleaning and disinfecting agents should be chosen on the basis of their suitability, safety and effectiveness. Some common disinfectants, particularly those derived from or containing coal or wood tar products, are toxic to cats. Pine oil, phenol, cresol and chloroxylenols are such products, and must not be used where cats are kept. Manufacturer's instructions for the use of cleaning and disinfecting agents must be followed, since too dilute a solution may be ineffective and too concentrated a solution may be toxic.
- 3.25 After cleaning, animals should not be returned to the pens until the area is dry.
- 3.26 Pests including fleas, ticks, flies, mosquitoes and rodents must be controlled.
- 3.27 Chemicals used for pest control must be either prescribed by a registered veterinarian and/or registered and used only in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- 3.28 Cats must be provided with sufficient depth of suitable litter material, such as commercial cat litter, sawdust, shavings, sand or shredded paper. Litter should be checked, scooped, replenished or changed as needed. All litter must be completely changed at least once a week, when trays should be washed and disinfected. Fresh litter must be provided in disinfected trays for new cats when they are admitted.
- 3.29 Waste disposal must be in accordance with the requirements of the local government authority. Use of a trade waste service for collection and disposal of wastes is preferable. Wastes must not be incinerated.

## EXERCISE:

- 3.30 Dogs must have the opportunity for exercise. Exercise can be provided by:
- ▷ allowing dogs access to an exercise area for at least 10 minutes twice daily;
  - or
  - ▷ walking dogs on a lead for at least 10 minutes twice daily
- Very active or old dogs may require more or less exercise than specified.
- 3.31 Care must be taken to ensure that dogs being exercised cannot escape and are not in danger of attack or other injury. If dogs are walked off the property, the owner must give written informed consent.
- 3.32 If it is necessary to tether a dog, they must be tethered for no longer than 2 hours at a time and checked regularly, and then must be given the opportunity to exercise. Dogs must not be tethered overnight.

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- 3.33 Cats must have sufficient room to enable them to stretch and to move about freely, and be provided with toys that are disposable (e.g. pipe-cleaners) or able to be disinfected and/or other opportunities for stimulation (e.g. planks of wood for scratching), ability to hide (e.g. cardboard boxes).
- 3.34 Cats should be checked daily for normal posture and mobility.

## 4 HOUSING

### GENERAL:

- 4.1 Animal boarding establishments must provide an area for reception and records storage. Premises must include washing and toilet facilities for staff.
- 4.2 Catteries and kennels must be designed, constructed, serviced and maintained in a way that ensures the good health and well being of the animals, whilst preventing escape or injury to humans or other animals.
- 4.3 Housing must provide protection from the weather (wind, rain, sun and extremes of climate), vermin and harassment from other animals. This includes protection from extremes of temperature, with environmental temperature controlled as far as possible to minimize stress to animals.
- 4.4 Very old and very young animals may require provision of heating or cooling.
- 4.5 Materials should be selected for ease of maintenance and cleaning, durability and non-toxicity. Floors of animal housing areas of catteries and kennels must be made of an impervious material to assist cleaning and drainage. Wood, brick, dirt or grass floors are not acceptable.
- 4.6 The internal surfaces of the external walls must be constructed of impervious, solid, washable materials optimally curved at the wall/floor junctions to facilitate cleaning and disinfection.
- 4.7 Kennel and cattery floors should be sloped to enable wastes and water to run off, with a collection drain provided to take away water after cleaning.
- 4.8 Pens may be separated by either solid partitions, galvanised chain wire or weld mesh wire dividers. Pens must be completely enclosed having either a solid or wire roof or have an overhang of 700 millimetres at an angle of 35° to the horizontal.
- 4.9 All bedding provided for animals must be changed frequently and kept clean and dry.
- 4.10 Where kennels & catteries are constructed indoors, temperature, humidity and ventilation must be considered. Ventilation must be adequate to keep animal housing areas free of dampness, noxious odours and draughts. Cage or pen areas must have an ample supply of fresh air.
- 4.11 In totally enclosed buildings where forced ventilation is the only form of air the following is required:
- ▷ an air change rate of 8-12 changes per hour to prevent the build up of foul odours;
  - ▷ ventilation devices that avoid draughts and distribute fresh air evenly to all of the boarding areas;
  - ▷ temperature maintained in the range of 15°-30° C; and
  - ▷ air re-circulation units incorporating effective air cleaning and filtration.
- 4.12 Lighting must be as close as possible in duration and intensity to natural conditions.

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- 4.13 Suitable facilities for bathing, drying and grooming animals must be available and must be hygienically maintained. These facilities may be provided by an outside grooming service.
- 4.14 Joint Facilities: Where boarding kennels are used by a municipality as a pound or shelter, or the boarding kennels and cattery is attached to a veterinary practice, then the facility to house the pound, shelter or veterinary practice should be physically separated by sufficient distance to minimise the possibility of spreading disease to the boarded animals. Separate staff should be available for each business or if this is not possible a change of outer garments and the facilities to disinfect footwear must be used.

## DOGS:

- 4.15 All adult dogs must be housed one to a pen unless the owner(s) has given written consent for dogs to be housed together. If there are likely to be any times that the dog will be in the same run with one or more other dogs then the owner must give prior written consent. This must occur whether the dogs are from the same household or not.
- 4.16 Dogs which must always be housed singly include:
- ⊃ bitches with puppies;
  - ⊃ very aggressive dogs; and
  - ⊃ old or frail dogs
- 4.17 Minimum pen sizes for one adult dog (older than 16 weeks):

Height of dog at shoulder (cm)	Minimum Floor Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Minimum Width (cm)	Minimum height (cm)	Increased floor area for each additional animal (m <sup>2</sup> )
> 70	3.5	120	180	1.7
40 - 70	2.4	90	180	1.2
< 40	1.5	90	180	1.0

- 4.18 One third of the area of each pen must be weatherproof and include raised sleeping quarters. Individual sleeping equipment should be provided when two adult dogs are housed in the one pen.
- 4.19 Noise from barking dogs must be managed to comply with local council noise regulations and may be reduced by one or more of the following methods:
- ⊃ situating kennels so that they do not face each other;
  - ⊃ limiting external stimulation, e.g. by partitioning between kennels or use of blinds;
  - ⊃ holding dogs singly or in compatible pairs; and/or
  - ⊃ provision of background music or radio.

## CATS:

- 4.20 Facilities for cats must be physically separated from dog facilities.
- 4.21 Cats should not be kept in the same cage or run as dogs, even if they come from the same household, unless appropriate dual accommodation is provided for families of mixed species and the owner has given written consent.
- 4.22 Cats may be housed in cages or walk-in modules that include a sleeping compartment and an exercise area.
- 4.23 The *minimum* size cage for short term boarding of up to seven days must have a floor area of at least one square metre and a minimum height of 900 millimetres.

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- 4.24 Cats boarded for longer than seven days must be provided with accommodation that meets the following criteria:  
Cages that have a *minimum* floor area of 1.5 square metres and a minimum height of 900 millimetres, or walk-in modules that have a minimum floor area of 0.8 square metres, a minimum width of 900 millimetres and a minimum height of 1.8 metres. The module must contain at least two levels including raised sleeping quarters. The higher level(s) must be connected to the floor by means of a ramp or pole. This size is for one cat only and an additional one square metre floor space is required for a second cat.
- 4.25 Cats must be housed singly in minimum sized cages. Where two or more cats are housed together in walk in modules the owner must give prior written consent. This still applies where cats from the same household are to be housed together.
- 4.26 Where cats are housed in groups, additional floor area per cat is required than when cats are housed singly, and increased attention is needed to monitor for stress or disease.
- 4.27 Cats must be provided with bedding.
- 4.28 Cats need as much fresh air as possible while providing protection from the elements and wire mesh should be the major feature of a cattery.

## 5 SECURITY

- 5.1 All boarding establishments must have an external perimeter fence at least two metres high surrounding the establishment to prevent the escape of animals. The external walls of the facility may serve as the perimeter fence if an animal escaping from its pen is restrained by these walls.
- 5.2 Buildings housing dogs and cats must be securely lockable. Any security methods used must allow for ready access by staff to animals and ready exit of staff and animals from the premises in the event of an emergency.
- 5.3 Each individual kennel, module or colony pen must be fitted with a secure closing device that cannot be opened by the animals.
- 5.4 Fire fighting equipment must be readily available.

## 6 MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 Animals are to be protected from distress or injury caused by other animals.
- 6.2 All animals must be identified.
- 6.3 The following information must be recorded relating to each animal admitted for boarding:
- ▷ animal's name;
  - ▷ name, address and telephone number of its owner;
  - ▷ contact telephone number, and number of nominee in the event that the owner is uncontactable;
  - ▷ date of admission and expected date of collection by owner;
  - ▷ a description of the animal including:
    - sex
    - breed or type
    - colour
    - age
    - distinguishing features
    - vaccination status;

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- ▷ name and contact telephone number of a veterinarian who normally attends the animal;
- ▷ details of medical, dietary, bathing and grooming requirements;
- ▷ the animal's condition and preferably weight on arrival;
- ▷ any collars, leads or belongings brought in with the animal; and
- ▷ record of the signed consent of the owner where required (refer clauses 2.4, 3.18, 3.31, 4.15, 4.21, 4.25 and 8.2).

## **7 TRANSPORT**

- 7.1 Animals should be transported in the shortest practicable time. They must not be kept in parked vehicles in the sun or in hot weather unless adequate ventilation and shade is provided.
- 7.2 Any vehicle especially designed or regularly used for transporting animals should:
- ▷ protect animals from injury;
  - ▷ have non-slip floors;
  - ▷ provide easy access and operator safety;
  - ▷ protect against extremes of temperature;
  - ▷ protect against unauthorised release of animals;
  - ▷ be easy to clean and disinfect; and
  - ▷ be supplied with clean, secure cages or carry baskets for cats or very small dogs, and with separate compartments or partitions for larger dogs. Transport cages should permit an animal to turn around, but otherwise be of appropriate size to avoid trauma during transport.

## **8 EUTHANASIA & UNCLAIMED ANIMALS**

- 8.1 Euthanasia should be considered where an animal becomes seriously ill or injured and where it is recommended by a veterinarian who has examined it. Permission from the animal's owner or nominee, preferably in writing, should be obtained. Euthanasia must only be performed by a veterinarian except in exceptional circumstances.
- 8.2 Proprietors must have a policy for dealing with unclaimed animals, which gives owners a reasonable opportunity to collect boarded animals. Owners must be made aware of this policy when animals are admitted, by reading and signing a standard form which sets out the terms under which animals are accepted for boarding.