Standards and Guidelines for the Health and Welfare of Dogs in Western Australia

The draft Standards and Guidelines for the Health and Welfare of Dogs in Western Australia (Dog Standards and Guidelines) propose minimum requirements for the care and management of dogs. In future, if these matters are regulated under the Animal Welfare Act 2002, the standards will be legally enforceable.

The document also contains guidelines, which are recommended practices. Guidelines are not intended to become mandatory.

The Dog Standards and Guidelines will apply to all kept dogs in WA, including dingos. This work of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (the Department) supports the State Government’s Stop Puppy Farming initiative, which is being progressed by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC).

Format of the Dog Standards and Guidelines

The Dog Standards and Guidelines cover the main aspects of care and management relevant to the health and welfare of dogs.

Part 2 of the Standards and Guidelines apply to all people who own or have responsibility for the care and management of dogs, in private and commercial settings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 2 - Care of dogs - general</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 1</strong> – General (identification and transfer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 2</strong> – Housing and transport (housing, crating, tethering, transport)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 3</strong> – Health and husbandry (health and veterinary care, food and water, body condition, behaviour and training, exercise, restraint, electronic collars, euthanasia)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Section 4</strong> – Breeding (breeding of dogs, whelping and care of puppies)</td>
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Part 3 of the Standards and Guidelines sets out additional requirements that apply to a “a domestic dog operation”, which is defined in the Dog Standards and Guidelines as:

- a person who owns five or more fertile bitches that are kept for the purpose of breeding and selling dogs;
- an animal shelter or pound;
- a pet shop; or
- a premise at which dogs are boarded, trained, or kept overnight or during the day, whether the operator receives a payment or not.
Consultation

The purpose of consultation on the Dog Standards and Guidelines is for the Department to understand the views of the community in relation to this matter. Through the consultation on the Stop Puppy Farming initiative, which was managed by the DLGSC, it is evident that there is general support for the introduction of mandatory dog breeding standards. However, the community will have various views on specific proposals, in particular where these relate to matters that could become legal requirements.

In keeping with good practice in relation to laws and policy-making, the Department will consider the views of the community in relation to the Dog Standards and Guidelines, and any regulatory proposals that may follow.

In addition to the Dog Standards and Guidelines, the Department has prepared a separate paper on the use of electronic collars (including electric shock collars on dogs). The use of these collars is opposed by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and is restricted or even banned in some jurisdictions. The Department is seeking the opinion of Western Australians on the use of electronic collars.

The Dog Standards and Guidelines also propose that enclosures used to hold dogs comply with minimum size requirements. Modification of existing facilities may present a significant cost for operators of dog shelters, pounds and kennels. If the proposed requirements are to be made mandatory, it would be reasonable to introduce them gradually. The Department seeks feedback on acceptable transitional arrangements.

Who enforces the Animal Welfare Act?

Under an Agreement between the RSPCA WA and the Department, the RSPCA is the primary responder to reports of animal cruelty. Employees of local government appointed under the Animal Welfare Act may enforce its provisions in the local government area, and WA Police officers also have the powers of animal welfare inspectors. The Dog Standards and Guidelines do not propose to modify these roles and responsibilities.

What are the next steps?

At the end of the consultation process, the Department will consider feedback and amend the Dog Standards and Guidelines as appropriate. A Consultation Report that summarises the responses and the Department’s response will be published on the Department’s website approximately six weeks after the end of the consultation.

Your views are important. Please see the department’s Dog Standards and Guidelines webpage for information on how to participate in the consultation.

Important disclaimer

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from the use or release of this information or any part of it.

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