

Code of Practice for Dog Breeding





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Introduction

This Code of Practice sets the standard for care and management of breeding dogs and their offspring. It applies to all dogs used for breeding and all the puppies produced regardless of whether the breeder is licensed.

The decision to breed a dog is a big responsibility and the breeder has a legal duty of care towards the dogs used for breeding and their future offspring. Remember that the health and welfare of the puppies you breed is your responsibility, and depends on selecting genetically and physically healthy parents that do not have an extreme size or shape. The breeding dogs you select should also have a suitable temperament. You should also be prepared for ensuring the early socialisation and care of puppies. Their environment and experiences are crucial to good health and welfare throughout their lives, and help them to develop into confident, well-adjusted family pets. Responsible selling practices are vital. Dogs are sentient animals, and feel pain, fear, joy and many other emotions.

This Code of Practice is not a stand-alone document. It should be read in conjunction with relevant Legislation and Regulations.

A good breeder maintains contact with a new owner and is prepared to take back a dog if the owner can no longer care for them. By doing this, you can ensure the dogs you breed will be cared for throughout their lives. Keeping in touch also makes it possible to monitor any health or behaviour problems that occur during a dog's lifetime. Keeping records about the age and cause of death of the dogs you breed also informs you about future breeding decisions.

As a breeder, your responsibility should include making sure that the person who buys a puppy can offer him/her a healthy, happy, comfortable and stimulating life. As far as possible, you should ensure that puppies you breed go to a home where their needs are met. There are various steps that you can take to achieve this, which are outlined in this document.



Legislation

The information in this section identifies some key legislation that will apply to any person involved in the breeding of dogs. It is not a complete list, and it is your responsibility to ensure you comply with all appropriate legislation relating to the care and welfare of dogs.

Animal Welfare Act 2006

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 applies to all owners of dogs whether they intend to breed from them or not. Under section 9 of the Act you must take such steps as are reasonable in all circumstances to ensure that the needs of a dog are met. These needs include:

- (a) need for a suitable environment
- (b) need for a suitable diet
- (c) need to be housed with, or apart from, other dogs
- (d) need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour
- (e) need to be protected from pain, injury, suffering and disease

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 you are always responsible for your dogs' welfare. If you own or are responsible for a dog (or dogs) and fail to meet their welfare needs or you cause unnecessary suffering, you may be prosecuted.

For more details, please refer to:

Animal Welfare Act 2006

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/45/contents

Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs

www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-welfare-of-dogs

The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) Regulations 2018

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/486/contents/made

Schedule 2 General Conditions and Schedule 6 Specific conditions: breeding dogs

These regulations cover:

- Advertisements and sales
- Suitable environment
- Suitable diet
- Behaviour and training
- Housing with, or apart from, other dogs
- Protection from pain, suffering, injury and disease

See Appendix 1 for further details.

The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2019

This is also known as 'Lucy's Law' (which makes it illegal to sell puppies or kittens if you haven't bred them yourself).

No puppy or kitten under the age of 6 months may be sold as a pet, or sold with a view to being resold as a pet, by someone who has not bred the animal themselves.

Third party sales are likely to result in poorer welfare conditions for the animals compared to when people buy directly from a breeder. Breeders who do not prioritise the health and welfare of the breeding dogs and their puppies may supply third party sellers. A breeder must now sell directly to new owners and purchasers must be allowed to see puppies with their mother and littermates (and the father wherever possible).

Licence requirements

Dog breeders will need to obtain a local authority licence for dog breeding if breeding three or more litters of puppies a year, or if carrying out a business in order to make a profit.

Advertising puppies for sale could indicate a business when taken together with other factors. It is up to you to ensure that you are fulfilling the legal requirements for dog breeding.

If you require a licence, it must be displayed prominently at your premises. Your licence number must accompany any advertisement for the sale of your puppies and/or be included on your website.

Local authorities will award a licence based on a star-rated system. A local authority officer will carry out unannounced inspections to licensed premises. Meeting higher standards may result in fewer inspections and a lower licence fee.

Licensed breeders must keep up-to-date records of all breeding dogs and puppies bred, and produce them for inspection when requested to do so by an authorised person.



Avoiding inherited diseases and conformation (physical) extremes

Any breed of dog or crossbreed can suffer from a wide range of genetic diseases. These diseases can be painful, reduce lifespan, and require expensive veterinary treatment, as well as potentially cause distress to owners. As a breeder, you are responsible for ensuring that dogs selected for breeding do not suffer from such diseases.

Breeders should be familiar with relevant breed-related diseases and you should carry out the necessary screening on the breeding animals, before deciding to breed them. Failure to do so could result in prosecution under the 2018 Regulations. Your vet will also be able to give you advice.

New owners should be provided with the original certificates for the Canine Health Scheme tests and DNA test results, as appropriate.

You also need to be aware of the potential health and welfare implications of breeding dogs with extreme conformations (body shape). These can be very painful, make it difficult for dogs to behave normally, and require expensive veterinary treatment, as well as being distressing for owners. Examples of such extreme conformation include: flat faces, loose or wrinkled skin, screw tails, giant or 'teacup' size, disproportionately long backs with short limbs, shallow eye sockets or eyelids that don't cover the eyes, acutely angled or very short necks, or carrying a disproportionately heavy head. Dogs who have undergone correctional surgery to correct poor conformation that adversely affects their health, should not be used for breeding. Dogs should be able to live a life in which they are predicted to be free from pain and discomfort and are able to carry out natural behaviours.

Note the relevant point from the 2018 Regulations:

(5) No dog may be kept for breeding if it can reasonably be expected, on the basis of its genotype, phenotype or state of health that breeding from it could have a detrimental effect on its health or welfare, or the health or welfare of its offspring.

More sources of information about health testing and conformation welfare issues are available in the Guidelines for Dog Conformation and Appendix 3.

Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs)

Inherited diseases can be extremely detrimental to the health and welfare of any dog.

Many inherited diseases in dogs are caused by multiple genes and environmental factors and therefore cannot be controlled by a simple DNA test. An EBV for a complex inherited disease is a calculation of

risk of disease based on pedigree information and the results of a physical test of both parents. EBVs are available for Hip Dysplasia (HD) and Elbow Dysplasia (ED) for some breeds based on information held by the Kennel Club on dogs registered with them. Always check whether EBVs apply for the breed you intend to breed from.

www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health/for-breeders/breeding-advice/estimated-breeding-values

For HD and ED, it is important that you screen every dog you are considering breeding from. For HD, dogs with values over the median should not be bred from. For ED, where EBVs are not available, the advice from the British Veterinary Association (BVA) is to breed only from dogs with a score of 0. Your vet will be able to advise you further.

Test results, both good and bad, should be submitted to the Kennel Club for inclusion in the Estimated Breeding Values system, to continue towards improving knowledge in this area.

See the *Guidelines for Dog Conformation* for further information on appropriate health tests and requirements when deciding to breed your dog.



How to provide a suitable environment for dogs and their puppies

Whether you breed commercially or at home, the environment you provide for your dogs and puppies must be safe, secure, comfortable and enriching.

The current law states that the ratio of human carers to adult dogs must be a minimum of 1:20. However, the recommended ratio to ensure adequate care, socialisation and enrichment for individual dogs and puppies is 1:10. All carers should be familiar with the physical, emotional and behavioural needs of dogs and puppies.

All dogs must be cared for, at a minimum, in accordance with the relevant legislation as described in Section 2 of this Code of Practice. These provide minimum standards of care and every effort should be made to ensure even better provision for the care of dogs and puppies (Appendix 1).

Water and Food

Fresh, clean water must always be freely available to all dogs. Water can quickly become dirty; dispensers should regularly be thoroughly cleaned. Ensure that there are numerous water dispensers available where there is more than one dog, or a litter of puppies. It is very important to ensure that all dogs are able to access water as required. Water dispensers should be appropriate in size, shape and volume for the age/size/requirements of the dogs.

All dogs and puppies should have the opportunity to eat a well-balanced and life-stage appropriate diet. Where there are many puppies, they should be supervised during feeding periods to ensure that they all gain access to food. Lactating bitches have higher food requirements due to the effort in producing milk. The food may be provided by feeding more frequently with a highly nutritious diet, or by having ad lib access to their normal food.

It is important to monitor whether and how much each dog is eating; a reduced or changed appetite can be a sign of ill-health.

Food can be offered in a variety of ways and can be used to add enrichment to the environment. A number of food dispensing toys are available which make meals last longer, offer additional stimulation for dogs and can prevent food from being eaten too quickly.

Be careful when offering food toys in situations with more than one dog – monitor them to avoid fighting.

Bedding

All dogs need a comfortable and safe place to relax and rest undisturbed by humans or other pets. This should be in a quiet, sheltered area with a comfortable dry bed, away from draughts and extremes of weather and temperature.

Pregnant bitches may need additional care and attention and should have a quiet area, away from other dogs, to rest. Bitches who are due to give birth should be supervised and checked regularly. Any health concerns should be reported to a vet immediately.

Following the birth of the puppies, the whelping area should be kept clean and dry. The bitch and puppies should be kept in a safe area which does not pose risk to exploring puppies. Puppies should be checked regularly to ensure their health and welfare and checked early for things such as cleft palate or hernias.

Separation opportunities for a breeding bitch should be available and increase as the puppies get older. There should be an area available for mum to allow her to rest and relax away from her puppies. This can be done simply by using an appropriate whelping box. The mother should be offered short walks and toileting opportunities four times a day away from her puppies.

Socialisation, Habituation and Training

Ideally, breeding dogs and puppies should live within the home. However, if dogs and puppies live in kennels, they will need additional socialisation and habituation sessions planned into their day (see Section 7). This ensures that they become used to the home environment, everyday events, and a wide range of people. Adult dogs will need additional opportunities for positive interaction with humans.

All training and behaviour therapy should take an ethical approach. It should be positive and reward-based, with consideration given to the age and needs of the individual dog or puppy. Current scientific knowledge should be applied at all times, and help sought if required. Contact the Animal Behaviour and Training Council (ABTC) or one of the organisations accredited by them for further guidance and support (see Appendix 2).

Enrichment

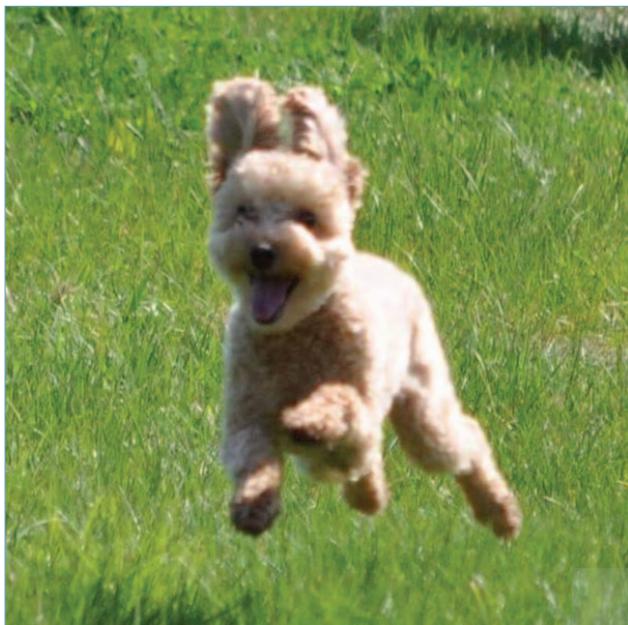
The environment that a dog lives in should offer mental as well as physical stimulation. Dogs are social, inquisitive animals who need to have opportunities to display their natural behaviours. Without these opportunities, dogs may develop behavioural issues caused by fear or anxiety, potentially resulting in aggression or stress behaviours, or become difficult to manage.

Suitable enrichment should be offered to all dogs at all stages of their life. Examples of enrichment include exercise in different environments, the opportunity to interact with other social dogs, grooming sessions, games with people and use of food dispensing toys.

Exercise

The early stages of a puppy's life are crucial to their physical and social development. Therefore, the area where they are kept should be safe and offer enough space for them to develop their motor skills. Floors should allow for good grip and should not be slippery. This helps to prevent damage to joints and allow natural movement.

Puppies should be offered additional exercise opportunities as they develop. This should be part of their socialisation and habituation plan (see Section 7 below) and take into account their individual needs. Consult your vet for advice on appropriate exercise levels. Adult dogs should also be offered regular, appropriate exercise.



Protecting the health and welfare of dogs used for breeding

Dogs used for breeding need to be cared for in a way that meets their needs as well as ensuring their health and welfare. This will ensure that they are able to care for their puppies properly.

All dogs should have regular vet checks to ensure that they are healthy and to provide routine health care such as vaccination and treatment for internal and external parasites.

Dogs are social, intelligent animals. They need access to other social animals as appropriate. They need activities that offer enrichment, and they need to feel safe.

Dogs with temperament issues should not be bred from. However, if behavioural problems do occur in parent dogs this can cause problems for management and care, as well as affect puppy responses to people and/or other animals. If your dog develops a behavioural issue, a professional behaviourist will be able to help you to work with your dog. This is particularly important in the case of bitches with a litter as they could pass on fearful or aggressive responses to their puppies. Contact the Animal Behaviour and Training Council (ABTC) or one of the organisations accredited by them for further guidance and support (see Appendix 2). You should only ever seek support from a qualified accredited trainer or behaviourist who is registered with an appropriate organisation. All professional behaviourists will require your dog to have a full vet check and for your vet to agree to a referral prior to a behavioural consultation.

Dogs used for breeding will one day retire. It is important to consider this throughout their time as a breeding dog and make sure that they have positive interactions with other dogs and people throughout this time, so that, if necessary, they can join a pet home when they are retired.

Breeding bitches can have a maximum of six litters under current legislation, which applies to licensed breeders. However, the health of the dog should be considered at all times and you should seek the advice of a vet. Each dog is an individual and this may be too many litters for some dogs, causing long lasting health or welfare issues for both the mother and her puppies.

The process for homing should ensure that responsible, appropriate homes are found for all ex-breeding dogs. As the breeder, you should ensure the new owner knows that they can contact you at any time for advice. If they are no longer able to care for the dog you have homed with them, you should ensure that another suitable home is found.

Preparing puppies for life

Early, appropriate and positive socialisation and habituation is essential to ensure that puppies become well-rounded, confident and resilient adult dogs. Early experiences during the first weeks and months of a puppy's life are crucial to ensuring that the puppy becomes a confident adult dog. It is important that a puppy's experiences are not overwhelming or scary. Negative experiences during this period may harm the puppy for the rest of its life.

During this important early period of development, puppies need to gradually experience lots of different everyday sounds, sights, smells and touch in order to get used to them. They should meet different people of all ages and other animals. Socialisation and habituation should take many different forms and should account for the puppy's age and individual needs as they develop. After the early socialisation period (usually between approximately 3 – 12 weeks), puppies will find it harder to accept new everyday activities and experiences as safe.

As a breeder, you are responsible for ensuring that puppies experience positive, gradual exposure to these experiences during their early weeks. You should also provide new owners with a socialisation plan, showing what the puppy has experienced during their first weeks with you, and providing an outline for the next steps of their socialisation plan. There are a number of puppy socialisation plans available (see Appendix 2), which will help you structure this process for your puppies. If you are concerned about the way a puppy is coping with any aspect of their development, or require additional support with socialisation plans, contact a professional training or behaviour organisation (see Appendix 2), which will be able to offer guidance and signpost you towards accredited professionals.

A positive socialisation and habituation program will help to prepare puppies for life in their new homes. Many dogs are relinquished to rescue, returned to breeders or put to sleep due to behavioural issues. To avoid this, make sure your puppies are prepared for life as pets. By preparing them, you are helping to ensure that your puppies stay in their home for life.



Microchipping

All dogs and puppies must, by law, be microchipped and registered on approved databases. These must meet government standards as at:

www.gov.uk/get-your-dog-microchipped

Unless temporarily exempted by a vet (on health grounds), puppies must be microchipped and registered by the age of 8 weeks, prior to sale. This should be carried out with care and with a view to ensuring the puppy does not experience fear during the event and making it as positive an experience as possible (see Section 5: Preparing puppies for life). Only a vet, vet nurse or suitably qualified person is allowed to carry out the microchipping procedure. Ensure that you check that the person microchipping your dog is suitably qualified.

Owner details must be kept up-to-date on the microchip database. It is the new owner's responsibility to transfer the microchip details to their name after purchase.

More information about microchipping can be found on the PDSA website at:

www.pdsa.org.uk/microchipping



Vaccinations and health treatments

It is your responsibility as the breeder, to ensure your puppies' health care needs are properly provided for. This will include treatment for parasites and may include vaccination. You should take advice from your vet about what is best for your puppies.

www.pdsa.org.uk/taking-care-of-your-pet/looking-after-your-pet/puppies-dogs/vaccinating-your-dog

www.bsava.com/Resources/Veterinary-resources/Position-statemenst/Vaccination

The vaccination certificate should be passed on to new owners. This should provide information about the first vaccines, including dates and the vet's signature. It should also say when the second set of vaccinations will be required.

Puppies will also require worm, flea and tick treatments as advised by your vet. This should be appropriate for puppies. Information regarding the treatment, dates of administering the treatment and next due dates for treatment should be passed to the new owner.

Any additional vaccination or health treatment information should be provided in full to the new owner to ensure that the owner's vet is able to treat their new puppy effectively.



Finding suitable homes for your puppies

Before you decide to breed, you should be confident that you will be able to home all the puppies to suitable new owners. Many dogs are relinquished to rescue centres or passed on to different homes during their lifetime when owners are unable to care for them or do not understand the commitment that a puppy or dog requires.

As the breeder, you should ensure that the prospective owners are fully aware of the responsibilities of dog ownership and care, and any health or care requirements of the breed they wish to own. A breeder's responsibility should not end when a puppy is sold. You should be responsible for offering support and, if need be, taking the dog back, for the whole of their lifetime.

It is good practice to provide owners with your contact details and reassure them that they can contact you at any time for advice. You should also inform owners that if for any reason they can no longer care for the dog at any time, they should contact you and you will be prepared to take the puppy/dog back, without judgement.



The Puppy Contract



Use of The Puppy Contract is very important in protecting both the breeder and the puppy buyer.

As the breeder, you should complete The Puppy Contract before a puppy is sold. The Puppy Contract provides information to the owner about the puppy and the parents. This will include details of everything from the puppy's diet to any health screening tests the puppy's parents have had, and the experiences that the puppy has had to prepare him/her for life in a new home.

You and the puppy buyer sign two copies of The Puppy Contract. Your signature means that you confirm that the information is true and complete. The buyer's signature confirms that they understand and will meet the puppy's future health and welfare needs.

www.puppycontract.org.uk

Legislation, Regulation and Guidance

The below legislation and Regulations are not the only applicable documents. It is your responsibility to ensure that you comply with all relevant legislation and guidance.

The Animal Welfare Act 2006

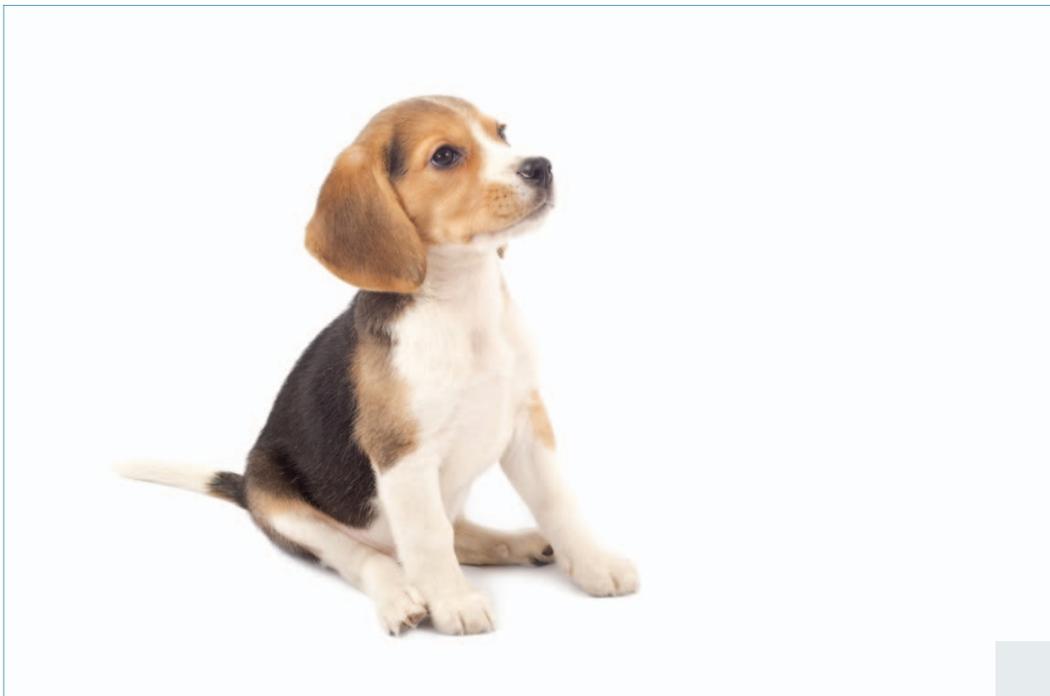
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/45/contents

The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2018/9780111165485/pdfs/ukdsi_9780111165485_en.pdf

The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018: Guidance notes for conditions for breeding dogs November 2018

www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-activities-licensing-guidance-for-local-authorities



Resources and Information

Further information for dog breeders, puppy buyers, and those involved in assessing premises for licensing is available from the following sources. This list is not exhaustive.

Animal Behaviour and Training Council (ABTC)

www.abtcouncil.org.uk/public-information.html

BSAVA

www.bsava.com/Resources/Veterinary-resources/Position-statements/Responsible-pet-ownership
www.bsava.com/Portals/0/resources/documents/PetSavers_Puppy_%20Guide_2015.pdf?ver=2016-08-30-145741-880

Dog Breeding Reform Group

www.dbrg.uk
www.dbrg.uk/guide-to-buying-a-puppy.html
www.dbrg.uk/puppy-contract.html

Dog Breed Health

www.dogbreedhealth.com/list-of-dog-breeds

Dogs Trust

www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/factsheets-downloads/your%20new%20puppy%20july%2015.pdf

Kennel Club

www.thekennelclub.org.uk/breeding

Kennel Club Puppy Socialisation Plan

www.thepuppyplan.com

Dr Sophia Yin

Yin, S. (2011) Puppy Socialization: Stop Fear Before it Starts. Cattledog Publishing. Online at:
www.drsophiayin.com/blog/entry/puppy-socialization-stop-fear-before-it-starts

PDSA

Puppy Socialisation Schedule:
www.pdsa.org.uk/taking-care-of-your-pet/looking-after-your-pet/puppies-dogs/puppy-socialisation-schedule

RVC

www.rvc.ac.uk/research/research-centres-and-facilities/rvc-animal-welfare-science-and-ethics/projects/dogs-breeding-for-welfare

RSPCA

www.rspca.org.uk/dogs

Information for relevant DNA tests currently available for individual breeds



DogWellNet
IPFD 

DogWellNet IPFD:

www.dogwellnet.com/ctp



The UK Kennel Club:

www.thekennelclub.org.uk/worldwide-dna-tests



Dog Breed Health:

www.dogbreedhealth.com



The BVA/KC Canine Health Schemes:

www.bva.co.uk/Canine-Health-Schemes

Schemes are available for Hip Dysplasia (HD), Elbow Dysplasia (ED), Hereditary Eye Diseases, and Chiari-malformation/Syringomyelia (CM/SM).

