

# A Code of Welfare for Australian Livestock Working Dogs



**This code was adapted from the New Zealand Government 2010 Code of Welfare for Dogs by the Working Kelpie Council of Australia Inc. (WKC) with permission from the Animal Welfare Directorate, MAF Biosecurity New Zealand.**



**The New Zealand 2010 Code of Welfare for Dogs was approved for adaptation by: The Australian Sheepdog Workers Association, Australian Farmer organisations and Royal Agricultural Societies.**



## **Preface**

### **Livestock Working Dogs**

The many thousands of dogs working on a daily basis make an enormous contribution to the efficiency of livestock management in Australia's large agricultural sector, which is responsible for approx 30% of GDP.

The \$ value of the work these dogs perform in Primary Production is undefined but would run to \$millions annually.

On properties they are the stockman's constant companion and highly valued assistant.

In most cases it would be impossible to manage livestock without them.

They assist in many enterprises where the cost of employing staff would be prohibitive. The increased competition for staff created by the resource boom has meant that good Livestock Working Dogs have become more necessary to replace humans in the field.

Possessing a wide variety of working styles and temperaments, they differ from many other types of dogs in that they inherit their working instincts and are then trained to use these on command. i.e. Livestock Working Dogs naturally work, they are not trained to work.

With this strong inherited desire, the greatest reward for a Livestock Working Dog is to be allowed to work.

A good working instinct, conformation, athletic ability and temperament are paramount when selecting a Livestock Working Dog.

Breeders of Livestock Working Dogs are usually involved in livestock industries enabling them to assess the ability of future breeding stock. This often means they live and work in relatively remote areas.

Established breeders are highly skilled at selection for desirable traits and in Livestock Working Dog husbandry and are an essential and important part of Primary Production.

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## Key to Minimum Standards

### Regulations

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 What is the purpose of this code of welfare?

Owners, handlers, breeders and/or lessees in charge of dogs have a responsibility to understand and meet the welfare needs of their dogs. The purpose of this code is to encourage all those responsible for dogs to adopt the highest standards of husbandry, care and handling.

The code sets minimum standards for the care and management of livestock working dogs. It includes recommendations for best practice to encourage standards of care better than just the minimum. Advice is given to encourage a high level of welfare. Explanatory material is provided where appropriate.

## 1.2 Who does this code apply to?

This code applies to all owners, handlers, breeders and/or lessees responsible for the welfare of dogs. Clients of breeders should be encouraged to adopt these standards.

## 1.3 What animals does this code apply to?

The code applies to livestock working dog's.

It is considered that the minimum standards and recommendations for best practice are generally applicable across all livestock working dogs in all situations. The way in which a minimum standard is achieved, however, may depend on the context in which it is being considered.

## 1.4 What happens if I do not follow the minimum standards in this code?

A person who is charged with an offence may defend him or herself by showing that he or she has equalled or exceeded the minimum standards in this code.

## 1.5 How does this code relate to other codes of welfare?

This code applies to all livestock working dogs in all situations. Other codes of welfare in existence or under development provide minimum standards and recommendations for best practice in particular circumstances.

## **2 Dog Ownership**

### **Introduction**

Livestock working dogs are highly valued within the livestock industry, both as companions and as assistants in the efficient management of stock. However, if not properly managed and cared for their welfare can be affected and they have the potential to create problems with livestock, other dogs and the environment.

### **2.1 Purchasing or Adopting a Dog**

#### **Introduction**

Those thinking about acquiring a livestock working dog should assess the situation in which it will work and the nature and the amount of work it will be required to perform. The intending owner needs to consider the facilities the dog will need including housing and the potential cost of keeping the dog. Their experience in training a livestock working dog and what temperament they prefer also needs consideration. Their budget will also govern whether they purchase a pup or an older dog.

#### **Recommended Best Practice**

- (a) Before acquiring a livestock working dog for the first time, intending owners should seek advice from others who work dogs in similar situations as to what type of dog is most suited
- (b) They should develop selection criteria applicable to their requirements
- (c) They should contact a reputable breeder or ask a livestock working dog organisation to provide a list of registered breeders.
- (d) Intending owners should be realistic about their ability to provide for the dog's needs.
- (e) If they have already purchased and trained a dog they should contact a reputable breeder.
- (f) When acquiring a pup the new owner should seek information about:
  - i) The working capabilities and temperament of the parents (these need to be assessed against the selection criteria).
  - ii) If possible see the parents working in a situation similar to their own.
  - iii) Make sure the pup appears healthy and that it has had the appropriate health care for its age.
  - iv) Ask about its diet, frequency of feeding and what type of housing it is accustomed to.
  - v) Ascertain what type of guarantee applies.
  - vi) Does the pup have identification? (Such as a unique tattoo).
- (g) When an older livestock working dog is purchased the intending owner should:
  - i) Observe a demonstration of the dog working alone in a similar situation to their own.
  - ii) Work the dog themselves and assess their ability to handle it.
  - iii) Make sure the dog appears healthy and physically fit and that it has a suitable temperament.

#### **General Information**

Care should be taken when a new dog is introduced into an environment which already includes dogs or animals of other species. If there is confrontation the new dog should be introduced gradually.

- (a) If a pup is purchased it may be anxious for its siblings and dam for a day or so and will need re-assuring. Try to feed it a similar diet and monitor it to see that it is content in its new housing. Particularly check it often in extreme weather. If assistance is needed training advice should be sought from an experienced livestock working dog handler. If there is a problem the breeder should be consulted as soon as possible.
- (b) If an older trained dog has been purchased it should be allowed at least six weeks to settle in before reliable work can be expected. If it appears unduly nervous reassure it and take care that it does not run off. Begin working it in a situation where it will be confident. Provide the breeder/seller with feedback.

## **2.2 Relinquishing (Changing) Ownership**

### ***Introduction***

While ownership of a dog should be undertaken as a commitment for the entire life of that animal, sometimes it becomes necessary to relinquish ownership, such as following changes in financial or family circumstances or relocation.

### ***General Information***

Potential ways to find a new owner include contacting the original breeder, placing advertisements in newspapers, notice boards etc, or rehoming to a family member or friend who is prepared to undertake the commitment of ownership. The new owner needs to be prepared to take responsibility for the ownership of the dog, its health and well-being.

If an alternative owner cannot be found, the dog should be relinquished to an animal shelter (such as the RSPCA) for adoption to a new owner. It is an offence to abandon an animal where no provision is made to meet their needs and an obligation exists for the owner or person in charge to pass the dog into the care of a responsible person or animal welfare shelter.



## 3 Food and Water

### 3.1 Food and Feeding

#### **Introduction**

Livestock working dogs need a balanced daily diet in quantities that meet their requirements for health and welfare and to maintain their ideal bodyweight. Home-made diets may not contain all the nutrients required. A diet of lean-meat only is not balanced and is not appropriate for prolonged periods. Specialised diets are available for dogs with some specific health problems.

Food and nutrient requirements of dogs vary widely. Factors to be considered include the dog (i.e. its age, sex, size, state of health, growth rate, level of activity and exercise, and physiological state), and the food (i.e. its nutritional composition, quality and frequency of feeding). Consideration should also be given to previous feeding levels, the introduction of a new food and any potential periods of food deprivation (e.g. during transportation).

Good quality, complete and balanced commercial dog foods usually provide all the nutrients required for a healthy dog. Supplementation with individual nutrients (e.g. calcium) is not recommended nor, in general, required if a dog is on such a diet. Pet rolls and tinned foods are generally unsuitable as a sole maintenance diet for dogs, as most are not complete and balanced. They can, however, be fed as one component in an overall balanced diet.

Most commercially available foods provide a guide to quantity to be fed. Owners need to be aware that individual variation means that recommended amounts will not always be appropriate, so growth rate in pups, and bodyweight and condition score in adult dogs should be carefully monitored.

#### **Minimum Standard No. 1 - Food and Feeding**

**Dogs must receive adequate quantities of nutritious food to enable each dog to:**

- (a) maintain good health;**
- (b) meet its physiological demands, including those resulting from the level of physical activity, growth, pregnancy, lactation and exposure to cold; and**
- (c) avoid metabolic and nutritional disorders**

#### **Recommended Best Practice**

- (a) Pups from time of weaning to four months of age should be fed small quantities at regular intervals three to four times throughout the day.
- (b) Pups from the age of four to nine months should be fed two to three times a day.
- (c) Dogs over the age of nine months should be fed at least once a day; however, the optimum frequency of feeding will vary depending on the dog's level of activity. The feeding regime should be modified as necessary to maintain optimum body weight and health. If there is any doubt concerning feeding regimes, advice should be sought from an appropriate source.
- (d) Where a dog's body weight and condition score (refer to Appendix I: Assessment of Body Condition of Dogs) do not meet the norm for the breed, and particularly where a dog is overweight, expert advice should be obtained about a weight management programme.
- (e) Prescription diets for certain medical conditions should be fed as instructed by a veterinarian or other experienced person.

### **General Information**

Maintenance ration (M) is the amount of food required to meet a dog's energy requirements and maintain its optimal body weight or condition. When a dog is growing, given significant exercise or work, or is lactating, its nutrient requirements increase above maintenance to meet the additional demands (see Table 1). The amount of food offered needs to be increased if a dog is losing condition, or decreased if it is becoming overweight. Up to twice maintenance ration may be required for dogs living outside in cold weather to provide the extra energy needed to keep warm.

**Table 1 Guide to amount of food relative to maintenance ration (M) needed for dogs and bitches in work and breeding**

<b>Dogs in work</b>	
Light exercise	1.5 x Maintenance (M)
Medium exercise	2.0 x M
Heavy exercise	3.0 x M
<b>Bitches</b>	
Late pregnancy	2.5 x M
Lactation	3.0 x M

*Please note this is guidance only and expert advice should be sought where there is any uncertainty.*

Food should be stored carefully, with dry food in a rodent-proof container and moist food (meat, dog rolls and opened cans) in a refrigerator.

### **3.1.1 Dogs with special nutritional requirements (see Table 1)**

#### ***Pregnant bitches***

A high quality pup or performance food is an easy way to ensure that the nutrients required throughout pregnancy and lactation are received. Increasing amounts of food will be required as pregnancy advances so that the bitch maintains acceptable body condition and the pregnancy develops normally. In late pregnancy, food may need to be provided in three or four portions throughout the day.

#### ***Lactating bitches***

Depending on the number of pups being fed, a lactating bitch may require up to three times the maintenance amount to ensure her milk supply for the rapidly growing pups and to prevent metabolic diseases such as eclampsia. Food may need to be provided in three or four portions throughout the day. Peak lactation requirements decrease about four weeks after whelping as the pups are introduced to supplementary food.

#### ***Unweaned pups***

Pups are, in general, not physiologically prepared to be fully weaned until at least six weeks of age, although the optimum time will depend on the bitch's attitude towards the litter and the size of the litter. Weaning is assisted by offering easily-digested food to pups (commercial feeds are available) from three weeks of age as a supplement to the bitch's milk. Feeding a supplement to pups reduces demands on the bitch. This is important for her welfare, especially if she has a large litter.

#### ***Growing dogs***

Young dogs need a diet balanced in calcium, protein, vitamins and energy for growth. Large amounts of calcium and overfeeding can cause problems. Commercial dog foods designed for growing dogs are available. If owners, handlers, breeders and/or lessees have any doubt about what is appropriate, they should seek expert advice. Bodyweight should be monitored and special diets may be necessary to ensure that a pup gains weight at a healthy rate.

#### ***Livestock working dogs***

Livestock working dogs with high work rates will require a higher food intake (refer to Table 1). Dogs should not be exercised hard soon after a large meal because this

increases the risk of gastric (stomach) torsion occurring.

### ***Desexed dogs***

Dogs and bitches may have a lower maintenance requirement after desexing and the amount of food provided should be modified accordingly.

### **3.1.2 Risky foods and objects**

As dogs are natural scavengers and tend to eat quickly, they may eat harmful material. Pups are especially at risk because they like to chew. All food given to dogs should be free from harmful objects that could cause intestinal problems. Indigestible objects that can cause intestinal obstruction include wool (e.g. from unskinned sheep carcasses), plastic dog roll wrap, small toys and balls, and plastic bags. Sharp plastic or wooden objects can also be harmful.

Bones need to be fed with care. Cooked bones (including chicken) and fish bones are not recommended as they can cause bowel damage or constipation. Large, raw bones present fewer problems.

### **3.1.3 Body condition**

#### ***Introduction***

An adult dog should be well-proportioned and have an observable waist behind the ribs when viewed from above and from the side. Ribs should be palpable (able to be felt), but have a light fat covering over them. The abdominal fat pad should be minimal - excessive fat here indicates obesity.

A body condition scoring system is provided in Appendix I: Assessment of Body Condition of Dogs.

Body condition varies between individual dogs and also depends on the dog's level of physical activity. E.g. some livestock working dogs may exhibit a body condition below that listed as 'ideal' in Appendix I: Assessment of Body Condition of Dogs.

#### **Minimum Standard No. 2 - Body Condition**

- (a) A dog's body condition score should be maintained at "ideal" as defined in Appendix I: Assessment of Body Condition of Dogs.**
- (b) If a dog is exhibiting a body condition score "thin" (as defined in Appendix I: Assessment of Body Condition of Dogs in this code) in conjunction with any other physical or behavioural indicators of malnutrition, appropriate remedial action through veterinary attention or improved nutrition must be taken.**
- (c) If a dog is exhibiting a body condition score "grossly obese" (as defined in Appendix I: Assessment of Body Condition of Dogs in this code), veterinary advice must be sought and remedial action taken to decrease body weight using a planned exercise programme to increase energy expenditure and dietary modification to reduce energy intake.**

#### ***Recommended Best Practice***

If a dog is "heavy" according to Appendix I: Assessment of Body Condition of Dogs in this code, appropriate remedial action should be taken to decrease body weight using a planned exercise programme to increase energy expenditure and dietary modification to reduce energy intake.

#### ***General Information***

Obese dogs face serious health risks and are predisposed to conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. Excessive weight can also damage joints, reduce mobility and exacerbate arthritis. The life expectancy of an obese dog is 25% less than that of a

normal dog.

Exercise programmes need to be designed carefully so that the level of exercise increases gradually as the dog's fitness level increases and to take account of any co-existing conditions such as arthritis which might be exacerbated by exercise. Where there is doubt about how an exercise regime can be implemented, seek expert advice.

Body condition of long-haired dogs cannot be assessed by simple visual observation - the extent of fat deposits can only be accurately assessed by feeling the tissues over the dog's ribs, backbone, pelvis and abdomen.

## 3.2 Water

### *Introduction*

Water is essential and regular access to good quality water is necessary for all dogs.

### **Minimum Standard No. 3 - Water**

**Dogs must have frequent access to water, appropriate to their needs, that is palatable to the dog, not harmful to health and available in quantities sufficient to maintain vital bodily functions.**

### *General Information*

Water requirements vary between individuals and also depend on workload, weather conditions (especially temperature), and requirements of lactation. As a general guide, dogs require 50-70 ml of water per kg body weight daily for general functioning with additional requirements during hot weather or when performing high levels of work.

High salinity levels in water can affect dogs detrimentally, especially those on dried food.

Dogs that eat dry food need more water than those eating canned food or pet rolls. Milk is not essential for dogs and should not be the sole source of liquid. Dogs may lose the ability to digest milk after weaning and this can lead to stomach upsets and diarrhoea.

## 4 Containment, Tethering and Shelter

### 4.1 Containment

#### *Introduction*

Containment of unsupervised dogs prevents them injuring or otherwise harming themselves, other dogs and people. The length of time that dogs are contained or tethered, and the way that it is done, can have a significant impact on their welfare. Prolonged containment or tethering can have a significant negative impact on the physical and mental health of dogs and the need for exercise (see Section 7.8 Exercise), as well as access to food, water and shelter while in containment all have to be considered.

#### **Minimum Standard No. 4 - Containment and Tethering**

- (a) Dogs must not be contained or tethered in a way that causes them injury or stress.**
- (b) Collars must fit comfortably without damaging the skin or restricting breathing.**

#### *Recommended Best Practice*

- (a) Owners should keep their dog under control at all times. This is best achieved by providing a secure but confined environment where dogs can roam. If a property is not appropriately fenced then the dog should be provided with an outdoor kennel with an attached run or a tether.
- (b) Dogs should not be tethered by choke-chains or other devices which tighten around the neck.
- (c) Collars should be checked frequently, particularly in young growing dogs, and loosened if they become tight to prevent effects such as chafing of the skin or restriction of breathing.

#### *General Information*

Long term confinement with minimal provision for exercise or social interaction can contribute to behaviour problems.

Where a tethered dog is unsupervised there should be nothing within reach of it that could injure it or with which the tether could become entangled. If the tether is long enough that the dog can climb onto nearby objects then, to prevent the dog hanging itself, the tether needs to be long enough that the dog can reach the ground on the other side of the object. Swivel clips and light, strong chains are less likely to become tangled than are ropes, and cannot be chewed through.

A correctly fitted collar allows space between the collar and the neck so that it does not restrict breathing or chafe against the hair and skin of the dog's neck, but is secure enough that the dog cannot slip its head from the collar. A harness can be used to restrain a dog with the advantage of distributing pressure over the chest rather than just the neck. Other forms of head restraint are also available.

### 4.2 Kennelling, Shelter and Ventilation

#### *Introduction*

Dogs need access to shelter that provides warmth, and is free from draughts and excessive heat or cold, to meet their physical needs. They also need a dry bed and enough space to lie down, stand and turn around.

A dog may be provided with shelter by a kennel, night box or crate. A kennel may be in a larger secure area or have an enclosed run attached so the dog has free access, or the dog may be tethered to the kennel. Livestock working dogs and dogs in breeding may be housed close to each other or in a communal area. Attention needs to be paid to space allowance and congestion within such kennels to limit the opportunity for disease to spread and reduce the risk of confrontation.

### Minimum Standard No. 5 - Kennelling, Shelter and Ventilation

- (a) Dogs must be provided with sheltered and dry sleeping quarters.
- (b) Measures must be taken to enable dogs to keep warm in cold weather.
- (c) Sleeping quarters must be large enough to allow the dog to stand up, turn around and lie down comfortably.
- (d) Dogs must be able to urinate and defecate away from the sleeping area.
- (e) Ventilation and shade must be provided in situations where dogs are likely to experience heat distress.

#### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) Kennels should be constructed of solid, non-permeable materials, preferably raised above ground level, be stable, draught-free and of sufficient size to comfortably house each dog.
- (b) Dogs should not be required to sleep on concrete or metal surfaces. Where kennel and run areas are made of these materials dogs should be provided with a raised platform, shelf or other type of bed made of a softer material on which to sleep.
- (c) Housing should be sited to provide shelter from cold, wet and windy weather, and to provide shade on hot sunny days, with the ideal area providing both shade and sun. Shade is especially important during the hottest part of the summer when artificial shade should be provided where no natural shade exists.
- (d) Where a number of dogs are kept together, ventilation should be controlled to manage dampness and noxious odours and to minimise the airborne spread of infectious diseases such as kennel cough.
- (e) Dogs should only be housed communally if they are known to interact well together, or are kept under observation to ensure that they do not fight.
- (f) Kennels and kennels with runs attached should be no smaller than the minimum kennel and run sizes given in Table 2.
- (g) Concrete kennels and runs are unsuitable for livestock working dogs, particularly in the colder, wetter areas of Australia. Apart from arthritis of the leg and hip joints, they can suffer from, splayed paws, weakness in the legs which become misshapen, softening of the pads which leads to footsoreness when worked and general poor health. A dog's working life is considerably shortened, by an estimated 3 to 4 years, if they are kept on concrete and especially so if it is hosed on a daily basis, as it is constantly cold and wet.

**Table 2 Recommended minimum sizes for kennels and kennels with runs attached**

Size of dog	Kennel only	Kennel plus run
<b>Small (&lt;7Kg)</b>	900mm x 700mm	500mm x 500mm plus 600mm x 1m
<b>Medium (7-20Kg)</b>	1.2m x 800mm	600mm x 700mm plus 800mm x 1m
<b>Large (21-40Kg)</b>	1m x 1.5m	800mm x 800mm plus 1m x 800mm
<b>Extra large (&gt;40Kg)</b>	1m x 2m	1.2m x 1.2m plus 1.2m x 2.4m

*Please note this is guidance only and expert advice should be sought where there is any uncertainty.*

### **General Information**

In general, the following considerations can help with kennel design:

- Toxic materials, such as lead-based paint, cause a risk of poisoning.
- The requirement for bedding depends on factors such as the body condition of the dog, the length of its coat, its age and the effectiveness of the housing. While metal and concrete sleeping areas are easier to clean, these hard surfaces may be cold and can cause pressure sores and exacerbate arthritis. Sleeping beds off the ground will increase comfort where dogs live in these types of kennels. Supportive bedding is of particular benefit to older dogs, dogs with arthritis, and short-coated lean dogs which may develop calluses or sores over the elbows and hocks.
- Wet concrete can soften and damage a dog's pads.
- In many rural areas there is insufficient water for kennel runs to be hosed, so that housing needs to be cleaned without water.
- Metal kennels or kennels with a metal roof can become extremely hot in warm weather so dogs need access to a shaded area with effective ventilation.
- Kennels can be lined and floored with insulating material such as wood to reduce heat loss. This is particularly important for winter in colder parts of the country.
- The floors of runs should be solid or slatted with no gaps capable of injuring the feet.
- Dog-runs on the ground need to be well drained and kept clean of faeces and the area changed regularly to prevent a build-up of hookworms (refer to Section 7.5).

In cold weather, additional measures to keep dogs warm include providing additional bedding or a source of heating, or feeding it additional food.

## 5 Sanitation

### *Introduction*

Good hygiene is important in order to maintain the health and welfare of dogs and to minimise disease and distress.

### **Minimum Standard No. 6 - Sanitation**

- (a) Faeces and urine must not be permitted to accumulate to such an extent that they pose a threat to the health or welfare of the dog.**
- (b) Food and water containers must be kept clean of contamination that may pose a threat to the health or welfare of the dog.**

### *Recommended Best Practice*

- (a) Kennels and runs should be checked on a daily basis and any contaminated bedding, faeces and urine removed.
- (b) Where larger and/or changing populations of dogs are kept, hygiene measures should be of a high standard to minimise the risk of cross-infection.

### *General Information*

Where dogs are housed in kennels or runs, and especially where they are grouped close together or housed communally, the environment needs careful attention. Giving dogs free exercise early each morning will help prevent fouling of sleeping areas.

Kennel and run surfaces, as well as food and water containers, can be kept clean by scrubbing with hot soapy water, followed by rinsing and disinfection. The design of food and water containers affects the ease with which they can be kept clean. Plastic containers need to be sturdy as some can become brittle and pose a danger if a dog chews them. Cleanliness is improved by keeping areas around containers clean, by allowing containers to dry before re-use and by using drying methods that prevent cross-infection.

Fixed soft furnishings and carpets may harbour parasites and infectious agents. Regular renewal or cleaning and disinfection of bedding improve hygiene and comfort.



## 6 Breeding

### **Introduction**

Unplanned breeding can create a major animal welfare problem as the resulting pups are often unwanted and so can experience insufficient care or inappropriate disposal, with detrimental effects.

Poorly planned breeding without regard to inherited disorders can compromise dog welfare due to increased risk of conditions such as hip dysplasia, difficulty breathing and blindness, and of undesirable traits such as bad temperament. It can also result in a poor level of working instinct and can result in inefficient stock working ability.

Information on inherited disorders of specific breeds is available from veterinarians.

### **Minimum Standard No. 7 - Breeding**

**Breeders must make all reasonable efforts to ensure that the genetic make-up of both sire and dam will not result in an increase in the frequency or severity of known inherited disorders.**

### **Recommended Best Practice**

- (a) Owners, handlers, breeders and/or lessees should report the occurrence of inherited disorders to assist progress in reducing these disorders and identify carrier dogs.
- (b) Owners, handlers, breeders and/or lessees should follow a documented scheme that allows for monitoring and eventual prevention of known inherited disorders.
- (c) Dogs and bitches should not be kept together if there is a risk of accidental mating.
- (d) All dogs being considered for mating should be tested for inherited disorders where such tests are available. For those inherited disorders where no suitable test is available, occurrence of inherited disorders in their genealogy should be assessed. Veterinary or other appropriate advice should be sought in this respect.

### **General Information**

Owners, handlers, breeders and/or lessees considering undertaking dog breeding need to inform themselves about what is involved before they start, and take time to consider how they will manage the problems that can arise. Ensuring that there is a market for the offspring before breeding will reduce the risk of unwanted dogs.

There are believed to be at least 500 genetic diseases across more than 300 dog breeds, with testing available for only some of these conditions. The societies of the breeds most at risk from common inherited disorders (such as hip and elbow dysplasia and retinal atrophy) operate schemes which enable early detection and identification of carriers. Breeders should, by careful research and testing wherever possible, gain as much information as they can about both the dog and bitch before any mating is carried out.

## 6.1 Desexing

### **Recommended Best Practice**

- (a) Dogs not intended for breeding should be desexed.
- (b) Dogs that have or are likely to develop known inherited faults should be desexed as early as practicable once the condition has been identified.

### **General Information**

Desexing of dogs is a significant surgical procedure and must only be carried out by a veterinarian.

The benefits of desexing far outweigh any negatives, as determined scientifically. Direct medical benefits include the fact that desexed animals live significantly longer than those that are not. Many diseases are reduced or eliminated, including infections and cancers of the reproductive system. Desexing also removes the hormonal influences that can contribute to inter-dog aggression and roaming. There is no scientific evidence that a bitch benefits from having a litter of puppies before she is desexed. There is scientific evidence that the risk of mammary cancer increases if dogs are desexed after the first heat (puberty).

A dog may reach puberty from approximately six months of age. Desexing is safely carried out before the onset of puberty. Although pre-pubertal desexing can be carried out safely from six weeks of age, this is only recommended in situations where rehoming with future population control is of the highest priority. Where dogs are in established homes, desexing from three to five months of age and before the first heat in the case of bitches is recommended.

Pre-pubertal desexing will not stunt growth, but rather is associated with a delay in closure of growth plates so that the growth period is prolonged by several months. This may increase the risk of skeletal disorders but can be managed by good diet. Desexing increases the risk of urinary incontinence in bitches irrespective of age, but this risk is greater when de-sexing occurs before three months of age. Desexing, whether of companion or livestock working dogs, generally causes no significant increase in negative behaviours and it does not in itself make the animal become less active. There may be increased weight gain after desexing, but this can be controlled by adequate exercise and an appropriate diet.

Increases in rates of dog desexing will enable better control of the dog population, reduce the surplus of unwanted dogs and protect the dog's health and well-being. Veterinarians, dog breeders, local councils and animal welfare organisations can facilitate this process by continuing to encourage the dog-owning public to have dogs desexed.

## **6.2 A bitch in heat and mating**

### ***Introduction***

A bitch generally comes into heat (oestrus) at intervals of about six to ten months. Each heat period lasts approximately three weeks.

### ***Recommended Best Practice***

- (a) Only dogs in good health and physical condition should be used for breeding.
- (b) A bitch should not be intentionally mated
  - (i) at less than twelve months of age; or
  - (ii) on its first heat.
- (c) Veterinary advice should be sought before
  - (i) mating bitches of nine years of age or more; or
  - (ii) mating bitches for the first time at five years of age or more.
- (d) A bitch should be well grown before mating.
- (e) A bitch should not be mated so as to whelp and rear more than two litters in eighteen months
- (f) A bitch in heat should be carefully supervised or securely contained to prevent physical contact with male dogs and unwanted mating.
- (g) Preventative health care in the form of vaccination and parasite control should be carried out on bitches and dogs to be used for breeding, under veterinary advice.
- (h) Mating dogs should be allowed to separate naturally.
- (i) A bitch's working schedule should be considered before mating to avoid stress during pregnancy and pup rearing period.

### **General Information**

Age of maturity, and therefore the age at which breeding is appropriate, varies with the individual dog.

The scent produced by bitches in heat can attract dogs from far away. If an unintended mating has taken place, veterinarians can provide advice on preventing or terminating an unwanted pregnancy, with best success if consulted without delay.

Although desexing is the preferable option, bitches can be prevented from coming into heat by using pharmaceutical products which may be obtained after consultation with a veterinarian.

## **6.3 Pregnancy, Whelping and Lactation**

### **Introduction**

The length of gestation in the dog is about 63 days. Information about the stages of pregnancy, whelping and lactation can be obtained from experts such veterinarians.

### **Minimum Standard No. 8 - Whelping**

- (a) Bitches that are due to whelp, or are whelping, must be provided with a suitable whelping area in a safe, warm and quiet environment.**
- (b) Bitches that are due to whelp must be inspected frequently to ensure that they are not experiencing whelping difficulties.**
- (c) If a bitch is exhibiting any signs that indicate that she is experiencing difficulties at any point during whelping, expert assistance must be sought.**

### **Recommended Best Practice**

- (a) If whelping boxes are used, they should be placed in a warm but well-ventilated environment.
- (b) Advice on design should be obtained from an expert such as an experienced dog breeder, a veterinarian or veterinary nurse.
- (c) The bedding material should be replaced after the birth has taken place and as frequently as needed to keep the area clean, but without causing unnecessary disruption to the dam and pups.
- (d) Cleaning will need to be more frequent as the pups get older and the dam is less able to clean up after them.
- (e) After whelping, the dam should be allowed access to her pups until the pups are fully weaned.
- (f) Unweaned pups should be individually checked each day and regularly treated for parasites.
- (g) Sometimes bitches have larger than normal teats and pups may need to be assisted to feed.
- (h) Young pups are very susceptible to heat and cold stress and therefore need to be monitored.

### **General Information**

A bitch will often exhibit a sharp drop in body temperature 12-24 hours before whelping. Monitoring the bitch's temperature during the last days of pregnancy can give an indication of when whelping may begin.

Close supervision of bitches with pups, appropriate feeding and exercise, frequent cleaning of the area in which they live and supplementary feeding of pups from the age of three weeks is beneficial for their welfare. Veterinarians can provide advice in relation to large litters where pups may need supplementary feeding from a very young age. Section 3.1.1 of this Code covers food and water requirements of bitches.

## 6.4 Weaning and Removal of Pups from the Bitch

### **Introduction**

Pups rely on the dam's milk to obtain all nutrients for the first few weeks of life. From 3-4 weeks they spend more time exploring their immediate environment and less time with the bitch. At this stage solid food can be introduced and the dam may begin to seek time alone. Pups should be completely weaned onto solid food by age 6-7 weeks and before they are rehomed.

### **Recommended Best Practice**

- (a) Pups should remain with the dam to suckle during the first three weeks.
- (b) Supplementary feeding should not be commenced before the pups are three weeks of age, except with veterinary advice in circumstances in which the bitch is unable to supply adequate milk to feed some or all of the pups.
- (c) Pups should not be permanently removed from the dam to be weaned before 4 weeks of age. They should be given access to the dam for suckling until six weeks of age and removed before this only where the dam shows aggression to the pups or where ongoing lactation could damage the bitch's health.
- (d) A bitch should be provided with an area that is out of reach from her pups.
- (e) A bitch should be fed separately from her pups.

## 6.5 Supply of Pups

### **Introduction**

It is important that new owners are provided with information concerning the potential working capabilities of the pup, its health and its requirements for housing. Buyers inexperienced with livestock working dogs on stock should be encouraged to attend an approved course for handlers. All buyers should be directed to reputable publications on livestock working dog training.

### **Minimum Standard No. 9 - Supply of Pups**

- (a) Pups must be able to feed independently and be in good health when made available for sale**
- (b) Owners, handlers, breeders and/or lessees supplying pups must, at the time of supply, disclose to persons receiving them, any known inherited disorders that the pup may be predisposed to which may cause health and/or welfare problems during the dog's lifetime.**
- (c) Pups must have had appropriate vaccinations for their age and have been treated for parasites.**

### **Recommended Best Practice**

- (a) Pups should be at least eight weeks of age and should have begun socialisation with other dogs and humans when made available for sale.
- (b) Owners handlers and breeders selling pups need to be satisfied that the pups are capable of independent life before moving them to new owners.
- (c) The seller should make every endeavour to assess the working requirements of the purchaser.
- (d) The seller should supply a pup from a genetic working background and temperament as close to the requirements as reasonably possible.
- (e) The seller must explain fully the conditions of sale, including any guarantee, which should be in writing.
- (f) Buyers inexperienced in livestock working dogs on stock should be encouraged to attend training schools or clinics
- (g) Buyers should be encouraged to read good books on training dogs for stock work. Suggested reading - authors Nancy Withers and Colin Seis.

**Supply of Working Age Dogs**

- (a) If an older dog is sold, the level of training (started, well-started, fully trained) and the working capabilities of the dog must be adequately explained and supplied in writing, along with commands with which the dog is familiar.
- (b) Where possible a demonstration of the working capabilities should be given.
- (c) The seller must explain fully the conditions of sale, including any guarantee, which should be in writing.

**Recommended Best Practice**

- (a) The seller should assess the capabilities of the intending buyer with regard to handling and caring for the dog adequately in a working environment and, if deemed necessary, attendance at an approved livestock working dog training school should be recommended.
- (b) The health and housing requirements should be discussed.
- (c) If the intending buyer already has other livestock working dogs they should be made aware of possible conflict when the new dog is introduced and given advice on how to manage it.
- (d) It should be explained that the new dog will take at least six weeks to settle in to its new surroundings and new owner.
- (e) The WKC has well established by-laws governing registration, individual identification (by means of tattoo) and sale of pups and dogs.

**General Information**

Between the ages of three to 14 weeks, pups go through a development phase in which they become socialised. For further information on the important process of socialisation, refer to Section 8 Behaviour.

## 7 Health

### 7.1 Health and Injury

#### **Introduction**

Health and welfare are closely associated. Owners have a responsibility to maintain their dogs in good health and to treat injury and disease when it occurs. The health and welfare of the dog should be checked daily, including observing whether the dog is eating, drinking, urinating, defecating and behaving normally.

#### **Minimum Standard No. 10 - Ill Health and Injury**

- (a) Owners, handlers, breeders and/or lessees, or persons in charge of dogs, who observe their dogs to be showing:**
  - (i) signs of significant acute pain, suffering and distress; or**
  - (ii) signs of chronic pain, suffering and distress; or**
  - (iii) signs of rapidly deteriorating health; or**
  - (iv) serious injury****must seek immediate advice from a veterinarian.**
- (b) If a dog is suffering from pain or distress that is extreme or untreatable, then the animal must be euthanased.**

#### **Recommended Best Practice**

- (a) All ill or injured dogs should be examined by a veterinarian.
- (d) A veterinarian should be consulted immediately if bleeding is profuse or persists for more than a few minutes.
- (e) Owners, handlers, breeders and/or lessees and persons in charge who know that their dogs will be distant from veterinary care (e.g. when working) should carry a first aid kit appropriate for dogs.

#### **General Information**

Treatment can be provided by veterinarians. Injuries such as puncture wounds, which often appear relatively insignificant, can be worse than they look and advice sought if any doubts exist about their severity.

Courses on first-aid for animals are available through some veterinary clinics and *Technical Colleges*.

Section 10 of this Code deals with euthanasia.

#### **Heat stress**

A dog cools its body through evaporative heat loss through lungs and cardio vascular system. Once a dog's ability to compensate is exceeded, heat stress rapidly develops.

If a dog's body temperature exceeds 42 degrees muscle activity decreases and if this continues for any length of time muscle damage, heart failure, organ breakdown and brain swelling can occur. Symptoms include: Staggering, lack of coordination, excessive panting and collapse.

Immediate first aid: need to increase evaporative heat loss. Cool, but not iced water, can be poured over the dog or it can be partially immersed. Take care not to compromise breathing. Fanning the wet dog with, perhaps a hat, or anything available, also increases heat loss.

Once the dog partially recovers, Allow it drink but do not force it to drink before it wants to. Seek veterinary advice and/or attention for dogs with heat stroke, as they may have

organ damage, which can be permanent.

### ***Dogs Injured by Motor Vehicles***

Accidental injury to dogs while they are crossing roads is common and there is a recognised moral obligation for the driver of a vehicle who injures any animal, including a dog, to stop and give assistance.

### ***Dealing with Injured Dogs***

An injured dog, whether familiar or not, may be in severe pain and may bite during attempts to assist it. Care must be taken when handling injured dogs, and if in doubt, seek expert advice. An effective muzzle will prevent biting. If an injured dog is unable to walk and needs to be moved, a blanket or similar can be used as a stretcher to minimise movement of the body and reduce the risk of exacerbating serious injuries.

## **7.2 Disease and Illness Related to Diet**

### ***Introduction***

Feeding unbalanced or inadequate diets to dogs can cause problems associated with abnormal growth, weight, reproduction and dental health.

Overfeeding leads to obesity. This can lead to disorders such as heart and kidney disease, diabetes, arthritis and skin conditions. Generally less food and more exercise are required if overweight dogs are to lose weight.

### ***Recommended Best Practice***

- (a) Owners, handlers, breeders and/or lessees and those in charge of dogs are referred to Table 1 Guide to amount of food relative to maintenance ration (M) needed for dogs and bitches in work and breeding, in Section 3.1 Food and Feeding, of this Code.
- (b) Veterinary attention should be sought for any dog that shows signs of food sensitivity which include, but are not limited to, skin disease (especially scratching or dermatitis), vomiting and diarrhoea. Veterinary attention should be sought for any dog showing extreme or unexpected changes in appetite. Both decreased and increased appetite can indicate underlying disease.
- (c) Dogs' teeth and gums should be checked regularly by their owners and appropriate action taken where tooth and gum health deteriorate.

### ***General Information***

If a dog is suffering from an illness or disease, special attention to the dog's diet may be required. Diet also affects dental health in dogs. Dogs' teeth and gums will benefit from chewing on harder food, such as raw bones and dry kibble food, and from regular cleaning. There is a range of products available including diets that are beneficial for dental health. Working or vigorous exercise too soon after a large meal can increase the risk of gastric (stomach) torsion.

Also see Section 3.1.2 regarding the feeding of risky foods and objects.

## **7.3 Prevention of Infectious Disease**

### ***Introduction***

Vaccination is an important means of controlling infectious diseases such as parvovirus, distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis and kennel cough. Infectious diseases can rapidly spread among unvaccinated dogs, with consequent negative impacts on animal welfare. Minimum standards and recommendations for best practice relating to ill-health (Section 7.1 Ill Health and Injury) also apply to the management of dogs with infectious diseases.

## Minimum Standard No. 11 - Prevention of Infectious Disease

**Dogs known to be infected with an infectious disease must be carefully supervised and securely isolated so as to prevent infecting other dogs.**

### **Recommended Best Practice**

- (a) Dogs should be provided with protection against infectious disease by vaccination according to veterinary recommendations.
- (b) When pups are six to eight weeks of age, their owners should seek veterinary advice on a vaccination programme against relevant infectious diseases.
- (c) Pups should be kept away from public places until approximately two weeks after their final vaccinations, but it is also important not to compromise socialisation during this period. Contact with other dogs should be limited to those known to be vaccinated, and pups should be restricted to areas that are not accessible to unvaccinated dogs.
- (d) Preventative health plans for breeding bitches and their litters should be carried out according to veterinary recommendations.

### **General Information**

Pups are particularly susceptible to infectious diseases. Vaccination programmes normally begin at six to eight weeks of age, and are complete by 12 to 16 weeks of age depending on individual circumstances. Thereafter, an annual veterinary health check is recommended, including an assessment of any need for a vaccination booster.

## 7.4 Parasitic Disease

### **Introduction**

Parasite infestation can cause disease and death. Where environmental conditions permit, parasite populations can become large, while animals suffering ill health may also have more parasites. Dogs can develop hypersensitivity to parasites and show extreme skin irritation, even with very low parasite numbers. Some canine parasites present a public health risk.

Regular worming should be performed to maintain health. Failure to maintain a regular worming schedule can result in the dog losing weight and condition and can cause a gradual deterioration of the health of the dog.

### **Recommended Best Practice**

- (a) Dogs should be given regular and effective treatments to prevent internal and external parasite burdens, as recommended by veterinarians or product manufacturers.
- (b) Bitches should be treated for roundworms during pregnancy to prevent their spread to the pups.
- (c) Pups should be wormed with an effective roundworm treatment at two-week intervals from two to 12 weeks of age. Thereafter they should be wormed every three months, using a broad spectrum wormer, or as recommended by a veterinarian.
- (d) If dogs are tethered or in runs on bare earth, they should regularly be moved to fresh ground and the area kept clear of faeces, to prevent the build-up of hookworms.
- (e) Dogs should be checked regularly for signs of infestation with external parasites e.g. scratching, chewing or hair loss, and should be treated appropriately.
- (f) Dogs to be wormed should only be treated with products intended for dogs.

### **General Information**

Many diseases, including worm infestations, can be related to poor hygiene.

Internal parasites, such as intestinal worms, are a major disease problem and also a public health risk (see Section 7.6 Diseases Transmissible to Humans (Zoonoses))



below). Regular worming prevents large infestations. Products for worming can be toxic, especially when products not intended for dogs are used on them, and need to be used according to instructions or label directions.

External parasites that live on the skin of dogs include fleas, mites and lice. Ticks are prevalent in some parts of the country and may attach themselves to dogs. The presence of external parasites may be indicated by rubbing, scratching, fur loss, scabs or scale. Fleas or flea dirt (black coils that turn red when moistened with water) may also be seen in the coat. Longer-haired dogs may have more difficulty with external parasites if their fur becomes knotted through lack of grooming. Matted areas provide a haven for fleas, and may cause severe discomfort for the dog.

Fleas are common. 95% of the flea's life cycle is spent, not on the dog, but in its environment, therefore bedding should be cleaned and/or treated. Routine cleaning such as vacuuming does not kill fleas, their eggs or larvae. Where there is infestation, advice on appropriate treatment of both environment and animals should be obtained. Effective treatment of fleas requires that all animals in the property, including cats, should be treated at the same time.

The signs of mange, which is caused by mites, include hair loss, flaky skin, redness, sores and sometimes itchy skin. Treatment can be difficult particularly in advanced cases, and it is important to seek veterinary help at an early stage of the disease. Some types of mange also affect humans.

The ears of dogs, especially young dogs, should be checked regularly for ear mites. An infestation may cause excessive scratching of the ears and a dark-brown discharge inside the ears.

## **7.5 Diseases of the Skin**

### ***Introduction***

Skin diseases are common in dogs, and may cause considerable pain and distress.

### ***Recommended Best Practice***

Dogs with minimal hair covering and/or pale skin on the nose or ears should be protected from sunburn and skin cancer by keeping them out of direct sunlight during the sunniest times of the day. The application of appropriate animal sunscreen on nose and ears is helpful but not fully preventative.

### ***General Information***

There are many causes of skin disease in dogs including allergies, parasitic diseases, fungal infection such as ringworm, bacterial infection, nutritional imbalances and hormonal disorders. Few of these conditions are resolved without appropriate treatment. Delays in seeking help may lead to worsening of the condition as the dog damages its skin further by chewing and scratching, and to complications such as secondary bacterial infections which may then require additional treatment.

## **7.6 Diseases Transmissible to Humans (Zoonoses)**

### ***General Information***

Some diseases (e.g. ringworm, roundworm, mange, leptospirosis and campylobacter) can be transmissible between dogs and other species, including humans (zoonotic diseases). Owners, handlers, breeders and/or lessees can act as a vehicle for transmission and unknowingly transfer diseases from dog to dog.

Where a zoonotic disease has been diagnosed, a discussion with a veterinarian is recommended to enable the owner of the dog to make an informed decision on the best course of action for both dog and owner. Misunderstandings may result in the owner being unaware of the potential public health risk of a condition, putting the owner and their family at risk, or alternatively, having a dog unnecessarily euthanased.

## 7.7 Care of Claws and Coat

### **Introduction**

Neglected coat and claws can cause considerable distress and suffering. Hygiene around the perineum, anus and tail is particularly important in dogs with long hair to reduce soiling and the risk of flystrike.

### **Minimum Standard No. 12 - Care of Claws and Coat**

- (a) The coats of longer-haired dogs must be groomed and/or clipped at a frequency that will prevent suffering and distress due to matting or infestation by parasites.
- (b) Claws must be clipped when necessary to avoid penetration of the skin and/or foot pads.

### **Recommended Best Practice**

- (a) Where appropriate dogs should be groomed regularly so as to prevent matting.
- (b) Claws, including dew claws if not removed, should be clipped as required.

### **General Information**

Mats of hair harbour external parasites and dermatitis is likely to develop in the underlying skin. Mats can be brushed out or clipped off. Longer haired dogs may require regular clipping or their hair tied back to ensure they can move freely and see where they are going.

Long hair can predispose to grass seeds penetrating skin and ears. Owners, handlers, breeders and/or lessees should regularly check dogs for grass seeds during the late spring and summer period.

Shampooing and bathing dogs is generally not necessary if the dog is kept in a clean environment, but it can reduce unpleasant odours. Shampoos formulated for dogs should be used as human products may dry out the skin.

Dew claws, the claws of older dogs, and the claws of dogs that get little or no exercise on hard surfaces, may become overgrown. Long claws need careful trimming with sharp clippers taking care not to damage the quick of the nail (the nail bed) which will be painful and result in bleeding and possibly infection. Sharp nail tips can be removed with an emery board or nail file.

## 7.8 Exercise

### **Introduction**

Exercise is extremely important for both physical and mental health, particularly where dogs are confined for prolonged periods, and also helps to meet dogs' social needs. Insufficient exercise can contribute to the development of behaviour problems. Exercise is usually a matter of walking and running off a leash.

### **Minimum Standard No. 13 - Exercise**

**Dogs must receive daily exercise sufficient to maintain their health and well-being.**

### **Recommended Best Practice**

- (a) Dogs should have an appropriate amount of exercise to maintain health and well being.
- (b) Dogs being exercised should be under control at all times, or exercised in an enclosed area where they cannot come to harm.
- (c) Owners, handlers, breeders and/or lessees training dogs for backing and/or intensive yard work should consider the stage of skeletal development, follow a structured training process and seek advice from an experienced handler. This is particularly important for dogs under the age of 18 months.
- (d) The level of exercise should be appropriate for the age and level of fitness of the dog.
- (e) A bitch should not be worked or exercised hard in the last two weeks of pregnancy.
- (f) A bitch should not be worked until their pups are close to weaning.

### **General Information**

Exercise requirements vary with age, and individual circumstances. Over-exercising of growing dogs, may result in muscle or joint problems. Older dogs require relatively less exercise but physical activity remains important for both health and mental stimulation.

Regular exercise is important for livestock working dogs to maintain their fitness, especially during periods of little or no work.

Gentle exercise is appropriate for pregnant bitches until the last two weeks prior to whelping. Lactating bitches do not require regular exercise while their pups are very young.

When exercising dogs beside a vehicle, due regard needs to be taken for the dog's fitness and safety.

Exercise on hard surfaces such as tarmac and long working hours can lead to worn footpads, especially where dogs are unaccustomed to this. Extremely hot surfaces, such as hot asphalt, sand and metal trays on vehicles in summer, can burn footpads.

## **7.9 Harmful Substances**

### **Introduction**

As natural scavengers, dogs are susceptible to accidental poisoning by many substances e.g. vertebrate pest baits, poisonous plants, illegal drugs, prescription medicines, household cleaners, and contaminated water. Dogs can also be poisoned by eating carcasses of poisoned animals.

### **Minimum Standard No. 14 - Harmful Substances**

- (a) Owners, handlers, breeders and/or lessees and persons in charge of dogs must take all practical steps to ensure that dogs are not exposed to poisons and harmful substances.**
- (b) Owners, handlers, breeders and/or lessees and persons in charge of dogs known to have eaten a harmful substance or showing signs indicative of poisoning (e.g. tremors, fitting, frenzied behaviour, sudden vomiting, sudden drowsiness or collapse) must seek immediate veterinary advice.**

### **General Information**

Dogs are commonly poisoned by baits containing poisons that prevent blood clotting laid to control rats and rabbits, and by the carcasses of the poisoned animals. Slug, snail and mouse bait poisoning is also common.

Dogs are particularly susceptible to 1080 poison (rabbit, fox and wild dog baits), which can remain active for many months in the carcasses of poisoned rabbits. Signs of 1080 poisoning in dogs include frenzied behaviour, fear and panic, howling, cowering and

eventually fits and death. They may appear immediately or several days after ingestion. Dogs can recover if veterinary advice is sought immediately. Owners of dogs in areas near 1080 operations should contact their Regional Council for advice. Councils normally advise of poison operations by signage and dogs entering these areas should wear muzzles.

Dark chocolate is toxic to dogs, even in small amounts.

Dogs can be poisoned by drinking water polluted with toxins such as sheep dip, horticultural sprays, antifreeze etc, and care should be taken to cover polluted water or prevent access to it.

If a dog has eaten a poison which is strongly acidic, alkaline or a petroleum product, or if the dog appears to be losing consciousness, it should not be made to vomit as this could cause further harm.

Further advice can be obtained from your local Poison Centre or a veterinarian.

## 7.10 Care of Older Dogs

### ***Introduction***

Heart disease, metabolic disease, cancers and arthritis are common age-related diseases of dogs. Difficulty standing up, weight change and excessive drinking and urination are common signs of age related disease.

Some diseases of older dogs may be interpreted by the owner as part of the natural ageing process but in many cases the difficulties of advancing age can be managed by treatment and/or nutrition. Veterinary advice and specific treatments may help the aging dog.

### ***Recommended Best Practice***

- (a) Dogs over the age of seven years should be provided with a diet appropriate for their health.
- (b) Dogs over the age of seven years should receive regular veterinary checks to ensure that their health and welfare is maintained by early diagnosis and treatment of age-related diseases.

### ***General Information***

As dogs age, their need for warmth, free access to water and nutritious and easily-digested food increases. Commercial foods for older dogs are available and ensure a balanced diet to meet nutritional requirements.

Older dogs require less exercise and are less tolerant of high workloads than younger dogs, but this will vary with factors such as health, size and working history. Nevertheless physical activity remains important for good bowel function, prevention of constipation and general well-being.

## 7.11 Surgical Procedures

### ***Introduction***

Surgical procedures need to be conducted in a manner that manages likely pain and distress. Pups that still have their eyes closed are developmentally immature and less likely to experience pain in the same way as dogs that are older; however the long term impacts of painful procedures conducted on young pups are not fully understood.

Significant surgical procedures should only be undertaken by a veterinarian. If in doubt about a surgical procedure, veterinary advice should be sought.

### **7.11.1 Debarking - Not Applicable**

### 7.11.2 Removal of dew claws

Dew claws are vestigial digits found on the inside of the lower limbs of a dog.

#### **Minimum Standard No. 16 - Dew Claws**

- (a) Where dew claws are to be removed from pups by a person other than a veterinarian, it must be done before the eyes have started to open or before four days old, whichever comes first.
- (b) Where dew claws are removed by a person other than a veterinarian, that person must possess the knowledge, training and competence, in relation to that procedure, that is necessary to maintain the health and welfare of the pup.
- (c) Dew claws on dogs after their eyes have begun to open or after four days of age, must only be removed by a veterinarian.
- (d) If dew claw removal is not performed, care must be taken to manage any consequential risks to animal health and welfare.

#### ***Recommended Best Practice***

- (a) Jointed dew claws should not be routinely removed.
- (b) Dew claw removal, when conducted, should be carried out by a veterinarian.

#### ***General Information***

While most front dew claws are firmly and closely attached to the leg, hind dew claws may be large and loosely-attached and therefore more likely to be injured. In these cases preventive removal may be justified, particularly in livestock working dogs. Negative impacts on the health and welfare of the dog can be reduced by having this procedure conducted at the same time as desexing.

### 7.11.3 Tail Docking - *Not applicable*

## 8 Behaviour

### **Introduction**

Inappropriate behaviour, such as lack of sufficient and appropriate working instinct, straying and excessive barking, is a major reason for euthanasia of dogs less than two years old. All livestock working dogs have the same set of innate behaviours but they differ as to the threshold at which different behaviours are exhibited. Genetics, socialisation, training, desexing and level of supervision all contribute to the manner in which a dog will behave. Where a behavioural problem occurs, advice should be obtained from an animal behaviourist or a veterinarian. The earlier that behavioural problems are addressed, the greater the chance of correcting them.

Positive training techniques that are based on the understanding that inherent dog behaviour is a consequence of their evolution as pack animals are widely used. Problems occur when the dog misunderstands its hierarchical position as a subordinate member within its human 'pack' (its human family and contacts).

Failure of a livestock working dog to exhibit sufficient and appropriate working instinct is a significant cause of wastage. Often inexperienced owners, handlers' breeders and/or lessees do not understand how to develop a livestock working dogs' instinct.

### **Minimum Standard No. 18 - Training**

**Training techniques must be appropriate for the individual dog**

### **Recommended Best Practice**

- (a) Pups should be well socialised to minimise the development of behavioural problems.
- (b) Socialisation should be appropriate to the circumstances in which the individual dog will be kept as an adult (e.g. dogs likely to come into contact with livestock should be socialised accordingly).
- (c) Dogs should be given the opportunity to socialise with other dogs on a daily basis.
- (d) Dogs should be trained to minimise the risk of inappropriate behaviour and so that they are under control at all times.
- (e) Dogs should be trained or taken to reputable training classes from the age of 16 weeks to learn basic commands.
- (f) Appropriate advice (e.g. from a reputable livestock working dog handler/trainer or veterinarian, or dog behaviourist) should be sought at the early stages of a behavioural problem.
- (g) Where an owner, handler, breeder and/or lessee in charge of a dog is at all uncertain how the dog will respond to other dogs, livestock or wildlife, the dog should be restrained in a manner that keeps all parties safe.
- (h) Training sessions should be short and regular and should be determined by the animal's reactions and condition, without over-working the animal.
- (i) The owners, handlers, breeders and/or lessees dominant position should be enforced calmly and patiently using recognised techniques that provide positive reinforcement for acceptable behaviour as part of the training process. Dominance should not be established by physical punishment or processes that are psychologically harmful to the dog.

### **General Information**

Between the ages of three to 14 weeks, pups go through a development phase in which they become socialised. During this period it is important to expose pups to a large range of stimuli including gentle, but not excessive, handling by people, exposure to novel experiences, vaccinated dogs, cats and other animals, and vehicles. This will assist them in learning how to communicate and interact with humans and other dogs, and how to adjust to novel situations and environments. Pups that have little opportunity for such contact should attend socialisation classes at an early age once vaccination

programmes have begun.

Some dogs develop annoying habits, including persistent barking, territorial barking, separation anxiety, aggressiveness, chasing cars and destructive behaviour. There is usually an underlying reason for nuisance behaviour. Boredom, insufficient exercise and inappropriate training are frequent predisposing factors. Altering or enriching the environment or improving training techniques may provide an effective remedy.

The dog is, by nature, a predator and will naturally try to work or chase animals that run from it. Uncontrolled dogs can be a danger to other companion animals, livestock, wildlife and people.

## 8.1 Aids for Behavioural Modification

### ***Introduction***

A range of devices is available to assist training and modify behaviour. These include choke chains, prong or pinch collars, electronic collars (remote transmission and bark-activated), electronic boundary control devices and muzzles. Training devices, especially electronic devices, have the potential for misuse and abuse. If used incorrectly, they can significantly reduce the long term welfare of a dog. They should only be used by competent operators as a training aid for serious behavioural faults when other methods have proved ineffective, and when, without the use of such a device, the dog is likely to be euthanased.

### **Minimum Standard No. 19 - Aids for Behavioural Modification**

- (a) Training aids, including electronic training devices, must not be used in a way that causes unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress to the dog.**
- (b) Pinch or prong collars must not be used.**
- (c) Muzzles must fit comfortably without chafing the skin or impeding breathing and must allow the dog to open its mouth sufficiently to enable panting or drinking.**

#### 8.1.1 Choke chains

##### ***Recommended Best Practice***

- (a) Choke chains can be harmful if misused and owners and persons in charge should seek advice on their appropriate use.
- (b) Choke chains should be fitted so that they are comfortable and hang slack when not being used to correct the dog.
- (c) Choke chains should be used only during training sessions, when the dog is on a lead and supervised.

##### ***General Information***

Choke chains can become caught on objects then cause distress or strangulation. On long hair they may become entangled in the fur causing pain and/or restricting breathing.

#### 8.1.2 Electronic devices

##### ***Introduction***

Electronic training devices are punishment-based devices that work by supplying an instant noxious stimulus for an unwanted behaviour. This is contrary to the philosophy of most animal behaviourists, who recommend reward-based training methods. Electronic training devices can be harmful if misused, but used carefully they can be very effective against unwanted behaviours.

##### ***Recommended Best Practice***

- (a) Electronic devices should be used carefully and only when other training methods have failed.
- (b) Operators of electronic devices should be trained and knowledgeable, aware of the

- early signs of distress in the dogs being trained, and able to alleviate these.
- (c) Electronic devices should not be used on dogs with a nervous disposition.
  - (d) Electronic devices should only be activated during or immediately after (within a few seconds of) the offending behaviour.
  - (e) Electronic devices should not be left on unsupervised dogs because they can cause serious harm if they malfunction or are accidentally remotely activated.
  - (f) Electronic devices should only be used to control barking where the problem being addressed is intractable to other training methods.

### **General Information**

Electronic training devices include:

- Remote control transmission - a collar delivers an electric shock or warning tone activated by a radio signal from a hand-held radio transmitter.
- Bark activated (anti-barking devices) - when the dog barks, a disc located in the collar detects vibration from the voice box, activating the delivery of *an electric shock*, citronella spray, water vapour, air pressure or a high frequency sound. Because these devices inhibit inherent natural behaviours, they should be used only as a last resort in cases of a dog barking excessively in its own territory (territorial barking). If it is necessary to use an electronic device for this purpose, a citronella collar spray device is preferred over an electric shock device.
- Boundary containment - a transmitter emits a radio signal along an underground wire, forming a defined boundary. The animal wears a receiver attached to a collar, which delivers an electric shock or citronella spray, usually preceded by a warning tone, when the dog approaches this boundary.

### **8.1.3 Muzzles**

#### **Introduction**

Muzzles are used for a number of reasons including to prevent a dog biting or eating, to safeguard wildlife or to protect dogs from poison baits.

#### **Recommended Best Practice**

- (a) There should be a period of preconditioning with supervision by the handler as dogs may initially find the muzzle frightening or distressing.
- (b) Muzzles should be light, strong and as open weaved as possible.

## **8.2 Fireworks**

#### **Introduction**

Many dogs find the sound and sight of fireworks very frightening. Lightning, thunder and gunshots may also have a similar effect.

#### **Recommended Best Practice**

- (a) Dogs that are fearful of fireworks should be kept in an area with the least possible exposure to the sight and sound of fireworks.
- (b) Dogs kept outside when fireworks are in use should be kennelled, and the kennels should be covered.
- (c) Veterinary advice should be sought for particularly nervous dogs and medication may be appropriate if the dogs cannot be physically removed from the area.

#### **General Information**

Medication and 'remedial training' may be appropriate for some dogs in order to manage ongoing or severe behavioural problems arising from or during exposure to fireworks.



## 9 Transportation

### *Introduction*

Dogs are frequently transported in a variety of vehicles. Every person in charge of a vehicle must ensure that any animal carried in a vehicle is secured and its welfare attended to.

### **Minimum Standard No. 20 - Transportation**

- (a) Dogs must be provided with adequate ventilation when being carried in a vehicle.
- (b) Dogs must not be transported loose in a stock crate with livestock.
- (c) If dogs are carried in a purpose-built transport box fixed to a vehicle, it must be well-ventilated and free from exhaust fumes and road dust.
- (d) Dogs must not be carried on the open rear of a moving vehicle unless they are secured or enclosed in a crate.
- (e) Dogs must not be left unattended in a vehicle in conditions where the dog is likely to suffer from heat stress.

### *Recommended Best Practice*

- (a) Dogs should be transported using a specially designed, travelling crate if possible.
- (b) Dogs should not be carried in the closed boot of a car unless they are injured and this is the most appropriate manner in which to transport them over a short distance.
- (c) When dogs are transported on the back of farm vehicles, non-slip surfaces and insulated matting on metal surfaces should be provided.
- (d) If a dog is transported on the back of or on the fuel tank of a farm motorbike, the driver should provide a non-slip cover for the dog to assist it to retain balance when the vehicle is moving at speed or cornering.
- (e) Dogs should not be left unattended in vehicles. If a dog must be left in a vehicle even for a short time, the vehicle should be parked in shade with more than one window left open to allow air to circulate so that heat stress will not occur.
- (f) Dogs should not be carried on the open back of vehicles during extremes of weather unless shelter and/or shade are provided.
- (g) When dogs are tethered on the back of an open vehicle for transport, the securing lead or chain should be attached so that the cab provides protection against the wind.
- (h) When dogs are tethered on the back of an open vehicle for transport, the securing lead or chain should be long enough to permit the dog to stand, lie down and move about but short enough to prevent the dog's legs from reaching the side of the tray so that it cannot fall off or enter the cab of the vehicle.
- (i) When groups of dogs are transported together, submissive dogs should be protected from those that are more dominant by physical separation or restraint that prevents aggressive interaction.
- (j) When dogs are transported together in a group, there should be easy and safe access to all dogs by the owner or person in charge.
- (k) Dogs awaiting loading onto aircraft should be kept in a secure, tranquil and quiet environment and should be sheltered from the elements.

### *General Information*

Dogs can be seriously injured if allowed to travel with their heads out of the window of a moving vehicle.

The temperature in a closed vehicle in full sun can reach 50 degrees Centigrade in less than 15 minutes. This will cause an enclosed dog's temperature to rise rapidly, followed by extreme distress and rapid death. Dogs that have been stressed in this way should be cooled by wetting down and providing cool water immediately, then veterinary assistance should be sought.

Pups which are transported by car, and continue to be transported at regular intervals as they age, will, in general, develop a higher tolerance for travel than dogs not introduced to cars at an early age.

Dogs being transported over long distances, either by road or by air, have additional requirements such as appropriate ventilation, and provision of water. Where dogs are to be transported over long distance, veterinarians and animal transport agents can provide useful advice. For air travel the IATA provides guidelines, which all domestic carriers follow.

Sedation of dogs for transportation is not generally recommended. Veterinary advice should be sought in the first instance where there are concerns that a dog may not settle.

## 10 Euthanasia

### ***Introduction***

In Australia It is an offence to kill any animal such that it suffers unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress.

### **Minimum Standard No. 21 - Euthanasia**

- (a) When a dog is euthanased it must be carried out in such a way as to ensure that death occurs quickly and that pain and distress is minimised.**
- (b) Dogs of any age must not be killed by drowning.**

### ***Recommended Best Practice***

- (a) Dogs should be euthanased by a veterinarian.
- (b) Where a veterinarian is not available, or the time taken to reach one prolongs suffering, and the dog is to be shot, this should be undertaken only by a fully competent person, taking special care to safeguard people and other animals in the area.

### ***General Information***

The preferred method of euthanasia for dogs is by a veterinarian using an intravenous injection of a drug registered for this purpose. Dogs which are difficult to handle may need to be tranquilised first.

It is inhumane to kill a dog, including a pup, by drowning. Pups, in common with many newborn mammals, have a diving reflex which prolongs the time they can survive without breathing. They therefore experience a prolonged period of distress before death.

Information on humane killing can be obtained from veterinarians, animal welfare inspectors and Local Authority animal control officers.

## Appendix I: Assessment of Body Condition of Dogs

- 1 **EMACIATED** Ribs, lumbar vertebrae, pelvic bones and all bony prominences evident from a distance. No discernible body fat. Obvious loss of muscle mass.



- 2 **THIN** Ribs easily palpated and may be visible with no palpable fat. Tops of lumbar vertebrae visible. Pelvic bones becoming prominent. Obvious waist and abdominal tuck.



- 3 **IDEAL** Ribs palpable without excess fat covering. Waist observed behind ribs when viewed from above. Abdomen tucked up when viewed from side.



- 4 **HEAVY** Ribs palpable with difficulty, heavy fat cover. Noticeable fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent or barely visible. Abdominal tuck may be absent.



- 5 **GROSSLY OBESE** Massive fat deposits over thorax, spine and base of tail. Waist and abdominal tuck absent. Fat deposits on neck and limbs. Obvious abdominal distension.



(Source: Purina Pet Care Centre)

## Appendix II: Interpretation and definitions

<b>bitch</b>	A female dog.
<b>body condition score</b>	A scoring system used to classify the condition of animals, based on the assessment amount of fat and/or muscle covering they have (see Appendix I: Assessment of Body Condition of Dogs).
<b>breeder</b>	A person who cares for livestock working dogs and facilitates the mating of appropriate sires and dams in order to produce pups and dogs with a potentially high standard of working instinct for use in the livestock industry.
<b>choke chain</b>	A chain of metal links which, when looped through an eye at the end, forms a noose with a free-running end. The chain tightens around the neck when the free end is drawn.
<b>dam dog</b>	A nursing bitch. Member of the species <i>Canis familiaris</i> . Refers to any dog, whether a companion or a livestock working dog. Includes a pup unless otherwise stated.
<b>dog behaviourist</b>	A person experienced in dog psychology, biology and behaviour who is able to provide advice on training and correcting behavioural problems in canines.
<b>euthanasia</b>	Induction of death in a humane manner.
<b>good practice</b>	A standard of care that has a general level of acceptance among knowledgeable practitioners and experts in the field; is based on good sense and sound judgment; is practical and thorough; has robust experiential or scientific foundations; and prevents unreasonable or unnecessary harm to, or promotes interests of, the animals to which it is applied. Good practice also takes account of the evolution of attitudes about animals and their care.
<b>handler</b>	A person in charge of a dog and responsible for its immediate care and control.
<b>heat</b>	Oestrus. The time in the reproductive cycle when a bitch shows an interest in mating. Normally around ovulation (release of the egg).
<b>kennel</b>	A container that provides shelter for the animal to rest and sleep. Also known as a nightbox or dog house.
<b>lessee</b>	A person or who receives the use and possession of a livestock working dog from a lessor in exchange for payment. The person to whom a lease is made is the responsible owner of the dog during the period of the lease.
<b>livestock working dog</b>	A dog usually kept or proposed to be kept and/or worked: (a) On rural land, and/or (b) By an owner/breeder or lessee who is a Primary Producer, or a person engaged or employed by a Primary Producer, and Primarily for the purpose of (a) herding, droving, protecting, tending, or working stock or (b) being trained in herding, droving, protecting, tending, or working stock.
<b>maintenance ration (M)</b>	That required to maintain a dog's optimal body weight or condition.

<b>minimum standards</b>	Minimum standards provide the details of specific actions people need to take in order to meet the obligations of the relevant State Act. They are identified in the text by heading, and generally use the word 'must' or similar. They are highlighted in boxes within the text.
<b>nightbox</b>	A kennel, with no run, designed principally for the dog to sleep in.
<b>owner</b>	In relation to an animal, includes the parent or guardian of a person under the age of 16 years who- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) owns the animals; and</li> <li>(b) is a member of the parents or guardian's household living with and dependent on the parent or guardian.</li> </ul>
<b>person in charge</b>	In relation to an animal, includes a person who has an animal in that person's possession or custody, or under that person's care, control, or supervision <i>on behalf of a member</i> .
<b>physiological state</b>	Relates to the functioning of the body, its organs and body systems.
<b>prong collar (or pinch collar)</b>	A chain made of metal or hardened plastic links with prongs positioned against the neck on each link.
<b>pup</b>	A dog less than 12 months of age.
<b>recommended best practice</b>	Best practice agreed at a particular time, following consideration of scientific information, accumulated experience and public submissions on this code. It is usually a higher standard of practice than the minimum standard, except where the minimum standard is best practice. It is a practice that can be varied as new information comes to light. Recommendations for best practice will be particularly appropriate where it is desirable to promote or encourage better care for animals than is provided as a minimum standard. Recommended best practices are identified in the text by a heading, and generally use the word "should".
<b>run</b>	An enclosed area which allows the animal space in which it can urinate and defecate.
<b>shelter</b>	Cover or protection from weather including sun, rain, wind and snow.
<b>tethering</b>	Securing a dog to an object by a collar, harness, head collar or secure restraint around the neck.
<b>tattoo</b>	An identification usually by means of a coloured dye to the skin. May consist of a series of letters and numbers unique to the individual animal.
<b>trainer</b>	A person who encourages and develops the livestock working dog's natural instinct and teaches the necessary commands which enhance the dog's usefulness.
<b>veterinarian</b>	A person who practices veterinary medicine or surgery who is registered under the appropriate Australian State and Federal laws.
<b>weaning</b>	The process that begins with the introduction of supplementary food to pups and ends when the pups are nutritionally independent of the dam.
<b>whelping</b>	Parturition. A bitch in the act of giving birth.
<b>zoonoses</b>	Diseases that are transmissible from animals to humans (e.g. hydatid disease)

**Appendix III: Legislative Requirements - Not  
Applicable**

## **Appendix IV: Codes of Welfare**

### ***Revision of the Code***

This code is based on the knowledge and technology available at the time of publication, and may need to be varied in the light of future advances and knowledge. In any event, this code will be reviewed no later than 1 July 2017 (being 5 years from the date on which this code was issued by the Working Kelpie Council of Australia).

Comments on this code are always welcome and should be addressed to: Working Kelpie Council of Australia, PO Box 306, Castle Hill NSW. 1765

The Code can be obtained from the website:

[www.wkc.org.au/PDF/AnimalWelfare-LivestockWorkingDogs.pdf](http://www.wkc.org.au/PDF/AnimalWelfare-LivestockWorkingDogs.pdf)