

Australian Capital Territory

Animal Welfare (Welfare of Dogs in the ACT) Code of Practice 2010*

Disallowable instrument DI2010–85

Made under the

Animal Welfare Act 1992, section 22 (Codes of practice)

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the Animal Welfare (Welfare of Dogs in the ACT) Code of Practice 2010.

2 Commencement

This instrument commences the day after notification.

3 Approval of code of practice

The document entitled the “Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs in the ACT 2010” attached to this instrument is approved as a code of practice

4 Revocation of previous instrument

Disallowable Instrument DI1997-30 (Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs in the ACT) is revoked.

Jon Stanhope MLA
Minister for Territory and Municipal Services

17 May 2010

*Name amended under Legislation Act, s 60

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE WELFARE OF DOGS IN THE ACT 2010

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1. Introduction

This Code of Practice for the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) has been prepared by the ACT Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) to provide guidelines for the welfare of dogs, including minimum standards of accommodation, management and care.

Since humans can alter and control an animal's environment, animal welfare includes the concept that people have duties and responsibilities towards animals. The greater the level of interference or control of an animal's environment, the greater our responsibility.

Animal welfare considerations are becoming increasingly important in the keeping of animals. Practices once considered acceptable are now being reassessed and modified according to new knowledge and changing attitudes. This code is based on established experience and current scientific knowledge and is open to future review as appropriate.

Dog owners should familiarise themselves with relevant legislation. The *Animal Welfare Act 1992* defines a range of behaviours which are considered cruel or otherwise deleterious to the health and welfare of animals; including failing to ensure that the dog receives appropriate and adequate food, water, shelter, exercise and veterinary treatment. Legislative controls concerning the ownership of dogs and their behaviour in public places have changed in recent years. Within the ACT, the *Domestic Animals Act 2000* deals with, among other things, dog ownership and animal nuisance matters.

Owners should be aware of other relevant Codes of Practice under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*.

- *Code of Practice for the Welfare of Greyhounds in the ACT*
- *Code of Practice for Animal Boarding Establishments*
- *Code of Practice for Pet Grooming Establishments*
- *Code of Practice for the Handling of Companion Animals in Pounds and Shelters in the ACT*
- *Code of Practice for the Sale of Animals in the ACT.*

2. Responsible Ownership

2.1 General

The owner of a dog should provide for its physical, emotional and behavioural needs and (under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*) must provide appropriate food, water, exercise, housing, hygiene, health care. These requirements are detailed under appropriate headings throughout this code. However, there are additional responsibilities required of owners under the *Domestic Animals Act 2000*. Complying with these responsibilities will help protect dogs, people and animals from undesirable interactions.

People considering taking ownership of a dog need to ensure that their circumstances will allow them to give it proper care and take account of any likely changes to these circumstances. Housing – whether in a house or apartment, likely frequent absences, are examples of what needs to be given thought. Potential

major changes in circumstances also need to be taken into account, such as moving overseas or to accommodation less suited to care of a dog. Such changes are a major cause for surrender of dogs to shelters and pounds.

2.2 Registration

Under the *Domestic Animals Act 2000*, in the ACT dogs are required to be registered by the time they are eight weeks old. The registration is for the lifetime of the dog (whilst living in the ACT). The dog must wear the registration tag or another tag showing the registration number.

2.3 Identification

Numbers of unowned dogs are killed each year simply because they lack identification. Identification enables owned dogs to be distinguished from un-owned dogs and provides a link between a dog and its owner.

2.3.1 Microchip

The *Domestic Animals Act 2000* requires that dogs that are at least 12 weeks old, have been sold, or are a dangerous dog, must be identified by microchip. A microchip is a tiny silicon chip (approximately the size of a small grain of rice) that is implanted under the skin of the dog. The microchip contains a unique identification number which identifies the dog's owner through a microchip registry. Once in place, the microchip cannot be lost, removed or altered for the life of the dog. It is the responsibility of the dog owner to ensure that their details are up-to-date on the microchip registry.

2.3.2. Collar and tag

All dogs should also wear a tag showing the address and phone number of the owner, enabling a lost or roaming dog to be quickly returned to its owner by a local resident. Collars should not be too restrictive, nor too loose

2.4 Desexing

Desexing is essential to reduce the number of neglected or abandoned dogs. Desexing may also improve behaviour and help to reduce reproductive health problems later in life. Dogs not intended for breeding should be desexed as early as veterinary advice allows. Female dogs do not need to produce a litter for full physical and emotional development.

Under the *Domestic Animals Act 2000*, all dogs older than six months of age must be desexed unless the owner holds a permit (issued by the Registrar of Domestic Animal Services) to keep a dog that is not desexed. However, this does not apply to dogs born before 21 June 2001. Owners of undesexed female dogs are risking unplanned pregnancies and should be certain they can provide adequate care for puppies and nursing bitches, and that they can provide appropriate homes for all puppies born.

Under the *Domestic Animals Act 2000*, a female dog on heat is prohibited from a public place.

2.5 Control and clean-up responsibilities

The owners of dogs are expected to maintain reasonable control of their dogs at all times so that they are at less risk of harm and do not create a nuisance or danger within the community.

Humans and other animals, such as other dogs, cats, wildlife and livestock, may be affected or endangered by uncontrolled dog behaviour. Owners should take reasonable precautions to prevent escape of a dog from their premises or vehicle. Dogs should be securely confined within the property boundary. Devices using electric shocks for confinement or training/discipline purposes are not permitted under section 13 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*.

Dogs in public places should be on a lead, except when in a designated *Dog Exercise Area*. In these areas, dogs should still remain under the effective control of their owner at all times; for example, a dog should respond by the second call of its keeper. Obedience training is a useful tool in adjusting dogs to the urban environment.

Under the *Domestic Animals Act 2000* it is required that all dog faeces in public places are removed by the dog carer. In addition, it is required under the Act that when walking a dog, appropriate equipment for picking up dog faeces is carried eg, a plastic bag.

The location of dog exercise areas is available at http://www.gim.act.gov.au/website/gimmapviewer/viewer.htm?SERVICE=dog&QUERYDOG=yes&TITLE=Dog%20Exercise%20Areas&LOGO=Tams_Colour_logo2.gif. The maps are also available for viewing at ACT Libraries and all Canberra Connect Shopfronts.

2.6 Dangerous dogs

Dangerous dogs are a significant source of concern to the ACT community and therefore warrant particular control. A dangerous dog is broadly defined as one which threatens the safety of people and other animals by showing aggression with little or no provocation. In the ACT a dog may be declared dangerous by the Registrar under the *Domestic Animals Act 2000* if:

- a dog has been trained as a guard dog or is kept as a guard dog on other than residential premises; or
- a decision has been made under equivalent state or territory law to declare a dog to be dangerous; or
- it has attacked or harassed a person or animal.

A decision regarding the classification of a Dangerous Dog is based on its behaviour and not on its breed.

In the event of a dog being declared dangerous, the owner must apply to the Registrar for a licence to keep a dangerous dog. Only persons over the age of 18 years are eligible to apply for a licence to keep a declared dangerous dog. The owner must comply with any conditions of the licence. Such dogs may, for example, need to be kept in an escape proof enclosure or indoors except when being exercised or transported. The enclosure should be double gated, of adequate size

to provide the opportunity to exercise and should contain appropriate shelter, protection and accommodation. The enclosure should be sited near the owner's house to enable both easy access and visual supervision of the dog from the house. In addition, the Registrar may direct that a warning sign be displayed at the premises where the dangerous dog is kept.

In a public place, a dangerous dog may only be exercised whilst wearing a muzzle.

2.7 Security dogs

Security dogs are dogs used to protect premises, goods or persons. If a security dog is a declared a dangerous dog, Section 2.6 of this code applies.

2.8 Assistance dogs

An assistance dog refers to a dog trained to help a person with a disability. A person accompanied by an assistance dog has the same right of access to, and the same entitlement to the use of, a public place (as defined in the *Domestic Animals Act 2000*) as that person would have if not accompanied by an assistance dog.

2.9 Keeping of multiple dogs

Under the *Domestic Animals Act 2000*, a dog owner is restricted to keeping no more than three dogs at a residential premise, unless that person has a licence to keep multiple dogs.

3. Nutrition

Dogs require a healthy, well-balanced diet. Dogs benefit from a range of foods which should contain all the proteins, fats, carbohydrates, fibres, vitamins and minerals to maintain good health. This may be provided by a complete commercial dog food. A home-prepared diet consisting of a variety of fresh food including meat, vegetables and rice or a similar carbohydrate is likely to require vitamin and mineral supplementation and should be discussed with a veterinarian. It should be noted that some human foods may be dangerous to dogs. If a commercial dog food is used, it should contain all the essential ingredients for a healthy diet and fed according to the manufacturer's recommendations or metabolic needs of the dog.

Dogs may be fed a vegetarian diet; however, veterinary advice should be sought to ensure that the diet is complete.

From 6-to-12 weeks of age, puppies require four meals daily. From 12 weeks to 6 months of age, puppies require three meals a day. From the age of 6 months dogs should be fed at least once a day. Two small meals are often better for digestion than one large meal. Large and giant breeds should be fed at least twice daily.

Quantities of food to be fed vary according to the age, size and activity of the dog. Food should be served at about room temperature. Overfeeding of dogs should be avoided as obesity can have serious health consequences.

Fresh, clean drinking water must (under the Animal Welfare Act 1992) be available at all times.

Pregnant and lactating bitches require more food and should be fed at least twice daily. They will also require more water and the supply should be checked twice daily.

If uncertain about quantities and types of food to feed, veterinary advice should be sought. Sick animals should be fed in accordance with veterinary advice.

Dogs should be provided with raw bones of a suitable size or hard chews to help prevent dental disease. Alternatively, the teeth can be brushed at least twice a week using special canine toothpaste to prevent the build up of tartar.

4. Environment and Housing

4.1 General

Dogs are social animals and particularly need the company of humans and, if possible, other dogs. Suffering and undesirable behaviours in dogs, such as excessive barking, destructive behaviour and escaping, can result from leaving the dog unattended for extended periods, such as all weekend. As well as indicating distress, these behaviours can lead to animal nuisance and neighbourhood complaints. There are various techniques and tools available to help solve problem behaviour, and advice should be sought from veterinary surgeons, pet shops, the RSPCA-ACT, the ACT Canine Association, Domestic Animal Services or professional dog trainers.

Dogs should be provided with the following basic requirements:

- human contact for a reasonable length of time each day;
- adequate exercise (see Section 5);
- accommodation designed to suit their age, anatomy and behavioural patterns;
- environmental enrichment for non-working dogs which may include training, free running exercise, play and chewing objects;
- when kept outdoors, adequate protection from rain, wind, direct sunlight and extremes of temperature. An enclosed kennel with an entrance off-set from the centre of the front is recommended;
- when kept indoors, provided with comfortable conditions of ventilation and lighting and adequate bedding or sleeping quarters; and
- protection from other animals and humans if contact with them is likely to cause distress.

Dogs are social pack animals and are likely to be happiest living in the house with their family. Living in the home with the family also maximises their familiarity with humans, our body language, behaviours, smells, voice levels and tones, and therefore reduces the likelihood that the dog will become a danger to family members, visitors and strangers. Dogs are also more useful as intruder deterrents if they live in the house.

Care should be taken to ensure that it gets on well with any other animals in the household, and that small companion animals such as birds, rats, mice, rabbits and guinea pigs have a safe and separate area where the dog cannot see or harass them. Dogs can form very close affectionate bonds with other animals, but owners should always ensure that all animals have escape routes available in case squabbles occur.

Young children and dogs should never be left together without adult supervision.

4.2 Tethering

Tethering dogs for long periods or on a regular basis should only be used as a last resort. If tethering is the only option for confining the dog within the premises, a running chain (also known as a run line or tether line) should be used with due consideration given to safety preventing hanging or entanglement problems. A run chain (commonly available at pet supply outlets) should be used with a double swivel chain to prevent tangling. Regular off chain exercise must be provided, as per Section 5. If tethering is the only long-term prospect for confining the dog, owners should seriously re-think whether it is appropriate for them to keep a dog at this time. Puppies should not be tethered until accustomed to walking on a collar and lead.

4.3 Sleeping areas

Sleeping areas, whether indoors or outdoors, should include a dog bed or wooden pallet so that the dog is not forced to sleep on concrete or the ground. Bedding should be provided and kept clean and dry, and replaced as required.

For winter in the ACT, consideration should be given to the materials and consequential warmth of the kennel, having regard to the condition of the dog including age, type of coat and health. Sleeping kennels should be selected to suit the size of the dog, but allow the dog to stand, turn around and lie down. Un-insulated metal shelters or kennels are not sufficient for most breeds in Canberra winters.

4.4 Outdoor enclosures

Enclosures, whether for single or group housing, should provide at least enough space for each animal to feed, sleep, sit, stand, lie with limbs extended, stretch and move about and provide adequate protection from rain, wind, direct sunlight and extremes of temperature.

Where outdoor enclosures are used more than three or four hours at a time, they should include sleeping and run areas and meet the following requirements:

One dog up to 15kg: run area 4m² with a minimum dimension (width/length) 1m, plus 0.5m² for each additional dog of similar size.

One dog 15kg to 30kg: run area 6m², with a minimum dimension (width/length) 1.5m, plus 0.5m² for each additional dog of similar size.

One dog over 30kg: run area 8m² with a minimum dimension (width/length) of 2m, plus 1m² for each additional dog of similar size.

In certain cases, dogs may need to be housed in smaller areas, due to injury, behavioural needs, illness and age.

Floors of enclosures should be made of an impervious material to assist cleaning and drainage. Sealed concrete is ideal or sealed brick may be acceptable. Grassed or landscaped sections may form part of large outdoor runs but should be adequately maintained to reduce the risk of parasites and disease.

Where dogs are confined in outdoor enclosures, they should be exercised for at least one hour daily. To minimise aggressive behaviour only dogs of compatible temperament should be housed together.

5. Exercise

Exercise is an important part of a dog's physical and mental well-being. Exercise can be provided by a number of activities and should occur for a suitable duration to:

- allow them to be observed for good health;
- provide mental stimulation by change of environment and interaction;
- maintain muscle tone and fitness; and
- give them contact with humans.

For walking dogs on a lead, a suitable duration is a minimum of 30 minutes once daily or 15 minutes twice daily, except for permanently confined dogs which should be exercised for at least one hour daily. Large, very active, very old or injured dogs may require more or less exercise than the average dog. When it is safe for the dog, members of the public and other animals, dogs should be allowed exercise off lead in a declared dog exercise area. Information on dog exercise areas is available from Domestic Animal Services, ACT Government Shop fronts and libraries.

Dogs should not be exercised when tied to a motorised road vehicle.

6. Training

Obedience training is a major factor in sound dog management and when properly carried out, results in an improved relationship between the dogs, their keepers and the community. Obedience training is available by professional dog trainers and through obedience clubs (see Appendix). Other forms of training are also available.

Dog behaviour and safety is the responsibility of the owner. Training aids the owner to fulfil his/her obligations in managing the dog's behaviour. Positive reinforcement is the preferred training technique, that is, the use of rewards rather than punishment.

Under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*, the use of any devices which administer an electrical shock is prohibited.

7. Hygiene

Food and water bowls should be maintained in a clean condition.

Bowls should be of a texture and design which limits damage from chewing and restricts water spillage.

Bedding should be changed weekly or more often if soiled.

The dog's environment should be maintained in a clean state. Faeces should be removed at least every second day. Cleaning and disinfecting agents for enclosures and kennels should be chosen on the basis of their suitability, safety and effectiveness. Some cleaning and disinfecting products may be detrimental to an animal's health and should not be used.

Manufacturer's instructions for the use of cleaning, disinfecting and external parasite (eg fleas or worms) control agents should be strictly followed.

8. Health Care

8.1 Prevention of disease

It is essential for a dog's general health that a program of vaccination against canine distemper, parvovirus and infectious hepatitis be carried out. Vaccination against kennel cough is recommended for dogs that are likely to come into contact with large groups of dogs, ie, at training classes, dog shows or in boarding kennels.

Puppy vaccinations should begin at six-to-eight weeks. Further vaccinations will be required as advised by a veterinarian. Adult dogs should be vaccinated annually or as prescribed by a veterinarian.

An effective gastrointestinal worm control program with an appropriate medication should be carried out. Puppies should be treated each fortnight up to 12 weeks of age. Unweaned puppies have special needs and veterinary or registered breeders' advice should be sought. Dogs older than 12 weeks should be treated at three-monthly intervals. Dogs should not be fed raw offal due to the risk of hydatids, a potentially serious human disease. Dogs having access to carcasses should be treated with an effective compound against hydatid tapeworm as recommended by a veterinarian or breeder. Heartworm prevention and/or diagnosis should also be discussed with a veterinarian. Dogs should be weighed to ensure correct dosage for any given treatment.

Manufacturer's instructions should be followed for the use and suitable application of all medications and products associated with hygiene or health care.

External parasites, such as fleas, lice and ear mites, should be controlled.

If a new dog is introduced into a home or kennel where other dogs already reside, it is the responsibility of the new owner/carer to ensure that any new dog is free of contagious diseases and parasites.

Regular grooming should be carried out to maintain a healthy coat and skin and assists in detection of other problems. The amount of grooming required is dependent on the breed of the dog and the coat type. Commercial pet groomers may assist and advise on grooming issues.

8.2 Disease and ill health

It is the responsibility of the owner/carer to monitor a dog's health. The person observing the dog should note whether it:

- is eating normally;
- is drinking normally;
- is urinating and defecating properly;
- is behaving in its usual manner;
- is able to move about freely; and
- has normal skin and coat.

Veterinary advice should be sought if a dog is showing signs of ill health. The following symptoms may indicate ill health:

- runny nose, weepy or inflamed eyes;
- repeated sneezing or abnormal coughing;

- vomiting or diarrhoea;
- lameness or inability to stand or walk;
- bleeding or swelling of body parts;
- weight loss or lack of appetite;
- increase in appetite, body weight or consumption of water;
- apparent pain;
- fits or staggering;
- straining or inability to urinate or defecate;
- wounds, irritations or inflammations;
- significant or unusual hair loss;
- repeated scratching and shaking of the head; or
- bloody saliva or a rotten smell from the mouth.

9. Transport

The person or company responsible for transporting dogs should ensure that they are transported at all times in a way not to cause injury, escape or undue stress. Dogs should be transported in the shortest practicable time.

At all times during transport, dogs should be protected against extreme temperatures or rain. They should not be left in a parked car in warm weather or in a container that is exposed to direct sunlight. Short-nosed breeds of dog are especially susceptible to heat stress and should never be left unattended in a vehicle. Very old and very young animals, which are more sensitive than others to changes in temperature, may require provision of heating or cooling.

Loud or sudden noise which may distress animals should be avoided.

9.1 Cars

When being transported by vehicle, it is suitable for the dogs to travel in the car with the owner or handler or in an enclosed trailer that is insulated and properly ventilated. Ventilation must be sufficient to avoid dampness and draughts and minimise noxious odours. Dogs are not to be exposed to the vehicle's exhaust emissions. Faeces, urine and vomit should be removed promptly. Added safety can be achieved by installing a harness to restrain the dog.

9.2 Utility vehicles

The *Animal Welfare Act 1992* requires that dogs travelling on the back of utility vehicles and trucks be in a secured container or on a lead short enough to prevent their hind legs reaching either side of the truck bed. The length of the lead should not allow the dog to climb onto the cabin.

If a lead is used, a swivel at both ends of the lead prevents the lead from becoming tangled. Penalties apply for failure to appropriately secure a dog on the back of a utility or truck. Organisation like the RSPCA ACT can provide advice.

Dogs should not be carried on the back of utility vehicles or trucks during weather extremes unless there is provision for protection from the elements.

9.3 Cages and containers

Where cages or containers are used in transport, they should be constructed with a strong framework with joints made so that the animal cannot escape. The container should have no protuberance that could injure the dog during transport and it should provide adequate shelter. The interior walls of containers must be smooth, flat and not subject to splintering.

Where individual cages or containers are used, the whole of one end of the container should be open and covered with bars, weld mesh or smooth expanded metal securely attached to the container. Additional ventilation holes should be provided on all three of the remaining sides. The total ventilation area should provide a minimum of 16 per cent of the total surface area of the four sides. The vehicle or trailer in which the cage is being transported should be fitted with appropriate roof ventilation.

Access to the container should be by a sliding or hinged door adequately secured to prevent accidental opening and escape.

The container should be large enough to permit each dog contained therein to stand, turn around and lie down. The container should be easy to clean and disinfect.

The number of adult dogs in one container should not exceed two, and then only if the dogs are from the same household and are compatible. Sibling puppies may be transported together and the number should be related to the size and strength of the individual animals.

Unless travelling by private motor vehicle, a transport container should have both a label on the top and at least one of the four sides with the name, address and phone contact number of both the sender and receiver and a label stating LIVE ANIMALS.

Any vehicle or trailer especially designed or regularly used for transporting dogs should:

- protect the dogs from injury;
- have non-slip floors;
- provide easy access and operator safety;
- protect against extremes of temperature;
- protect against unauthorised release of animals;
- be easy to clean and disinfect;
- be properly ventilated avoiding dampness, draughts and exhaust emissions, and maintaining a comfortable temperature; and
- be supplied with clean, secured cages or containers appropriate to the size of the dog being transported.

These requirements are the same whether the vehicle is moving or stationary.

For interstate commercial transport, advice should be sought from the airline or railway. International transport should follow the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service standards or requirements.

9.4 Food, water and exercise during transport

A dog should not be kept in a vehicle, trailer or container for more than six hours without breaks. In extremes of temperature, breaks provided will need to be more

frequent. A break should consist of being let out of the vehicle, trailer or container for at least ten minutes and provided with drinking water. Water should be offered more frequently during warm weather. Food should be offered at least once every 24 hours.

9.5 Use of tranquillisers during transport

Tranquillising a dog for transport is not recommended. Tranquillisers are prescription drugs and may have severe side effects, such as overheating or hypothermia due to disruption of temperature regulatory systems. These drugs may only be prescribed by a veterinarian, and their use should be fully discussed with your veterinarian.

10. Breeding

Desexing is essential to reduce the number of neglected or abandoned dogs. Desexing may also improve behaviour and help to reduce reproductive health problems later in life. Desexing female dogs does not stunt their physical or emotional development.

Under the *Domestic Animals Act 2000*, all dogs older than six months of age must be desexed unless the owner holds a permit (issued by the Registrar of Domestic Animal Services) to keep a dog that is not desexed. However, this does not apply to dogs born before 21 June 2001. Anyone who sells a sexually entire dog more than six months old is required to inform the Registrar of Domestic Animal Services of the name and address of the buyer of the non-desexed dog.

Regardless of how a person acquires an animal, it is the responsibility of the keeper of the animal to ensure that the dog is desexed, or that an appropriate permit is obtained to keep a sexually entire dog. It is the responsibility of all dog owners to avoid unwanted pups being born through indiscriminate breeding, even when a licence to keep the dog entire is held or the dog is exempt because it was born before June 2001. If it is likely that suitable homes will not be found for all puppies, breeding should not occur, and the bitch preferably being desexed.

Persons planning to breed dogs should carefully assess their own lifestyles. It takes considerable time, energy and expense to produce, raise and find appropriate homes for every litter of pups.

Some female dogs can come into oestrus (“in season”/“on heat”) as early as six months of age. At first mating a bitch should be a minimum of 12 months of age, but preferably 18 months. A bitch should then only be mated once in any 12-month period.

Breed variation should be taken into account when deciding how often a bitch should be put into whelp. However, continuous whelping throughout the breeding life of a bitch is unacceptable. Prior to the mating, a bitch should be checked by a veterinarian for sound health.

The average gestation period for a dog is nine weeks. By 60 days from mating, owners should have provided a suitable area for the birth. The area should be clean, safe, quiet and protected from weather and other animals. If the dog experiences difficulty, veterinary advice should be sought.

Animals selected for breeding should have a balanced temperament, be physically healthy and genetically sound. The deliberate breeding of malformed or aggressive dogs is not acceptable.

Bitches in season should be kept separate from sexually mature male dogs to prevent unplanned pregnancies. Under the *Domestic Animals Act 2000*, bitches in season are not allowed to be in a public place.

Where dogs are allowed to breed, puppies should be health checked by a veterinarian prior to going to their new homes. Adequate worming and vaccination as recommended in Section 7.1 should be followed. It should be noted that vaccination does not afford immediate protection.

Puppies should not be permanently separated from their mother before eight weeks of age.

10.1 Socialisation of puppies

Where dogs are bred, puppies should have extensive visual, auditory and physical contact with humans from at least 10 days of age. From three weeks of age puppies should be allowed to explore a safe environment. They should not be allowed to contact unknown dogs. Puppies should be prepared for a range of experiences by being exposed to varying stimuli, such as loud noises (vacuum cleaners, cars), grooming, bathing, collars and leads etc.

The most critical stage of a puppy's development is socialisation, which occurs between 6-to-16 weeks of age. During this period dogs learn to trust and interact with humans, dogs and other animals. It is essential for the puppy's behavioural and emotional development that during this period these interactions occur. This interaction should be both safe and positive.

Safe contact means that the puppy is not exposed to potentially unvaccinated, unhealthy, or dangerous dogs. It also means that the puppy is not placed in dangerous situations. Positive contact means that the puppy's experiences with people, animals and situations should result in the puppy learning confidence, whilst not being scared, hurt or injured. Advice about socialisation can be obtained from animal behaviourists, veterinarians, dog trainers, pet stores and others as listed in the Appendix.

10.2 Tail docking and ear cropping

The ACT *Animal Welfare Act 1992* prohibits the docking of a dog's tail or cropping of ears. An exception exists that will allow a veterinarian to perform a tail-docking procedure at any stage of a dog's life for a therapeutic reason.

10.3 Change of ownership

New owners should be aware of the ongoing commitment of accepting responsibility for dog ownership, including time, emotional and financial commitments. Breeders are responsible for finding suitable homes for all puppies produced by their dogs. Puppies should remain with their mother until at least eight weeks of age. Breeders

and a potential owner should consider the suitability of the breed with the intended environment before arranging transfer of ownership.

Breeders or sellers should provide new owners with all relevant information about the care and welfare of the dog as well as their legal responsibilities. Further information about caring for a dog and all relevant ACT Government regulations can be obtained from:

- Department of Territory and Municipal Services www.tams.act.gov.au
- RSPCA-ACT www.rspca-act.org.au
- Petcare Information and Advisory Service Australia Pty Ltd (PIAS) www.petnet.com.au.

Under the *Domestic Animals Act 2000*, Domestic Animal Services must be notified of a change of ownership.

11. Unwanted Dogs

It is recognised that there will be times when a person(s) will be unable to keep and/or care for their dog(s) any longer. These owners are encouraged to make every effort to pass their dog(s) on to a new owner as a companion animal either privately or through an organisation such as the RSPCA ACT or the ACT Canine Association. Domestic Animal Services, ACT dog clubs and veterinarians may also be of assistance.

Persons wishing to dispose of an unowned stray dog or puppy on their property should contact the RSPCA ACT or Domestic Animal Services.

When a dog cannot be re-homed, it may be necessary to have it euthanased by a veterinary surgeon. It is an offence under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* to abandon or neglect an animal.

12. Lost Dogs

Organisations which assist in reuniting lost dogs with their owners include the RSPCA ACT, the ACT Canine Association, Domestic Animal Services (see Appendix 1), and private veterinarians in the area. The various media outlets also assist owners of lost pets by making public announcements.

Owners should personally visit the Domestic Animal Services animal shelter and the RSPCA ACT refuge to avoid potential misidentification over the telephone.

Other methods for reuniting lost dogs include personal advertising in the media, veterinary clinics, dog clubs and public bulletin boards.

Lost dogs may be held by a temporary carer and can turn up after some time. Often the carer is also searching for clues about the owner before handing the dog over to the authorities. It is advisable to contact Domestic Animal Services and the RSPCA ACT every three-to-four days for at least several weeks. Dogs are held by the RSPCA ACT for seven days and then offered for sale. Dogs at the Domestic Animal Services animal shelter are held for seven working days.

Appendix

Relevant contact addresses –

Domestic Animal Services

PO Box 1038
TUGGERANONG ACT 2901
Telephone: 132281

Government Animal Shelter

Mugga Lane
Symonston
www.domesticanimals.act.gov.au

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)

RSPCA (ACT) Inc
PO Box 3082
WESTON ACT 2611
telephone: 1300 477722
www.rspca-act.org.au

Shelter
12 Kirkpatrick St
Weston
Closed on public holidays

ACT Canine Association

EPIC Federal Highway
Mitchell
telephone: (02) 6241 4404
fax: (02) 62411 1129
Email: admin@dogsact.org.au

ACT Companion Dog Club

Jerrabomberra Avenue
Narrabundah
telephone: 10.00am to 1.00pm (02) 6295 7764

ACT German Shepherd Dog Association Inc

Flemington Road
Mitchell
telephone: (02) 6242 4541

Belconnen Dog Obedience Club Inc

Darling Street
Mitchell
telephone: (02) 6241 7999

Tuggeranong Dog Training Club

Rowland Rees Cres
Greenway
telephone: (02) 6293 4122