



AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

ANIMAL WELFARE ACT 1992

NO. 97 OF 1995

CODE OF PRACTICE - APPROVAL

Under section 22 of the Animal Welfare Act 1992, I approve the document entitled the **Code of Practice for the Handling of Companion Animals in Pounds and Shelters in the ACT** as a Code of Practice.

Date: *30th June, 1995.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Humphries', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

GARY HUMPHRIES
Minister for the Environment, Land and Planning

**CODE OF PRACTICE
FOR THE HANDLING OF COMPANION ANIMALS
IN POUNDS AND SHELTERS IN THE A.C.T.**

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1. Introduction

1.1 Aims and Objectives

This Code of Practice for the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) has been prepared from a consideration of the welfare of animals housed in all pounds and shelters, with emphasis on dogs and cats. This Code does not apply to wildlife shelters.

The objective of the Code is to ensure that all such animals receive proper treatment consistent with the need to maintain their comfort, security and well being at all times. This includes ensuring that all reasonable action is taken to reunite animals with their owners, or where relocation occurs, to place animals in safe and caring permanent homes. In addition, this Code is aimed at increasing public confidence in pounds and shelters and promoting responsible pet ownership.

General guidelines on the minimum standards of accommodation, management and care that are appropriate to the physical and behavioural needs of such animals are provided.

Surveillance requirements and operational procedures are also set down for both management and staff; they are designed to ensure that individual animals receive a high level of attention.

Impounded animals have certain basic requirements:

- * accommodation and equipment designed to suit their anatomy and behavioural patterns;
- * protection from the elements and provision of comfortable conditions of temperature, ventilation and lighting;
- * protection from other pound animals;
- * space enough to move, stretch, rest and exercise;
- * feed and water to provide essential nutrients; and
- * protection from disease, parasites and vermin.

The provision of these requirements should be accompanied by regular surveillance to enable early detection of problems. This Code is based on established experience and scientific knowledge, but may need to be varied in the light of new knowledge.

In the ACT the management of animals in pounds and shelters is covered by two main Acts:

- * *Animal Welfare Act 1992*; and
- * *Dog Control Act 1975*.

1.2 Definitions

In this Code , unless the contrary appears:

- * **'air-conditioning'** means either refrigerated or evaporative cooling;
- * **'Animal Attendant'** means a person responsible to the Manager and may include an authorised person appointed by the ACT Government;
- * **'Manager'** means the person responsible for the operation of a pound or shelter;
- * **'pounds and shelters'** means any facility providing accommodation for impounded, lost, sick or abandoned animals;
- * **'vehicle'** means any motor vehicle including caravans and trailers used by pound/shelter staff to transport an animal.

2. Management

2.1 Responsibilities of the Manager

The Manager, being the person nominated by the relevant body as being responsible for all activities at the establishment, is responsible for:

- * **Provision of accommodation and equipment which suits the physical and behavioural requirements of the animals held;**
- * **Provision of protection for animals, as necessary, from adverse natural or artificial environmental conditions, other animals and interference by humans;**
- * **Provision of sufficient space for animals to stand, move around freely, stretch fully, rest and exercise;**
- * **Provision of appropriate and sufficient food and drinkable water to maintain good health;**
- * **Protection of animals from disease, internal and external parasites, distress and injury;**
- * **Provision of prompt appropriate treatment in cases of disease or injury;**
- * **Maintenance of hygiene of the premises and health of the animals held;**
- * **Supervision of daily feeding, watering and inspection of animals adequate to ensure their welfare;**
- * **Supervision of staff, including volunteers, whether working full or part-time and whether or not working for fee or reward;**
- * **Collation and maintenance of relevant records;**
- * **Ensuring that the establishment's operating hours and conditions are displayed or made known to pet owners and others; and**

- * Ensuring that pound/shelter staff take all reasonable steps to locate an animal's owner or else to place the animal in a new home.

2.2 Veterinarian

Every animal pound or shelter should have an arrangement with sufficient registered veterinarians to be on call and responsible for the health and treatment of the animals, and in particular for the following tasks:

- * advice on housing and hygiene procedures;
- * examination of animals to assess suitability for rehousing;
- * recognition of infectious and zoonotic diseases;
- * first-aid and other animal treatments;
- * control of disease including vaccination and parasite control procedures; and
- * humane euthanasia.

2.3 Animal Attendants

Animal pounds and shelters should engage sufficient trained or experienced personnel for the handling and management of animals.

Animal attendants should be responsible for the following tasks:

- * daily feeding and watering of all animals;
- * cleaning cages;
- * inspection of all animals and reporting of sick animals and those with behavioural problems either to the manager or the veterinarian;
- * exercise of animals; and
- * reuniting animals with their owner where possible.

All pound and shelter staff should be aware of their responsibilities, and of ACT legislation and Government policies related to animal welfare and dog control.

Staff should also be aware that there are a small number of diseases transmissible from animals to humans, and take simple hygiene precautions after handling any animal. An annual serological test for zoonotic diseases for all employees of the pound or shelter should be undertaken.

3. Housing

3.1 General

Animal pound and shelter establishments should be located:

- * away from sources of noise or pollution that could cause injury or stress to animals; and

- * out of areas that are prone to flooding and/or bushfires.

Animal pound and shelter sites should have an adequate water supply and appropriate waste disposal systems.

The specifications given below are generally applicable. However, in certain cases, it may be more appropriate for some animals to be housed in special areas due to injury, behavioural needs, illness or age.

Unless otherwise indicated, individual rather than group housing is preferred in order to prevent and control spread of disease and parasites.

3.2 Construction

Where dog kennels (sleeping area and run) are constructed outdoors they should provide adequate protection from rain and wind, and provide adequate shade. Outdoor kennels should be partially enclosed to provide sheltered sleeping areas.

Where kennels are constructed indoors, temperature, humidity and ventilation should be appropriate to the animals' needs.

Kennels may be separated by either solid partitions, which help reduce noise, or by single, preferably double, galvanised chain wire dividers. Advice should be sought on suitable non-combustible construction materials for reducing noise.

The internal surfaces of the external walls of catteries and kennels should be constructed of solid, washable materials.

Catteries and kennels should be cleanable and well-drained. Sealed concrete is ideal for dogs. A strictly limited number of bricked or grassed areas are acceptable for the special behavioural needs of some dogs.

3.3 Size

Animal housing areas, whether for single or group housing, should provide at least enough space for each animal held to feed, sleep, sit, stand, lie with limbs extended, stretch and move about.

3.3.1 Cats

Cats may be housed either in banks of cages which prevent direct contact or in walk-in modules that include a sleeping compartment and an exercise area. Where the cat is held for more than 2 weeks, the minimum size should be:

Minimum volume	0.6 m ³
Minimum floor area	0.7 m ²
Minimum distance in any direction	0.6 m

NOTE: It will not be acceptable for a cage to have a floor area of 0.7 m² and a height of 0.6 m, as the volume would then only be 0.4 m³.

Where the cat is held for less than 2 weeks, the cages should exceed the following specifications:

Minimum volume	0.35 m ³
Minimum floor area	0.70 m ²
Minimum height	0.45 m

NOTE: It will not be acceptable for a cage to have a floor area of 0.7 m² and a height of 0.45 m, as the volume would then only be 0.315 m³.

Where there is common cat accommodation for selected animals, the minimum floor area available for sleeping should be 0.4 m² per cat.

3.3.2 Dogs

Kennels for dogs, including sleeping quarters and runs, should have a run area 4.0 m² with a minimum dimension (width/length) of 1.0 m, plus 0.5 m² per additional dog (maximum 3 dogs).

Dog kennels should be high enough to permit staff to walk right to the back of the kennel.

3.3.3 Other animals

Refer to 6.8 of this Code.

3.4 Drainage

Floors of animal housing should be designed to facilitate cleaning and disinfecting.

Where a collection drain is provided, it should be fitted with fine mesh wire baskets to trap hair and waste, and be cleaned daily.

3.5 Temperature

Animals should be protected from the elements and extremes of temperature, appropriate to their needs.

Very old and very young animals which are more sensitive than others to changes in temperature may require provision of heating or cooling.

3.6 Noise

Use of deterrent collars is not permitted, under the ACT *Animal Welfare Act 1992*.

Cats and other animals should be housed away from dogs as they may be disturbed by barking.

3.7 Lighting

Lighting should be as close as possible, in duration and intensity, to natural conditions.

Sunlight is the preferred means of lighting, provided shaded areas are available.

Artificial light should be provided, where needed, to allow animal housing areas to be thoroughly cleaned and animals checked.

3.8 Ventilation

Ventilation should be adequate to keep animal housing areas free of dampness, noxious odours and draughts.

3.9 Bedding

All kennels should be provided with raised wooden sleeping boards, dog houses or trampoline-style beds.

Cats should be provided with bedding. New or freshly cleaned and disinfected bedding should be provided to each animal on arrival.

Any bedding provided for animals should be changed frequently and kept clean and dry.

3.10 Security

Buildings for animal housing should be securely lockable.

Each individual kennel, cat cage, module or colony should be fitted with a secure closing device that cannot be opened by the animals held.

Any security method used should allow for ready access to animals and ready exit of staff and animals from the premises in the event of an emergency.

Where dogs are held, a double gated security barrier should be constructed to prevent escape of animals or entry of unauthorised persons. The kennel compound wall may form part of the security barrier. The security barrier should be fitted with at least one self-closing lockable gate.

4. Transport

4.1 Animal Carers' Responsibilities

The animal carer of an animal pound or shelter vehicle is responsible for the following tasks:

- * Initial medical assessment and arranging veterinary treatment, if necessary, as soon as possible;
- * The care and welfare of all animals during transport until admitted to the pound or shelter;

- * Hygiene and cleanliness of the vehicle; and
- * Maintaining the vehicle so that it conforms with the minimum standards for animal transport vehicles as prescribed in this Code.

Animals should be transported in the minimum time practicable.

Cats should be placed in secure carrying cages, while dogs should be placed in individual compartments in the vehicle or separated and securely tethered.

4.2 Vehicles

Vehicles used for the collection and transport of animals should have the following features:

- * facilities for the separation of the animals;
- * no protrusions or sharp edges in the framework, doors, partitions or any other items;
- * a design that is both escape proof and prevents the protrusion of heads and/or limbs of the smallest animal carried;
- * floors which are strong enough to bear the weight of the animals being transported and have a non-slip surface to minimise the likelihood of injury;
- * adequate ventilation of vehicles both when stationary and in motion;
- * non-absorbent materials of a design that allows for effective cleaning and disinfection; and
- * vehicles should provide animals being transported with protection from the elements.

Vehicles should be disinfected as appropriate, at least on a daily basis after use to prevent transmission of disease. Mats in vehicles, if used, should be cleaned at the end of each day.

5 Impoundment

5.1 Capture

Capture methods should be as humane as possible and used only by trained persons, with minimum risk to operators, bystanders and animals. The behaviour of the species concerned should be taken into account when deciding on the method to be used.

5.2 Admission

Four types of animal are likely to be admitted to a pound or shelter:

- * Stray animals - where the animal is not identified and the owner is unknown;
- * Roaming animals - where the animal is identified and the owner is to be contacted;

- * Owned animals - where the owner presents the animal for rehousing or euthanasia;
- * Feral or semi-wild animals - unlikely ever to have been owned.

Every animal admitted to a pound or shelter should be examined by an experienced attendant, who should be responsible for classifying the animals according to its health:

- * healthy animals - to be held in pens;
- * moderately or slightly injured animals - to be given prompt first-aid;
- * severely injured animals, animals with an infectious disease or parasite infestation, unweaned animals, or wild or vicious animals; or
- * any animal showing one or more of the following signs:
 - * runny nose, runny or inflamed eyes;
 - * repeated sneezing;
 - * coughing;
 - * vomiting;
 - * severe diarrhoea, especially if bloodstained;
 - * lameness;
 - * inability to stand or walk;
 - * bleeding or swelling of body parts (other than the vulva of bitches on heat);
 - * significant weight loss or inappetance (not eating);
 - * apparent pain;
 - * fits or staggering;
 - * bloating of abdomen;
 - * inability to urinate or defecate; and/or
 - * significant wounds, inflammations or irritations.

Veterinary advice about animals other than healthy ones should be sought by the manager or his or her nominee.

5.3 Identification

Each animal should be individually identified, preferably by placing a numbered disc on the collar or alternatively by labelling the kennel where the animal is placed.

Each animal's entry to the pound or shelter should be noted and the following information recorded promptly:

- * name of impounding officer with date, time, reason for and place of collection;

OR

name of individual, address and phone number of person presenting the animal with explanation for the presentation, date and time, and place of collection;

- * description of the animal, including:
 - * species (cat/dog/etc.);
 - * breed or type (reference to a breed handbook such as *The Observer Book of Dogs* or *The MacDonald's Encyclopaedia of Dogs* is recommended);
 - * colour;
 - * sex;
 - * condition on arrival; and
 - * details of any identification on the animal (e.g. electronic identification number, registration disc, name tag, tattoo, marking on the inside of the collar).

Every effort should be made to locate and notify the owner of animals other than those surrendered.

If the animal has been surrendered details should be provided by the owner on the animal's:

- * age;
- * temperament;
- * health status;
- * vaccination status;
- * desexing details; and
- * reason for surrender.

5.4 Quarantine

An animal with any symptoms of a disease or internal/external parasites should be separated on arrival at the pound or shelter and held in an individual pen or cage (refer to Section 6.2 Health).

Veterinary examination is necessary to determine whether an animal should be treated or euthanased.

An animal can be released from the quarantine only after clinical examination by a veterinary surgeon.

6. Daily Care

6.1 Diet

The following should be used as a guide for feeding dogs:

Recommended Daily Intake for Normal Adult Dogs

Body Weight of Dog (kg)	Dry Dog Food cups/dog	OR	
		450g/can cans/dog	Canned Dog Food 700g/can cans/dog
3	0.75	0.50	
5	1.00	0.75	
10	2.00	1.25	
15	2.50	1.75	1.00
20	3.25	2.00	1.25
25	3.75	2.50	1.25
30	4.00	2.75	1.75
40	5.00	3.50	2.00
50	6.00	4.00	2.50

Note Larger pelleted dry foods may not be suitable as a complete diet for puppies or very small dogs. Smaller pellets or softer food should be substituted.

The following should be used as a guide for feeding cats:

Recommended Daily Intake for Normal Cats

Body Weight of cat (kg)	Age (weeks)	Canned cat food 425g/can cans/cat
0.5 - 1.0	10	0.25 - 0.50
1.0 - 2.0	20	0.30 - 0.60
1.5 - 3.0	30	0.30 - 0.65
2.0 - 4.0	40	0.40 - 0.70
3.0 - 5.0	Adult	0.40 - 0.80

Note: a variety of canned foods should be supplied. Fish or fresh meat may tempt fussy eaters.

dry food may be supplied on an ad lib basis in addition to canned or fresh meat unless contraindicated.

whole milk should not generally be offered as it may cause diarrhoea.

Pregnant and lactating animals require approximately twice the amount of food specified in the above tables.

Adult dogs and cats should be fed daily. Geriatric animals, pregnant and lactating animals should be fed twice daily. Puppies and kittens up to 4 months of age should be fed three to four times a day, then twice daily up to nine months of age.

Food should be prepared hygienically in a separate kitchen area. It should be stored appropriately, i.e. dry food kept in a rodent-free place and fresh meat and opened cans kept refrigerated.

Food should be presented in appropriate containers. They should be preferably nonchewable and nonspillable. They should also be readily accessible and cleaned at least daily.

Uneaten food should be removed and disposed of daily so that it does not spoil or attract vermin.

Cats should be specially monitored after admission to check that they are eating.

6.2 Health

Prevention and control of disease, including internal and external parasites, is paramount. Each animal shall be checked at least once daily to monitor its health and comfort. The person checking animals should observe whether each animal:

- * is eating normally;
- * is drinking normally;
- * is defecating normally;
- * is urinating normally;
- * is behaving normally;
- * is of normal appearance;
- * is able to move about freely; and
- * has a normal coat.

Any changes in health status should be reported promptly to the pound or shelter manager. Also refer to Section 5.4 Quarantine.

6.3 Cleaning and Disinfection

Animal housing and exercise areas should be kept clean so that the comfort of animals can be maintained and disease controlled.

Faeces should be removed at least once daily from kennels and exercise areas. Kennels should also be hosed at least once daily.

Kennels should be disinfected at least three times each week, before new dogs are introduced, and after an outbreak of infectious disease.

Cat housing should be cleaned daily with disinfectant, before new cats are introduced, and after an outbreak of infectious disease.

Cleaning and disinfecting agents should be chosen on the basis of their suitability, safety and effectiveness. Phenols should not be used where cats are kept because they are particularly toxic to cats. Manufacturer's instructions for the use of these agents should be followed, and clearly displayed for all staff to follow, since too dilute a solution may be ineffective and too concentrated a solution may be toxic to animals.

6.4 Vermin Control

Efforts should be made to effectively control vermin, including flies, mosquitoes and wild rodents.

Chemicals used for vermin control should be registered under relevant Commonwealth and ACT agriculture and veterinary chemicals legislation, and used only in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

Because some pesticides are toxic to dogs and cats they should only be used in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

6.5 Litter Trays

Cats should be provided with litter trays.

Sufficient suitable litter material, such as commercial cat litter, sawdust or shredded paper, is to be provided. Faeces should be removed at least daily; litter trays are to be cleaned daily and disinfected prior to use by new animals.

6.6 Waste Disposal

Waste disposal should be in accordance with the requirements of ACT Government authorities.

Faeces, used litter and uneaten food should be placed in sealed containers for disposal. Use of trade waste service for collection and disposal of wastes is preferable. Wastes should not be incinerated.

6.7 Physiological Needs of Animals in Pounds and Shelters

Dogs should have enough room to walk around and let them stretch their limbs.

The kennel area should be big enough to allow dogs to have a separate area to urinate and defecate.

Specific animals may not be suitable to be exercised. Very active or old dogs may require more or less exercise than other dogs.

Dogs should not be walked on roads without management approval but confined within the premises for safety reasons.

Cats should have sufficient room to enable them to stretch and to move about freely. Cats should be checked daily for correct mobility.

6.8 Other Animals

6.8.1 Birds

Pounds and shelters receiving birds should provide cages meeting the specifications described in the *Code of Practice for the Welfare of Captive Birds in the ACT*. Dietary and other welfare considerations are also addressed in that Code.

6.8.2 Farm Animals

Pounds and shelters receiving farm animals should provide treatment consistent with that described in the various Codes of Practice for domesticated livestock.

6.8.3 Other Animals

Several sources contain information on the care of animals which are not included in this Code. The *Canadian Council on Animal Care's Guide to the Use and Care of Experimental Animals* or the *UFAW Handbook for the Care and Management of Laboratory Animals* include provisions for housing and nutrition of many species. Standards for pet animals such as rabbits and mice are produced by ACT Veterinary Services.

7. Release to Owner/Adoption

The managers of pounds and shelters should have a policy for dealing with collected animals, which gives owners a reasonable opportunity to reclaim their animals. The policy should include a period of time during which an animal will be kept after collection or presentation.

7.1 Assessment for release

Prior to release, all dogs should be assessed for aggression.

7.2 New Owners

New owners should be informed about feeding, housing and responsible pet ownership and encouraged to report any problems with a new pet and to seek advice about the problem from a registered veterinarian.

7.3 Use for Scientific Purposes

It is the policy of the ACT Government to not provide live animals from pounds and shelters for scientific purposes. Any proposed use of body parts from euthanased animals from pounds and shelters should have the prior approval of the ACT Government.

7.4 Desexing

All cats and dogs sold from a pound or shelter should be desexed or sold with a prepaid desexing voucher, except where in the opinion of a qualified veterinary surgeon desexing could put the animal at risk.

7.5 Vaccination

Every animal should be examined by a veterinary surgeon prior to sale. A vaccination program should be implemented for all dogs and cats being placed in new homes by the pound or shelter which covers the following diseases:

- * dogs - canine distemper, infectious canine hepatitis, canine parvo-virus.
- * cats - infectious feline enteritis.

A new owner should be given a vaccination certificate for the animal.

7.6 Public Access

The public should have reasonable access to all pounds and shelters.

8. Euthanasia

Animals may be euthanased because of disease, injury, temperament, age, unsuitability for rehousing or in accordance with the *Dog Control Act 1975*.

The preferred method of euthanasia is intravenous barbiturate overdose, carried out by a registered veterinarian.

In extreme cases, very wild or aggressive animals may require euthanasia by gunshot.

Euthanasia should be performed in an area that is separated from animal accommodation at the pound or shelter and should not be carried out in view of any other animals.

After euthanasia, the bodies should be placed in disposal bags, either individually for large animals, or two to three for smaller animals. The bags should then be transported to the local infill site where they are placed in the area set aside for dead animals, to be covered with dirt by the tip operators.