

The Code of Practice for the Operation of Breeding and Rearing Businesses (Revision 1)

Facility operations factsheet

Following extensive public consultation, the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security has released the revised Code of Practice for the Operation of Breeding and Rearing Businesses (Revision 1), which will commence on 11 April 2014. The Revised Code sets minimum welfare standards for dogs and cats in breeding and rearing establishments. This factsheet covers operations of the business.

What are the major differences between the Revised Code and the original Code?

The Revised Code is considerably different from the original code. The Revised Code covers 6 different business types. It offers several new sections including:

- definitions
- health management
- breeding management
- socialisation, enrichment and handling
- euthanasia
- retirement
- vehicle management and transport of animals.

In addition, the Revised Code provides a strong stance on:

- record keeping to ensure traceability and consumer protection; and to aid in the management of animal health & welfare
- breeding limits to enable dogs to be easily rehomed
- minimum staffing levels - to ensure minimum standards of care and animal welfare
- minimum requirements for exercise, enrichment, socialisation and handling - in recognition that these elements influence the suitability of animals as pets/working dogs and provide innumerable animal welfare benefits
- veterinary care - every dog and cat will see a vet at least once per year and prior to sale; and no dog or cat will be bred without assurances from a veterinarian that they are physically sound to be bred.

The Revised Code offers significant improvements for animal management and animal welfare protection, compared with the previous code, by ensuring a holistic approach to health care and breeding management, and ensuring every animal is treated as an individual.

Why is a staff:animal ratio required?

The Victorian community has strongly expressed their concern about understaffed breeding businesses being unable to maintain good breeding practices and minimum standards of animal welfare.

Several other mandatory codes of practice under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* require a minimum staff:animal ratio.

The decision to include a staff:animal ratio was three-fold:

1. to improve the minimum standard of care and to better ensure animal welfare;
2. to meet community expectations with respect to operation of breeding businesses; and
3. to bring the Revised Code into line with other mandatory codes under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

The Code - Facilities operations factsheet

Why are business hours 8 per day and not 12?

The National Employment Standards (NES) provide maximum working hours of 38 hours per week for full-time employees. There are provisions in the NES which allow for hours to be averaged over a period. For part-time and casual employees, weekly hours can't be more than the employee's ordinary hours, or 38 hours (whichever is less). However, an employee can be asked to work reasonable additional hours (reference: <http://www.business.vic.gov.au>).

Therefore, the definition of business hours cannot be greater than 8 per day to meet the NES. However, breeding businesses can and should employ staff on rosters to ensure that they have sufficient staff to cover all the animal care requirements set out in the code, including feeding periods no more than 12 hours apart.

What is the health management plan?

The health management plan under the Revised Code is essentially a complete description of the operation of a breeding or rearing business. It provides protocols and standard operating procedures for the management of, and health care within, a facility.

Why have the record keeping requirements been increased so substantially?

As part of the Victorian Government's election commitment to crack down on illegal and rogue puppy farms, they promised to improve traceability of puppies and kittens sold across Victoria and to provide consumers with better assurances that the animals they were purchasing were produced ethically.

Record keeping is an essential part of traceability and breeding management that promotes animal welfare. Comprehensive record keeping also ensures businesses adhere to the requirements of the Revised Code by providing authorised officers with a starting point for auditing businesses.

I built my pens based on the original code, how long will I have to change my facilities/build exercise yards?

The Minister for Agriculture and Food Security has written to local government directing them to allow the conditional registration of Breeding Domestic Animal Businesses who do not meet the minimum exercise facility requirements. The conditions on registration will require breeders to undertake a certain level of capital works, depending on the business, within the registration year before they will be able to re-register the following year. However, businesses undertaking capital works will still have to meet minimum exercise requirements for their dogs.

Will any training be provided?

The online breeder training course will be available when the Revised Code is released on www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets. As part of the tool kit being prepared for breeders, the Department has commissioned and developed this FREE training course for breeders and their staff. This training course meets the anticipated minimum educational requirements to be set out in the Revised Code.

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