



# Queensland Code of Practice for **Pet Shops**

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry seeks to maximise the economic potential of Queensland's primary industries on a sustainable basis.

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# 1. Preface

The Queensland Government is working to reduce the number of unwanted cats and dogs being euthanased each year in Queensland. More than half the cats submitted to pounds and welfare agencies annually are euthanased, mainly because there are too many cats for available homes. The rates for surrender and euthanasia of dogs are lower, but still cause distress to agencies and the community. Unsuitability is another factor that leads to euthanasia.

One of the key components to addressing this problem in 2008 is the development of a Queensland Code of Practice for Pet Shops.

Responsible retailing of dogs and cats, consistent with the provisions of the code of practice, can reduce the risk of pets either becoming unwanted or breeding unwanted litters. The code of practice encourages retailers to ensure that purchasers take home a pet that is healthy, suitable to their current and anticipated lifestyle and will not contribute to overpopulation. Retailers can also ensure that the purchasers are fully informed regarding the needs of their pet, their community obligations and regulatory requirements—including the control of breeding, appropriate management of behaviour—and identification and registration (as applicable).

The best means of pet retailers reducing the risks of unwanted cats and dogs are to ensure that all cats and all dogs are desexed prior to attaining breeding age, that all cats and all dogs are microchipped, and that purchasers are properly informed on responsible pet ownership. In addition, stock should be sourced only from breeders who operate at acceptable standards.

The implementation of the Queensland Code of Practice for Pet Shops complements other initiatives aimed at the management of unwanted cats and dogs and those aimed at improving the general welfare of Queensland's cats and dogs.

This Queensland Code of Practice for Pet Shops also provides advice on accepted standards for managing other animal species for sale at pet shops.

By adhering to the code, people involved in the pet shop industry will demonstrate to the general community their concern for the welfare of animals in their care.

The code will be revised to take account of advances in the understanding of animal physiology and behaviour, technological changes, changing industry standards and the community's attitudes and expectations about the welfare and management of animals.

Compliance with the code does not remove the need to abide by the requirements of any other laws and regulations, such as duty of care obligations under the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001, local government laws and environmental protection legislation.

The code has been prepared by the Queensland Government in consultation with the South East Queensland Regional Animal Management Group, Pet Industry Association of Australia, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Qld), Animal Welfare League (Qld), Australian Veterinary Association (Qld Division) and Canine Control Council (Qld). The code is endorsed by the Queensland Companion Animal Management Group.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1. This code sets standards for the care and management of animals kept for sale in pet shops.
- 2.2. This code applies to the welfare of all species sold as companion animals.
- 2.3. The keeping of animals for sale in pet shops presents opportunities, risks and responsibilities. These should all be assessed objectively prior to a decision to sell live animals from a pet shop.
- 2.4. A pet shop is defined as a retail outlet where a companion animal is offered for sale for commercial purposes. The shop may be a self-contained section of a larger business (such as a department store, produce store, or market). Re-homing services of animal pounds and shelters are not included in this definition of a pet shop.

## 3. Responsibilities

- 3.1. The proprietor/manager has the responsibility of providing for the needs of animals under the control and ownership of the business. Specifically, the manager of a pet shop is responsible for:
  - (a) the provision of accommodation and equipment that suits the physical, behavioural and social requirements of the animals kept
  - (b) the protection of animals from people, other animals or adverse environmental conditions
  - (c) the provision of sufficient space for animals to rest, stand, stretch, swim, fly or move about freely as appropriate to the species
  - (d) the provision of sufficient quantities of appropriate feed and water to maintain good health
  - (e) the protection of animals from disease, distress and injury
  - (f) the provision of prompt veterinary or other appropriate treatment to animals in the case of illness or injury
  - (g) the maintenance of hygienic premises and the health of the animals
  - (h) the supervision of daily feeding, watering and inspection of animals to ensure their wellbeing
  - (i) the recruitment, induction, training, competency, performance and supervision of all pet shop staff
  - (j) the collation and maintenance of appropriate records
  - (k) sourcing animals from breeders who meet appropriate standards such as those required in accreditation criteria of recognised breed societies or those standards required for local government breeder's permits
  - (l) ensuring that purchasers are fully informed of their responsibilities for the care and welfare of the particular animal they purchase, and as much as possible, are prepared with appropriate facilities and equipment.
- 3.2. Animal attendants are responsible for:
  - (a) attending to the daily husbandry requirements of all animals, as appropriate to the species
  - (b) monitoring for sick or injured animals and reporting to the manager.

## 4. Training and competencies

- 4.1. All staff should be aware of their responsibilities toward animals and be competent to carry these out. Formal training, such as a technical college qualification in animal care, is encouraged.
- 4.2. Members of staff should be knowledgeable and experienced—or be under the direct supervision of a person who is knowledgeable, experienced and competent—in the care of each animal species kept. Specifically, competency of staff should include good knowledge of the different diets, housing and accessories, as well as knowledge of the signs of common diseases, treatments and medications, for the animal species under their control.
- 4.3. The manager and staff should be trained and practised in informing customers of their responsibilities for the care of the animals they are selling and, as much as possible, should ensure they are prepared with appropriate supplies and equipment necessary for the animals' safety and wellbeing.
- 4.4. Staff should be selected on the basis of attitude, knowledge and empathy with animals.
- 4.5. The manager and staff should be trained and practised in the emergency evacuation of animals.
- 4.6. Written policies and procedures should be accessible to all staff and should be part of a staff induction program.

## 5. Animal housing

- 5.1. Location
  - (a) Pet shops should be located away from sources of excessive noise or pollution that could stress or injure animals.
  - (b) Enclosures which hold animals that may be stressed easily should be located away from areas of high traffic.
- 5.2. Construction
  - (a) Animal enclosures should be designed and maintained to minimise the risk of injury or disease and to provide comfort for the animal.
  - (b) Animal enclosures should protect animals from extremes of weather.
  - (c) Animal enclosures should be designed for ease of cleaning, feeding, watering and the regular inspection of animals.
  - (d) All solid surfaces of animal enclosures should be impervious or painted to facilitate cleaning and disinfection. Only non-toxic paint should be used in animal enclosures.
- 5.3. Cage sizes
  - (a) Animals kept either in groups or individual confinement should have space to feed, sleep, sit, stand, lie with limbs extended, stretch and move about according to the behavioural needs of the species.
  - (b) Special provision should be made to prevent the young of any species being overlain.
- 5.4. Separation of species
  - (a) Different species should be housed separately at all times, except for compatible bird or fish species or when inter-species mixing of animals is beneficial (e.g. a single puppy with a single kitten to prevent loneliness).
  - (b) Where different species are housed in adjoining cages, a solid opaque partition should separate the cages.

### 5.5. Temperature

- (a) Environmental temperature should be controlled to minimise distress to animals. Heating or cooling should be provided for young animals as necessary.
- (b) Animal enclosures should have adequate shade when exposed to sunlight, especially through glass windows.
- (c) Animal enclosures should be free from draughts in cold weather.

### 5.6. Noise

- (a) Loud or sudden noise that may distress animals should be avoided.

### 5.7. Lighting

- (a) The duration and intensity of internal lighting should be as close as possible to natural conditions.
- (b) Lighting should be sufficient to enable thorough inspection of animals.
- (c) Lights should not generate excessive heat.
- (d) Animal enclosures should be protected from excessive light at night, when shop lights should be subdued, turned off or used with proper light protection.

### 5.8. Ventilation

- (a) Ventilation should be sufficient to minimise noxious odours, but not excessive so as to cause dampness and draughts.

### 5.9. Security

- (a) Premises should be secure. Outside animal enclosures should be fitted with secure doors or gates.
- (b) All animal enclosures should be securely fastened or locked to prevent the escape of animals and the interference or theft of animals by unauthorised people.
- (c) All external openings should be screened to prevent escape of animals and minimise the entry of insects.
- (d) Every reasonable effort should be made to recover lost or escaped animals.
- (e) An emergency plan, including procedures for evacuation of animals, should be placed prominently on the premises and understood by all staff.
- (f) The proprietor should provide the local RSPCA/police with up-to-date emergency contact details, including a nominated veterinarian.

## 6. Hygiene

### 6.1. Zoonoses

- (a) Some animal species harbour disease-causing organisms that can be transmitted to humans (zoonoses).
- (b) All staff should be aware of zoonotic risk and maintain high standards of personal hygiene.
- (c) Adequate hand washing facilities should be available and used routinely after handling animals.

### 6.2. Cleaning and disinfection

- (a) Animal enclosures, their surrounds and equipment should be kept clean to assist with disease prevention and to ensure the wellbeing of animals.
- (b) Animal enclosures should be separated by a space and/or solid walls, and people and equipment moving from one enclosure to another should be cleaned to minimise the risk of cross-infection.
- (c) Before new animals are introduced to vacated enclosures, the enclosures should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- (d) Cleaning and disinfection chemicals and materials should be chosen and used on the basis of their suitability, safety and effectiveness, and only in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions.
- (e) It is important that all surfaces and utensils be thoroughly rinsed after disinfecting to avoid poisoning.
- (f) Staff should wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling any animal or contaminated animal equipment.
- (g) When infectious disease is suspected, hands, enclosures and equipment should be disinfected.

## 7. Animal management

### 6.3. Pest control

- (a) Pest prevention and control measures should be implemented.
- (b) Feed storage facilities should be vermin-proof, insect-proof and waterproof.
- (c) Specialist advice should be sought before pest control operations are conducted in order to protect the health and safety of staff and animals.
- (d) Chemicals used for pest control should be used only in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions.

### 6.4. Waste disposal

- (a) Droppings, soiled litter, bedding, food wastes and dead animals should be disposed of promptly and hygienically, and in accordance with the requirements of local government and environmental laws.

### 7.1. Sources of animals

- (a) Dogs and cats, including puppies and kittens, should be acquired from sources who can demonstrate compliance with accepted standards. Accepted standards may include those of recognised breed societies, or the following:
  - (i) The breeder meets local government requirements for a breeder's permit.
  - (ii) All animals are healthy, bright and alert, and sociable.
  - (iii) Appropriate treatment is provided for injury or illness.
  - (iv) Animals are accommodated with suitable space, cleanliness and shelter.
  - (v) Animals are fed a high-quality diet.
  - (vi) Dogs are provided with regular exercise, companionship and stimulation, and cats with environmental enrichment.
  - (vii) The breeder is knowledgeable about breed standards (the desired characteristics of the breed, such as size, proportion, coat, colour, and temperament) and breed-specific genetic problems, and provides documentation that the kitten's/puppy's parents and grandparents have been tested (where possible) to ensure they are free of these genetic problems.
  - (viii) A health care program is provided to both breeding stock and litters that includes worming, flea control, vaccination and heartworm prevention, as recommended by a local veterinarian.
  - (ix) Documentation of health care and medical history is provided with each kitten/puppy.
  - (x) A health guarantee is provided.
  - (xi) Kittens/puppies have been desexed in accordance with section 14.7, or post-sale desexing is encouraged.

- (b) If the pet shop is approached by a dog or cat supplier who cannot demonstrate breeding and management standards (as above), the manager should encourage the supplier to desex their animals to prevent further unwanted litters.
  - (c) Consideration should be given to supporting the homing of cats and dogs from shelters and pounds. Pet shops may promote the availability of pets from shelters and pounds and, subject to adequate management of disease risk, pet shops may present and sell these animals.
  - (d) For all species, pet shops should develop stable trading relationships with reliable breeders of quality stock.
  - (e) The number and quality of animals acquired by a pet shop should be managed with care, to avoid euthanasia or relinquishment of unsuitable or excess pets.
  - (f) Minimum age of animals for acquisition for sale, subject to maturity, should be:
    - (i) dogs—eight weeks (seven weeks for large breeds)
    - (ii) cats—eight weeks.
  - (g) Unweaned animals should not be accepted by pet shops.
  - (h) Any animal that is classified as a restricted or prohibited animal should not be acquired, displayed, offered for sale or sold by a pet shop.
  - (i) Animals that are not accepted for sale at point of delivery or cannot be sold should be returned to the breeder, re-directed to a local government pound or shelter such as RSPCA (Qld) or AWL (Qld), or euthanased as a last resort.
  - (j) Concerns about sub-standard animal sources (evidenced by, for example, repeated viral diseases, malnutrition, injuries or premature weaning) should be referred to appropriate authorities.
  - (k) Wherever possible, newly introduced animals should not be mixed with existing stocks until their health has been checked and a quarantine period of 48 hours, or longer for higher risk animals (such as from a sub-standard source), has expired. These animals should be monitored closely for the incubation period for common diseases of up to 10 days.
  - (l) Animals should not be bred on pet shop premises.
- 7.2. Care of animals
- (a) Animals should be protected from distress or injury caused by other animals, particularly larger or predatory species.
  - (b) Animals that may be distressed by the presence of other animals should be housed in a manner that prevents or minimises contact by sight, sound or smell.
  - (c) Animals should receive behavioural enrichment, recognising the physiological status and special needs of differing ages and species, to ensure good psychological health.
  - (d) All equipment that may affect the welfare of animals should be designed and maintained to minimise the risk of illness or injury.
- 7.3. Animal handling and restraint
- (a) Animals should be protected against stress or injury from excessive handling or interference from adult customers and children.
  - (b) Any animal that is distressed by excessive viewing or handling should be removed from public view and reach, and monitored.
  - (c) Notwithstanding protection from excess, handling is important to the behavioural enrichment and social development of puppies and kittens. Handling is desirable in moderation.
  - (d) Restraints should not cause injury to any animal.



## 8. Records

### 7.4. Protected fauna

- (a) Any animal that is classified as protected fauna, other than those species permitted under the relevant state and/or federal Regulations, should not be acquired, displayed, offered for sale or sold by a pet shop.
- (b) Only certain protected fauna is allowable for sale under a Commercial Wildlife Licence issued by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (DEHP). A list of these species can be found within the document Guideline: Conditions and restrictions – Keeping and using controlled or commercial animals under a commercial wildlife licence, which is available from the DEHP website at [www.ehp.qld.gov.au](http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au)
- (c) All protected fauna allowable for sale under a Commercial Wildlife Licence must be lawfully obtained and, unless exempt, must be moved under a 'movement advice' from a suitably licensed person. Movement advices are available via the DEHP website.
- (d) Any necessary certificates should be provided at the point of sale.

### 8.1. Appropriate records should be kept for two years for:

- (a) the acquisition/breeding of animals, including the date of birth, date of acquisition, description of animal(s), and the name and address of the supplier and breeder of the animals
  - (b) the sale of animals, including the date of sale, description of animal(s), identification details and the name and contact details of the new owner
  - (c) the death or euthanasia of animals at the premises, including the date of decease and, where known, the circumstances surrounding the death or euthanasia
  - (d) veterinary treatment of animals, including routine husbandry procedures such as worming or parasite control
  - (e) trading in animals that are subject to regulatory control.
- 8.2. The use of stock books, enclosure labels and daily cleaning record sheets is encouraged.

## 9. Health care

### 9.1. Health checks

- (a) All animals and enclosures should be inspected at least once daily to monitor health and wellbeing.
- (b) The person checking animals should note if each animal is:
  - (i) eating
  - (ii) drinking
  - (iii) defecating
  - (iv) urinating
  - (v) behaving normally
  - (vi) showing any obvious signs of illness or distress
  - (vii) able to move about freely
  - (viii) maintaining or gaining weight.
- (c) Any changes in health status should be promptly reported to the person responsible for appropriate action.

### 9.2. Veterinary care

- (a) The pet shop manager should establish liaison with a veterinary surgeon who is able to attend to animals in his or her care, and is also able to advise on disease prevention measures.
- (b) When signs of disease or injury are observed, action should be taken promptly to protect the wellbeing of individual animals and prevent the spread of disease.
- (c) Any sick animal should be isolated in an area away from public contact and separated from other animals. Animals suspected to have a contagious disease (and those in the same cage or enclosure) should be strictly quarantined. In cases of respiratory infections, quarantine should include separating cages by at least one metre or a solid wall and strictly ensuring animal attendants wash their hands in a bleach handwash immediately after attending to animals.
- (d) Any injured animal should be isolated in an area away from public contact, and should also be separated from other animals unless it would benefit from companionship rather than isolation.
- (e) Prompt and appropriate first aid and/or veterinary care should be provided to sick or injured animals.

- (f) Veterinary advice should be obtained in the event of unexplained illness or deaths.
- (g) Internal and external parasites should be controlled in accordance with veterinary advice.
- (h) The effectiveness of preventative health care—including control of infectious diseases (such as parvovirus in dogs)—is influenced heavily by animal husbandry and management. Preventative health care should not rely solely on vaccination.
- (i) Immature animals that are unable to feed themselves should only be kept where adequate facilities and expertise are available for artificial rearing.

### 9.3. Euthanasia

- (a) Where treatment to restore the health of an animal is impractical or unsuccessful, animals should be humanely destroyed (euthanased).
- (b) Animals that are surplus to sales requirements should be surrendered to a pound or shelter for re-homing in preference to being euthanased.
- (c) Euthanasia of cats and dogs should only be performed by a veterinarian.
- (d) For other species, euthanasia should be performed by a competent person and in accordance with veterinary advice. Lethal injection by a veterinarian is the preferred method of euthanasia for birds, reptiles and amphibians.

## 10. Food and water

### 10.1. Food

- (a) Animals should receive appropriate and sufficient food to maintain good health and growth, recognising the special needs of differing ages and species. All diets should be nutritionally balanced and palatable.

### 10.2. Feeding

- (a) Adult animals, other than reptiles, should be fed at least once daily.
- (b) Puppies and kittens less than four months of age should be fed a minimum of three times daily.
- (c) Puppies and kittens between four and six months, and pregnant and lactating mammals, should be fed at least twice daily.
- (d) The diet and feeding of sick or debilitated animals should be under the guidance of a veterinary surgeon or a person of acknowledged experience in their care.
- (e) Food and water containers should be stable, non-toxic and either disposable or easily cleaned/disinfected.
- (f) Containers should be readily accessible to animals and should be positioned to avoid spillage or contamination by urine or faeces.
- (g) Animals should be fed under supervision to ensure that each animal gets the required amount of food.
- (h) Spoiled food should be removed.

### 10.3. Water

- (a) Fresh, palatable water should be available at all times.
- (b) If access must be controlled for spillage or hygiene reasons, water should be provided sufficiently (in frequency, quantity and duration) to meet the animal's physiological needs.

## 11. Sale of animals

### 11.1. Age

- (a) All animals offered for sale should be weaned and fully self-sufficient (able to feed themselves unaided).
- (b) Juvenile birds should be self-sufficient and fully feathered (moult permitting).
- (c) The minimum age of animals for sale should be:
  - (i) dogs—eight weeks (seven weeks for large breeds)
  - (ii) cats—eight weeks
  - (iii) guinea pigs—four weeks
  - (iv) rats and mice—three weeks.

### 11.2. Health

- (a) Any animal suspected of being sick, injured, congenitally deformed or diseased should not be sold.
- (b) All animals should be treated for internal and external parasites as appropriate for the species and age, and in accordance with veterinary advice.
- (c) All dogs and cats for sale should have a vaccination certificate, signed by a veterinarian, stating that the animal has been vaccinated and indicating the next due date for further vaccination.

### 11.3. Information and advice

- (a) Animals should not be misrepresented as to sex, age, origin, species, breeding history or soundness.
- (b) At the time of sale, the pet shop should provide appropriate advice, both verbally and by printed information, on the care and feeding of the purchased animal, including:
  - (i) the long-term commitment that pet ownership implies (Should a pet shop feel that the buyers are ill-prepared to accept this responsibility, they should not sell them the pet.)
  - (ii) desirability and advantages of desexing male and female dogs and cats, including any local incentives for desexing such as discounted registration fees or desexing subsidies

- (iii) desirability and advantages of segregating the sexes, or desexing male rats and guinea pigs
  - (iv) need for follow-up vaccinations, as vaccinations already given may be only part of the puppy's/kitten's initial vaccination program
  - (v) responsibilities and awareness of financial costs (weekly and yearly) inherent in companion animal ownership, and the availability of pet insurance
  - (vi) general care, housing and management of the animal
  - (vii) common diseases and their prevention and management, including protection from exposure to contagious diseases until immune
  - (viii) appropriate diet for the animal (or a diet sheet)
  - (ix) legal requirements of keeping the species [including registration, identification, containment on owners' property, numbers allowed, need for body corporate (strata association) approval, permits for wildlife etc.].
- (c) New owners should be advised to visit their veterinarian for advice concerning pet health, desexing, subsequent vaccinations, worming, flea and tick prevention, and nutrition.
- (d) Information on care and feeding of reptiles should be prepared by a specialist herpetologist.
- (e) Consideration should be given to providing information in languages appropriate to the local population.

#### 11.4. Restraint

- (a) All animals sold should be contained or suitably restrained to ensure their security and protection at the point of sale.

#### 11.5. Sales policy

- (a) Pet shops should hold the objective that all cats and dogs that they sell are desexed before they attain breeding age. This objective will minimise the risk of cats and dogs either becoming unwanted or having unwanted litters. Kittens and puppies should be desexed consistent with the advice of section 13.7. If kittens or puppies are not desexed prior to sale, desexing should be actively promoted at the point of sale (e.g. by issuing pre-paid desexing vouchers and advising on the advantages of desexing).
- (b) The adoption of a guarantee policy is strongly encouraged, and inclusion of the following features is recommended:
  - (i) The pet shops offer a health guarantee for a period of 10 days against any issues that are agreed to be a fault of the specific pet being sold or the pet shop. If the problem is deemed to be hereditary, congenital or likely to be a problem that was existent prior to the sale then the pet shop should offer to take the animal back and give a full refund or replacement animal to the same value. Animal replacement could be delayed or avoided if the problem is due to a contagious disease.
  - (ii) Should a pet become ill in the guarantee period the pet shop should have a clear policy and issue documented instructions on how an owner should respond. This may include instruction on which veterinary clinic is the preferred veterinary clinic for the guarantee period.
  - (iii) In the event the health problem is related to the care and management of the pet after sale, the pet shop is not obliged to cover the cost of treatment, take the animal back, and/or refund monies; however, it may still choose to do so. The animal's welfare should be the primary focus when resolving any consumer conflict.

## 12. Transport

- (iv) The provisions of a guarantee should be clearly explained to the purchaser and documented.
  - (c) Policies, procedures and staff training should ensure that impulse sales or sales to inappropriate purchasers do not occur. Specifically:
    - (i) The risk of impulse buying of pet animals displayed in shop windows should be addressed by sales staff in their advice to customers.
    - (ii) Pet animals should not be sold to a minor (person aged under 17 years) unless accompanied by a parent or guardian.
    - (iii) A cooling-off period, which may include a deduction for costs incurred for returning the animal (i.e. quarantining, payment costs, vet checks), should be offered for the sale of puppies and kittens.
  - (d) Information on any condition of the animal that might affect its future wellbeing should be disclosed to a prospective purchaser.
  - (e) Retailers should not sell or 'trade in' any animal, fish or aquatic plant species listed as declared (noxious) in Queensland. Retailers could advise the person(s) where they can deliver such declared (noxious) animal/plant species.
- 11.6 Protected fauna
- (a) Unless exempt, the movement of protected fauna must be covered by a 'movement advice' issued to the purchaser by the commercial licence holder. Movement permits are a requirement under the Nature Conservation (Wildlife Management) Regulations.
  - (b) The purchaser should be advised of the DEHP's website should they require further information regarding protected fauna.
- 12.1. Transport causes distress to animals and should be kept to a minimum.
  - 12.2. All transported animals should be contained or suitably restrained to ensure their security and protection when delivered to the customer. The size of transport cages should be just large enough for the animal to turn around; larger cages allow excessive movement and risk of injury during sudden movement.
  - 12.3. Animal containers should be strong enough to withstand handling and stacking. They should provide adequate light and ventilation.
  - 12.4. Animals should be protected from extremes of temperature.
  - 12.5. Food and water should be provided during an extended journey, including loading, unloading and waiting time. The requirements of the individual animal(s), prevailing conditions and the journey being undertaken should be the primary guides to feed and water provision.
  - 12.6. The consignor and consignee should confirm the departure and arrival time of animals with the carrier. In the event of delay or cancellation, the carrier is responsible for the welfare of animals in transit.
  - 12.7. Containers in which animals are transported should be clearly labelled, including contact details of both consignor and consignee, licence number for protected fauna, and date and time of departure.
  - 12.8. Transport by air should be conducted in accordance with air industry standards.

## 13. Special needs for dogs and cats

### 13.1. Cages

- (a) Cage floors should be lined with absorbent disposable material that can readily be removed and replaced (e.g. newspaper).
- (b) Clean bedding should be provided.
- (c) Cat cages should be provided with sufficient litter trays containing a sufficient depth of suitable litter material (such as commercial cat litter, sawdust, shavings, sand or shredded paper). Cat litter trays should be completely changed and thoroughly cleaned daily.
- (d) Cages and pens should include a protected area where animals can hide.

### 13.2. Socialisation with animals and people

- (a) Particular attention should be paid to appropriate socialisation and training of puppies and kittens during the socialisation period of 6–16 weeks.
- (b) Puppies and kittens should not be held in isolation unless there is no practical alternative.
- (c) The interaction between puppies should be monitored to manage problems due to competitive behaviour.

### 13.3. Attendance and exercise

- (a) The health of dogs and cats should be monitored. Signs of illness for which attention is required include:
  - (i) runny nose
  - (ii) runny, discharging or inflamed eyes
  - (iii) repeated sneezing
  - (iv) coughing
  - (v) vomiting
  - (vi) diarrhoea
  - (vii) lameness
  - (viii) bleeding or swelling of body parts
  - (ix) inability to stand, walk, urinate or defecate
  - (x) lethargy
  - (xi) loss of appetite
  - (xii) weight loss
  - (xiii) apparent pain
  - (xiv) staggering or convulsions
  - (xv) patchy hair loss.

- (b) Dogs and cats of any age should not be left unattended for more than 16 hours.
- (c) Dogs should be exercised according to breed and age, but for a minimum of 10 minutes at least twice daily. Puppies should be exercised at least three times daily.
- (d) Dogs should not be walked in unsecured areas, unless:
  - (i) they are on a lead at all times
  - (ii) they are under the supervision of a competent person.
- (e) Any yard for group exercise of dogs should be supervised to avoid mixing of incompatible dogs, fighting and the transmission of infectious disease.
- (f) Over weekends and public holidays, dogs and cats should be inspected, fed and exercised at least once daily; puppies and kittens should be inspected, fed and exercised at least three times daily.

### 13.4. Vaccination of dogs

- (a) Veterinary advice should be sought for the most appropriate vaccination protocol, due to local and seasonal variation in disease risks.
- (b) Puppies and dogs should be vaccinated against distemper, hepatitis and parvovirus, and accompanied by a current vaccination certificate.
- (c) Puppies should normally receive their first vaccination at 6–8 weeks of age.
- (d) Under current best practice, puppies should have been given an initial vaccination at least two weeks before they arrive at the pet shop (but not before 6 weeks of age). If puppies are unvaccinated at delivery to the pet shop, they should be vaccinated immediately (but not before 6 weeks of age).
- (e) A second vaccination against distemper and hepatitis and parvovirus should be given at about 12 weeks of age.

### 13.5. Vaccination of cats

- (a) Veterinary advice should be sought for the most appropriate vaccination protocol, due to local and seasonal variation in disease risks.

- (b) Cats and kittens should be vaccinated against feline enteritis and the feline respiratory diseases and accompanied by a current vaccination certificate.
- (c) Kittens should normally receive their first vaccination at 6–8 weeks of age.
- (d) Under current best practice, kittens should be given an initial vaccination of at least two weeks before they arrive at the pet shop (but not before 6 weeks of age). If kittens are unvaccinated at delivery to the pet shop, they should be vaccinated immediately (but not before 6 weeks of age).
- (e) Kittens should also be re-vaccinated at about 12 weeks of age.

#### 13.6. Identification

- (a) Dogs and cats, including puppies and kittens, should be readily and individually identified. Microchip identification provides secure and lifelong identification, and is recommended.
- (b) At sale, the pet shop should notify the microchip registry of the new owner's details of a microchipped animal.

#### 13.7. Desexing

- (a) Desexing of cats and dogs—including puppies and kittens—prior to sale is an important contribution to the reduction in unwanted cats and dogs.
- (b) A desexed cat or dog will generally live a longer and healthier life, given the same environment. Desexing reduces the risk of uterine and ovarian cancer in females, and prostate and testicular cancer in males. Desexed cats and dogs are generally more affectionate, better companions that are less likely to roam, fight, be aggressive or cause nuisance issues in the community.
- (c) Desexing of puppies and kittens prior to sale, at between two and four months of age (early age desexing)—depending on weight and health—ensures pet shops that a sold pet will not produce unwanted litters and unwanted, sex-linked behaviours, and has increased intrinsic value. Fewer than half of all cat and dog owners will fulfil desexing as expected.

- (d) With new understanding and technologies, early age desexing is as safe for male and female kittens as desexing at the traditional age of 5–6 months. Cats can be pregnant by 5 months of age.
- (e) For male puppies, early age desexing has more benefits than risks.
- (f) For female puppies, the benefits of early age desexing (prevention of unwanted litters and reduced risk of mammary cancer) should be weighed against the reported increased risk of urinary incontinence and cystitis.
- (g) For both male and female puppies, early age desexing carries higher benefits in breeds that are over-represented at shelters or predisposed to congenital defects.
- (h) Decisions on whether a dog should be desexed, and at what age, should be made carefully, in consultation with a veterinarian. Issues for consideration include the risk of the dog becoming unwanted or producing unwanted litters—based on the characteristics of the dog (including breed) and the conditions under which the dog will be kept.

## 14. Special needs for birds

- 14.1. National guidelines for the welfare of pet birds are available at:  
[www.daff.gov.au](http://www.daff.gov.au)
- A comprehensive Queensland Code of Practice for Aviculture and guidelines and information sheets, issued by the DEHP, are available at: [www.ehp.qld.gov.au](http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au)
- 14.2. Where possible, rooms where birds are housed should be separated from the rest of the pet shop and fitted with an extraction fan system to remove feather dander and dust to reduce the risks of the zoonotic disease psittacosis.
- 14.3. Each species should be accommodated according to its needs. Some species may need cage furniture or nesting sites that allow them to hide and rest.
- 14.4. Bird enclosures should be protected from environmental extremes.
- 14.5. Outdoor cages and aviaries should be designed and constructed so as to minimise the threats posed by predators. Many bird, mammal and reptile species are predators of, or cause distress to, aviary birds during the day or night. These include cats, dogs, foxes, birds of prey (including owls, butcherbirds and currawongs), snakes and even children.
- 14.6. Cages should be large enough to ensure that the bird(s) can fully extend and flap their wings in any direction. Stocking density should be in accord with the DEHP Code of Practice for Aviculture to avoid stress from overstocking, especially for small bird species, that commonly results in disease, suffering and death.
- 14.7. Sufficient perches, roosting areas and feed/water stations should be provided to meet the needs of all birds in a cage or aviary.
- 14.8. Perches should be of a diameter, construction and material appropriate to the species held. In general, natural wood perches are preferred; plastic and metal perches are unsatisfactory. Perches should be positioned to provide easy access to food and water, prevent contamination of food and water containers, and ensure that birds' tails are not in contact with the cage substrate.
- 14.9. Environmental enrichment should be provided. This may include the provision of cuttlefish, toys, fresh native browse or other enrichment devices.
- 14.10. Solid floors of cages and aviaries should be covered with a suitable non-toxic disposable material (e.g. newspaper).
- 14.11. All bird species should have access to food and water at all times.
- 14.12. Except where it is a species requirement, birds should be fed out of suitable containers and not directly off the floor.
- 14.13. Birds should be fed a balanced and complete diet that allows them to maintain good health and growth, recognising the physiological status and special needs of differing ages and species.
- 14.14. Seed is not a complete diet. Every bird requires supplements to provide variety and essential nutrients (e.g. vegetables, greens, seeding grasses or fresh fruit, where appropriate).
- 14.15. Grit and other vitamin/mineral supplements should also be available to reduce the potential for nutrient deficiencies.
- 14.16. Care should be taken with new equipment. New galvanised wire may be toxic, especially for parrots. The risk of 'new wire disease' can be reduced by removing any tags and loose fragments, washing new wire with a mild acidic solution (e.g. vinegar) and rinsing with water.
- 14.17. Other than in exceptional circumstances, pools and ponds should be avoided in sales cages/aviaries.



- 14.18. Birds should be monitored for health. Signs of illness include:
- (a) change in appearance of droppings
  - (b) change in food and/or water consumption
  - (c) change in appearance or posture
  - (d) weight loss
  - (e) enlargements or swellings
  - (f) vomiting, injury or bleeding
  - (g) discharge from nostrils, eyes or beak
  - (h) excessive feather loss
  - (i) lameness or sores on feet
  - (j) overgrown beak or claws
  - (k) stains or scabs around eyes or nostrils.
- 14.19. Birds showing signs of illness should be attended to immediately and separated from other birds to prevent spread of disease or molestation. A heated hospital cage should be provided for the isolation and treatment of sick or injured birds. The cage should be away from view to minimise stress.
- 14.20. Only staff members who have specialised knowledge should handle birds. Birds should be caught by the least stressful method and subjected to minimal handling.
- 14.21. Pinioning of wings is not acceptable, except under exceptional circumstances.
- 14.22. The clipping of wing feathers is a skilled procedure and should only be undertaken under the guidance of a veterinarian or an experienced bird keeper. Wing feathers should not be trimmed until the bird is fully competent in flight and landing—both wings should be clipped; only 5–7 feathers should be clipped at a length of 5–10 mm below the covert feathers.
- 14.23. The application of rings for identification purposes requires care in the selection of the appropriate ring and its application. Some species, especially adult birds, should not be ringed because of the risk of self-mutilation. Special care is needed should a ring require removal (e.g. to attend to a leg injury), and referral to a veterinarian for removal under anaesthesia should be considered.
- 14.24. Overgrown beaks are usually symptomatic of chronic disease, and veterinary advice should be sought. Overgrown beaks should be carefully trimmed. Unless overgrown beaks are due to a curable disease or nutritional problem, birds with overgrown beaks should not be sold for breeding.
- 14.25. Excessively long nails should be trimmed without drawing blood, but toes should not be cut with the intent of preventing nail growth. Overgrown nails may be indicative of inadequate conditions, particularly in small cages.
- 14.26. Baby birds require special formulas to be fed at the correct temperature. Only highly competent staff should feed immature birds during hand-rearing.
- 14.27. Hand-reared birds should be fully weaned and self-sufficient before sale.

## 15. Special needs for rats, mice and guinea pigs

- 15.1. Sexes should be segregated.
- 15.2. Litters under one week of age should be disturbed as little as possible.
- 15.3. Enclosures for rats and mice should be escape-proof, to ensure compliance with section 2X of the Public Health Regulation 2005 that requires owners of these animals to ensure that the animals cannot escape.
- 15.4. Cages and pens should include a protected area where animals can hide.
- 15.5. Nest boxes should be provided for breeding females.
- 15.6. Suitable non-toxic bedding should be provided and replaced frequently.
- 15.7. Hay or other sources of dietary fibre should be provided to guinea pigs for complete nutrition and for dental care.
- 15.8. Animals should be fed a cubed or pelleted ration appropriate to the species, supplemented by fruit and/or vegetables. A source of stable vitamin C is essential for guinea pigs.
- 15.9. Water should be constantly available and supplied in suitable containers. When using bottles with a nipple drinker, the tip should not come into contact with bedding or food.

## 16. Special needs for fish

- 16.1. Fish are capable of feeling pain, and their needs for appropriate feed, accommodation, health and behaviour should be considered.
- 16.2. Fish tanks should be protected from environmental extremes.
- 16.3. Water changes should be adequate to maintain good water quality in relation to population density; replacing 25% of the water in an aquarium every fortnight is recommended.
- 16.4. Fish should be fed with appropriate food according to each species' requirements.
- 16.5. Fish showing signs of illness should be attended to immediately and, where necessary, separated from other fish to prevent the spread of disease or molestation by healthy fish.
- 16.6. Diseased or injured aquatic animals should be treated promptly and humanely. Medications should be used according to label directions or under veterinary prescription.
- 16.7. The most effective and humane method of euthanasia for fish is to add an anaesthetic or euthanasia agent (eugenol or clove oil is recommended) to the water. AQUI-S, the only product registered for the use on fish that contains eugenol, is registered for use by or under the direction of a veterinarian. To ensure death, all forms of chemical euthanasia of fish should be followed by decapitation (preferable for small fish) or a blow to the back of the head.
- 16.8. Customers should be advised that unwanted, dead, diseased or injured aquatic animals should never be dumped into sewerage or natural waterways due to the adverse risks to natural biodiversity. Unwanted aquatic animals should be either re-homed or euthanased and sick or injured aquatic animals should be treated or euthanased. The bodies of dead aquatic animals should be discarded in garbage used as landfill. This same policy should be applied to aquatic plants in order protect our waterways from weed incursions.

- 16.9. The risk of introducing disease to a pet shop aquarium should be considered before an aquatic animal or plant is accepted for sale or as a return.
- 16.10. All fish nets should be disinfected daily.
- 16.11. Tank lids should be fitted and kept in place to prevent fish escaping.
- 16.12. Water chemistry should be checked regularly and appropriate measures should be taken to correct any imbalance.
- 16.13. All electrical equipment (such as lights and thermostats) should be regularly checked for correct performance.
- 16.14. Filtration equipment and heaters should be adequate for the species and population densities, and should be effective at all times.

## 17. Special needs for reptiles and amphibians

- 17.1. Reptiles cannot be assumed to all have the same requirements for heat, light, food, water, humidity and shelter. Each species has different requirements.
- 17.2. A comprehensive Queensland Code of Practice for Captive Reptile and Amphibian Husbandry and guidelines and information sheets, issued by the DEHP, are available at: [www.ehp.qld.gov.au](http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au)
- 17.3. Water
  - (a) All amphibians and reptiles require a shallow pool of water.
  - (b) Fresh water should be supplied for terrestrial species two or three times per week if the water is being contaminated.
  - (c) Reptiles (such as pythons etc.) should have enough fresh water to fully immerse themselves, to assist with the process of shedding their skin.
  - (d) Water-loving species (such as Arafura file snakes) should, at all times, have sufficient clean water to allow full immersion.
- 17.4. Humidity
  - (a) The humidity of enclosures should be monitored regularly.
  - (b) For most species, a humidity of 50% is sufficient.
  - (c) The humidity should be higher (possibly >70%) for some species that originate from tropical parts of Australia. Misting or fogging the enclosure can be used to achieve this.
  - (d) In maintaining high humidity, the substrate should not be allowed to become wet as this promotes bacterial growth and may lead to scale rot and other skin problems.
- 17.5. Vibration and noise
  - (a) Reptiles are very sensitive to vibration. Housing should be positioned to minimize floor vibration and noise, and buffered from the public by barriers or signs (e.g. 'Quiet Please' or 'Do Not Tap On Glass').
  - (b) Reptile cages should be totally enclosed except for one viewing panel, and should include cage furniture that allows total or partial concealment of the reptile.

## 17.6. Heating

- (a) All reptiles require external sources of heat to maintain their body temperature. The temperature requirements vary between species and the time of day and the stage of digestion of food.
- (b) Reptiles and amphibians from most regions will tolerate brief exposure to cold temperatures of 5–10 °C. Continuous exposure to temperatures greater than 35 °C can cause high mortalities.
- (c) Because reptiles need to vary their body temperature, they require a range of ground and air temperatures in their enclosures. The temperature should be monitored at various locations in the cage to ensure the temperature gradients are appropriate. A variation of 5–8 °C is sufficient.
- (d) Heat sources are provided at one end of the cage only. Heaters should have fine mesh shields in place to prevent burns on snakes. Either basking heat or ground heat should be provided, depending on the species.
- (e) Basking heat is used for reptiles spending time on branches or high in the cage. An overhead heat source such as a ceramic heater, basking lamp or an infrared lamp should be provided. Lamps are placed to provide a basking hot spot as well as general cage heat.
- (f) Floor heat is used for those species that spend their time on the floor of the cage, and nocturnal and secretive species. Heat pads can provide low-level heating. ‘Hot rocks’ may develop hot spots on their surface that can cause burns, and are not recommended.
- (g) Heat sources should be connected to a thermostat to provide regulated heat to the cage. Thermometers should be placed in the cage to monitor the performance of the thermostat and to gauge the temperature gradient.
- (h) All cages should have vents to allow air circulation.
- (i) Glass enclosures lose heat readily. The heating system in glass enclosures should be sufficient to provide the environmental requirements of the species being housed.
- (j) Avoid placing cages in direct sunlight as sunlight through glass may cause overheating.

## 17.7. Lighting

- (a) Reptiles housed in pet shops require a photoperiod of eight hours. Light bulbs used for heating should be coloured red or blue so that the animal has a dark period during the day.
- (b) For most species, the warmest part of the cage should also be the most brightly lit.
- (c) UVA and UVB are essential for all reptiles. Full spectrum lighting should be provided to all reptiles that are housed indoors.
- (d) Do not use the ‘blacklight blue’ or poster globes, as they are too strong.
- (e) Eight watt mini lights are inadequate.
- (f) UV lights should be on timers so they turn on during daylight hours only.
- (g) UVA and UVB tubes are not heaters—they are inadequate as cage heaters.
- (h) Proper fitting and maintenance of UVB lights is essential. The UVB output dissipates very rapidly, so the lights must be fitted so that reptiles can get within 10 cm of them. UVB lights need to be changed every nine months as their lifespan is limited.

## 17.8. Freshwater turtles

- (a) Freshwater turtles require a pool of water deep enough for the animal to completely submerge, and a totally dry haul-out area large enough for the entire animal to be out of the water. The edges of the haul-out area should be a shallow gradient that allows easy access and a smooth surface that will not abrade the turtles’ bellies.
- (b) Turtle aquaria require a filter and good hygiene practices should be applied. Turtle aquaria should be kept clean to prevent fungal infections.
- (c) A neutral water pH (pH 7) should be maintained by regular water testing and adjustment.
- (d) Water temperature should be maintained at 22–25 °C via a water heater, and monitored with a thermometer.
- (e) UVB light should be provided to allow proper shell development. UV lights should be on timers for daylight operation.

- (f) Turtle aquaria should not be placed in the direct sunlight, as overheating may occur.
- (g) Freshwater turtles should be provided a vitamin-enriched tortoise food daily until are at least three months old. Feeding frequency can be decreased to every second day by the age of two years.

17.9. Feeding of reptiles and amphibians

- (a) Dietary requirements vary with the species—correct diets should be provided.
- (b) Captive snakes can be readily trained to accept killed prey. The feeding of live vertebrates to a snake is an offence under the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001, unless it is absolutely necessary for the snake's survival. It unnecessarily causes both stress and suffering of the prey and risk of injury, mutilation or death to the snakes.
- (c) Pet shops should only provide feed for snakes that is humanely killed, frozen prey species bred specifically for the purpose. Food rejected by one reptile should be discarded, and not offered to another, to reduce the risk of disease.
- (d) Feeding in groups may lead to dominance behaviour, causing sub-dominant animals to miss feeds.
- (e) Reptiles are usually shy feeders and should be fed outside normal shop opening times unless the animal has a special requirement.
- (f) Fresh water should be available in suitable containers. Some species require misting to allow skin absorption of moisture.
- (g) Records should be kept of the feeding behaviour of reptiles. Amounts and dates of feeding should be recorded.

17.10. Care of juvenile reptiles

- (a) Juveniles will require special attention in food selection and provision. Requirements vary greatly between species.
- (b) Housing and heating requirements also differ from those suitable for adults. Overcrowding should be avoided.

17.11. Sick or injured reptiles

- (a) All facilities should provide an adequate hospital cage for sick or injured animals.
- (b) A veterinarian with reptile experience should be consulted in the case of illness or injury of housed reptiles.
- (c) A quarantine and preventative treatment program should be designed in conjunction with a veterinarian experienced with reptiles.

17.12. Euthanasia

- (a) The preferred method of euthanasia is by lethal injection, which can be performed only by veterinarians or a person trained and authorised to use barbiturates.
- (b) An alternative method is stunning (e.g. blunt trauma) then decapitation and destruction of the brain (pithing). Decapitation without destruction of the brain is not acceptable.
- (c) Killing by freezing is not supported, as formation of ice crystals may cause pain. Chilling prior to freezing may reduce activity but may not reduce sensibility to pain.

