



Code of Practice for the Operation of Boarding Establishments

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This Code sets the minimum standards of care required for dogs and cats in boarding establishments.



1. Introduction

This Code is made under the provisions of Section 59 of Division 4 of the [Domestic \(Feral and Nuisance\) Animals Act 1994](#) (‘the Act’).

The purpose of the Code is to specify the minimum standards of accommodation, management and care which are appropriate to the physical and behavioural needs of dogs and cats housed in boarding establishments.

The Code and its provisions are to be observed by owners and operators (‘the proprietor’) of boarding establishments and by people who work in them. All boarding establishments must comply with state and local government legislation and permits.

Where dangerous, restricted breed or menacing dogs are being boarded they must be kept in accordance with the requirements of the Domestic (Feral & Nuisance) Animals Act and Regulations.

All boarding establishments must carry a minimum of \$10,000,000 Public Liability insurance cover.

2. Definitions

2.1 Boarding means the taking of custody or possession of a dog or cat for the keeping, accommodation, care, training or feeding for fee or reward at a property other than the animals normal place of residence.

2.2 Overnight boarding — Animal stays at facility for at least one night.

2.3 Day boarding — Animal is housed during the day only and is NOT housed overnight.

2.4 Vaccination — means vaccination against distemper, hepatitis, parvovirus and kennel cough (parainfluenza (Type II) virus and Bordetella bronchiseptica).

2.5 Animal — for the purposes of this code means a:

- dog
- cat
- puppy
- kitten.

2.6 Home boarding — for the purposes of part 10 of this code means a maximum of two animals boarded at a place of residence occupied by the animal carer where no other form of boarding is occurring on the same property.

3. Admission requirements

3.1 All animals entering boarding establishments must be identified and all reasonable special requirements requested by the animal's owner or attending veterinary surgeon must be complied with, such as:

- administration of medication
- feeding of special diets
- bathing
- grooming.

3.2 Pups between 10 to 16 weeks can be admitted to day boarding facilities provided they have received their first vaccination at least 8 days previous to admission and are continuing the recommended vaccination schedule. Owners of these pups must be given information on the risks of the pup contracting disease and have given written approval or acknowledgment of these risks.

3.3 Dogs older than 16 weeks must meet the vaccination requirements of Section 4.2.

3.4 Pups between 10 to 20 weeks being boarded at day boarding facilities must be supervised visually and physically at all times while being housed with other pups or dogs.

3.5 Dogs less than 4 months old and cats less than 3 months old must not be admitted for overnight boarding other than in exceptional circumstances.

4. Staff

4.1 Manager/Person in charge

The proprietor of a boarding facility is responsible for the overall management and conduct of the establishment and for the welfare of the animals boarded therein. Manager/person in charge of animals must be appropriately experienced and trained in animal care.

In particular, the proprietor is responsible for:

- ensuring that each animal is able to be uniquely identified
- the well-being of all animals in the establishment
- the supervision of staff
- the maintenance and collation of records and statistics
- supervision of daily feeding, watering, inspection and medication of all animals
- supervision and examination of animals upon entry
- the overall level of hygiene in the establishment, including the disposal of waste materials
- provision of prompt veterinary attention for animals when required

- notifying owners (or their contacts) as soon as possible when an animal is observed to be ailing or injured or promptly after a veterinarian has examined the animal
- ensuring that Part 5 of the Act — Boarding of Dogs and Cats is prominently displayed in the reception area of the establishment so that it can be read by all prospective clients
- ensuring that the owner signs an agreement where the owner requests the boarder to be housed in shared accommodation
- ensuring a plan for emergency situations is in place.

4.2 The veterinarian

The proprietor of the establishment must have a written agreement with sufficient veterinarians to be on call for the treatment of animals and for humane euthanasia where an overdose of barbiturate is used.

4.3 Animal attendants

The proprietor must ensure that animal attendants employed by the boarding establishment are appropriately trained and experienced to properly manage the type of animal boarded.

Animal attendants are responsible to the proprietor for:

- daily feeding for overnight boarding and where required for day boarding animals
- watering and inspection of all animals
- daily cleaning of facilities, (for example, hose out, replace bedding, litter trays, feeding and watering utensils)
- reporting to management animals showing any of the following symptoms:
 - runny nose
 - runny or inflamed eyes
 - repeated sneezing
 - coughing
 - vomiting
 - diarrhoea, especially if bloodstained
 - lameness
 - inability to stand or walk
 - bleeding or swelling of body parts
 - weight loss
 - lack of appetite
 - apparent pain
 - fits or staggering
 - bloating of abdomen
 - difficulty or inability to urinate or defecate
 - red or brown coloured urine
 - any other serious physical or behaviour abnormality
- exercising dogs as required by the manager.

Staff health must be protected by the provision of:

- appropriate work clothing
- adequate hand washing facilities
- tetanus immunisation.

Information must be supplied on disease-causing organisms which can be transmitted to humans (zoonoses) and personal hygiene procedures must be such that transmission should not occur.

All personnel working with cats, especially women of childbearing age, must be made aware of the risk of contracting toxoplasmosis.

5. Husbandry

5.1 Nutrition

All animals must have a permanent supply of fresh, clean water.

Food and water containers must be non spillable and of a design that can be easily cleaned and does not cause injury to the animals.

5.1.1 Overnight boarding

All dogs and cats must be fed at least once a day. Puppies and kittens between four and six months of age must be fed a minimum of twice daily with a nutritionally balanced diet. Where exceptional circumstances exist and puppies and kittens under four months of age are being housed (refer section 3.5) they require a minimum of three feeds a day with a nutritionally balanced diet. The food provided must contain acceptable nutritive values in sufficient quantity to meet appropriate daily requirements for the condition and size of the animal.

5.1.2 Day boarding

Where indicated ie veterinary, age or medical purpose, animals must be fed as required/specified.

5.2 Vaccination and health care

For dogs, pre-vaccination is required against:

- distemper
- hepatitis
- kennel cough (parainfluenza (Type II) virus and Bordetella bronchiseptica)
- parvovirus.

A current vaccination certificate (certifying that vaccination was done within the preceding 12 months and that the 'due date' for the next vaccination has not been passed) must be produced for each dog before admission. Checking for heartworm infection should be recommended prior to admission.

For cats, pre-vaccination against feline infectious enteritis and feline respiratory disease is required. A current vaccination certificate (certifying that vaccination was done within the preceding 12 months and that the 'due date' for the next vaccination has not been passed) must be produced for each cat before admission.

Dogs and cats must be treated for gastrointestinal worms before admission. Animals that have not been wormed must be wormed on admission at the owners cost and the owner be advised accordingly.

Animals known or suspected to be suffering from an infectious disease must not be admitted for boarding.

Facilities must be available either at the animal boarding establishment or at veterinary premises for isolation of animals that are suspected of, or have been diagnosed as having an infectious condition. Where an infectious condition is suspected, veterinary advice must be sought as soon as possible and owners should be contacted if possible. All animals confined in isolation pens must be under veterinary supervision.

Isolation pens for animals with, or suspected of having, an infectious disease must be physically separated by an impervious barrier or for external pens a distance of at least 10 metres from other animal accommodation at the boarding establishment. Boarding establishments using the facilities of a veterinary practitioner to treat injured or unhealthy animals will not require isolation pens.

Sick animals which are not infectious but which may be stressed by contact with other animals must be separated but not necessarily isolated.

5.3 Hygiene

The establishment is to be clean and hygienic at all times:

- All pens and yards must be cleaned out at least once per day (or more often if inspection shows it is required) by hosing or other appropriate means.
- All used, contaminated bedding and litter and all uneaten food must be removed before hosing, to ensure the pen is fresh and clean.
- Used litter and uneaten food must be placed in sealed containers for disposal.

Animal boarding establishment sites must have an adequate water supply and must be seweried or on a septic system, or have some other adequate method of disposing of faeces and other wastes.

Waste/faeces disposal and drainage discharge points must be in accordance with the requirements of the relevant government authority. Use of a trade waste service for collection and disposal of wastes is preferable. Wastes must not be incinerated.

After cleaning, sleeping areas must not be allowed to remain wet.

Cats must be provided with clean litter trays daily and litter trays must be disinfected regularly. Sufficient suitable litter material, such as commercial cat litter, sawdust or shredded paper, must be provided.

Disinfection of pens and cages must be done whenever the pen/cage is vacated or every seventh day with hospital grade disinfectants. Utensils must be rinsed after disinfecting to avoid poisoning. Phenol must not be used for cats. Manufacturer's instructions for the use of these agents must be followed.

All watering and feeding utensils must be cleaned daily.

Pests including fleas, ticks, flies, mosquitoes and rodents must be effectively controlled. Chemicals used for pest control must be either prescribed by a registered veterinarian and/or registered by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) under the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code (Commonwealth) and used only in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

5.4 Security

Kennels and catteries must be able to be securely locked to prevent unauthorised entry.

Each individual kennel, module or colony pen must be fitted with a secure closing device that cannot be opened by the animals.

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

All boarding establishments must have an external perimeter fence surrounding the establishment to prevent the escape of animals.

Boundary perimeter fencing must be a minimum height of 1.8 metres and must be constructed of:

- brick
- concrete
- timber
- iron
- similar solid material
- chain mesh manufactured from 3.15 mm wire to form a uniform 50mm mesh
- 4mm weld mesh wire with a maximum mesh spacing of 50mm.

The fencing must:

- be maintained in a manner which prevents a dog from being able to dig out
- have self-closing and self-locking gates or doors
- be designed to prevent a person from climbing into the enclosure.

The external walls of the facility may serve as the perimeter fence if an animal escaping from its pen or cage is restrained by these walls.

There must be a minimum of two gates between animal and escape.

Design and materials used must ensure the security of the facility.

Dogs and cats when boarded should be safe from attack, stress or injury and their behavioural needs should be met.

5.5 Facilities

Each animal boarding establishment must provide an area for reception, records storage, and include washing and toilet facilities for staff.

Boarding facilities must be designed, constructed, serviced and maintained in a way that ensures the good health and well being of the animals, whilst preventing escape or injury to humans.

Housing must provide protection from the weather (wind, rain, sun and extremes of climate), vermin and harassment from other animals.

Facilities must have appropriate fire extinguishers or other fire protection.

6. Overnight boarding establishments

6.1 Exercise

The proprietor must ensure that dogs housed in pens of the minimum recommended size for more than two weeks are exercised daily. Dogs in enclosures larger than twenty square metres do not require additional exercise unless they are boarded for longer than four weeks. Care must be taken to ensure that dogs being exercised cannot escape and are not in danger of attack or other injury.

Exercise areas must be well maintained, not muddy or bare and dusty. Health and hygiene of both animals and humans must be taken into consideration.

Exercise can be provided by:

- allowing dogs access to an exercise area for at least 10 minutes twice daily; and/or
- walking dogs on a lead for at least 10 minutes twice daily.

Very active or old dogs may require more or less exercise than specified.

Dogs can also be exercised or socialised during daylight hours in the same manner as for day boarding establishments, provided all requirements for day boarding are met. This includes supervision levels and written permission from the owner for this to occur.

Dogs must not be walked on roads but confined within the premises for safety reasons unless:

- they are on a lead at all times
- they are under the supervision of a competent person who is 17 years of age or older
- no more than two dogs are being walked by the one person
- they are on a leash at all times including in areas designated as off-lead
- the owner has given written approval for this to occur.

Cats must not be exercised with other cats unless they are with compatible cats from the same household where the owner has agreed for this to occur.

6.2 Housing

Each animal boarding establishment must provide an area for reception, records storage, and display of information for clients including Part 5 of the Act. Premises must include washing and toilet facilities for staff.

Catteries and kennels must be designed, constructed, serviced and maintained in a way that ensures the good health and well being of the animals, whilst preventing escape or injury to humans.

Housing must provide protection from the weather (wind, rain sun and extremes of climate), vermin and harassment from other animals.

Materials should be selected for ease of maintenance and cleaning, durability and non-toxicity. Floors of animal housing areas of catteries and kennels must be made of an impervious material to assist cleaning and drainage. Wood, brick, dirt or grass floors are not acceptable.

The internal surfaces of the external walls of catteries and kennels must be constructed of impervious, solid, washable materials optimally curved at the wall or floor junctions to facilitate cleaning and disinfection.

Kennel and cattery floors must be sloped to enable wastes and water to run off. A collection drain must be provided to take away water after cleaning.

Pens may be separated by either solid partitions, galvanised chain wire or weld mesh wire dividers. Pens must be completely enclosed having either a solid or wire roof or have an overhang of 700 millimetres at an angle of 35 degrees to the horizontal.

All kennels must be provided with a weatherproof sleeping area containing raised beds.

Where dog kennels are constructed indoors, temperature, humidity and ventilation must be considered. Ventilation must be adequate to keep animal housing areas free of dampness, noxious odours and draughts. Cage or pen areas must have an ample supply of fresh air.

In totally enclosed buildings where forced ventilation is the only form of air, requirements are:

- an air change rate of 8 to 12 changes per hour to prevent the build up of foul odours
- ventilation devices must avoid draughts and distribute fresh air evenly to all of the boarding areas
- temperature must be maintained in the range of 15 to 27°C
- air recirculation units incorporating effective air cleaning and filtration to ensure the removal of infectious organisms and chemicals
- a back-up and alarm system in case of power failures or breakdown of ventilation and temperature control mechanisms.

Suitable facilities for bathing, drying and grooming animals must be available and must be hygienically maintained. These facilities may be provided by a grooming service provided that the boarding establishment has a business agreement with the service.

Cats need as much fresh air as possible while providing protection from the elements and wire mesh should be the major feature of a cattery.

Cats must be provided with bedding and any bedding provided for animals must be changed frequently and kept clean and dry.

Facilities for cats must be physically separated from dog facilities.

6.3 Pen sizes

6.3.1 Dogs

All adult dogs must be housed one to a pen unless the owner has given permission in writing for dogs to be housed together. Two dogs can only be housed in the one pen where owners have signed a written agreement. Up to three dogs from the same household can be housed together where the owner has signed a written agreement, the dogs are compatible and are normally housed together at home.

Table 1: Dog pen sizes for overnight boarding

Size of dog	Height of dog at shoulder (cms)	Minimum floor area (sq.m)	Minimum width (cms)	Minimum height (cms)	Increased floor area for each additional dog (sq.m)
Large	>70	3.5	120	180	1.7
Medium	40-70	2.4	90	180	1.2
Small	<40	1.5	90	180	1.0

The minimum pen sizes are for one adult dog (older than 16 weeks).

One third of the area of each pen must be weatherproof and include raised sleeping quarters. Individual sleeping quarters and food bowls must be provided when adult dogs are housed in the one pen. Where isolation pens are provided at the facility they must comply with the above requirements.

6.3.2 Cats

Cats may be housed in cages or walk-in modules that include a sleeping compartment, refuge area (can be sleeping area provided it has opaque walls and allows individual cats to get away from other cats housed in same module and those in neighbouring cages/modules) and an exercise area.

Cats must be housed on their own except in walk in modules where compatible cats from the same household may be housed together. The owner must sign an agreement giving permission for the cats to be housed together.

The minimum size cage for short term boarding of up to seven days must have a floor area of at least one square metre and a minimum height of 900 millimetres.

Cats boarded for longer than seven days must be provided with accommodation that meets either of the following criteria:

- Cages that have a minimum floor area of 1.5 square metres and a minimum height of 900 millimetres.
- Walk-in modules that have a minimum floor area of 0.8 square metres, a minimum width of 900 millimetres and a minimum height of 1.8 metres. The module must contain at least two levels including raised sleeping quarters. The higher level(s) must be connected to the floor by means of a ramp, pole or steps. This size is for one cat only and an additional one square metre floor space is required for each subsequent cat. Each cat must have an individual sleeping area, food bowl and litter tray.

Joint boarding kennels and pounds

Where boarding kennels are used by a municipality as a pound or shelter, the facility to house the pound or shelter must be physically separated by sufficient distance to minimise the possibility of spreading disease to the boarded animals.

It is preferable that separate staff are available for each business or, if this is not possible, a change of outer garments and the facilities to disinfect footwear must be available and used.

7. Day Care Facilities

7.1 Cats

Cats are to be housed as for overnight boarding (refer 6.3.2). Facilities for cats must be physically separated by a waterproof barrier from dog facilities.

7.2 Dogs

Dogs demonstrating aggressive tendencies can only be admitted if they are housed separately from other animals. Facilities must be available to house problem dogs separate from other dogs.

Ideally new dogs should be placed in an introductory run next to main enclosures for assessment prior to being placed in group enclosures.

Faeces must be picked up as soon as possible.

7.2.1 Indoor facilities

Flooring of facility must be watertight, sealed, washable and non-slip.

7.2.1.1 Enclosed facilities

Temperature, humidity and ventilation must be considered. Ventilation must be adequate to keep animal housing areas free of dampness, noxious odours and draughts. Cage or pen areas must have an ample supply of fresh air.

Note: In totally enclosed buildings where forced ventilation is the only form of air movement, the following is required:

- An air change rate of 8 to 12 changes per hour to prevent the build up of foul odours.
- Ventilation devices must avoid draughts and distribute fresh air evenly to all of the boarding areas.
- Temperature must be maintained in the range of 15-27°C.
- Air recirculation units incorporating effective air cleaning and filtration to ensure the removal of infectious organisms and chemicals.
- A back-up and alarm system in case of power failures or breakdown of ventilation and temperature control mechanisms.

7.2.2 Outdoor exercise areas

Outdoor exercise areas must be well maintained, not muddy or bare and dusty. Health and hygiene of both animals and humans must be taken into consideration. Exercise areas must comply with the requirements of section 7.2.3.

Boundary perimeter fencing must be a minimum height of 1.8 metres and must be constructed of:

- brick, concrete, timber, iron or similar solid material;
- chain mesh manufactured from 3.15 mm wire to form a uniform 50mm mesh or 4mm weld mesh wire with a maximum mesh spacing of 50mm.

Must be maintained in a manner which prevents a dog from being able to dig out.

Must have self-closing and self-locking gates or doors.

Must be designed to prevent children from climbing into the enclosure.

An indoor facility must be provided, for use in inclement weather, which is sufficient for number of dogs boarded at facility.

7.2.3 Enclosures

Fencing between enclosures (both internal & external) must prevent dogs from escaping from one enclosure to another and must be in such condition that they prevent injury.

Table 2: Dog numbers per enclosure

Size of dog	Minimum width	Minimum height	Minimum floor area (1 dog)	Additional space per dog	Maximum No. dogs per enclosure	Maximum No. large dogs per enclosure
Enclosures	2m	1.2m	10sqm	3.5sqm	17	8
Rest areas	2m	1.2m	4sqm	2sqm	5	5

Minimum height applies to internal fences only

For example if a total of 17 dogs are kept in an enclosure, only 8 can be large dogs and the enclosure would need to be at least 66sqm in size.

Suitable rest areas must be provided (as per above table) where more than 6 dogs are being boarded at any one time. Rest areas are not to be included as parts of the enclosure floor area but are in addition to minimum requirements for enclosure size. ie if 17 dogs are being housed a minimum enclosure of 66sqm must be provided plus the rest area (as per above table).

An area suitable to isolate animals must be provided which is physically separated from other animal housing areas and caters for the animal's welfare. Animals may only be housed in such areas for short periods to allow them to be claimed by owner or transport arranged for animal to vet.

7.2.4 Supervision

Where enclosures are separated by physical barrier (for example, different room) a staff member must be in visual and audible range of animals in each enclosure at all times.

Staff numbers and animals per enclosure at facility must at least meet the requirements of the Table 3 below.

Table 3: Dog and enclosure ratio per staff member

Number of dogs at facility	Minimum Number staff	Maximum of dogs per enclosure/min staff number
1-17	1	6
18-30	2	12
31-40	3	17
For every 10 dogs over 40	Add 1 extra staff member	17

If there is one staff member at the facility there can be no more than 17 dogs boarded and they must be separated into at least 3 separate enclosures with no more than 6 dogs per enclosure.

At least one staff member must be on call to come in and assist where necessary. It is recommended that if more than 10 dogs are booked in for a day an extra staff member is present particularly during main check in and check out times.

8. Transport

The driver is responsible for the welfare of animals in the vehicle during transportation.

Animals must be transported for the minimum time practicable.

Cats and small dogs may be placed in secure, well ventilated, carrying baskets, cages or boxes. Large dogs may be restrained but all animals must be physically separated.

Care must be taken when transporting cats and dogs at the same time. They must be transported separately in such a way that minimises stress.

Vehicles used for the transport of animals must have the following features:

- provision for animals to be physically separated and restrained
- no protrusions or sharp edges in the framework, doors, partitions
- a design that is both escape-proof and prevents the protrusion of head and/or limbs of any 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
- weatherproof with adequate ventilation of vehicles both when stationary and in motion
- facilities for ease of loading and unloading animals with minimal risk of injury to the animals and humans
- materials and a design that allow for effective cleaning and disinfection.

9. Records

The following information must be recorded relating to each animal admitted for boarding: the name of the animal, contact telephone number and address of the owner or the owner's nominee and a description of the animal including:

- sex
- breed type
- colour
- age
- details of condition on arrival
- distinguishing features
- permanent identification details, where applicable
- date of admission
- expected date of collection
- expected check in/check out time
- details of medical, dietary, bathing and grooming requirements
- any collars, leads or belongings brought in with the animal
- vaccination status
- heartworm treatment (dogs)
- name and contact telephone number of the owner's veterinarian
- any behaviour changes during boarding.

10. Home Boarding Establishments

A maximum of 2 animals may be boarded in a home environment. Home Boarding Establishments are exempted from the following requirements of this code:

- Section 6.2
- Section 6.3
- Section 7.2.1
- Section 7.2.3
- Section 7.2.4

Despite this exemption where animals are kept in an enclosure it must meet the requirements of this code.

Council local law requirements, such as number of animals per property, must be met.

Was this page helpful?

 YES

 No

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We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal Owners of Country throughout Victoria, their ongoing connection to this land and we pay our respects to their culture and their Elders past, present and future.