

COMMERCE AND EMPLOYMENT DEPARTMENT

GUIDANCE FOR THE WELFARE OF DOMESTIC & WORKING DOGS

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GUIDANCE – FOOD AND WATER

Food

A nutritionally balanced diet will maintain a dog in good health and vigour and a good diet can also help to prevent the development of many diseases.

The dietary needs of a dog can usually be met by feeding it a commercial pet food that has been specifically formulated for dogs.

The diet of a dog should be formulated to take account of -

- a) its age,
- b) whether it is entire or neutered,
- c) in the case of a bitch, whether it is pregnant or feeding young,
- d) its size,
- e) its state of health and body condition (see Appendix 1), and
- f) its normal level of activity, work or exercise.

Lean meat alone is not a balanced diet and should not be fed to dogs, without other food, for prolonged periods as it does not contain enough vitamins and minerals to maintain good health. Dog foods that are prepared at home should provide for the protein, fat, carbohydrate, vitamin and mineral requirements of a dog.

Bones need to be fed to dogs with care as they can damage teeth and gums and may cause other oral injuries and fragments can obstruct the airway or cause damage to the digestive organs. Large, raw cylindrical shaft limb bones are a lower risk. When a bone has been gnawed to a size that it could be swallowed whole, it should be disposed of to prevent injury to the dog.

Dogs that are pregnant or feeding puppies and dogs that are ill, old or young have different dietary needs from an average, healthy, adult dog. Dog Feeds specifically formulated to meet special dietary needs are commercially available. As dogs age their need for water and for food of a type which is nutritious and easily digested increases. A dog over the age of 7 years (and giant breeds over the age of 5 years) should be provided with a diet formulated specifically for older dogs.

Dogs should not be fed one hour before or after exercise, this is particularly important for large breeds and breeds with deep chests.

Number of Meals

The number of meals provided per day should take account of the age and health of a dog and how much work or exercise it normally undertakes, and in the case of bitches, whether they are pregnant or feeding young. However, generally one to two meals per day are sufficient for healthy, active, adult dogs.

Typically puppies should have small quantities of meat based foods introduced from 3 weeks of age and they are generally weaned between 6 and 8 weeks of age. As a guide, once weaned they should be offered 5 meals a day until 12 weeks of age, 4 meals a day until 16 weeks of age, 3 meals a day until 24 weeks of age and then 2 meals daily until skeletal maturity (1 year for small breeds, 18 months for giant breeds). Some puppies will not eat all the food that they are offered and if this occurs the number of meals may be reduced.

Amount of Food

Ideally a dog should be fed enough to maintain it at a body condition score of 3. Appendix 1 is a guide to condition scoring, however, account must be taken of the familiar characteristics of particular breeds (such as the Saluki) as some may, for example, have a narrow waist and a slightly 'ribby' appearance that is considered normal for that breed.

A dog should not be fed less than is normally necessary to maintain it in good health and condition other than for health reasons on the advice of a veterinary surgeon or an animal nutritionist.

A dog should not be underfed to create hunger to enhance training using food rewards as under the animal welfare legislation an owner or keeper is required to provide a dog with food of sufficient quantity and quality to keep it in good health. Ideally a dog should not be fed between its normal feeding times, but if food is used as a training reward, the amount of food a dog has at meal times should be adjusted to take this into account. Commercially formulated 'treats' may not be nutritionally balanced and may be high in calories. Ideally treats should not constitute more than 10% of the daily calorific intake of a dog.

If a dog is overfed and exercised too little, it will gain weight and may become obese. This will reduce its quality of life and can also lead to health problems and may significantly reduce its life expectancy.

Commercial pet foods that are specifically formulated for dogs usually provide guidance on the amount to feed to be fed on a daily basis, though this may need to be increased or decreased slightly so as to maintain a suitable body condition.

In the case of doubt, information on diet should be obtained from a breed society, an animal nutritionist or a veterinary surgeon.

Water

An owner or keeper is required under the animal welfare legislation to provide a dog with a supply of fresh drinking water of sufficient quality to keep it in good health (hydrated).

Domestic tap water should be provided for a dog and whilst a dog may drink from pools and puddles, drinking in this way should not be its main or only source of water.

The amount of water provided should take account of -

- a) its age,
- b) in the case of a bitch, whether it is pregnant or feeding young,
- c) its size,
- d) its state of health and body condition (see Appendix 1),
- e) its normal level of activity, work or exercise, and
- f) environmental conditions.

Signs of dehydration in a dog include -

- a) sunken eyes,
- b) lethargy,
- c) loss of appetite,
- d) dry gums and mouth, and
- e) depression.

GUIDANCE – LIVING ENVIRONMENT

Outside Space

If a medium sized dog is regularly kept outside for extended periods it should be provided with a minimum floor area, of 16 sq.m for a single dog with an increase of 9 sq.m for each additional dog. The minimum outside floor areas for different size categories of dog are provided in the table below. This will provide sufficient space for dogs to stand up, stretch, walk three paces and turn around and to be able to relieve themselves without needing to walk through a soiled area to return to a resting place, kennel or shelter.

Dog size category	Maximum height at shoulder (cm)	Weight range (kg)	Minimum outside space for one dog (m²)	Minimum additional space for each additional dog (m²)
Toy	< 5	< 25	9	4
Small	5 - 10	35	10	6
Small/Medium	10 - 20	45	14	8
Medium	20 - 40	60	16	9
Large	40 - 55	70	18	10
Giant	> 55	> 70	20	14

Bed and Bedding

If a bed is provided it should be large enough for a dog to lie down in a normal posture and if bedding is provided it should be clean, comfortable and dry.

GUIDANCE - HEALTH

Monitoring Health

The health of a dog should be checked daily, by observing whether it is bright, alert, and responsive, whether it has its normal posture, whether it shows signs of injury, pain or distress and whether it is eating, drinking, urinating, defecating and behaving normally.

Signs of illness or injury in a dog include changes in appetite or water intake, listlessness and lethargy, reluctance to exercise, slower to react to stimulation, a large, open wound and profuse or persistent bleeding, breathing difficulties and/or cough, persistent straining, more frequent toileting, diarrhoea and vomiting, itchiness, baldness and or poor coat quality, lameness or discomfort, including a change in normal posture, change in normal behaviour and weight loss. This list is not exhaustive.

In the case of doubt, advice should be obtained from a veterinary surgeon.

Exercise

Regular exercise is essential for a dog and provides it with the opportunity to encounter novel situations which helps reduce boredom and the development of psychological distress. Exercise also helps maintain fitness and health and is particularly important for working dogs. Working dogs include those that are used for hunting, guard dogs and dogs used to manage livestock.

A healthy dog should have at least 20 minutes of exercise every day with the opportunity to explore a safe outdoor environment which is different to that of its home. However, the period of exercise should be adjusted to take account of the age, breed and general health and fitness of a dog.

Older dogs require less exercise and are less tolerant of high workloads. However, some physical activity remains important for good bowel function and general well-being and exercise should be provided even if it is restricted to the garden of the dog's home.

Dogs should not be exclusively exercised on hard surfaces (such as concrete or tarmac) as this can lead to worn footpads or on hot surfaces (such as hot asphalt) in summer, as this can lead to burnt footpads. However some exercise on hard surfaces is desirable as it will help to keep their claws trim.

A dog that is acclimatised to the Guernsey climate is likely to be most comfortable at an environmental temperature in the shade of between 16 and 21°C. If a dog is exercised at higher temperatures, consideration should be given to the risks of heat stroke, particularly if a dog has a heavy coat or it is obese, unwell or infirm or if the environmental temperature in the shade is greater than 24°C.

Signs of heat stroke include uncontrollable panting, reluctance to exercise or collapse. If a dog is affected by heat stroke, exercise should be stopped immediately and it should be cooled by drenching it with cold/cool water and placing it in the shade in a breeze. Ice-cubes and ice-packs can be used in an emergency as a first-aid measure but care must be taken to avoid ice burns. Veterinary advice should be sought as soon as these first aid measures have been taken.

Hazardous Substances

Dogs, and especially puppies, may eat things that are poisonous to them. They may drink or eat a poisonous substance either by accident or because they find something palatable. Substances that are hazardous to dogs include -

- a) foods such as raisins, grapes, macadamia nuts, onions and garlic, the artificial sweetener xylitol and dark chocolate,
- b) plants, such as azaleas, rhododendron, tulip, daffodil, sago palm seeds, some toadstools and autumn crocus,
- c) indigestible objects, such as wool, string and plastic bags, fishing line and fish hooks, bedding, toys, bones, underwear, and
- d) chemicals and substances (such as household cleaners and paints), slug pellets, rat poison (and the carcasses of poisoned animals), anti-freeze and medicines especially ectoparasite treatments, human psoriasis cream and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications, such as ibuprofen and aspirin.

This list is not exhaustive.

Care of Coat

A dog's coat should be checked at least once a week for mats and, if possible, these should be groomed or teased out. If this is not possible, mats should be removed by careful cutting with scissors (with care taken not to cut skin). In the case of difficulty or doubt, advice should be obtained from a veterinary surgeon or a professional dog groomer.

External Parasites

A dog's coat should be examined at least once per week for the presence of parasites and their eggs and faeces.

As a guide, if a dog shows signs of discomfort from parasites, such as excessive scratching, or moderate or heavy infestation is identified following an examination of its coat, the parasites should be treated. If there is evidence of extensive infestation or disease caused by parasites, veterinary advice should be obtained.

Care of Claws

Dew claws, the claws of older dogs and the claws of dogs that get little or no exercise on hard surfaces may become overgrown. Long claws should be carefully trimmed with sharp clippers or a suitable nail file/burr or emery board, with care taken not to damage the quick of the nail. Sharp or rough nail tips should be blunted with an emery board or nail file/burr. In the case of doubt, advice should be obtained from a veterinary surgeon or a professional dog groomer.

Hygiene

Good hygiene is important in order to avoid increased risk of infection and to minimise the threat of disease.

Cleanliness is improved by keeping areas around food and water containers clean and dry and by allowing containers to dry fully before re-use. Uneaten food should be cleared before it goes 'off', after each meal and before further feed is offered.

Dog faeces should be cleaned up as soon as practicable in order to minimise the health risks to a dog. Kennels, hard run surfaces and areas where a dog is tethered should be kept clear of faeces and should be cleaned and disinfected at least once per week using a disinfectant specifically formulated for animals, in accordance with the manufacturers instructions. Cleansed areas should be dried and aired before being used by a dog.

Where bedding is provided it should be regularly cleaned, washed or removed and replaced in order to manage parasites (such as fleas, mites and ticks) and their larvae and eggs.

Fresh meat should be stored in refrigerated conditions and other dog foods should be kept in conditions that are cool, dark, dry and free from vermin such as:-rats, mice, flies, slugs, snails and forage mites.

Collars

Ideally, a dog should be made accustomed to wearing a collar from a young age. It may be more difficult to get an older dog used to wearing one.

When fitting a collar, it should be tightened to a point where it is possible to comfortably slide two fingers under the collar against the dog's neck. If it is not possible to do this comfortably, the collar is too tight and should adjusted accordingly.

As a dog grows, its collar must be adjusted accordingly to prevent it getting tighter.

GUIDANCE BEHAVIOUR

Socialisation

Dogs are intelligent, inquisitive and social animals and particularly enjoy companionship. Such companionship may be provided by people, other dogs and other animals.

The most important period of learning for a dog is from approximately 2 weeks to 11 weeks of age, but can last for considerably longer. The first few weeks are also very important in terms of a dog learning how to react to other dogs, people and the environment. It will also learn to interact and understand how dogs communicate with each other by mixing with them. Much of a dog's behaviour and character becomes established by 11 weeks of age, and after 16-22 weeks of age it becomes much harder to properly socialise them: therefore every effort should be made to do so prior to this time.

However, a dog should not be forced to socialise if it is fearful or anxious, but should be gently encouraged, and early socialisation should be controlled and carried out under safe conditions.

Socialisation later in life should take account of the temperament of a dog and its usual reaction to other dogs, animals and people. Owners should keep their dog under control and if it is apparent or suspected that it has an aggressive temperament they should in addition muzzle it when in public.

Managing Boredom, Frustration and Stress

A dog that is kept away from people or other animals and denied mental stimulation can suffer emotional harm and develop problems such as excessive chewing, unusual behaviours or extended barking or howling; once established these behavioural problems can prove difficult to treat.

Dogs are inquisitive animals with active minds and they should be provided with a range of social and environmental stimuli and novel situations throughout their lives to ensure that they remain well balanced and free from anxiety and stress. Examples of how this could be achieved include -

- a) providing regular contact with humans, other dogs and/or other animals,
- b) providing a companion animal,
- c) providing regular exercise, including exercise away from the place where it lives,
- d) allowing access to a secure, hazard-free garden,
- e) providing toys of an appropriate strength and size, and
- f) hiding toys for a dog to find.

Toys should be alternated or replaced regularly in order that a dog does not become bored with an individual toy.

Toys should be checked regularly to ensure they are not dirty or damaged and are safe to use. Toys that are gnawed to a size which allows them to be swallowed are a hazard and must be removed and disposed of.

Stimulation should not be such that it is overwhelming or frightening.

Signs of distress

A dog can convey its feelings through its behaviour. When content a dog will appear calm and relaxed when approached by people and animals and should interact with them comfortably and positively. Behaviours which may be associated with distress include -

- a) panting, salivation, licking of the lips,
- b) excessive activity, such as pacing around, tail chasing,
- c) fouling or urinating,
- d) barking or aggression,
- e) excessively seeking out contact, both with people and other pets,
- f) hiding or cowering, and
- g) flattening the ears and lowering the tail.

This list is not exhaustive.

Training and Aids for Behavioural Modification

Where owners train their dogs reward based techniques are preferable. The least restricting or uncomfortable training method or aid should be used to achieve a training objective. Any punishment should be administered at the time of a misdemeanour and not at some time later.

Toilet training is an essential part of early learning. A dog should be introduced to a suitable outdoor location early in training where urination and defecation is acceptable, and rewarded for using this area as a toilet so that it will use it as a matter of habit.

Crates may be used to assist with toilet training, but puppies should not be confined within crates for periods of more than 1 hour and for no more than four times during the daytime. Excessive periods of confinement within crates can result in dogs becoming distressed.

A range of aids are available to assist training and to modify behaviour. These include clickers, training discs, choke chains, combi-collars, flat collars, long lines, harnesses, prong (pinch) collars, halters, thundershirts, long lines, whistles, electronic collars (trainer or behaviourally activated), electric fences, shrill alarms, crates and muzzles.

A dog owner who acquires a behavioural modification training aid should seek advice from the supplier of that aid as to its correct use or follow the manufacturers guidance as to its use in order to prevent misuse and the risk of causing injury, suffering or distress to a dog.

Advice

Advice on behavioural problems can be obtained from an animal behaviourist or a veterinary surgeon.

Tethering

A tethered dog should have continuous access to water and shelter from rain, wind and direct sunlight and a tether should be long enough to allow it freedom to move around and lie down in comfort.

A tether should be connected to a harness or a broad flat collar, should not be connected to collars which tighten under tension and should have at least two working swivels to prevent twisting of the tether. Tethers and swivels should be checked before use and maintained in good working order or replaced. Tethers should be at least 2 metres in length or 3 times the length of the dog as measured from the tip of its nose to the base of its tail whichever length is the greatest.

If a tethered dog is not under constant supervision, there should be nothing within reach of it that could injure it or with which the tether could become entangled. Nor should it be left within sight or sound of something that may aggravate it or cause it distress.

Ideally a dog should not be tethered for periods of more than 1 hour and no more than 4 times per day.

GUIDANCE - BREEDING

Selection of Breeding Dogs

Only dogs that are adult, well developed, in good health and condition and with a favourable temperament should be used for breeding.

Common inherited disorders include hip and elbow dysplasia (poorly fitting hip and elbow joints) and retinal atrophy (wasting of the light sensitive tissue at the back of the eye), some breeds being more at risk from such disorders than others. A relevant breed society or a discussion with your veterinary surgeon will be able to provide further information.

Bitches should not be intentionally mated -

- a) to a brother, their son or their sire,
- b) before their second season,
- c) so as to whelp more than once every 12 months,
- d) for the first time after the age of 5 years of age, or
- e) after they are 7 years of age.

Care of Young

Un-weaned puppies should be individually identified, checked and weighed at least twice a week.

Puppies rely on the bitch's milk to obtain all necessary nutrients for the first few weeks of life; however, the advice of a veterinary surgeon should be obtained on the need for supplementary feeding when the number of puppies exceeds six or is greater than the number of the bitch's milk producing mammary glands.

Puppies should be offered solid food from 2 to 3 weeks of age. From 3 to 4 weeks of age puppies will spend less time with the bitch. Puppies should be completely weaned onto solid food when they are 6 to 8 weeks old but this will vary with individual circumstances. Breeders can assist the weaning process by restricting access between the bitch and puppies from 6 weeks of age.

Ideally puppies should be regularly treated for parasites from 4 weeks of age.

Re-homing

Puppies should be capable of independent living before they are re-homed.

Ideally, breeders should ensure that there is a home for puppies before breeding a dog. New owners should be provided with information on feeding together with exercise requirements for a puppy and records of any veterinary treatment and worming and vaccination that the puppy may have received.

Neutering

Ideally, neutering should be considered unless a dog is intended for breeding. Veterinary advice should be sought on neutering. Neutering should normally be carried out before puberty unless a veterinary surgeon advises otherwise.

GUIDANCE - TRANSPORTATION

Dogs can also be restrained in private vehicles for transportation within the Island by means of harnesses which attach to seat belts or seat belt buckles. This will assist in ensuring they are securely confined within the vehicle to prevent injury etc.

This guidance is given by the Department with a view to securing the welfare of dogs. It is additional to the Welfare Recommendations set out in the **Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Domestic & Working Dogs** made by the Department and available at [insert link etc.]. A breach of the Code may be relied upon in Court proceedings.

Appendix 1.

Dog Body Condition Score Chart

Body Condition Scoring

1



Ribs, spine and bony protrusions are easily seen at a distance. These pets have lost muscle mass and there is no observable body fat. Emaciated, bony, and starved in appearance.

2



Ribs, spine and other bones are easily felt. These pets have an obvious waist when viewed from above and an abdominal tuck. Thin, lean or skinny in appearance.

3



Ribs and spine are easily felt but not necessarily seen. There is a waist when viewed from above and the abdomen is raised and not sagging when viewed from the side. Normal, ideal and often muscular in appearance.

4



Ribs and spine are hard to feel or count underneath fat deposits. Waist is distended or often pear-shaped when viewed from above. The abdomen sags when seen from the side. There are typically fat deposits on the hips, base of tail and chest. Overweight, heavy, husky or stout.

5



Large fat deposits over the chest, back, tail base and hindquarters. The abdomen sags prominently and there is no waist when viewed from above. The chest and abdomen often appear distended or swollen. Obese.



Association for Pet Obesity Prevention

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