

# Code of Practice for the Welfare of

## Dogs



States of  
Guernsey



# Understanding the Animal Welfare (Guernsey) Ordinance, 2012 - Introduction to the Code

Owning and caring for a dog can be a source of great enjoyment, but you should be aware that dog ownership is a major responsibility and a huge financial investment. On average, dogs live for around 12 years, but some may live much longer. Consequently, you should think carefully about all factors that will affect your ability to care for a dog and whether a dog is suitable for you. Would you be able to provide for all a dog's needs? You will need to consider the size of your property, the financial and time implications of having a pet dog, and its exercise needs. Caring for a dog can be expensive and you should consider whether, for instance, you would be able to afford the cost of veterinary treatment or pet health insurance.

Being able to own a pet is not a human right. If you are a tenant, you must ask permission of your landlord before you take on ownership of a dog. Some landlords require enhanced deposits from pet owners to insure against the increased risk of damage to the property by pets.

Even the best laid plans can go wrong, we are all susceptible to the unexpected, be it loss of a job or family member, a personal illness, an expensive bill, a relationship breakdown or even imprisonment. Changes in an owner's circumstances can impact on their ability to meet their pet's welfare needs. While you cannot plan for every eventuality, it is good to have someone who would be able to step in to help. If you are unable to care for your dog at any time, you must make arrangements for another suitable person to look after it on your behalf. Furthermore, if you are the head of the household of a child under the age of 16 years old, you are responsible for any animal that child looks after or owns. If you own or are responsible for a dog and fail to meet its welfare needs or cause it unnecessary suffering, you may be prosecuted under the Animal Welfare (Guernsey) Ordinance, 2012 (the 'Ordinance').



There is no one “perfect” way to care for all dogs because every dog, and every situation, is different, but they all have the same needs. It is up to you to find out what your dog’s precise needs are and how to meet them. Under Section 8 of the Ordinance, the owner or keeper of an animal owes a duty to take such care as, in all circumstances, is reasonable to see that the animal is –



**Free from thirst, hunger and malnutrition, by access to a diet to maintain full health and vigour and free access to water**



**Free from discomfort, by providing an appropriate environment including suitable shelter and a comfortable resting area**



**Free from pain, injury and disease, by prevention or by the provision of timely veterinary diagnosis and treatment**



**Free from fear and distress, by ensuring conditions and treatment to avoid mental suffering, and**



**Free to express normal behaviour patterns, by providing sufficient space, environmental enrichment and companionship, whether that be of the animal’s own kind, a compatible species, and especially in the case of dogs, human company**





## How to provide a suitable diet for your dog

**Diet includes water, and dogs always need access to fresh, clean drinking water to keep them hydrated. Without water to drink, a dog will become distressed and seriously ill, especially during hot weather.**

A dog needs a well-balanced diet to stay fit and healthy. Meals designed for people may not provide dogs with the balanced nutrition they need, and some foods commonly found in the home, such as cooked bones, grapes, raisins, chocolate, or onions, can be harmful or even fatal to dogs.

An individual dog's nutritional needs depend on their age, sex, activity, state of health and whether they have been neutered. Some dogs, such as those that are pregnant, or nursing puppies, have special dietary needs. Diets designed for adult dogs are not always suitable for growing dogs and puppies, which may have special dietary requirements. Other dogs, for example, senior dogs, working dogs and those with poor health, may also require a special diet.

Dogs need at least one meal a day and how much an adult dog needs to eat depends on the type of food, their age, sex, breed, bodyweight and how active they are. Dogs should be neither too thin nor too fat. Over or underfeeding a dog will lead to them becoming over or under weight, which can lead to health problems.

Dogs can suffer from digestive problems that can be caused by their diet being changed suddenly. Strenuous exercise shortly before, or after, food can also be harmful.

### What you should do:

Provide your dog with clean fresh drinking water at all times. If necessary, carry water with you when clean water is unlikely to be available.

Make sure your dog eats a balanced diet suitable for their individual needs and maintains a stable weight that is neither over nor underweight for their age, level of activity, sex, breed, and state of health.

Be aware that any change in the amount your dog eats or drinks may be a sign of ill health. If your dog's eating or drinking habits change, consult your vet.

Read, and be guided by, the feeding instructions relating to any dog foods you buy but adjust how much you feed your dog so that your dog does not become over or underweight.

Provide all dogs (including puppies) that have special needs with diets that meet their individual requirements.

Feed your adult dog at least once each day, unless advised otherwise by your vet.

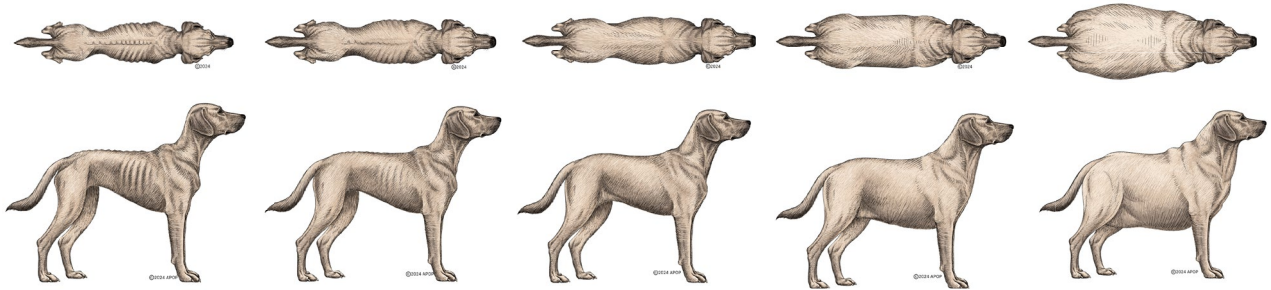
Do not change your dog's diet suddenly. Changes should be made gradually over several days.

You should not feed your dog shortly before, or after, strenuous exercise.

If you are uncertain what to do, you should seek advice on feeding your dog from a vet, veterinary nurse, or other reliable source.



## Body Condition Score (BCS) for Dogs



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Very Thin

Thin

Ideal

Overweight

Obesity

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Association for Pet Obesity Prevention





## How to provide a suitable environment for your dog

Your dog needs a safe environment and, whether they live inside or outside, they need protection from hazards. Examples of hazards include open windows and balconies, which may be inadequately protected to prevent your dog from falling from them; household and garden chemicals; and poisonous plants.

Dogs are naturally inquisitive, and a dog may put themselves in danger if they are left to explore unsupervised.

Your dog needs a safe, comfortable place to rest, situated in a dry, draught-free area. Living in a cold or damp place can lead to suffering. If your dog lives outside, they will need protection from adverse weather or other threats.

All dogs must be able to avoid things that frighten them and need a place to hide where they feel safe. If they are unable to distance themselves from perceived threats, your dog may suffer anxiety and stress.

A dog is naturally disinclined to soil its living area and needs regular opportunities to use a toilet area, or it will become distressed. Some dogs may need access to a toilet area more frequently, for example: very young, very old and those that are ill.

Dogs are vulnerable to heat stress. In hot weather they rapidly become distressed and can die in enclosed areas such as conservatories, vehicles, balconies, and outdoor kennels. On warm days, these are inappropriate environments for a dog, even for a short time. Their bodies cannot cool like humans, and so heat can become dangerous very quickly.





## What you should do:

Provide your dog with a comfortable, safe, clean, dry, quiet, and draught-free environment with appropriate ventilation, temperature control and lighting (either natural or artificial).

To ensure your dog can thrive, you should offer as much space, choice, and enrichment as possible. Dogs need ample space to stand up, turn around and stretch. Dogs that are unable to perform natural behaviours become stressed, unwell and have a reduced lifespan.

If your dog is kept in a kennel, you should check them frequently and ensure they are not in danger or distressed.

Provide your dog with access to an appropriate place, away from their resting area, which they can use as a toilet area regularly as needed and at least every few hours.

Make sure that you provide adequate protection from hazards and somewhere they can go to avoid things that frighten them.

Provide your dog with safe enrichment items for periods where they may be unattended. It is important to regularly clean and wash your dog's toys.

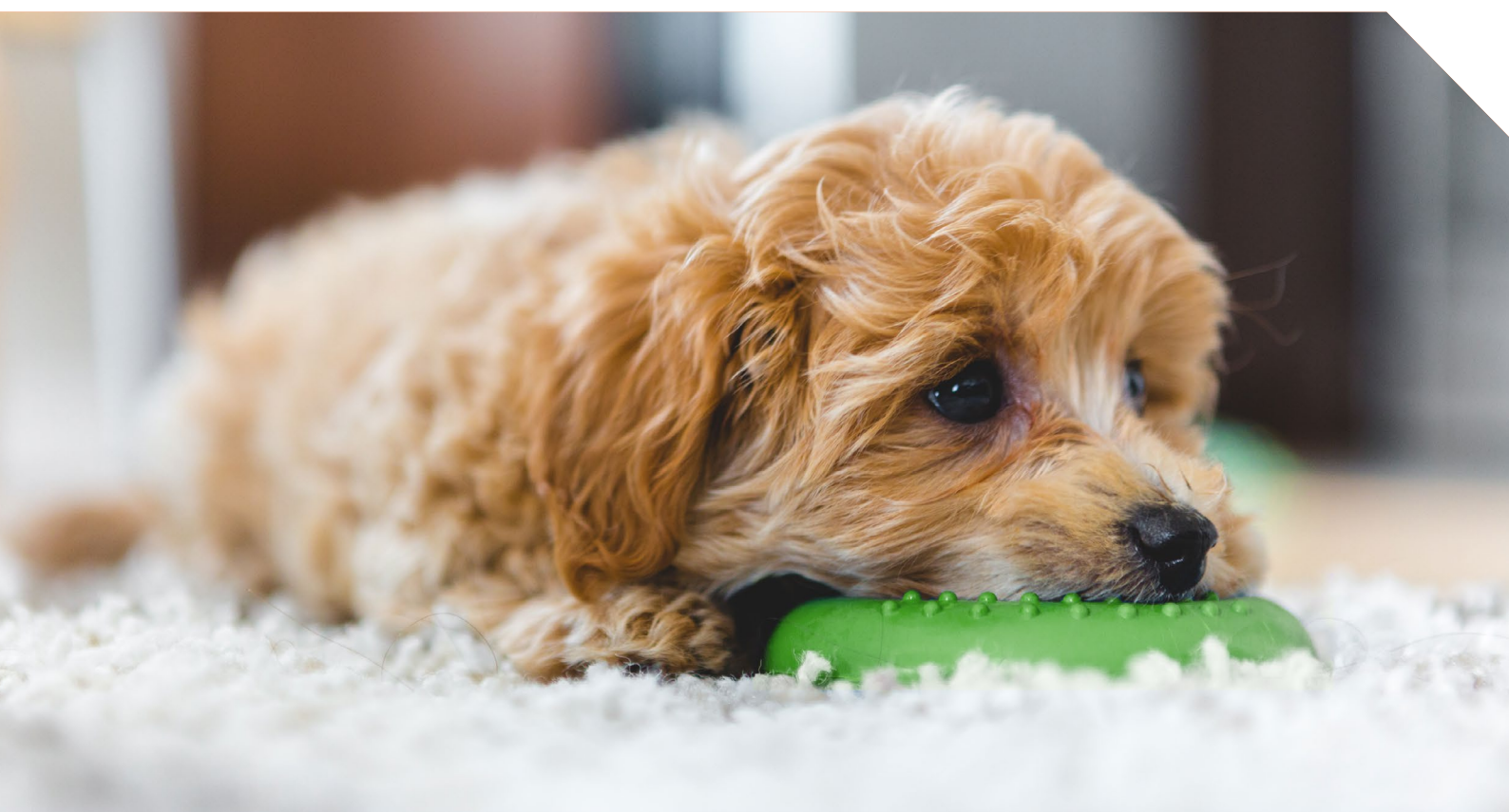
If you have more than one dog, make sure you provide enough extra resources. For example, toys, beds, hiding places and water bowls to promote a healthier relationship and minimise conflict.

Consider removing your dog's collar if they are left in the company of other dogs or if there are fixed projections upon which their collars could be caught. This is applicable to dogs left in the home, garden, and vehicles.

Do not leave your dog unattended in situations, or for periods of time that are likely to cause them distress or render them unsafe.

Keep your dog under control and safe at all times and do not let them stray.

If you are going away and not taking your dog, make sure they are only ever left with someone who can meet their welfare needs.





## How to ensure your dog is fit and healthy

**Dogs do feel pain, however, individual dogs and different breeds or types may show pain and suffering in different ways. Any change in the way a dog behaves can be an early sign that it is ill, or in pain.**

### **They may:**

- stop or reduce eating and lose weight,
- drink water excessively, less, or not at all,
- become withdrawn and unwilling to exercise or play,
- cry when approached or touched,
- show uncharacteristic fear or aggression when approached,
- try to hide.

### **They may also show specific signs of ill health such as:**

- discharges from the eyes, ears, or nose,
- excessive salivation, vomiting,
- difficulties passing urine, diarrhoea, or constipation,
- coughing or wheezing,
- excessively scratching and developing skin sores,
- limping or swellings.

This list is for guidance only and is not exhaustive.

Dogs are vulnerable to a range of infectious diseases, parasites, and other illnesses. Your vet can advise on ways to protect your dog's health and welfare including vaccination, parasite treatment and neutering.

Dogs benefit from regular health care. Long-haired dogs, or those with specialised coat types need help with grooming to avoid a matted coat.

If you decide to breed your dog, your vet can advise on the risks of inherited conditions and exaggerated features that could affect the welfare of the puppies. Caring for puppies is difficult and time-consuming, and the puppies are your responsibility, with the same needs as any dog under the Ordinance.

A dog which can be easily identified (e.g. by microchip or DNA) is more likely to be reunited with its owner if injured or lost. This will ensure they receive prompt veterinary treatment needed if injured. It is important to ensure the contact details held by any database are kept up to date.

### **What you should do:**

Take sensible precautions to keep your dog safe from injury, fear, and distress, including prevention of access to poisonous food, plants, chemicals, medicines, electrical cables, and any other hazards. You should always consult your vet if you are concerned that your dog has eaten or come into contact with anything that could be harmful.





Get to know what is normal for your dog. Monitor your dog daily and watch out for changes in behaviour or signs of injury, disease, or illness. Make sure someone else does this if you are away.

If you recognise signs and symptoms of disease or suspect that your dog is in pain, ill or injured; contact a vet promptly and follow veterinary advice regarding their treatment. If at any time you have concerns about the health or welfare of your dog, you should seek advice from a vet or registered veterinary nurse.

Carefully check your dog's coat regularly and groom/bath your dog, as necessary, to maintain a healthy coat.

Ask your vet how often your dog needs a health check, and about the things you can do to protect your dog's health. You should follow the advice you are given.

Clean up your dog's faeces to avoid disease transmission to you, your dog, other people, and animals.

Seek the advice of your vet if you are considering having your dog neutered. They will be able to advise you about the best age and time to have this done.

Seek the advice of your vet before breeding your dog and take all reasonable steps to ensure that you will be able to provide the care required during pregnancy, as well as finding suitable homes for the puppies before your dog is bred.

Use positive reinforcement training to help your dog willingly participate in home husbandry, grooming and vet visits. Seek advice from a qualified trainer who can help you teach cooperative care and management techniques.



## How to provide the right companionship for your dog

**Dogs are sociable animals that need, enjoy and value company, especially that of humans. Consequently, many dogs do not like being left alone and may suffer if left without company or enrichment.**

The length of time individual dogs can be left varies, depending on factors such as age, training, previous experience, breed or type, lifestyle, and housing conditions. However, no dog should routinely be left on its own for lengthy periods, experts recommend four hours as the maximum period. If the time left alone is excessive for your pet, you can expect behavioural problems that can be distressing for you, your neighbours, and your dog.

Enjoying positive experiences with people, dogs and other animals is an essential part of social development for a puppy. If a dog has positive contact with people, other dogs, and animals early in their life, they will be more sociable, and this can enhance their quality of life. Dogs that have not had opportunities to develop socially, perhaps by being removed from their mother or littermates too early, or which have had bad experiences involving people or other animals, may be frightened and display aggressive behaviours in normal social situations.

Dogs that are frightened, stressed, or conflicted, show characteristic body language such as flattening of the ears, lowering the tail, excessive panting and licking lips. Dogs will also exhibit displacement behaviours, a normal behaviour out of context, such as scratching, drinking, or sniffing the ground as a means of

coping with a stressful social interaction. They may also jump up at you or hide behind you to protect themselves.

Dogs usually get on well with other dogs in the same household but may need time to get to know each other in a neutral space first. Dogs need to have their own space and places in their home to get away from other dogs if they want to.

Dogs get to know the people with whom they regularly interact and can trust. They can become confused and distressed if the behaviour of people is inconsistent and unpredictable. Dogs need to display greeting behaviours and have the choice to move away from the situation if necessary. It is never acceptable to frighten a dog, cause pain, injure or encourage them to behave aggressively by teasing or tormenting them.





## What you should do

If your dog/puppy is not fully vaccinated, check with your vet before allowing it to mix with other dogs. You should consult your vet about health issues before socialising your dog.

Make sure your dog has opportunities to spend enough time with people and friendly dogs so that it does not become lonely or bored.

Make sure your dog has space when meeting people and other animals so they can choose to move away if they become overwhelmed. Do not restrain them and insist they get along, as this can create a fear response.

If you keep more than one dog, you should keep them together for company if possible. They will need to get on with each other but will also need space to get away from each other when they want to.

When dogs live together you should provide enough extra resources (e.g. toys, beds, food and water bowls and places where they feel safe) and space to stop them from becoming competitive and fighting with each other.

Make sure that your dog is never left alone long enough for it to become distressed, for some dogs this could be minutes. If this is the case, seek the help of an ethical dog trainer or behaviourist.

Encourage your dog to be friendly towards other dogs by allowing them to regularly experience positive social interactions. These should be in a controlled manner and your dog should have a reliable recall before being let off lead.

Puppies should be given regular and appropriate opportunities to learn how to interact with other dogs, animals, and people. These should be short positive interactions and never forced.

Give your dog regular opportunities to explore, play and provide training. Scent work is especially good for dogs.

You should ensure that dogs in your care are handled properly and are not stressed or endangered by other people or animals, including those who look after your dog for you when you are away from home.

Be consistent, kind, and gentle in the way you, your family, and friends, react to your dog. Never leave children alone with your dog.

When you are away, make sure your dog is properly cared for by a responsible person. When someone else is looking after your dog they also have a legal responsibility to ensure its welfare, and you should ensure that they understand its needs and any special requirements that it may have.

If your dog shows signs of fear or aggression, calmly remove them from the situation and seek advice from a vet, veterinary nurse, or ethical dog trainer/behaviourist.



How to

## provide for your dog's behavioural needs - dog training and behaviour

**The way a dog behaves is individual and depends on their age, breed or type, breeding, rearing and past experiences. However, most dogs are playful, sociable animals and they enjoy playing together with toys, people, and other dogs. They should have regular opportunities for positive interactive playing. Play with people and other dogs is a valuable source of interaction and fun, although dogs will spend some time playing alone with toys.**

Dogs are intelligent animals and can suffer from boredom and loneliness. If your dog is not mentally and physically stimulated, they may suffer or engage in inappropriate behaviour e.g. excessive barking or destructive behaviour such as chewing furniture. Aggressive displays or changes in behaviour, including vocalisation, hiding or dietary changes, may indicate that something is wrong with the dog's physical and mental health.

Dogs experience a range of emotions including happiness, anxiety, fearfulness, and anger. How they behave and their body language can help you understand what they are feeling and whether they are physically and mentally fit and healthy.

All dogs, in particular puppies, need rest. However, individual dogs have different needs, and some will sleep for long periods after exercise or food; others will need less rest and will be more active.

A dog needs regular opportunities to explore and investigate an environment beyond their home and garden. This is best achieved in open places where they can interact and play with other dogs and investigate new environments through sniffing.

The intensity and duration of exercise dogs can cope with varies with age, breed, and health. Some individuals need a lot of exercise, and you should take account of this when choosing a dog. Young dogs may need to have their exercise restricted during periods of rapid growth to avoid developmental musculoskeletal problems; however, they do need to explore and experience their world and everything in it.

A dog conveys its feelings through its behaviour, and as an owner it is very important that you understand how your dog behaves in various situation, with people, other dogs, and the environment. The context is very important when assessing your dog's behaviour as it often changes their response.

Training dogs is important to help them learn to behave appropriately and to make it easier to keep them under control. Force free training strengthens the relationship you have with your dog. An incorrect training regime can have negative effects on your dog's welfare and your relationship. Reward based training, which includes the use of things that motivate the individual dog (e.g. toys, food, sniffing and praise), is enjoyable for your dog and is widely regarded as the preferred form of training. The most important thing to train a dog is recall.



Training which includes physical punishment may cause pain, suffering and distress. Physical punishment can be direct, for example, hitting a dog, or indirect via an electronic training collar. These approaches to training compromise welfare, can lead to fear motivated aggressive responses, and often worsen the problems they aim to address.

Puppies need to be carefully introduced to the many noises, objects, and activities in their environment, some of which are frightening when first experienced. They also need to be adequately and carefully introduced to many different animals and people so that they learn how to interact appropriately and behave normally as adults.



## What you should do:

Make sure your dog has enough to do so that it does not become distressed or bored.

Make sure your dog has access to safe toys and suitable objects to play with and chew.

Ensure that your dog can rest undisturbed when it wants to. Puppies and older animals may need more rest.

Any collar, harness or other equipment fitted to a dog should be non-tightening and should not cause it discomfort, damage its skin, or impede its breathing.

Provide your dog with regular opportunities to explore and have positive social interactions with people or other friendly dogs. Do not force them into situations, dogs need space for successful communication. Scent work is recommended for all dogs.

Give your dog the exercise it needs to keep fit, active, and stimulated. If you are unsure how much exercise your dog needs; take advice from your vet, veterinary nurse or other suitably qualified dog behaviourist or trainer. Ensure their methods do not compromise the welfare of your dog. Avoid overexercising puppies, but still provide them with opportunities for positive social encounters. Avoid exercising dogs in extreme weather or during events which they may find frightening, such as firework displays.

You should know the behaviour of your dog when it is relaxed, fit and healthy, and therefore be able to recognise any physical or behavioural changes in your dog. It is important to seek professional veterinary advice to identify and discuss any possible health and/or behavioural problems. Your vet may refer you to a dog behaviour expert or dog trainer who should have a combination of qualifications, up

to date knowledge, skills, and experience and who treats dogs in such a way that their welfare is not compromised.

All dogs should be introduced gradually and positively to different environments, people, and animals. Do not force an anxious dog to face perceived threats or they may become frightened and display aggressive behaviours. Do not tell a dog off for growling, as a growl is a warning signal similar to a smoke alarm in the home. Look at the context and remove them from the environment, person, or the animal, creating distance between them and the perceived threat.

Some dogs have learnt to be fearful of other dogs and people. Don't force your dog to overcome these issues but discuss these anxieties with an ethical dog trainer or behaviourist.

Consider simple environmental management to reduce or prevent unwanted behaviour e.g. putting a safety gate by the front door to prevent escape behaviour or jumping up at visitors as they enter your home.

Do not rush to let your dog off the lead. Ensure you can call your dog back to you, so it doesn't become out of control or put itself in dangerous situations.

## Understanding dog behaviour

It is important to observe body language in context. Almost all behaviours, when observed on their own, could mean a number of different things in different contexts.

You should know the behaviour of your dog when it is fit and healthy and be able to recognise and understand the signs your dog, and others, use when they are worried, distressed, frightened or feeling unwell.

### Behaviours that may show your dog is happy:

- Seeking affection, long stretches
- Eliciting play; play bows
- Body is free from tension
- Soft gaze, round eyes without the white showing
- Ears are in a natural position for the individual
- Tail hangs and moves loosely, free from tension
- Relaxed face, open mouth or "smile"

### Behaviours which may be associated with stress include:

- Making distressed vocalisations (unusual to them)
- Hiding to avoid being touched or feeling vulnerable
- Excessive cleaning or chewing of their feet, flanks and fur
- Changes to their feeding or toileting habits
- Over-drinking or not drinking
- Reluctance to move or a change in movement
- Panting or salivation
- Repetitive movements, such as racing back and forth, tail chasing, jumping up
- Displaying more aggressive communication such as lip raising, growling or snapping
- Excessively seeking out contact, both with people and other pets
- An absence of behaviour normal for the individual





## How to Safely transport your dog

**A dog needs a safe and secure place within a vehicle that is large enough for it to stand, stretch and turn around comfortably.**

The vehicle must maintain a comfortable temperature in the space where the dog is kept.

Never leave an animal in a vehicle in direct strong sunshine or high temperatures. The temperature inside a car in full sun on a hot day can quickly rise to double the temperature outside, leading rapidly to distress for any animal in the vehicle. Overheating, distress, and suffering is likely when the temperature goes above 25°C for more than a few minutes.

Dogs differ from people in how they cope with heat. They lose heat mainly by panting and, unlike people, do not sweat a lot. Dogs with snub noses (for example, Pug) or dogs with

breathing problems or illness are much more likely to suffer from heat stress. Long-haired dogs are more likely to be affected than those with short hair.

### What you should do

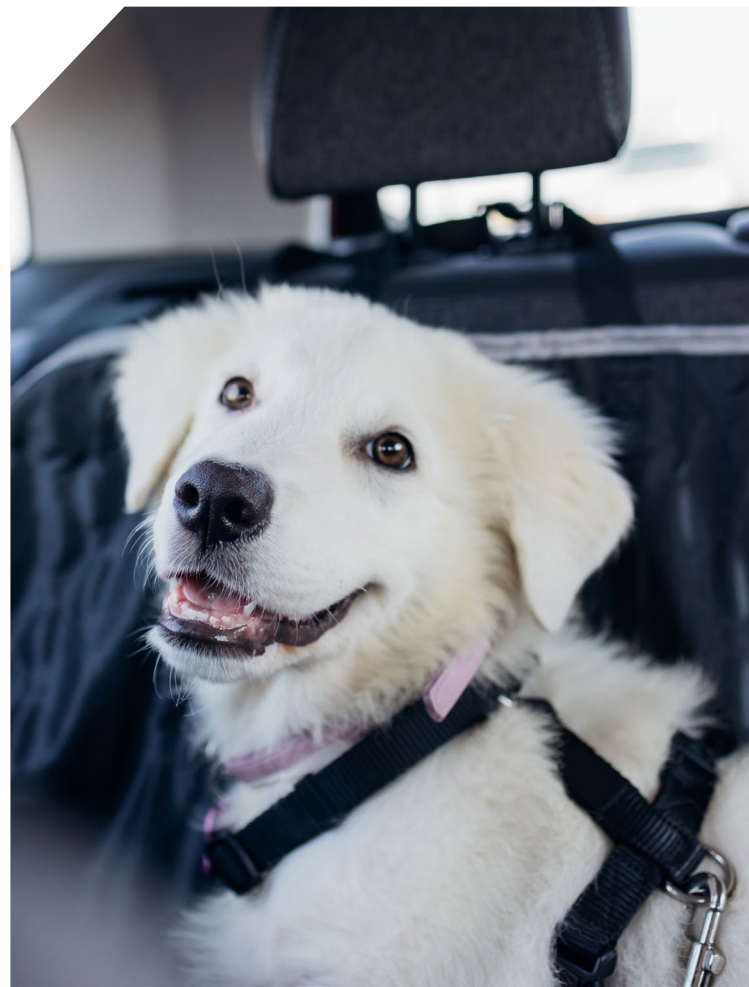
Provide a secure area, or crate, for your dog that is large enough for them to comfortably stand up, turn around and stretch.

Don't transport your dog in a way that it could come to harm, e.g. whilst unrestrained in a vehicle with the windows wide open.

Do not leave your dog unattended in situations, or for periods of time that are likely to cause them distress or render them unsafe.

### **If leaving dogs unattended in a vehicle:**

- Provide access to fresh drinking water
- Park the vehicle in full shade and ensure it'll remain in full shade for at least 30 minutes
- Leave windows (and/or doors) open to allow air to circulate freely around the vehicle, orienting it to utilise any natural breeze
- Remove your dog's collar and/or harness to ensure that it does not get caught on anything and come to harm.



# This Code of Recommendation applies to all dogs.

The purpose of the Code is to provide practical guidance to help you to comply with the provisions set out under Section 8 of the Animal Welfare (Guernsey) Ordinance 2012 ([weblink to the Ordinance](#)). It does not tell you precisely how to care for your dog, but it does summarise important things you should know and what to do when making decisions about how best to care for your dog.

A failure to comply with the Code of Recommendations may be relied upon in court as tending to establish liability for failing to meet the duty of care.

If you are unsure about anything to do with the care and welfare of your dog, you should always seek advice from an expert such as a veterinary surgeon or “other suitably qualified” specialists. These are people who hold the qualifications and experience to provide expert advice on canine welfare and behaviour.





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