

Number: WG42495



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government
Consultation Document

Dog Breeding Establishments – Guidance for Local Authorities

Date of issue: 23 July 2021
Action required: 17 September 2021

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Overview

A review of the Regulations was undertaken by the Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group ('the Framework') and the report and recommendations of the review were submitted to the Welsh Government in January 2020.

To address several of the recommendations in the Review, work is underway in relation to tackling barriers to enforcement of the Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014. Part of this process involves updating the Guidance that Local Authorities use when assessing applications and inspecting premises.

We would welcome your views and comments on the attached Guidance.

How to respond

Please respond using the questionnaire at the back of this document. Responses can be submitted electronically or through the post. Alternatively, an online form is available on the Welsh Government website at: <https://consultations.gov.wales/>

Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

Contact details

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This document is also available in Welsh

[Welsh Consultation](#)

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Cathays Park
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The contact details for the Information Commissioner's Office are:

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SK9 5AF

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Introduction

The Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014 ('the Regulations') replaced the Breeding of Dogs Act 1973 in Wales and provide for the licensing by local authorities ('LAs') of persons involved in the breeding of dogs. The Regulations introduced stricter criteria for breeding establishments and established an attendant to adult dog ratio at a minimum of one full-time member of staff to 20 adult dogs.

The regulations were the first of their kind in the UK and, whilst many welfare organisations and charities had differing views on the contents of the regulations, they were widely welcomed.

There have been ongoing concerns about the standards at some licensed premises, which was also a recurring theme in the responses to the Third Party Sales consultation.

Review of the Breeding Regulations

A review of the Regulations was considered and agreed in early 2019 (subject to legal resource). However, due to concerns raised in a BBC documentary in late September regarding the standards of some licensed premises in Wales, an urgent review was commissioned. The review was undertaken by the Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group ('the Framework') and the report and recommendations of the review were submitted to the Welsh Government in January 2020.

A [Government response](#) to the review was published on 4 March 2020

Findings and recommendations

To address several of the recommendations in the review, work is underway in relation to tackling barriers to enforcement of the Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014. A three-year Welsh Government funded project, which includes enhancement of training and better guidance for inspectors and improved use of resources within Local Authorities and across Wales, has been established and is being led by Local Authorities in Wales.

Part of this process involves updating the Guidance that Local Authorities use when assessing applications and inspecting premises. The review group has made preliminary suggestions which have been added to the document in red text. The group's full recommendations relating to the guidance are attached at Annex A.

Consultation

As stated above, the recommendations of the review relating to the guidance undertaken by the Health and Welfare Framework Group relating to the guidance are attached at Annex A.

Dog Breeding Establishments Guidance for Local Authorities

Welsh Ministers Guidance
to Local Authorities
issued pursuant to Regulation 13 of the Animal Welfare (Breeding of
Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014

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OVERVIEW

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to Local Authorities when they are considering or carrying out any function pursuant to the Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014 (the “Regulations”).

This Guidance seeks to ensure the needs of a dog, as set out under Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, are met, i.e. to include:

- (a) its need for a suitable environment,
- (b) its need for a suitable diet,
- (c) its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns,
- (d) any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals, and
- (e) its need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

However, this Guidance is not intended to be exhaustive, and Local Authorities are encouraged to take into account any other matter they consider relevant to the exercise of their functions under the Regulations. Any legal queries should be referred to the respective legal departments of the Local Authorities.

Overall, numbers of staff should be sufficient to allow staff to provide the level of care set out in the Licence Conditions and this Guidance document. This includes the interactions and procedures outlined to ensure that the welfare needs of the dog are being met, in addition to routine care and management.

Unless stated otherwise, any reference to ‘dog’ in this Guidance relates to all dogs kept on the breeding premises. ‘Adult dog’ refers to dogs not less than 6 months old and ‘puppies’ refers to dogs which are less than 6 months old.

1. ACCOMMODATION & ENVIRONMENT

Under Regulation 9 of the Regulations, before granting or renewing a licence, the Local Authority must be satisfied that all dogs are at all times kept in accommodation that is appropriate in construction, size, exercise facilities, temperature, lighting, ventilation, cleanliness and with appropriate bedding and whelping facilities. Dogs are supplied with suitable food, drink and adequate facilities to enable them to exhibit normal behaviour patterns.

The Local Authority must consider the following matters in deciding whether it is so satisfied.

1.1 Construction

The Local Authority should be satisfied that all internal surfaces used in the construction of walls, floors, partitions, doors and door frames are durable and impervious and can be easily cleansed and disinfected. There should be no projections or rough edges liable to cause injury.

When washed out, all areas (to include all kennel floors, exercise areas, passageways and kitchen area) should not be subject to pooling and be able to dry easily.

Partitions between kennels and individual exercise areas should normally be of solid construction sufficiently high to prevent nose-nose contact.

Kennel doors should be strong enough to resist impact chewing and scratching and should be capable of being effectively secured. Ideally, kennel doors should open inwards for health and safety reasons, i.e. in cases of large dogs pushing against them.

Where metal bars and frames are used, they should be of a suitable gauge with spacing adequate to prevent dogs escaping or becoming entrapped. Where metal edging is used, this should not present a risk of injury to the dog.

1.2 Size of Quarters

The following units of measurement, e.g. height, temperatures etc. provide advice to enforcement officers. It should be borne in mind that some dogs, such as working gundogs due to their type and nature may be kept in accommodation other than that which is laid out in the guidance. Each individual situation should be considered on its own merits.

Kennels should be divided into sleeping and activity areas. Kennels should be provided with an adequate size of sleeping area, such that dogs can stand, turn around, stretch and lie down flat in a natural position, with sufficient space for the door to open fully.

Special consideration should be given to whelping bitches and bitches in season. Kennels should cater for the maximum number of puppies having regard to the size of the breed and litter size.

The following are the recommended minimum requirements of enclosures for small, medium and large adult dogs.

Note:

Free access to exercise means the dogs have unrestricted daily access to an exercise area.

Limited access to exercise means the dogs have restricted access to an exercise area.

Calculations for size of quarters may not be suitable for hunt kennels or lodges. See 3.4 Kennel Layouts.

Small Size Dogs

No. of adult dogs	Free access to Exercise	Limited access to Exercise
1	2.5 sq m	4.5 sq m
2	2.5 sq m	4.5 sq m
3	4.5 sq m	6.5 sq m
4	6.0 sq m	8.5 sq m

Medium Size Dogs

No. of adult dogs	Free access to exercise	Limited access to exercise
1	2.5 sq m	4.5 sq m
2	4.5 sq m	6.5 sq m
3	6.0 sq m	8.5 sq m

Large Size Dogs

No. of adult dogs	Free access to exercise	Limited access to exercise
1	4.5 sq m	6.5 sq m
2	6.0 sq m	8.5 sq m

If the licenced premises operate in a domestic home and dog cages are used, the Local Authority should consider whether the cages are suitable for the size of dog kept.

Where used, cages should be of sufficient size to allow each dog to be able to sit and stand at full height, step forward, turn around, stretch and lie down in a natural position and wag its tail, without touching the sides of the crate. Dogs should not normally be confined to a crate for more than a total of a nine-hour period during any 24 hours.

1.3 Bedding

Beds and bedding should be provided and be suitable to allow dogs to be comfortable. A dog bed should be of a durable construction, away from draughts, and be a suitable size for the breed of dogs kept. It should be large enough for each dog to be able to lie flat on its side.

Bedding should be capable of being easily cleaned, disinfected and all bedding material in use should be clean, non-irritant and dry. If dogs chew their beds, alternative bedding should be sought.

In most circumstances it would be advisable that each adult dog should have access to a bed of its own*, however the Local Authority may be satisfied that this is not necessary in all circumstances.

If it is the intention for the premises to use animal bedding sourced from waste (e.g. wood, textiles etc.) the licence holder will need to ensure that it is suitable and that they have the relevant permissions in place. Further advice can be sourced from [Natural Resources Wales](#) on 0300 065 3000.

* Hounds kept at hunt kennels are pack animals and therefore should be housed together. Hounds are usually kept in groups of 20–40 animals in compartments or lodges with a raised, insulated sleeping area or bed

Further information on recommended standards at hunt kennels can be found in the Master of Fox Hounds “The Code of Practice for the Welfare of Hounds in Hunt Kennels”

1.4 Temperature & Heating

Local Authorities should consider whether kennels should be insulated so as to prevent extremes of temperature and whether heating and cooling facilities are necessary.

There should be some part of the sleeping area where the dog is able to enjoy a minimum temperature relevant to the breed/type of dog. For most this is likely to be between 10°C and 26°C (this may require consideration for certain breeds e.g. Huskies), except for puppies under four weeks of age where the Local Authority should consider whether the temperature should be between 26°C (79°F) to 28°C (82°F).

Local Authorities should consider whether any heat sources used appear safe for use and comply with all regulatory requirements.

1.5 Lighting

Local Authorities should consider whether there is sufficient light provided in exercise and sleeping areas so that all parts are clearly visible. Where practicable this should be natural light. Alternatively an artificial lighting system that can be switched off at night to allow proper sleep patterns can be used.

1.6 Ventilation

The Local Authority should consider whether ventilation is adequate in all interior areas and avoids the creation of excessive localised draughts in the sleeping areas.

1.7 Cleanliness

The Local Authority should consider whether there is an adequate cleansing schedule for purposes of disease control and wellbeing of the dogs.

A documented cleansing schedule should include a suitable disinfectant effective against micro-organisms responsible for canine diseases and should be put in the health plan. Dilution rates must be at least those specified in the approval.

1.8 Pest Control

A Local Authority should consider whether the licence applicant has taken adequate measures to minimise the risks from rodents, insects and other pests on the premises. As an example, all food should be kept in rodent proof containers.

If any pest control treatments containing poisonous or irritant materials are on the premises, they should be safely positioned so as not to allow dogs contact.

1.9 Waste Disposal

The Local authority should consider whether the licence applicant's premises have adequate facilities for storage and disposal of waste in accordance with the appropriate legislation on waste disposal.

The relevant waste legislation includes controls on onsite treatment and disposal and the onward transfer of wastes from the breeding premises. The reasons these controls are in place is to protect human health and the environment (includes animals and plants etc.).

Natural Resources Wales has produced a guidance document that will support Local Authorities and licence holders in understanding their obligations. A copy of this guidance can be obtained by contacting [Natural Resources Wales](#) on 03000 065 3000.

1.10 Whelping Facilities

Local authorities should be satisfied that whelping facilities provide bitches with a designated area/kennel prior to whelping, with a suitable whelping box/bed. However, they should not be completely isolated from the sight, sound and smell of other familiar bitches and daily contact with humans. Heating facilities should be adequate, secure, safe and capable of providing the range of temperatures suitable for both pups and bitch.

The facilities should cater for the maximum number of puppies, and take account of breed size and litter size. An area should be provided within the whelping area where a bitch can rest away from her puppies. The bed should contain bedding to ensure a soft surface for the bitch and to enable the absorption of mess resulting from whelping.

Bedding should be of soft material that may be covered by absorbent material. The use of newspaper alone is not acceptable other than for short periods during whelping. Sawdust and straw should not be used in whelping beds. Cleanliness of the whelping and surrounding areas is paramount and all materials used in the construction and maintenance of these areas should be capable of being easily cleaned on a regular basis.

1.11 Puppy Facilities

Local Authorities should consider whether there should be a specific area set aside for the socialisation of all litters e.g. in mimicking environmental conditions in a home or work environment.

2. DIET AND NUTRITION

Regulation 9 of the Regulations requires a Local Authority to be satisfied that dogs are supplied with suitable food and drink. Local authorities should be satisfied that fresh clean water is available at all times and changed at least daily and that adequate and suitable food is available.

2.1 Food & Drink

Local Authorities should consider whether eating and drinking equipment is suitable and capable of being easily cleansed and disinfected. In particular, that there is a system to ensure an adequate supply of water and consideration of whether fixed water bowls are advisable.

All dogs should be supplied with adequate food suitable to their age, breed, activity level and stage of breeding cycle. Puppies should start the weaning process as soon as they are capable of ingesting food on their own. The food offered must be appropriate for the stage of development of the puppies.

Weaning should normally commence at 3-4 weeks old. The weaning process should be gradual and aim to be completed by the time the puppy is six weeks old. Care should also be taken to allow the bitch gradually to reduce the production of milk. The initial diet may be liquid progressing to solid food over the ensuing period. Puppies should initially be offered food up to five times a day and care must be taken to ensure that each takes the correct share of the food offered. Monitoring weight gain is important. Food intake should be monitored to ensure that each dog receives an adequate quantity of food.

Dogs should normally be fed from individual bowls. Adult dogs should normally be offered at least two meals per day, dependant on breed and type of dog, and in accordance with veterinary advice and food manufacturers' recommendations.

'Ad lib' or continuous feeding is not desirable and should only be practised if specifically recommended by a food manufacturer or instructed by a veterinary surgeon.

Adequate routine cleaning procedures should be in place to ensure that the environment remains clean and free from infectious diseases. A standard operating procedure to administer this should be in place.

2.2 Food Preparation Facilities

Local Authorities should consider whether there are suitable and hygienic facilities for the storage and preparation of food for the dogs. A sink with hot and cold running water should be available for washing utensils and eating and drinking vessels. Where fresh and cooked meats are stored refrigeration facilities should be used. Food contamination should be prevented.

If hunt kennels are feeding flesh from fallen stock this should be carried out in line with the Animal By-Products (Enforcement) (Wales) Regulations 2014.

3. NORMAL BEHAVIOUR

Regulation 9 of the Regulations also requires that the Local Authority be satisfied that dogs are supplied with adequate facilities to enable them to exhibit normal behaviour patterns. The Local Authority should consider the following issues in deciding if it is so satisfied.

3.1 Enhancement & Enrichment

Under Regulation 7 of the Regulations an application for a licence must include a draft written programme detailing how the dogs on the premises will have the opportunity to express normal behaviour patterns.

In considering whether the draft programme does provide that opportunity, the Local Authority should consider whether it provides for:

- A suitable amount of human contact (e.g. grooming, training, handling and/or playing).
- A written exercise programme to include sufficient exercise considered to be at least 30 minutes a day for dogs and puppies over 6 weeks old.
- A suitable amount of access to outdoor environments which should be as complex as safety and cleanliness allows.
- If appropriate, access to play items which should be rearranged regularly and swapped (after cleansing) between runs.

3.2 Socialisation of Puppies

Under Regulation 7, an application for a licence must include a draft socialisation programme detailing how puppies will be introduced to human handling, domestic environments, play and how they will be prepared for separation from the dam.

A draft programme should provide for a number of activities that may include:

- Gently handling each puppy.
- Gradual introduction of low-level noise from 14 days onwards.
- Introduction to a variety of human contact daily from 21 days on.
- Play with suitable toys organised to play away from the mother.
- Where biosecurity and kennel health allows, puppies of different litters should mix in suitable environments. Care should be taken that removal of puppies for handling is done in such a way that it does not distress the dam.

If training is included in the programme it should be reward-based; harsh training methods which may result in pain or fear must not be used.

3.3. Staff:Adult Dog Ratio

The Regulations state that the Local Authority must attach to each licence granted, a condition specifying the maximum number of adult dogs and puppies to be kept under the terms of the licence.

The Local Authority should have regard to factors such as the size and type of dogs kept at a dog breeding establishment when deciding the most appropriate staff: adult dog ratio to apply.

In particular this relates to accommodation, the dogs' health and environmental and socialisation needs. The Regulations state that the maximum number of adult dogs and puppies kept at any one time is stated on the licence. **In no case will it exceed 20 adult dogs per full time attendant or 10 adult dogs per part time attendant** in line with the definitions provided in the Regulations.

The maximum of 20 adult dogs per full time attendant or 10 adult dogs per part time attendant should not be applied as the benchmark. This is a MAXIMUM amount of adult dogs. Inspecting officers should be proactive in applying an appropriate ratio for the specific premises in order to make sure that all required tasks, including adequate exercise and socialisation programmes, are realistically able to be completed during the working day.

If the conditions of the licence are not being met within the stipulated ratio consideration should be given to amending the ratio.

Supervision should be by a suitable and competent person who should be at least 16 years of age. They should be available and capable of dealing with emergencies.

Examples of how staffing/attendance levels could be evidenced (this list is not exhaustive):

- Proof of residence at the premises
- Payslips/timesheets
- Confirmation of volunteering from recognised charity/organisation
- Witness of attendance at inspection

If the number of dogs on the premises exceeds the specified ratio, actions to reduce the dog count or increase staffing levels over a specified time frame should be evidenced by the breeder.

3.4 Kennel Layout

Dogs used for breeding must be kept in an environment that allows adequate social contact. Local Authorities should consider if it is appropriate for dogs to be housed in the company of others, unless for reasons of safety and wellbeing they are better kept in isolation.

Hounds kept at hunt kennels are commonly housed in lodges. Each kennel / lodge should provide a raised area where adult dogs can enjoy an elevated view of their surroundings.

The kennel environment should be designed to ensure the safety, wellbeing and welfare of the occupants. This should be reflected in the enhancement and enrichment plan.

4. HEALTH AND WELFARE

It is a condition of all licences issued under the Regulations that the licence holder must take all reasonable steps to protect dogs from pain, suffering, injury and disease. The Local Authority should consider the following in deciding whether that condition is met.

4.1 Registration with a Veterinary Surgeon

Local Authorities should be satisfied that all licence holders are registered with a Veterinary Practice with full details made available to the Licensing Authority.

The role of the private veterinary surgeon, and that of the inspecting veterinary surgeon, should be clearly separated and defined. Inspecting vets should be independent and should not inspect their own clients' premises.

4.2 Health and Welfare Plan

Local Authorities should be satisfied that the licence holder has agreed a documented health and welfare plan with their Veterinary Surgeon. **The health and welfare plan should be a working document used in the daily husbandry and management of the establishment.** This should include a vaccination plan and methods of parasitic control.

Early vaccination is recommended against Canine Distemper, Infectious Canine Hepatitis (Canine Adenovirus), Leptospirosis and Canine Parvovirus unless vaccination is contra-indicated on the direction of their Veterinarian.

Vaccination records should be kept for each dog (adult(s) and puppies) and be up to date.

Agreements with their vet should be evidenced by vaccination records.

4.3 Medicines

All medication must be used as per manufacturer's instruction or veterinary prescription.

4.4 Health Status of dogs

The Local Authority should require the licence holder to undertake daily physical inspection of every animal to check for any signs of illness or distress **and record those checks**

All breeding animals must receive an annual health examination from a veterinary surgeon that must be recorded including microchip number.

The Local Authority should also be satisfied that a licence holder will seek advice from a Veterinary Surgeon where a dog shows signs of significant injury, illness or behavioural disorder and when these deteriorate following advice and treatment.

Puppies should receive a veterinary health examination prior to sale that must be recorded including the microchip number.

4.5 First aid kit

A fully stocked first-aid kit suitable for use on all dogs should be available and accessible on the premises.

4.6 Protection from fire

There should be a documented emergency evacuation plan and fire warning procedures in place. This should be posted where staff can easily see and become familiar with it.

Firefighting equipment and detectors should be properly maintained and fire extinguishers serviced or replaced as required.

Heating appliances should not be sited in a location or manner where they may present a risk of fire or risk to dogs.

Precautions should be taken to prevent any accumulation of material, which may present a risk of fire.

4.7 Strategy for the retirement of breeding bitches and stud dogs.

Local Authorities should consider the licence holders strategy for dealing with retired dogs including means of disposal and/or methods of re-homing that ensures the welfare of the dog as far as possible.

The retirement plan should include neutering by the breeder's veterinary surgeon of ex-breeding animals, prior to re-homing.

4.8 Transport of Dogs

When stud dogs, breeding bitches and puppies are being transported licensees should ensure full compliance with the Welfare of Animals (Transport) (Wales) Order 2007 and or the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Transportation of young dogs (less than 8 weeks old) in a commercial enterprise is subject to the requirement in Annex I to Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005, i.e. to be accompanied by their mother.

Recommendations relating to the Guidance for Local Authorities

R16. Prior to [amendments to the conditions suggested], it is recommended that the detail within the Guidance document is revised with input from veterinary surgeons with relevant expert, to ensure that it contains all the necessary information.

R21. It should be clearly stated within the Guidance, that all breeding animals must receive an annual health examination from a veterinary surgeon that must be recorded.

R22. It should also be clearly stated within the Guidance, that all puppies must receive a veterinary health examination prior to sale that must be recorded.

R24. Consideration should be given to which veterinary role is best placed to perform the "Fitness to Breed" examination. Consideration should be given to passing this role to the LA appointed inspecting vet at the annual inspection.

R25. The guidance on accommodation (sizing and layout) and exercise provision should be revised. A single set of enclosure sizes should be used in the Guidance, and these should be relative to actual dog length and height measurements, for greater clarity. The wording should also be reviewed around the using of crating for dogs in the home.

R31. The guidance on enrichment and socialisation for puppies should be updated and made more detailed and focussed on outcomes. The Welsh Government template socialisation and enrichment plan documents should be updated to record the demonstration of each activity during the inspection. The Guidance should include a requirement for the enrichment and socialisation plans to be demonstrated at the time of inspection.

R32. The Guidance should recommend the inspection of licensed breeding establishments at least twice per year and that one of these inspections should be unannounced.

R33. The revised Guidance document should be adopted universally by all LAs as the basis of their Model Licence Conditions and the standard against which to perform inspections.

R48. A system of assigning scores to breeding establishments based on existing licensing inspections should be considered. Every aspect of the inspection could be allocated a score that could be combined in a weighted formula to give a total breeder score. Whilst there are advantages to such a system, a more urgent priority is for all licensed establishments to achieve a good standard of animal welfare in accordance with the requirements set out in the Guidance.

R49. The Guidance should state that the retirement plan must include neutering by the breeder's veterinary surgeon of ex-breeding animals, prior to re-homing.

R51. The Health Plan drawn up in conjunction with the private veterinary surgeon and reviewed annually, should include a “breeding for improved health” plan, aiming to reduce any hereditary issues seen within the breeding stock, as well as any health testing that the veterinary surgeon feels is appropriate. This requirement should be described in Licence Condition 3 and in the Guidance.

R52. The Health Plan, agreed with the vet and the breeder and reviewed annually, should include information on the supply and administration of vaccines as well as the types and schedule of vaccination.