

MINIMUM STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR PET GROOMERS

C1. Introduction

C1.1 This annex applies to any individual, group or business offering services involving the grooming of pets. These services include but are not limited to fur, feather and nail clipping, trimming, styling, bathing, brushing and drying. For the purpose of this section, groomers refer to any persons providing and/or conducting these grooming services. The pet grooming services may be conducted in a commercial establishment, static or mobile, or in a non-commercial location such as a private residential premise, with approval from relevant authorities. The conducting of animal-related businesses including pet grooming is not allowed in HDB flats.

C1.2 The following are minimum standards and best practices for pet grooming, which are supplementary to the minimum standards and best practices in Sections 3-6 of this code. All who are involved in the grooming of pets must familiarise themselves with the minimum standards, as failure to meet the minimum standards may be used as evidence to support prosecution for an offence under the Animals and Birds Act. It should be noted that where there is a licensing regime, businesses must comply with the licensing conditions, in addition to the minimum standards contained in the Code of Animal Welfare (for the Pet Industry) and the Annexes.

C1.3 Groomers who have reasonable grounds to suspect that an animal under their care shows signs of abuse or neglect, or who become aware of a potential welfare breach under the Animals and Birds Act, should promptly report these concerns to NParks.

C2. Grooming Procedures

Minimum Standards

- C2.1 Groomers must ensure that the animal is not injured or subjected to undue stress during grooming and must implement appropriate safety measures during grooming.
- C2.2 Animals must not be left unattended at any point during grooming. Staff must maintain physical supervision of animals at all times, particularly when animals are on grooming tables, bathing areas and during blow drying.

C2.3	When grooming with sharp instruments (e.g. scissors, shavers, clippers), safety measures must be implemented where appropriate, such as the use of blade guards and adequate animal restraint to minimise movement and risk of injury. Extra care must be taken when cutting nails and trimming the fur around the face and ears.
C2.4	Whiskers, especially those of cats and small mammals, must not be trimmed or cut.
C2.5	When drying animals, care must be taken to avoid heat stress and burns. Drying apparatus must be used at safe temperatures and durations. When a cage or box dryer is used, the animal must be closely and frequently monitored to ensure its safety and comfort. The dryer must be large enough to allow the animal to sit, stand, and turn around comfortably.
C2.6	Care must be taken in bathing the pet's head to avoid getting water, soap or shampoo into the eyes, nostrils, mouth or ears.
C2.7	Groomers must use bathing products (including shampoo and conditioner) that are suitable to the pet's breed/species and coat, as indicated on the product label.
C2.8	Full wet baths must not be performed on small mammals, unless warranted for special health or hygiene reasons. Small mammals that are given wet baths should be promptly dried and kept warm to reduce risks of excessive body heat loss.
C2.9	Grooming stations must be adequately lit to allow groomers to work safely and effectively.

Best Practices

- (a) Groomers should advise owners on their animals' grooming requirements, including the grooming care and maintenance between each professional grooming session, and the frequency of grooming and amount of grooming each animal requires.
- (b) Non-slip rubber mats should be placed in the bathing area to allow the animal's feet to grip on to for a sense of security.
- (c) After bathing, animals should be allowed to shake the water off their body. Groomers should then dry them promptly with a towel or dryer.
- (d) All tools and equipment required for grooming (e.g. scissors, shavers) and bathing (e.g. towels, shampoo) should be placed within arms' reach so as not to leave the animal unattended when picking up these items.

C3. Animal Health and Handling

Minimum Standards

- C3.1 Groomers must be able to promptly identify signs of fear, stress, or distress in animals. Appropriate action must be taken if these signs are observed. This may include taking breaks during high-stress procedures, using gentle handling techniques, or providing positive reinforcement such as treats. Groomers should define clear thresholds for acceptable stress levels and stop the grooming session if these thresholds are reached.
- C3.2 Groomers must be able to promptly identify signs of overheating or excessive body heat loss in animals. Appropriate measures to regulate the animal's body temperature must be taken if these signs are observed.
- C3.3 Where an animal escapes, is injured, becomes unwell, or dies while under the care of the grooming business, the owner must be informed as soon as possible and prompt veterinary attention sought, as necessary. Groomers must also notify owners if abnormalities (e.g. skin conditions, parasites) are observed during grooming.
- C3.4 Groomers must ensure that animals are restrained safely and appropriately during grooming, limiting restraint to only what is necessary for each stage of the procedure so as to minimise stress or discomfort. Groomers must employ safe, secure, and species-appropriate restraint techniques and equipment. This may include the use of a double-arm lock restraint on the grooming table, basket or soft muzzles, Elizabethan collars, towels or safety gloves.
- C3.5 Groomers must adapt their handling, restraint and grooming techniques based on the individual needs and requirements of each animal, taking into consideration the species, breed, temperament, behaviour and known health status.
- For example, animals with known health conditions (e.g. brachycephalic breeds, cardiac or orthopaedic disease), anxious or old animals must be handled with extra care and precaution, given the increased risk of stress, pain, injury, or aggravation of existing health issues.
- C3.6 Prior to grooming, groomers must assess and interact with each animal to determine whether they are able to manage it safely. Groomers may decline to accept animals for grooming on medical or behavioural grounds, or where there are concerns for the safety of the animal and/or staff.

Best Practices

- (a) Contact between animals should be limited, particularly if they are not from the same household.
- (b) Groomers should perform physical checks on animals before starting grooming, looking for abnormalities or signs of ill-health such as infection, parasites and wounds. Groomers are recommended not to accept animals for grooming if they are showing signs of infectious disease or serious ill-health on arrival, and advise the owners to seek veterinary attention.
- (c) For animals requiring behavioural interventions, groomers may suggest to owners to seek veterinary consultation for stress management options prior to grooming.
- (d) There should be at least one staff with up-to-date training in animal first aid present onsite where animals are held.
- (e) Groomers should identify and maintain an up-to-date list of contacts and directions to duly qualified and accessible veterinary services for use in medical emergencies.

C4. Animal Holding

Minimum Standards

- C4.1 Animals for grooming must not be kept together with animals for sale, boarding or training.
- C4.2 Animals must be housed individually (e.g. in carriers, holding areas or enclosures). Group housing or contact with other animals may only be allowed with the prior consent of the owner, and provided that the animals are of the same species, healthy, behaviourally compatible and there is no overcrowding.
- C4.3 Clean drinking water must be provided and accessible to animals held in holding areas and enclosures at all times.
- C4.4 Holding areas and enclosures must be in good working condition, well-ventilated, safe and comfortable for animals.
- C4.5 Holding areas and enclosures must be constructed and maintained such that they are free of hazards, and secure to prevent animals from escaping, getting stuck or injured.
- C4.6 The animal's environment must not be exposed to excessive noise, heat, humidity or draughts.

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| C4.7 | Holding areas and enclosures must be of a suitable size so that the animal has sufficient space to move freely, turn around, lie down, stretch and stand upright on its hind legs with sufficient headroom. Housing requirements for specific species must follow standards stated in Annex A of the Code, as appropriate. |
| C4.8 | Groomers who house animals in their premises overnight must have a valid animal boarding licence. |
| C4.9 | Animals awaiting grooming or collection must be regularly supervised. Animals that are tethered or in group holding must not be left unattended and must be under constant physical supervision at all times. |

Best Practices

- (a) Animals should be held in a quiet, calm, and cool environment with minimal exposure to loud or sudden noises which may cause distress. Other animal species such as birds, cats and small mammals should be kept away from dogs to avoid disturbance by barking.
- (b) Noise from equipment or other animals (e.g. barking dogs) should be reduced in the holding areas such as through the installation of partitions so animals do not see each other, or by employing other soundproofing methods.
- (c) Animals with additional care requirements should receive closer and more frequent supervision. This includes young or old animals, animals with known health or behavioural conditions, as well as breeds with specific health considerations (e.g. brachycephalic breeds, double-coated breeds).

C5. Equipment and Facilities

Minimum Standards

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| C5.1 | All equipment and facilities must be in good serviceable condition and be clean and safe for use on/for the animals. |
| C5.2 | Groomers must establish and adhere to a disinfection and cleanliness protocol, using products that are within their validity period. All grooming tools, equipment, and stations must be properly disinfected after use and between animals. |
| C5.3 | All grooming products (e.g. shampoo, topical treatment) must be in-date and safe for use on animals. |

C5.4 Groomers must possess an array of suitable grooming equipment (such as clippers and scissors of different sizes, weights and configurations) to ensure they are able to meet the grooming needs of each animal. Groomers must select and use the appropriate grooming equipment for each animal, taking into account factors such as the animal's species, size, coat type and temperament to minimise the risk of injury.

Best Practices

- (a) Bathing areas should be weather-proof, draught-proof and have proper drainage.
- (b) Bathing facilities should include a separate area to dry animals after bathing.
- (c) Grooming tables should be stable, height customisable, easy to clean, and have a non-slip surface.

C6. Professional Competency and Training

Minimum Standards

- C6.1 All staff handling animals, including groomers, must be competent and properly trained in the areas of:
- Animal handling, body language and behaviour (including recognising stress indicators and defining acceptable stress thresholds);
 - Animal and human safety and hygiene.

- C6.2 Groomers must be proficient and properly trained in the areas of:
- Animal care, health and basic anatomy, including the ability to identify normal and abnormal states relevant to skin and grooming-related conditions;
 - Breed- and species-specific grooming requirements, skills and handling techniques, taking into account known health predispositions (e.g. brachycephalic breeds) and species susceptibility to stress (e.g. birds, rabbits);
 - Knowledge and use of grooming products and equipment.

Groomers must undergo relevant practical experience, training or courses in the above areas.

- C6.3 Groomers must operate within the scope of their professional qualifications. Groomers who are not duly qualified veterinarians must not represent themselves as a veterinarian nor perform any practice of veterinary medicine, such as providing medical diagnosis or advice,

prescribing medications, or conducting other practices of veterinary medicine (e.g. dental scaling or polishing, teeth trimming).

For the avoidance of doubt, groomers may provide general pet care information to owners such as recommending routine teeth brushing and use of grooming products for general hygiene purposes. However, groomers must not recommend products or practices in response to an observed medical condition, as this would constitute medical advice. Where a groomer observes signs of an abnormal medical condition during grooming, they must advise the owner to consult a veterinarian.

Where appropriate, groomers that provide brushing or similar teeth-cleaning services must inform owners that these do not replace veterinary dental health services.

C6.4 A responsible person (e.g. groomer, store manager) must be present onsite where animals are held for grooming. The responsible person must be trained in the necessary protocols to ensure the safety and welfare of all the animals onsite.

C6.5 Students, trainees and grooming assistants must work under the physical supervision of a suitably trained groomer at all times.

Best Practices

- (a) Groomers should attain professional, recognised or accredited grooming qualifications before conducting pet grooming activities.
- (b) Staff should periodically refresh their skills and knowledge by renewing relevant certifications, attending continuing education courses or workshops, and staying updated on industry best practices in grooming techniques, animal handling, welfare, health and care.
- (c) It is recommended that staff undertake additional relevant training on animal behaviour, welfare, health and first aid.

C7. Client Communication and Records

Minimum Standards

- C7.1 Groomers must check and discuss with owners on the following information about their animals prior to grooming:
- Relevant medical history and known health conditions;
 - Parasite prevention and vaccination status;
 - Behaviour, temperament, and demeanour.

C7.2 Groomers must explain the grooming process to owners and align on expectations, including animal handling approaches and grooming procedures, prior to grooming.

Groomers must ensure that owners are duly informed of the following:

- Potential risks or complications associated with grooming (e.g. shaver rash), including implications from the animal's known health or behavioural conditions;
- Contingency and response plans for incidents such as medical emergencies, injuries or escapes;
- Circumstances under which an animal may not be accepted for grooming or where a grooming session may be discontinued.

C7.3 The following records must be kept for at least 2 years, and made available to NParks for inspection if requested:

- Owner and animal particulars, including unique animal identifiers (e.g. microchip numbers);
- Medical history and behavioural notes as shared by owner;
- Details of each grooming session, including the groomer's name, date and time, procedures performed and any incidents or significant observations relating to animal health and safety (e.g. signs of stress, aggression, injury, escape or health abnormalities observed);
- Communications with owners before, during and after grooming.

For records in electronic form, the electronic records must be backed up.

Best Practices

- (a) Groomers should require owners to complete and sign a declaration form, covering the collection of owner and animal information, as well as the acknowledgement of the risks and liabilities associated with grooming. The signed forms should be retained physically or digitally for record-keeping purposes.
- (b) Groomers may choose to decline accepting an animal for grooming if an owner refuses to complete or sign the declaration form, or where an owner is found to have provided false or deliberately withheld information regarding the animal's medical or behavioural history.
- (c) Groomers should document the condition of animals through photos or videos before, during and after grooming, especially where health or behavioural abnormalities are observed. The documentation should be made available to NParks for inspection if requested.
- (d) Groomers should, as part of due diligence, check that animals under their care are up to date with their vaccinations and parasite preventatives, and

microchipped with a valid licence as appropriate for the species. Groomers should advise owners accordingly on any lapses.

- (e) Groomers should regularly check for potential animal health, welfare and safety risks in the grooming environment and grooming procedures. Where risks are identified, appropriate mitigation measures must be implemented to minimise the risk of harm to animals.
- (f) Groomers should establish standard operating procedures (SOPs), including but not limited to the following:
 - Requirements and steps for grooming procedures
 - Safe and appropriate use of grooming equipment
 - Safe handling of animals
 - Supervision and holding of animals
 - Response to incidents such as animal in distress, medical emergencies, injuries or escapes
- (g) Each grooming session should be visually monitored and recorded, such as through a closed-circuit television (CCTV) system or a body-worn camera. The surveillance must clearly capture areas where grooming activities take place (e.g. grooming tables, bathing areas) and where animals are held. Surveillance footage must be retained and made available to NParks for inspection upon request.

Please also refer to Sections 3-6 of this code and the other Annexes A, B, D, E and F for the other minimum standards and best practices applicable to the pet industry. Where there are licensing conditions that overlap with minimum standards and best practices, they will supersede the minimum standards and best practices.