
Guidelines for Animal Shelters



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GUIDELINES FOR ANIMAL SHELTERS

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Applicability of the Guidelines

1.1.1 There is variation in the interpretation of what constitutes adequate (i.e. minimum) welfare standards for animals. The guidelines for animal shelters seek to establish a common ground for all animal shelters in Singapore to agree on what is minimally appropriate for the care of animals in our local context. These guidelines were formulated with input from relevant stakeholders and the public, as well as referencing overseas Guidelines or Codes of Practices for animal shelters in countries such as Australia, the United States, and Wales.

1.1.2 Current legislation to safeguard animal welfare and prevent cruelty to animals resides in the Animals and Birds Act.

1.1.3 The objective of these guidelines is to provide guidance to improve the health and welfare of animals that are being kept at animal shelters in Singapore. This document is only useful if the animal shelters understand their social responsibility and commit to the welfare of animals under their care. Over time, the guidelines will be refreshed and updated to keep pace with local and international developments, as well as the improving standards of welfare practices of animal shelters in Singapore.

1.2 Animal Welfare

1.2.1 Animal welfare refers to the state of the animal; the treatment that an animal receives is covered by other terms such as animal care, animal husbandry, and humane treatment. Ethical principles for animal welfare include the Five Freedoms, namely: The freedom from hunger and thirst; the freedom from discomfort; the freedom from pain, injury and disease; the freedom to express normal behaviour; and the freedom from fear and distress. However, this model focuses on avoidance of negative experiences. Recognising that positive experiences are also essential to positive animal welfare, the Five Domains model, derived from the Five Freedoms, focuses on providing positive experiences in each of the following domains: nutrition; environment; health; opportunity/behaviour; and mental state. Under these welfare principles, an animal is in a good state of welfare if it is healthy, comfortable, well-nourished, safe, and if it is not experiencing unreasonable or unnecessary pain or suffering. Good animal welfare requires disease prevention and veterinary treatment, appropriate shelter, management, nutrition, and humane handling in order to meet each animal's physical, behavioural and emotional needs.

1.2.2 The guidelines are organised as follows:

- i. Sections 1 and 2 outline background information and definitions necessary for understanding the guidelines;
- ii. Sections 3 to 7 outline the responsibilities of animal shelters and principles of animal welfare that are applicable to them; and

- iii. The annexes list the needs specific to the types of animals commonly kept as pets in Singapore.

1.3 Definitions

1.3.1 Animal Shelters:

1.3.1.1 Registered as a society (ROS), charity (COC) or company (ACRA); and

1.3.1.2 Have animals under their care at their animal holding facility with the intent of offering them for adoption where possible.

1.3.2 **Owner:** in relation to an animal, includes a person in charge of the animal.

1.3.3 **Person in Charge:** in relation to an animal, means a person who has, whether permanently or on a temporary basis, the animals in the person's possession, custody or control, or under the person's care or supervision, and includes an individual who has the animal in such a manner in the course of the individual's employment.

1.3.4 **Veterinarian:** a person licensed to practise veterinary medicine in Singapore.

1.4 Responsibilities of the animal shelters

1.4.1 Animal shelters are places where animals that have been badly treated, or are lost, stray, or not wanted can be cared for, rehabilitated and rehomed to new owners.

1.4.2 The animal shelters have a responsibility and obligation to provide positive experiences for the animals under their care and ensure their welfare. Members of the public also often have high regard for animal shelters. It is therefore important for animal shelters to familiarise themselves with all provisions of the guidelines, to ensure a common understanding of what constitutes minimum standards or as best practices for animal welfare.

2 UNDERSTANDING THE GUIDELINES

2.1 **Minimum Standards** refer to the standards of animal housing, management and care that are deemed to be necessary to meet the basic needs of the animal. All animal shelters are expected to follow these standards minimally.

2.2 **Best Practices** refer to practices that the animal shelters are encouraged to adopt to further raise the standard of animal welfare and professionalism of the sector.

3 MANAGEMENT OF SHELTER OPERATION

3.1 **Accountability of owner**

Minimum Standards

- 3.1.1 Any owner should not leave the animal at any place, or cause or permit the animal to leave his/her possession, custody or control, whether permanently or temporarily, without making reasonable arrangements for the care of the animal*.
- 3.1.2 Any owner should take reasonable measures[^] to locate and retrieve the animal if it is lost.
- 3.1.3 Owners who handle animals should be trained in and competent to handle the animals in a humane and appropriate manner.
- 3.1.4 Owners are responsible for the shelter's ability to meet the minimum standards set out in these Guidelines.

*Owners should take measures to prevent the animals from escaping or getting lost, such as securing the premises or providing adequate supervision and control of the animal when it is not enclosed in the premises. Reasonable arrangements for the care of the animal include ensuring the animal has been handed over to new owners, or to caregivers (e.g. fosterers, commercial boarding service providers) who have agreed to care for the animal.

[^]If an animal is lost, reasonable measures must be taken by the owner to recover it. Reasonable measures include filing a missing animal report with the Police or AVS. In addition to making the reports, the owner can also put up lost animal advertisements and appeal to members of public while searching for the lost animal.

3.2 **Record keeping**

Minimum Standards

- 3.2.1 Appropriate records should be kept to ensure that all animals are identifiable (such as with the use of microchips), traceable to source (where applicable), and registered as appropriate. Records, including medical records, animal deaths and escapes, physical description and/or markings, and special dietary requirements, should be kept where available for as long as the animal remains in the shelter. If the animal is rehomed, the records should be shared with the new owner. Medical records include accurate identifying information; age, sex, species, and reproductive status; and a dated list of physical exam findings, vaccinations, diagnostic test results, procedures, and treatments (including medications with dose and route of administration).

Best Practices

- (a) The use of stock books, enclosure labels and daily cleaning record sheets is encouraged. Where records are computerised, there should be a back-up copy kept.

(b) New animal intakes should also have their weight and/or body condition score, photograph, preferences, owner history and details, temperament, medical and behavioural history and reason for intake recorded. Records kept should have space for notes or observations on any significant changes in the animal's condition or behaviour since arrival.

3.3 Pest Control

Minimum Standards

- 3.3.1 Proper protocols for pest management of the premises should be established to minimise problems with external parasites and disease vectors, such as fleas, ticks, flies, lice, mosquitoes and wild rodents. In the event that the external parasite problem persists despite attempts by the owner to resolve the problem, veterinary advice should be sought until the problem is successfully contained and managed.
- 3.3.2 Where pest management chemicals are used, the chemicals should be registered under the Control of Vectors and Pesticides Act (CVPA) 2002, or any other relevant legislation, and used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- 3.3.3 Appropriate safety precautions should be taken for both the workers and the animals when the premises are being treated. Animals should be removed if there is a threat to their safety or health.

3.4 Security

Minimum Standards

- 3.4.1 The premises should be secured to prevent access by unauthorised persons or the escape of animals.
- 3.4.2 Safe confinement should be provided to protect the animal from harm and distress, and safeguard against escape, intrusion by other animals and people, or accidental release into the environment.
- 3.4.3 All reasonable measures should be taken to ensure the animal's safety during its stay at the premises. This can include CCTV monitoring and putting up a contact number at the premises so that the operator can be alerted in the event of an emergency.

3.5 Staff, Volunteers and Visitors

Minimum Standards

- 3.5.1 New shelter operators who are not qualified veterinarians or veterinary nurses or technicians should attend training (on pet care and management) at a teaching institution approved by AVS. In addition, the operator should undergo a refresher course once every three years and attend relevant briefings conducted by AVS.
- 3.5.2 There should be a register recording the names of all staff and volunteers entering and leaving the premises and the corresponding dates and times of entry and exit. A visitor register should also be maintained indicating the visitors' names, visiting times, contact details and reasons for visiting the premises.

Best Practices

- (a) Sufficient numbers of competent staff and volunteers should be provided at all times to ensure proper, regular and timely attention to all animals held. When calculating staff requirements and rotas it is necessary to make allowance for absences due to training, holiday, sickness, maternity and unforeseen circumstances. Where necessary, appropriate numbers of volunteers should be sourced to complement staff responsibilities.
- (b) Records should be maintained of all staff and volunteers authorised to work with the animals (including any species-specific limitations), together with lines of responsibility, levels of expertise, training, qualifications and the duties they are trained in.
- (c) Staff, volunteers and visitors should receive training on health, hygiene, and safety, including prevention of zoonoses and disease transmission, and the appropriate use of animal food items brought into the shelter (e.g. treats). For example, staff and volunteers working with cats should be informed of the risk of contracting toxoplasmosis. Staff and volunteers who are feeling unwell should not handle animals. Staff should also receive appropriate health checks and/or immunisations to protect their health.

3.6 Emergency

Minimum Standards

- 3.6.1 There should be a written contingency plan for the safe and appropriate evacuation of animals in the event of fire and other emergencies. All staff should be briefed on the contingency plan and be suitably trained to deal with emergencies.
- 3.6.2 For animal shelters located at The Animal Lodge (TAL), there should be a fire safety warden to support TAL's fire evacuation plan.

- 3.6.3 The animal shelter should have suitable portable cages on standby to move animals in the event of an emergency.
- 3.6.4 There should be a person designated as a key holder with access to all the animal holding areas at all times. The designated person should be available and able to travel to the premises promptly to attend to an emergency.

Best Practices

- (a) The shelter should be equipped with an accessible first-aid box containing appropriate medical supplies for treating personnel.

3.7 Population Management

Minimum Standards

- 3.7.1 Shelters should practise active population management (i.e. intentionally and efficiently planning for the care of each animal in the shelter) in a manner consistent with the guidelines outlined in this document. Population management includes pre-intake planning, protocols for care and services, ongoing daily evaluation, outcome planning, and response to changing conditions of the shelter and animal.
- 3.7.2 Shelters should not allow animals to breed.
- 3.7.3 The maximum number of animals kept at any one time should be appropriate for the premises.
- 3.7.4 Shelters should know what care they can provide based on their resources (e.g. number of staff) before taking in animals, to reduce the animals' stay time. This helps them make quick decisions about whether to take in an animal or explore other options like foster homes. A veterinarian should be consulted where appropriate.

Best Practices

- (a) Shelters should keep track of population statistics over time (e.g. monthly intake and outcome type (for example, rehomed) for each animal type, length of each animal's stay, age category, animal status) to facilitate population management.
- (b) There should be a behaviour training and/or rehabilitation plan for animals that are meant to be rehomed.

- (c) Shelter animals should be sterilised where possible to prevent accidental breeding.

3.8 Resource Management

Minimum Standards

- 3.8.1 Shelters should have a clear financial plan to manage the expected income and costs for the next 6 to 12 months. There should be exit plans if the shelter ceases its operations, such as appropriate funds to meet the costs of closure and any remuneration for staff, as well as plans for the ongoing care of the animals. Financial accounts and records should be maintained according to the prevailing legal requirements (e.g. under ROS, ACRA, or COC).

Best Practices

- (a) Shelters should consider partnerships, collaborations and/or data sharing with other shelters or organisations to leverage resources and each organisation's strengths.

4 ANIMAL HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT

4.1 Housing Enclosure Requirements

Minimum Standards

- 4.1.1 Animal enclosures should be in good condition, safe and of a suitable size for the physiological needs of differing ages and species so that the animal has sufficient space to move freely, turn around, lie down, stretch, exhibit normal species-specific behavioural patterns, and have sufficient headroom to stand upright on its hind legs. The animal should have a clean and comfortable area to eat and sleep that is separate from toileting areas.
- 4.1.2 Each co-housed animal should have sufficient space as defined under 4.1.1. Unrelated or unfamiliar animals should not be co-housed until they have been assessed by trained personnel for signs of health or behavioural problems. Incompatible (e.g. aggressive or fearful) animals should not be co-housed, or should be separated by visual barriers when there is insufficient space to house them separately.
- 4.1.3 Animals should be provided with sufficient shelter and shade from inclement weather and extremes in temperature.

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| 4.1.4 | Enclosures should be kept clean, dry and well-ventilated. |
| 4.1.5 | All animals should be given the opportunity to hide and feel safe within their enclosures. Hiding places should allow animals to move out of sight of people and other animals at their choice. |
| 4.1.6 | There should be separate housing for different species. Unsterilised animals of different sexes should not be kept together. |
| 4.1.7 | Prey and predatory species should be housed away from each other at all times. |
| 4.1.8 | There should be individual housing for animals that are old or frail, aggressive, and for parents with their unweaned offspring. |
| 4.1.9 | Sick animals and new animal intakes with signs of infectious diseases should be placed in the isolation room/area. |
| 4.1.10 | The flooring should provide firm and safe support for the animals, and should not have gaps which may result in the entrapment of the animals' feet or paws. |
| 4.1.11 | Cages and enclosures should not be stacked more than 2 tiers on top of each other unless: <ul style="list-style-type: none">i) they are permanent fixed structures and placed securely on a frame or secured to the wall;ii) there is proper drainage of waste and wastewater which should not spill into the cages below; andiii) they do not cause the animals additional discomfort, stress, nor compromise hygiene or welfare. |
| 4.1.12 | Tethering should not be used as a means of permanent confinement for any animal as it can cause significant stress (i.e. should not exceed 1 to 2 hours at a time). Tethered animals should be monitored regularly. |

Best Practices

Enclosure Design & Construction

- (a) Enclosures should be of solid construction, such as sealed concrete or brick, and strong doors to withstand impact and scratching. Solid flooring should be provided to prevent pain, discomfort, and injury.
- (b) Construction materials should be safe and impervious to water to assist in cleaning and drainage.
- (c) Where metal bars or frames are used, they should be of a suitable gauge with adequate spacing to prevent animals from getting stuck or escaping. Where metal edging is used, it should not present a risk of injury to the animals.
- (d) Door openings should be constructed to allow easy removal of water and waste. Where possible, enclosure doors should open inwards to minimise the chances of animal escape.
- (e) A sloped floor for animal housing and individual exercise areas is recommended as it facilitates removal of waste and water after cleaning.
- (f) The premises should be connected to the main drainage or an approved sewerage disposal system, and fitted with fine mesh wire baskets to trap hair and waste. The baskets should be cleaned daily.
- (g) Where possible, cages should not be used. If cages are used, cage construction should use suitable material that is safe and easy to clean and disinfect, such as stainless steel, aluminium and acrylic. Joints should be properly finished. Rusty and damaged cages should not be used.
- (h) Collapsible or flimsy cages should not be used. If used, they should only be used for holding animals temporarily while display cages are being cleaned. All such cages should be placed directly on the floor or on a stable structure.
- (i) Design and construction should allow ready checking of animals and regular provision of food and water.
- (j) Cages should be easy to move in the event of an emergency.
- (k) Every enclosure or cage used for the housing of dogs or cats should be so constructed and maintained that it minimises as nearly as practicable the transfer of pathogenic agents.
- (l) There should be multiple entry and exit points for animals, so as to minimise cross-contact with animals that are unwell and potentially stressful interactions.

Enclosure Fittings & Facilities

- (m) Clean, hygienic bedding appropriate to the species and breed, and that is sufficient for the number of animals housed should be provided to insulate the animal from the floor and provide the animal with a sense of security.

- (n) Floor mats if used, should be of material that can be easily washed and disinfected.
- (o) Where appropriate, suitable and sufficient facilities for activities to promote general well-being should be provided.
- (p) Sleeping areas should be insulated appropriately to provide comfort.
- (q) When using bottles with a drink nipple for drinking water, the tip should allow free flow of water on activation and should not come into contact with the bedding or food.
- (r) Exercise areas should not be used as sleeping areas.
- (s) Accessories provided in the accommodation should be suitable to the animal species concerned.
- (t) Materials, such as newspaper (in sheets or shredded) or urine liners, should be provided to facilitate toilet training.

4.2 Environment

Minimum Standards

4.2.1 The living environment should:

- i) Be sheltered from bad weather conditions and extremes of temperature that could be harmful to the health and well-being of the animal;
- ii) Be sufficiently ventilated to ensure that the air is kept fresh and clean at all times;
- iii) Be clean and conducive to the well-being of the animal;
- iv) Be comfortable for the animal to eat, drink, rest and toilet in separate areas;
- v) Allow the animal to feel safe and hide from perceived or real threats;
- vi) Provide opportunities to perform natural species-specific behaviour like scratching, chewing or foraging; and
- vii) Provide a day-night light cycle that maintains daily circadian rhythm to promote good health.

4.2.2 The animal's environment should not be exposed to excessive noise, light, heat, humidity or draughts.

Lighting should be as close as possible, in duration and intensity, to natural conditions of the animal(s) and should not generate excessive heat. Natural light is the preferred means of lighting, provided that shaded areas are available.

Best Practices

Warmth & Lighting

- (a) Young, old or sick animals should be provided with additional heat as necessary, e.g. in the form of heat lamps or hot water bottles. Care should be taken to prevent scalding.
- (b) Lighting at night should not be excessive, including light from outside the premises.
- (c) Artificial light should be provided, where needed, to allow the animal holding area to be thoroughly cleaned and animals checked.
- (d) Reptiles should be provided with unfiltered natural light or artificial UV lighting.

Noise

- (e) Animals should not be exposed to loud or sudden noises which may distress them.
- (f) Noise from barking dogs should be reduced. This can be achieved by:
 - i) Placing dogs so that they do not see each other
 - ii) Limiting external stimulation (e.g. by partitioning between animal housing or using blinds)
 - iii) Housing dogs singly or in compatible pairs
 - iv) Turning the lights off after feeding
 - v) Providing environmental enrichment (e.g. toys under supervision)
- (g) Animals should be protected from excessive noise and vibration. This can be achieved by ensuring the animals are buffered from the public by barriers or signages with instruction not to disturb the animals.

4.3 Housekeeping

Minimum Standards

- 4.3.1 There should be cleaning and waste management protocols, including the cleaning of enrichment and training devices.

- 4.3.2 Animal holding, bathing, grooming and exercising areas should be cleaned daily.
- 4.3.3 At the completion of cleaning, enclosures should be dried before animals are returned to the enclosures.
- 4.3.4 Enclosures, their surroundings and any enclosed equipment should be cleaned and disinfected with effective and appropriate disinfectant at least once a week, or prior to the introduction of new animals, whelping or kitting.
- 4.3.5 Collection drains should be cleaned daily.
- 4.3.6 Chemicals used for cleaning and disinfecting should be used and stored in a manner that does not cause harm to the animals.
- 4.3.7 Cleaning agents, disinfectants and materials should be chosen on the basis of their suitability, safety and effectiveness. They should be used only in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. For instance, some common disinfectants, particularly those derived from or containing coal or wood tar products (such as pine oil, phenol, cresol and chloroxylenols) are toxic to cats and should not be used for enclosures for cats.
- 4.3.8 All waste products, including faeces, bedding, food wastes and dead animals, should be disposed of in sealed plastic bags promptly and hygienically, and in accordance with all relevant regulatory requirements.

Best Practices

Cleaning

- (a) Additional cleaning should be conducted as appropriate to the species, health status and age of the animal.
- (b) All equipment used in the grooming of animals should be cleaned and disinfected between animals.

Waste Disposal

- (c) Clinical waste from the treatment and handling of animals with infectious diseases should be segregated from normal waste and incinerated.

5 ANIMAL MANAGEMENT

5.1 Diet and Feeding

Minimum Standards

- 5.1.1 Animals should be fed a balanced and nutritional diet. Food should be provided in appropriate amounts at a regular and suitable frequency for the individual animal.

Diets should be appropriate for each individual animal, taking into account factors such as species, life stage, body condition, activity levels, and underlying health conditions. Diets should allow animals to maintain good health and an appropriate body condition. Any pregnant and lactating animals should be fed diets and quantities appropriate to their biological requirements. Young animals should be fed at least twice a day. Animals which are unwell should be fed in accordance with veterinary advice.

A licensed veterinarian or veterinary nutritionist should be engaged if animals are to be maintained on a home-cooked diet to ensure nutritional adequacy.

- 5.1.2 Fresh and clean drinking water should be available and accessible at all times.
- 5.1.3 Food for the animals should be readily accessible and positioned to avoid spillage or contamination by urine or faeces.
- 5.1.4 Food provided to animals should not be contaminated nor spoilt. Food discovered to be spoilt or contaminated should be removed immediately and discarded.
- 5.1.5 Food for the animals should be administered in such a manner that co-housed animals will each get an adequate portion. Co-housed animals should be monitored for their food intake and signs of possessive and/or aggressive behaviour.

Best Practices

- (a) Animals should be supplied a variety of food. A staple diet may constitute pre-packaged, commercial wet or dry food. Appropriate amounts of fresh meat, fish, vegetables and treats may be provided for enrichment purposes.
- (b) Food leftovers should not be re-offered.
- (c) Where possible, healthy adult dogs and cats should be fed at least twice a day.

5.2 Food Preparation

Minimum Standards

- 5.2.1 Food and water containers for feeding should be cleaned daily and disinfected when necessary, in a designated area separate from where faecal material or items soiled by faecal material are handled.
- 5.2.2 Food and water containers should be stable, non-chewable and non-toxic. The containers should be pest-proof and easy to clean and disinfect.
- 5.2.3 All animal feed, other than live feed, should be stored in a manner which prevents deterioration / contamination (i.e. dry foods should be stored in a rodent-free place, and fresh and cooked meats should be stored under refrigeration), and according to manufacturer's instructions where applicable.
- 5.2.4 Food preparation and storage areas, food and water containers, and utensil and equipment used in the preparation and provision of food, should be hygienic. Food should be prepared in a separate kitchen area in a hygienic manner. Measures should be taken to prevent cross-contamination between items used for eating and drinking, and items soiled with faeces.
- 5.2.5 There should be sufficient wash basins and clean water for food preparation, and for washing food containers and utensils.

5.3 Activities to Promote General Well-being

Minimum Standards

- 5.3.1 Animals should be allowed to exercise and interact in a safe and secure environment.
- 5.3.2 Animals should not be subjected to:
 - i) Distress or injury caused by other animals and by interference by people;
 - ii) Excessive viewing or handling;
 - iii) Deliberate exposure to other animals known to have or are suspected to be suffering from an infectious disease; and
 - iv) Harmful or potentially toxic chemicals.
- 5.3.3 Animals should be provided with:
 - i) Appropriate level of daily attention/inspection, feed and exercise;

- ii) An environment and activities that promote general well-being and meet the physical, behavioural and emotional needs of individual animals. For example, interaction with people or compatible individuals of the same species for social animals, the opportunity to scratch, climb and perch for cats, opportunity to chew for dogs, and the opportunity to forage for birds and small mammals; and
- iii) The opportunity to access outdoor environments as appropriate to their species, health status and temperament.

5.3.4 Supervision should be provided when animals are allowed to interact with other animals.

5.3.5 Any equipment used during or while interacting with the animal should be maintained in a good working condition and be used in an appropriate and humane manner. It should not cause the animal any undue stress or pain.

5.3.6 Where training is employed, it should follow the guidelines and advisories on animal training issued by AVS (e.g. Guidelines for Dog Training and Behaviour Rehabilitation). Training methods and aids used should be appropriate and should not subject the animal to unreasonable or unnecessary pain or suffering. Training aids should be used humanely and appropriately.

5.3.7 Care should be taken to ensure that any interactions do not pose risk to the health and safety of humans and other animals.

5.3.8 Animals should be bathed and groomed as appropriate to their species or breed, health status and age. Long-haired animals should be groomed regularly to prevent coat entanglement.

Best Practices

(a) Animals should be allowed sufficient space and opportunity to exercise at least once a day, or as appropriate to the species and health status of the animal.

(b) Animals should be allowed to interact with compatible animals of their own species at least once a day, or as appropriate to the species, health status and temperament of the animal.

(c) Animals should have positive interactions with people to socialise them, improve behaviour and support physical health as appropriate to their species, health status and temperament.

5.4 Handling and Transport

Minimum Standards

- 5.4.1 Animals should be handled in a manner that will not cause injury or undue distress.
- 5.4.2 All reasonable measures should be taken to ensure the comfort and safety of the animal during handling and transport, including using suitable clean equipment and proper restraints. Clean drinking water and food should be provided as necessary before and during transport. Animals should also not be at risk of falling out of the vehicle.
- 5.4.3 Animals should be protected from exposure to excessive rain, wind, sun, exhaust emission and extremes in temperature and humidity during transport.
- 5.4.4 Animals should not be transported in car boots, or any enclosed spaces with poor ventilation regardless of the period of transportation.
- 5.4.5 Different species of animals should not be kept next to each other. Cats should be provided a separate physical space with visual barriers from dogs if transported together.
- 5.4.6 If cages or carriers are used, the cages or carriers should be sturdy and of suitable size to allow the animals to stand up, lie down, and make other postural adjustments comfortably.
- 5.4.7 Animals that are unfamiliar with each other and/or incompatible should not be transported in the same cage or carrier.
- 5.4.8 Where cages or carriers are not used, steps should be taken to prevent dogs from fighting, injuring or causing stress to each other. Visual or physical barriers should be provided if dogs display signs of social incompatibility (e.g. aggressive or fearful behaviour) during transport. Where cats are observed to be fighting, they should be kept in separate cages.
- 5.4.9 Animals should not be left unattended in vehicles in conditions that could result in heat stress or distress during transport.
- 5.4.10 Sedatives if required should be prescribed by a veterinarian.
- 5.4.11 Vehicles used for transporting animals should be suitable and safe for this purpose, and should be properly ventilated.
- 5.4.12 Any vehicle specially designed or regularly used for transporting animals should also:

- i) be free from protrusions or sharp edges in the carrying area;
- ii) have non-slip floors;
- iii) provide easy and safe access for handlers;
- iv) be easy to clean and disinfect;
- v) protect against unauthorised release or escape of animals; and
- vi) be supplied with clean, secure cages or carry baskets for cats or very small dogs, and with separate compartments or partitions for larger dogs.

5.4.13 Vehicles, cages and carriers used for transporting animals should be thoroughly cleaned and sanitised after each use.

5.4.14 Animals should be transported in the shortest practicable time to minimise discomfort and danger.

5.4.15 Animals in circumstances indicated below should always be transported in separate carriers/containers:

- i) animals in heat;
- ii) visibly pregnant animals;
- iii) female animals with unweaned young; and
- iv) aggressive or noisy animals.

5.4.16 Chemicals, rescue equipment, and other loose objects should not be kept in the same compartment as the animals that are being transported so as to reduce the risk of injury to the animals.

6 ANIMAL HEALTHCARE

6.1 Health Checks and Recording

Minimum Standards

6.1.1 Reasonable measures should be taken to ensure good health and protection of the animal from illness, injury or disease. For example, the operator should take all reasonable steps to prevent the spread of and to destroy vermin and

invertebrates that may be harmful to the health, comfort or welfare of any animal in the shelter.

- 6.1.2 All animals should be inspected at least once daily to monitor their health and well-being. Veterinary attention from a licensed veterinarian should be promptly sought to treat any significant illness, injury or disease.
- 6.1.3 Animals that appear unwell should be isolated and inspected more frequently.
- 6.1.4 Any signs of illness, abnormalities and deviations from the norm for the following behaviours: eating, drinking, defecating, urinating, movement, resting, should be recorded.
- 6.1.5 Any changes in health status, including abnormal body coat should be promptly reported to the person in charge or a veterinarian for appropriate attention.
- 6.1.6 Animals with potentially infectious diseases should be removed from their cage or public view and isolated from other animals. Veterinary attention should be provided as required.
- 6.1.7 Special arrangements should be made to attend to sick animals during both day and night.
- 6.1.8 All animals should be checked, and treated as necessary, for external and internal parasites prior to transfer of ownership.
- 6.1.9 AVS should be informed immediately on the outbreak of a notifiable disease. The latest list of notifiable diseases and reporting link can be found on [AVS' website](#).

Best Practices

(a) Animals should be carefully observed for ill health or stress as some sick animals are able to suppress some signs of illness. Signs requiring urgent attention include, but are not limited to the following:

- i) Changes in food or water consumption and droppings
- ii) Overgrown claws, nails and beak
- iii) Changes in attitude or behaviour and posture
- iv) Changes in weight
- v) Enlargements or swelling of any portion of the animal
- vi) Vomiting, injury or bleeding
- vii) Stains or scabs around feet, eyes or nostrils
- viii) Discharge from nostrils, eyes or mouth/beak
- ix) Excessive loss of fur/feathers
- x) Lameness or sores on feet/legs

6.2 Disease Prevention

Minimum Standards

6.2.1 Each animal shelter should engage a veterinarian to advise and oversee a written disease prevention and healthcare programme. This should include protocols for the vaccination of dogs and cats and for managing disease outbreaks. Every animal should also see a veterinarian at least once a year for a general health check, which should include checks on the animal's dental condition where appropriate to the species.

6.2.2 Dogs, including new intakes, should be vaccinated against:

- i) Canine distemper virus;
- ii) Canine parvovirus;
- iii) Canine adenovirus;
- iv) Canine parainfluenza virus; and
- v) Leptospirosis (serovars: canicola, grippotyphosa, icterohaemorrhagiae, pomona).

Cats, including new intakes, should be vaccinated against:

- i) Feline parvovirus/panleukopenia virus;
- ii) Feline calicivirus; and
- iii) Feline herpesvirus/rhinotracheitis virus.

6.2.3 Appropriate measures should be put in place for the prevention of internal and external parasites from intake, and throughout the animal's shelter stay.

6.2.4 There should be an isolation room/area for animals that are ill or show signs of potential infectious diseases.

6.2.5 New animal intakes should have their health checked by trained personnel. The check should include signs of infectious disease or problems requiring immediate medical care, and should also confirm the animal's sex, physical description, and the presence of any identifiers or microchips.

Best Practices

- (a) There should be adequate facilities, equipment and materials, such as hand-washing facilities, disinfectants and disposable gowns, gloves, shoe covers and masks available for animal handling and contact.
- (b) There should be isolation protocols, which should include hand washing, disinfection and proper disposal of used gowns, gloves, shoe covers and masks.
- (c) For new animal intakes, a comprehensive physical examination by a veterinarian or trained personnel should be performed within 24 hours of arrival.
- (d) The primary and booster vaccinations should be given in accordance to the Singapore Vaccination Guidelines for Dogs and Cats and in consultation with a veterinarian. If an animal cannot be vaccinated, additional measures should be taken to safeguard the animal's health.
- (e) Vaccination of dogs in high animal density environment for protection against canine influenza virus and Bordetella bronchiseptica is strongly recommended
- (f) Vaccination of cats in high animal density environment for protection against Feline Chlamydiosis and Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) is strongly recommended.
- (g) A first-aid kit suitable for use on the animals should be available and accessible on site. The kit should be prepared in consultation with a veterinarian.

6.3 Veterinary Attention and Treatment

Minimum Standards

- 6.3.1 All animals that are injured or unwell should receive prompt veterinary attention to treat any significant illness, injury or disease.
- 6.3.2 All animals that require treatment, as determined by a veterinarian, should be treated promptly. Medications should only be administered to animals according to a veterinarian's prescription, and should be stored according to veterinary advice and/or the manufacturer's guidelines.
- 6.3.3 There should be a protocol for seeking veterinary attention, including an escalation framework and contact list.

Best Practices

- (a) A heated cage should be provided, when necessary, for the isolation and treatment of sick or injured animals. The cage should be away from public view to minimise stress.

7 REHOMING

7.1 Rehoming guidelines

Minimum Standards

- 7.1.1 To comply with the Guidelines for Rehoming and Adoption of Dogs issued by AVS on 14 Jan 2022. The guidelines can be accessed via the [AVS website](#).
- 7.1.2 All advertisements of animals for adoption should include the animal identification number where applicable to the species.

Please also refer to Annex A for minimum standards and best practices specific for certain species.

8 REFERENCES & USEFUL RESOURCES

- Advisory on the Use of Aversive Dog Training Devices (Electronic Shock and Prong Collars):
<https://avs.nparks.gov.sg/outreach/resources/advisory-aversive-dog-training-devices/>
- Animal Welfare Victoria – Code of Practice for the Management of Dogs and Cats in Shelters and Pounds:
<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/animal-welfare-victoria/domestic-animals-act/codes-of-practice/code-of-practice-for-the-management-of-dogs-and-cats-in-shelters-and-pounds>
- Australian Capital Territory – Animal Welfare (Management of Animals in Pounds, Shelters and Rescue Establishments) Mandatory Code of Practice 2023:
<https://legislation.act.gov.au/DownloadFile/di/2023-255/current/PDF/2023-255.PDF>
- Guidelines for Dog Rehoming and Adoption of Dogs:
<https://avs.nparks.gov.sg/outreach/resources/guidelines-dog-rehoming-adoption/>
- Guidelines for Dog Training and Behaviour Rehabilitation:
<https://avs.nparks.gov.sg/outreach/resources/guidelines-dog-training-behaviour-rehabilitation/>
- Singapore Vaccination Guidelines for Dogs and Cats:
<https://avs.nparks.gov.sg/businesses/veterinarians/guidelines-for-veterinarians/sg-vaccination-guidelines-for-dogs-and-cats/>
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Template – ASPCA:
<https://forum.maddiesfund.org/viewdocument/standard-operating-procedures-sop?CommunityKey=afce7f7a-fd5a-431e-9f2a-aaedc46a03d6&tab=librarydocuments>
- The Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters:
<https://jsmcah.org/index.php/jasv/article/view/42/19>
- Welsh Government – Code of Best Practice for Animal Welfare Establishments:
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-09/animal-welfare-establishments-code-of-best-practice.pdf>

MINIMUM STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES SPECIFIC FOR CERTAIN SPECIES

A1. Introduction

A1.1 The following minimum standards and best practices for specific species or breeds are in addition to, and should be read in conjunction with, Sections 3-6 of the Guidelines for Animal Shelters. All who are involved in the animal shelters must familiarise themselves with the minimum standards, to ensure a common understanding on what constitutes as minimum standards or as best practices for animal welfare.

A2. Dogs

Minimum Standards

General

- A2.1 The housing enclosure should be clean and kept sanitary, with a distinct area for the dogs to defecate and urinate.
- A2.2 All dogs, especially puppies, should be provided with objects that promote general well-being, such as toys, chewing items and towels under supervision.

Tethering

- A2.3 The area where the dogs are tethered should be safe and comfortable for the dogs.
- A2.4 Equipment used for tethering and the way it is used should not cause discomfort or injury to the dog, and cannot be chewed through by the animal.
- A2.5 Length of the tether should be at least 2 times the length of the dog from nose to the base of the tail and should allow the dog to move unimpeded, sit, lie down and stretch.
- A2.6 The tether should be fastened to a secure object that will not move or fall and hurt the dog. The anchor point should not be at a height that prevents the dog from moving unimpeded or to sit, lie down and stretch.

A2.7	Collars used should be of an appropriate size and material that does not cause discomfort or injury to the dog. Equipment such as choke chains, prong collars, and slip leads should not be used for tethering.
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Best Practices

(a) The housing enclosure should have a comfortable sleeping area. The sleeping area could be a dog bed or elevated platform so that the dog is not forced to sleep on the ground where it can get wet or dirty. Bedding should be kept clean and dry.

General

Best Practices

(a) Each premises should have an exercise area for dogs.

(b) Dogs should be exercised at a frequency and in such manner that is suitable for their breed and age. Ideally, they should be let out at least twice a day to exercise for at least half an hour each time.

(c) One feeding container should be provided for each dog. However, puppies from the same litter that are under 12 weeks of age may be fed from the same bowl, provided no signs of possessive and/or aggressive behaviour are observed and all puppies are able to receive adequate nutrition.

Cold Climate Dog Breeds

Minimum Standards

A2.8	Cold climate breeds, such as the Siberian Husky, Alaskan Malamute, Chow Chow, Samoyed, Newfoundland and St. Bernard should be provided with adequate shade, and good fan ventilation or air-conditioning, so that their environment is kept cool and less humid.
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A2.9	Cold climate breeds should not be subjected to unnecessary physical exertion in the heat of the day.
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A2.10	Cold climate breeds should be groomed regularly to prevent the accumulation of dead hair.
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A3. Cats

Housing and Tethering

Minimum Standards

General

- A3.1 The housing enclosure should be clean and kept sanitary, with a distinct area for litter boxes for the cats to defecate and urinate.
- A3.2 Cats should be provided with litter boxes of a size that is suitable to their body sizes with sufficient and appropriate litter material.
- A3.3 The housing enclosure should provide all cats opportunities to scratch, climb and perch. All cats, especially kittens, should be provided with objects that promote general well-being, such as toys and scratch posts.

Tethering

- A3.4 The area where the cats are tethered should be safe and comfortable for the cat.
- A3.5 Equipment used for tethering and the way it is used should not cause discomfort or injury to the cat.

Best Practices

- (a) One feeding container should be provided for each cat. However, kittens from the same litter under 12 weeks of age may be fed from the same bowl, provided no signs of possessive and/or aggressive behaviour are observed and all kittens are able to receive adequate nutrition.

A4. Small Mammals (Chinchillas, Rabbits, Guinea Pigs, Hamsters, and Gerbils)

Housing Area

Minimum Standards

- A4.1 Small mammals should have access to areas where they can rest and feed undisturbed, and exercise and explore safely.
- A4.2 The bedding material used should be appropriate, and kept clean and dry. Soiled parts of the bedding should be removed promptly. The bedding should be deep enough to allow hamsters and gerbils to burrow.

- A4.3 Small mammals should be provided with chewing blocks or other safe objects to chew to keep their teeth trim and in good condition.
- A4.4 Chinchillas, gerbils and hamsters should be provided exercise wheels that are of a suitable size for the individual to exercise comfortably and safely. Running surfaces on wheels should be solid to prevent entrapment of the animal's feet and other injuries.
- A4.5 Small mammals should be kept in a quiet, low-stress environment which is insulated from external disturbances. They should not be placed near the window or direct sunlight, and should be provided with low-intensity soft lighting and hiding places.
- A4.6 Chinchillas should be kept in a cool environment with low humidity and not placed under direct sunlight.
- A4.7 Small mammals should be fed a diet that has pellets and additional supplements of greens appropriate to the species.
- A4.8 Rabbits, guinea pigs and chinchillas should be provided with hay at all times.
- A4.9 Food and water bowls or bottles should be cleaned and disinfected at a suitable frequency, and between animals. Care should be taken to thoroughly clean drinking spouts of water bottles, and water bowls should be checked frequently for contamination and spillage.

Best Practices

- (a) Chinchilla cages should have solid sides, a piece of clear acrylic as the door, and enough ventilation holes for air and easy viewing. If wire mesh is to be used, it should be fine enough to prevent escape and injury.
- (b) A proprietary dust bath, or fine sand/bird grit (1 cup) mixed with talcum powder (1 teaspoon), should be provided for the chinchilla. The bath tray should be cleaned every 2 to 3 days minimally. There should be minimal disturbance to the animals when cleaning out the bath material.

A5. Birds

Housing Enclosure Requirements for Birds

Minimum Standards

- A5.1 The housing for birds should be of adequate dimensions. Birds should be able to move freely and comfortably and their tails and outspread wings should not touch the sides of the cage.
- A5.2 Perches, roosting areas and feed/water stations should be provided to meet the needs of all birds in a cage or aviary.
- A5.3 Perches should be of an appropriate size, diameter, construction and material that are appropriate and comfortable for the species. If more than one bird is kept, there should be adequate perch space for all the birds.
- A5.4 Perches should be positioned to ensure that birds' tails are not in contact with the cage substrate, and yet provide easy access to food and water.
- A5.5 Feed and water containers should be placed in areas where they are not likely to be contaminated by the birds' faeces.
- A5.6 Sandpaper should not be used on the perches.
- A5.7 The cage used should be made of material that is safe and not toxic. Galvanised wire which contains zinc and lead that can poison birds (especially for parrots that tend to chew the cage wiring) should not be used.
- A5.8 Nest boxes and hiding places should be provided for aviaries. For birds that are kept in cages, appropriate shelter e.g. cloth draped over the cage in the evening, should be provided to allow the bird to rest and provide it with a better sense of security.

Best Practices

- (a) In order to maintain hygienic standards, cages and aviaries with solid floors should be covered with a suitable non-toxic disposable material.

Tethering

Minimum Standards

- A5.9 The area where the bird is tethered should be safe and comfortable for the animal.

- A5.10 Equipment used for tethering and the way it is used should not cause discomfort or injury to the bird.
- A5.11 Chains or tethers used to restrain birds to a perch should be:
- i) Sufficiently long but not cause entanglement or strangulation; or
 - ii) Attached to a movable ring that slides along the perch, which allows the bird to move easily and comfortably along its length.
- A5.12 The leg ring of any bird should securely yet comfortably encircle and swivel around the bird's leg.

Best Practices

- (a) The leg ring should be inspected regularly. Where the ring is too tight, it should be removed or adjusted to prevent it from injuring the bird.

Animal Management for Birds

Minimum Standards

- A5.13 Birds should be fed a balanced and complete diet that allows them to maintain good health and body condition, based on the physiological status and special needs of differing ages and species. In addition to dry feed (seeds/pellets), fresh fruit, greens, nectar or seeding grasses should be supplied as appropriate to the species to provide variety and nutrient supplementation. Grit should be provided for species that require grit for proper digestion.
- A5.14 Except where it is a species requirement, birds should be fed out of suitable containers and not directly off the floor.
- A5.15 Where birds need to be handled, this should be done in a manner that does not cause undue stress and harm to them.
- A5.16 Birds that are allowed out of their cages should be properly supervised.
- A5.17 Pinioning should not be done, except under anaesthesia and by a veterinarian. If wing clipping is done, it should be carried out in a manner that does not cause undue stress and harm to the bird.

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| A5.18 | Environmental enrichment items (e.g. foraging or chewing items such as cuttlefish bone, toys, puzzles) should be provided, especially to parrots (<i>Psittaciformes</i> spp.). |
| A5.19 | All new equipment should be handled with care. New galvanised wire may be toxic, especially for parrots. The wire can be weathered for 4 to 8 weeks or by washing with a mild acidic solution (e.g. vinegar) and rinsing it with water, prior to use. |
| A5.20 | The application of rings for identification purposes should be done with care, such as in the selection of the appropriate ring sizes and its application. Some species, especially as adults, should not be ringed because of the risk of self-mutilation. Special care is needed should a ring require removal, for example, to attend to a leg injury. |
| A5.21 | Overgrown beaks should be carefully trimmed. |
| A5.22 | Excessively long claws should be trimmed without drawing blood, but claws should not be cut with the intent of preventing claw growth. Claw overgrowth may be indicative of inadequate conditions, particularly in small cages. |

Please also refer to Sections 3-7 of this document for the other minimum standards and best practices applicable to animal shelters.