



# Canine Welfare and Safety

KAREN HEDBERG BVSC 2015

# Basic Requirements

- ▶ **Shade/Shelter** – should be sufficient **to provide adequate access to shade at all times of the day**. It should be sufficient that in excessive wind or storms there should be some shelter from the worst of the conditions. There should be **adequate ventilation** available, especially in hot weather.
- ▶ **Water** – sufficient **clean** water supply must be available at all times. Ideally it must be in a container that cannot be tipped over and this should be cleaned regularly. If it can be kept in a shaded area, there is less evaporation and the water is cooler for the dog(s). The **access should be low** enough for the smallest individuals being held.
- ▶ **Food** – sufficient food of **adequate quality and amount** must be fed in order to maintain good weight on any dog, and to cover any **increased demands** such as pregnancy, lactation, heavy work and rapid growth.

# Fencing /housing

- ▶ Dogs should be housed **appropriately for their size, strength, number and age.**
- ▶ Fencing and housing should be of a **sufficient height, size and strength to safely** to keep the breed concerned contained.
- ▶ Kennel areas should be of **sufficient size to allow dogs to stretch out freely, stand up and turn** around. Bedding should be adequate to the size, breed, age and temperature conditions.
- ▶ Yards should be **sufficiently large to accommodate the number and size** of the breed being exercised.
- ▶ All areas must have **adequate and secure water supplies**. All areas must have **access to adequate shade and shelter**. Indoor areas must have **adequate ventilation**.

# Genetic Welfare

- ▶ Breeding should aim to minimise the incidence of severe or crippling disease such that it limits the life span and/or active working life of a breed.
- ▶ To maintain **a healthy kennel with as wide a genetic base** as possible.
- ▶ Comply with the desired breed requirements for health and disease testing at that time.
- ▶ Aim to improve the health and welfare of the whole breed.
- ▶ follow the Hippocratic oath – **'Do no harm!'**

## ▶ **Mental Welfare**

- ▶ Must try and minimise mental stress by **careful housing of different dogs** and or breeds together.
- ▶ Do not mix sexes **unless the individuals are compatible** and are observed for a period of time for stability.
- ▶ There should be some form of **environmental enrichment** where some individuals are isolated or left for long periods unattended. (toys etc)

# Health Requirements – by LAW!!!

- ▶ Dogs should **be vaccinated and wormed and treated for external parasites** according to the recommended schedules at that time.
- ▶ Dogs must be **adequately groomed** and kept in conditions such that coats are not excessively matted or causing skin irritation.
- ▶ Dogs that are ill **must receive adequate and appropriate medical care**. If the dog does not rapidly improve, veterinary treatment should be sought.
- ▶ **Emergency conditions** such as bloat, major injuries, dystocia etc. require **immediate veterinary care**.
- ▶ Dogs in **very poor health whose condition continues to decline despite veterinary attention (and second opinions)**, should be humanely euthanased if advised to do so.

# Breeding and breeding limitations

- ▶ Bitches cannot be bred **under 12 months of age**. Some larger (especially giant) breeds cannot be bred **under 18 months** of age.
- ▶ Bitches can only be bred a **maximum of twice in 18 months** then given **12 months rest**.
- ▶ Bitches **over the age of 8 years of age** must have a veterinary health certificate before being bred.
- ▶ Some breeds have **LRL's** – Litter registration limitations that must be full filled before registration. Some breed clubs have club requirements to full fill before breeding a litter.
- ▶ New breeders should understand **what health testing is required in different breeds**.

# Heat Stress

*Due to our hot climate, heat stress is quite a common problem in the hotter months. It must be remembered that this condition is often a medical emergency and failure to act quickly can result in the death of the dog.*

## **Pre-disposing factors affecting the incidence of Heat Stress**

1. **Weather** - Heat stress usually occurs on very hot or moderately hot days following several consecutive hot days.
2. **Restricted air circulation** – Heat stress can readily occur if a dog is in an area with such as a closed car, crate, tent or dog trailer where there is *inadequate through circulation of air*. Dark vehicles and dog trailers absorb more heat and so will overheat more rapidly. Air conditioning in stationary cars, if left unattended, can fail quickly because of the power drain required and is also a problem.
3. **Dogs that are exercising heavily in hot weather** e.g. Greyhounds, are particularly at risk.
4. **Black dogs** absorb more heat than lighter coloured dogs as they do not reflect the light, but absorb it.

## **The dog's main ways of losing heat are:**

1. *Respiration through panting.*
2. *Sweating through pads. Dogs do not sweat in the same way as humans.*
3. *Heat loss through areas of minimal hair i.e. belly and anus.*

# Symptoms and Treatment of Heat Stress

## *Symptoms*

Dog is collapsed, staggering, extremely rapid respiration, blue tongue, very high temperature ( $>41^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), may be found unconscious. **Dogs can over heat very rapidly**, even on quite mild days if there is insufficient movement of air over the dogs and insufficient access to shade and water.

## *Treatment*

If panting hard, cool the dog all over by hosing the dogs down in a bath or a wading pool. Pay particular attention to the head, throat and belly. Ice packs placed along the belly, under the throat will help cool the dog. **Keep going for a minimum of 10-15 minutes** or until the respiration rate slows down.

Do not put dogs into an **ice bath** as the temperature drop is too high. Do not attempt to make the dog swallow at this time. Do not wrap wet towels over the dog.

If the dog is still having problems, get the dog to the veterinarian as soon as possible. Keep the car air conditioned with the cold air aimed directly into the face of the dog.

# Prevention of Heat Stress

Prevention of heat stress is of course far better than having affected animals.

*Always ensure that your dogs have adequate shade and water.* If the dog for some reason has to be left in a confined area ensure that:-

- (a) Ventilation is more than adequate.
- (b) Shade is available.
- (c) Water is always available.

*Puppies, brachycephalic breeds and old dogs are especially susceptible to heat stress.* If your dog falls into any of these categories, you should always leave a wet towel or wet newspaper over **part** of their living area.

If you freeze a large dish of water, it can be left out to gradually melt during the day. Leave a sprinkler going over the shed if it can be managed or direct a fan over the animals to stir the air. If using a fan with puppies make sure it is directed **over** them and not on them.

# Prevention of heat stress cont.

*In hotter weather it is a good idea to give your dog electrolyte salts to help prevent heat stress.* There are two additives that are very helpful, especially after several hot days.

(a) Electrolytes - There are various brands available and they usually contain some glucose. Give one level teaspoon for average to large breeds. In the food is best. If using a liquid electrolyte eg. Lectade\* use 10mls of the concentrate for the same size dog.

(b) The bicarbonate ion is one of the main salts that is lost during heat. If it is not in the electrolyte mix, you can add a small amount of bi-carb soda. Give large dogs 1/4 teaspoon daily. If it is very hot, increase to 1/3rd teaspoon.

*Put the electrolytes in the food as dogs do not like it in water.*

*If travelling in hot weather, in addition to the salts or bi-carb, always travel with plenty of water* (preferably with frozen cool packs as well). If the dogs are at all distressed, wet them down and place them on wet towels. *Dogs cool quickest through their feet, belly and anus. Hot air rises, so do not cover the dogs with wet towels.*

# Newer assistance with heat stress prevention

- ▶ **Cool coats, cool mats** – these can be wet down and help keep the dog cool. However, if cool coats dry out, the dog will **rapidly heat** up.
- ▶ Portable **fans etc** can be used at shows, within kennels etc.
- ▶ Dogs that are becoming distressed should be cooled as soon as possible. Ideally **wadding pools half filled with water** should be available at all dog shows where the temperature is expected to exceed 36°C. These should also be available in backyards, with due consideration to the size, age and breed of dog (as well as young children).
- ▶ Once the dog has been cooled, place the dog on wet towels and keep them close to an air conditioner, particularly with brachycephalic breeds.

## **\*\*Remember:-**

- 1. In hot weather, ALWAYS ensure there is access to shade, through ventilation and water at all times.*
- 2. Heat stress can occur on a relatively mild day, especially if it has been very hot for the previous few days.*

## Brachycephalic Airway syndrome (short nosed breeds/long soft palate)

This is a syndrome occurs with a combination of the following: a long soft palate, narrow nostrils, everted laryngeal sacculles and underdevelopment and narrowing of the trachea. The most common finding in all cases is the long soft palate.

**Breeds affected** include the British Bulldog, the French Bull Dog, Pug, Boston Terrier, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, some English Mastiff's and Bull Mastiffs.

Individuals in other breeds can be affected, particularly the shorted nosed and overweight individuals.

**Signs of respiratory distress** - very noisy breathing, decreased exercise tolerance and heavy snoring are all common symptoms. Warm/hot/humid conditions, increased weight, exercise, excitement, allergic reactions are all added risk factors that can result in severe respiratory distress and possibly death if not treated.

# Brachycephalic airway syndrome cont.

**Treatment** of affected dogs usually involves removing part of the soft palate, allowing a freer passage of air into the lungs. This operation will usually improve the airway flow by at least 60%, care should still be given with these dogs in regards to weight, exercise, hot weather etc.

**Age Seen** - the majority of the severe cases are seen under 1-2 years of age. The odd older dog that is diagnosed as having significant obstruction of the airways often was marginally affected as a youngster and may have developed secondary problems such as obesity and/or hypothyroidism (which can also cause obesity).

**Severely affected dogs should be surgically corrected and ideally, not bred from.** If used, it should only be to sound partners with no history of problems themselves and preferably where the parents are also sound.

# Management of Brachycephalic Breeds in Hot Weather

Because all brachycephalic breeds have varying degrees of the predisposing anatomical features of airway obstruction, even if it is subclinical, it is appropriate to treat all brachycephalic breeds as ***having the potential for upper airway obstruction***.

The shorter face, the less the air will cool before it reaches the lungs.

***Predisposing Risk Factors*** - Heat, humidity, exercise, ***excitement*** can all increase panting as the dog attempts to lose heat and cool itself. This excessive panting can in turn produce local swelling (oedema) and further airway narrowing, increasing anxiety and body temperature; creating a vicious cycle.

***Treatment*** - If panting hard, cool the dog all over by hosing the dogs down in a bath or a wading pool. Pay particular attention to the ***head, throat and belly***. Do not attempt to make the dog swallow. ***Ice packs*** placed along the belly, under the throat will help cool the dog.

Keep going for a ***minimum of 10-15 minutes or until the respiration rate slows down***. If the dog is still having problems, get the dog to the veterinarian as soon as possible. Keep the car air conditioned with the cold air aimed directly into the face of the dog.

# Prevention of Heat Stress

**Prevention** – Be aware of the temperature on a daily basis, weather forecasting generally will give a good idea well ahead of hot weather.

Place your dogs on extra electrolytes in their food as this can help them cope with the heat better.

Keep your dogs in cool conditions with plenty of through ventilation.

In extremely hot weather the more affected dogs may need to be kept in an air conditioned area.

Fans, wet towels on the floor etc can all be useful items to leave out on hot days.

**Travelling** – These breeds need plenty of air flow around their bodies, particularly in hot weather.

If transporting by air, **larger crates** are needed.

# Travelling and Transporting Dogs

- ▶ Dogs must be **securely and safely crated** or **restrained** when being travelled.
- ▶ There must be **adequate ventilation at all times** particularly within cars and/or dog trailers so that there is through ventilation.
- ▶ Dogs being transported must have adequate room to stand, turn around. If flying this also applies as well as very good through ventilation.
- ▶ Brachycephalic breeds require **additional space and ventilation** and **will stress more quickly in hot weather**.

# Code of Ethics and Regulations

## Section 14

- ▶ DOGS NSW has an extensive **Code of Ethics and Regulations** covering aspects of owning and breeding dogs. These should be read and understood by breeders and exhibitors. These can be downloaded from the DOGSNSW website.
- ▶ These documents cover welfare aspects as well as requirements of DOGSNSW.
- ▶ All members of DOGSNSW are expected to comply with the Code of Ethics and welfare requirements as covered within the Regulations, as well as being aware of the requirements of **POCTA** and the Department of Agriculture **Codes of Dog and Cat Management**

# Benefits of Dog Ownership

- ▶ **Health, companionship, caring relationships, connecting with others.**
- ▶ With today's increasing **speed of life and activities**, more and more people are becoming **isolated from real contact** with other people. **Dogs can prevent loneliness while increasing the quality of life and interconnections with other people.**
- ▶ Pets **reduce stress and benefit our health** by lowering blood pressure, relieving stress, combating loneliness, ease depression, encourage activity, offer a greater sense of worth as well as security.
- ▶ Those people that are **isolated or marginalised by society** benefit from companionship and added social connection by having a pet. This applies particularly to the **elderly**, where pet ownership is especially important in increasing an interest in life, giving them something to care for as well as providing opportunities for exercise and socialization.

## Benefits cont.

- ▶ **Children** that have a close relationship to a pet have **better social skills and are more co-operative and sharing** with other children as well as having better self-esteem.
- ▶ These children also show greater respect for all living things around them.
- ▶ Dogs help build **social networks** within the community, creating opportunities for greater social interaction. They can help initiate conversations or **can be the basis** for more structured social activities such as dog showing or obedience classes.

# Selecting the right dog.

- ▶ Ideally **selecting** :-
- ▶ **A) the right type (and size) of dog**
- ▶ **B) the best temperament and breed**
- ▶ **C) for your home, lifestyle and life stage**
- ▶ These different aspects should all be carefully considered before getting a dog.
- ▶ Types of dogs – different breeds were developed for different functions and behaviours.

# Safety with Dogs

- ▶ Dogs, while they can be great companions, need to be cared for appropriately. Equally humans need to be aware that any dog can bite to defend itself if it feels threatened.
- ▶ Dogs, particularly if ***in groups*** can act as a pack if stimulated the wrong way.
- ▶ Dogs ***will inherently chase***, be it balls, sticks or humans.
- ▶ Bitches and older males can be very protective of young puppies and property respectively.
- ▶ **Well socialised and obedience trained dogs are much easier to handle and control, particularly in public situations.**

# Persons and situations at risk

- ▶ **Children of all ages**, but particularly under the age of 6 years, should **never** be left unattended with any dog, be it in the house, back yard or in public.
- ▶ Young children have **poor co-ordination and a poor memory retention**. Hugging people is very acceptable behaviour to humans but not to dogs, it is an invasion of their personal space. This is more obvious in male dogs than female dogs.
- ▶ Children under 4 years of age **do not** have the maturity to control aggressive or angry impulses and should be monitored with pets by a competent adult at all times.
- ▶ If there are several dogs, these dogs can **“pack”** and attack if children **inadvertently trigger** an aggressive response. Children playing in the back yard with several loose dogs may trip over, scream and trigger an inappropriate response.

# Persons and situations at risk cont.

- ▶ Visiting children can be perceived as threatening to their “own child” ie. the dogs are trying to **defend their own**.
- ▶ **Small children, large dogs** – children that are **below eye level** of large breeds – dogs often consider themselves to be dominant over such small “humans”.
- ▶ Children **should not discipline dogs**, this should only be done by a competent adult.
- ▶ Children **should not be in charge of dogs in public** unless under very close supervision. Care should be taken to only allow children to be in charge of **quiet, reliable dogs that are not too large**. Large heavy breeds may pull the child over or get away from the child.
- ▶ **Elderly people** – fit into many of these scenarios as well. Large dogs or dogs that jump onto people can over balance or bump into elderly people resulting in considerable damage.

# Unsure Adults/children around dogs

- ▶ Some adults and children are very unsure around dogs, especially large dogs.
- ▶ **Do not stare (eye ball)** at dogs – this is aggressive behaviour.
- ▶ **Do not wave your arms around excessively** – dogs get anxious.
- ▶ **Always ask permission** before approaching or patting any strange dog.
- ▶ **High pitched and sudden loud sounds** upset/unsettle dogs and make them anxious.

# Control of Dogs in Public/Shows

- ▶ **ALL Dogs** should be well socialised and receive basic obedience from a young age.
- ▶ Well socialised and obedient dogs that mix with other dogs are far easier to control, particularly in public.
- ▶ Dogs should always have **appropriate leads and collars** suitable to the size and strength of the animal such that it allows full control by the handler.
- ▶ **Dogs should be under control of a competent adult at all times in public areas.**

# Control cont.

- ▶ Dogs should ***never be allowed off lead in public areas unless under control of a competent adult*** and in a **designated leash free area**.
- ▶ ***No dog*** should be off lead unless under full control, ie. the owner is confident that the dog will not attack other dogs or people, and will return on call.
- ▶ Children should **never** be handed dogs that are ***large or aggressive, or dogs that can pull them over.***
- ▶ Remember the law states that dogs must be under control at all times in public areas.

# Failure to Control Dogs (particularly in public)

- ▶ Dogs that bite, chase or menace other dogs or humans, will pay the penalty and often have to be **euthanaised.**
- ▶ **Any dog can bite** if placed in stressful or frightening situations.
- ▶ **Owners must be vigilant at all times to avoid situations where the dog and/or other people and dogs are placed dangerous positions.**
- ▶ **Insurance** – many newer household policies do not cover dogs or dog bites. Ensure you are adequately covered under your household policy.