



HOW THE LAW PROTECTS DOGS



In 2007 a new law to protect animals came into force in England and Wales. It's called the Animal Welfare Act.

Most pet owners are responsible and look after their pets well but sadly this isn't the case for everyone. This is why the Animal Welfare Act was introduced as it means that all owners now have a legal obligation to take reasonable steps to meet the welfare needs of their pets. If they don't they could face prosecution.

What does the Animal Welfare Act mean for me?

The law sets out five welfare needs for pets. None of it is rocket science but it's important to understand the law and what you should do to make sure your dog is happy and healthy.

THE LAW SAYS THAT PETS MUST:

-  HAVE SOMEWHERE SUITABLE TO LIVE
-  HAVE A PROPER DIET, INCLUDING FRESH WATER
-  HAVE THE ABILITY TO EXPRESS NORMAL BEHAVIOUR
-  BE HOUSED WITH OR APART FROM OTHER ANIMALS (DEPENDING ON THE SPECIES)
-  HAVE PROTECTION FROM, AND TREATMENT OF, PAIN, INJURY AND DISEASE.

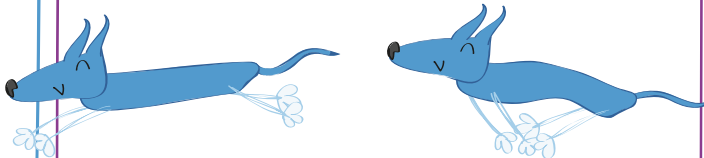


The RSPCA recommends you should:

Environment



- Provide your dog with a comfortable, dry, draught-free, clean and quiet place to rest undisturbed.
- At least every few hours provide your dog with access to an appropriate place where he/she can go to the toilet.
- Provide your dog with an appropriate place where he/she can exercise at least once a day.
- Give your dog constant access to a safe hiding place where he/she can escape if he/she feels afraid.
- Make sure your dog has access to suitable objects to chew and play with.
- If dogs live together, you should provide enough extra resources (e.g. toys, beds and hiding places) to stop them from becoming competitive and fighting.
- Make sure the size and temperature of any place you leave your dog (including your vehicle) is appropriate.
- Make sure that where your dog lives is safe, secure and free from hazards.



Diet



- Provide your dog with constant access to clean drinking water.
- Make sure your dog eats a balanced diet suitable for its age, lifestyle and health status.
- Feed your dog at least once each day, unless advised otherwise by your vet.
- Read and follow the feeding instructions on any dog foods that you buy.
- Adjust how much you feed your dog to make sure he/she does not become under or overweight.
- If your dog's eating or drinking habits change, consult your vet, as your dog could be ill.



Behaviour



- Choose a type and size of dog that is suited to you, your home and your lifestyle.
- Train your dog from an early age to behave well using rewards. Never shout at or punish your dog, as he/she is very unlikely to understand and can become more nervous or scared. If your dog's behaviour becomes an ongoing problem, seek expert advice.
- Exercise your dog regularly to keep him/her fit, active and stimulated. Give your dog the opportunity to run every day, unless your vet recommends otherwise.
- Make sure your dog has enough to do so that he/she does not become distressed or bored.
- Provide your dog with safe toys and regular opportunities to play with people or other friendly dogs.
- Be observant. If your dog's behaviour changes or he/she shows regular signs of stress or fear, seek advice from a vet or clinical animal behaviourist.
- If your dog often shows fear or signs of stress (such as excessive panting, licking lips, hiding, covering, aggression), seek advice from a vet or clinical animal behaviourist.
- Be consistent in the way you, your family and friends react to your dog.
- Give your dog constant access to a safe hiding place where he/she can escape if he/she feels afraid.



Company

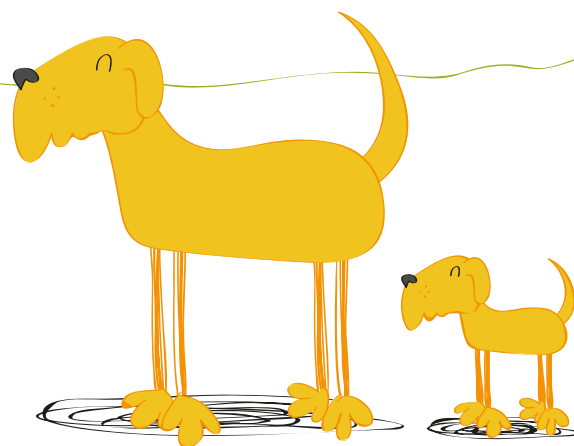


- Make sure your dog has opportunities to interact positively with appropriate companions so that he/she does not become lonely or bored.
- Make sure your dog is never left alone long enough for him/her to become distressed.
- If your dog is friendly towards other dogs, allow him/her to interact with them on a regular basis.
- Never leave your dog unsupervised with another animal or person who may deliberately or accidentally harm or frighten him/her.
- When you are away, make sure your dog is properly cared for by a responsible person.
- If your dog is fearful of, or aggressive towards, other dogs, avoid the situations that lead to this behaviour, and seek advice from a vet or clinical animal behaviourist.
- If you have more than one dog, house them together if possible, but make sure they have enough space and can get away from one another if they want to.

Health



- Check your dog for signs of injury or illness every day, and make sure someone else does this if you are away.
- If you suspect that your dog is in pain, ill or injured, consult a vet promptly.
- Take your dog for a routine health check with your vet at least once each year.
- Ask your vet for advice about things you can do to protect your dog's health, such as vaccination, neutering, and treatments to control parasites (e.g. fleas and worms).
- Make sure your dog can be identified, ideally via a collar and microchip (ask your vet for advice), so that he/she can be treated quickly if injured, or returned to you if lost.



- Get your dog neutered, unless he/she is intended for breeding and provisions have been made to care for both parents and offspring. Before allowing dogs to breed, seek the advice of your vet to ensure they are suitable for breeding in terms of their health and personalities.
- Before deciding to buy a dog, make sure you find out what health and behaviour problems he/she has, or may be prone to, for instance as a result of its breed, how it has been bred, and how it has been cared for.
- Always check with a vet if you are unsure about anything.
- Avoid harsh, potentially painful training methods. Only use positive reward-based training.
- Keep your dog under control, and do not let him/her stray.
- Take sensible precautions to keep your dog safe. Always be alert to risks that may affect your dog.
- Only use medicines that have been prescribed for your individual dog.
- Ensure your dog's coat is kept in good condition by grooming him/her regularly. If you are unsure how to groom your dog's coat properly, seek advice from a pet care specialist.
- Consider taking out pet insurance to ensure your dog is covered if he/she needs veterinary treatment.



Find out more about caring for dogs on the RSPCA's website
www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/dogs

