Code of Practice for the Operation of

Breeding and Rearing Businesses (2014)

Guide to developing a health management plan

# Introduction

The aim of the health plan is to ensure that all breeding and rearing businesses have a complete set of standard operating procedures (SOP) for the business to ensure the best possible welfare for the animals. The health management plan also aids businesses in maintaining efficiency and therefore promoting positive profit margins.

The health management plan must be developed in consultation with and signed off by the business veterinary practitioner to ensure that all practices meet suitable animal health and welfare standards.

This checklist is designed to help you develop your standard operating procedures. Once you have developed the procedures, you should make an appointment with your veterinary practitioner to review them. During your discussions with your veterinary practitioner, he/she may require you to alter your procedures/policies to meet the requirements of the Code or to ensure better welfare for your animals.

Your health plan must be reviewed and signed off by your veterinary practitioner every 12 months, or whenever you change business veterinary practitioners (whichever is sooner).

# How to write a standard operating procedure (SOP)

SOPs detail regularly recurring work that is conducted by the staff at your breeding or rearing business. SOPs document activities that need to be performed to ensure consistent care of the animals at your business and ensure compliance with the Code.

SOPs should be written in a concise, step-by-step, easy-to-read format. The information presented should be clear and uncomplicated. Keep it simple and short. Each step should be easy to follow and leave no doubt as to what is required. You may wish to use a flow chart and/or images to illustrate the process being described. SOPs often include checklists to ensure staff follow the correct procedures when carrying out the activities.

SOPs usually start with a purpose: a statement about what the SOP is about and what it is trying to achieve. You may then wish to provide a list of equipment required to carry out the activity. A step-by-step set of tasks should follow this. Below we have provided an example SOP for cleaning a dog pen.

# Example SOP — cleaning dog pen

**Purpose:** This SOP describes the business’s procedure for daily cleaning of the concrete areas of dog pens. It ensures good hygiene and biosecurity practices. All staff assigned this task must follow this SOP.

**Equipment:**

Overalls/apron

Boots

Hose

Bucket

Disinfectant (product xx – to be used at a concentration of xxxm/L)

Faeces scoop

Refuse bin

# Procedure

Before carrying out this procedure, complete daily health check of dogs under SOP Daily health check.

Step 1: Remove dog from concreted area into exercise/outdoor area of pen.

Step 2: Place bedding and food/water bowls into laneway.

Step 3: Pick up any faeces and leftover food and discard in refuse bin (ensure bin contains a plastic liner first). Note any loose stools, blood or vomit.

Step 4: Add disinfectant to bucket and fill with water from hose.

Step 5: Pour disinfectant over the areas of the pen that contained faeces and soiled food.

Step 6: Hose concrete area thoroughly to ensure no disinfectant or evidence of soiling remains.

Step 7: Wash food and water bowls and refill water. See SOP Feeding for food requirements.

Step 8: Place food/water bowls and bed back   
in pen.Step 9: Open gate into concreted area to allow dog access to its bed and food/water.

Step 10: Record cleaning date, time and employee signature on pen card/shed book. Note any loose stools, blood, vomit or other abnormalities in the record and take action where appropriate. See SOP Daily health check.

# Business policies

In addition to SOPs, your business may need a set of general policies that ensure all staff know what to do under all circumstances. For example, you may have a policy regarding whether non-business animals are allowed on the property or not — a biosecurity policy which is accompanied by a biosecurity SOP that details what to do in the event that someone brings an unknown animal onto your property.

Policies generally consist of a general statement about what the policy covers and then some general rules relating to that policy.

# For example: External animal policy

No dog or cat not associated with this business is allowed to pass the front reception counter. Customers, workers, contractors, etc. are asked not to bring their animals into the facility to maintain good biosecurity.

A notice to this effect is placed on the front gate and in the window of the reception area. People who do bring their animals on the property will be asked to leave them in their cars (weather permitting) or tied up outside the reception area.

If an external animal passes the reception point they should be intercepted as soon as possible and the Biosecurity SOP enacted.

# Health management plan checklist

The Code requires that all breeding and rearing businesses address the following topics in their health management plans. Depending on the business type, not all of these areas will need to be covered.

# Biosecurity/visitor entry

biosecurity protocols/SOP for visitors to the business (e.g. foot baths, hand washing equipment, etc.)

visitor entry protocols/SOP (where are visitors allowed; do they require specific foot wear; are the toilet facilities provided for them; can they bring their own animals)

SOPs for disease outbreaks: both common and less common diseases. Recognise that some diseases, while unlikely to occur given good biosecurity, can be highly infectious, so these protocols/SOPs need to include restrictions on movement of animals and staff

staff health information protocols/SOP and procedures in the event of injury, disease or accident.

# New animals

assessment for admission of new breeding animals to the business

isolation/quarantine procedures/SOPs for new animals.

# Facility management

staffing rosters

exercise management protocols/SOPs – detailing staffing roster, areas of the business to be exercised in order, what to do in wet weather, etc.

scheduling of veterinary health checks, vaccinations, microchipping, etc.

scheduling of grooming

general contacts list, including veterinary practitioners, feed supply companies, groomers, etc.

hygiene, disinfection and disease prevention (this includes daily cleaning, watering and feeding routines, schedules, etc.)

development and prominent display of emergency response plans for both humans and animals including evacuation procedures at the business

protocols/SOPs for management of isolation facilities (if applicable)

protocols/SOPs for risk assessments of housing and exercise areas and risk management plan/s

protocols/SOPs for movements of animals between different areas of the facility; for example, general housing to whelping/lactating areas; colony cages to queening modules, etc.

insect, ectoparasite and vertebrate pest control/management protocols/SOPs

food preparation and storage protocols/SOPs

record keeping protocols/SOPs for all levels of record management

# Animal health care

protocols/SOPs for provision of appropriate diet and feeding frequency for all animals at the business by age/breeding status classification

protocols/SOPs for provision of water

protocols/SOPs for vaccination programs — use Code as a guide and discuss with your veterinary practitioner to finalise

protocols/SOPs for parasite prevention including screening for ear mites

protocols/SOPs for investigation of any animals with symptoms of giardia

protocols/SOPs to meet grooming requirements

protocols/SOPs for general daily health, behavioural and welfare assessment

protocols/SOPs for assessment programs for the health and welfare of animals being reared for sale or as replacement breeding animals

animal health/welfare issues SOP (a ‘what do I do?’ guide/flowchart/SOP for staff who identify an issue with an animal)

approved methods of humane euthanasia for emergency situations (still requires verbal approval by a veterinary practitioner before being carried out)(optional)

# Breeding

protocols/SOPs for mating

protocols/SOPs for pregnancy detection

protocols/SOPs for birthing

protocols/SOPs for lactation management

protocols/SOPs for weaning

protocols/SOPs for determining the suitability for breeding of animals within the business.

# Exercise, socialisation, enrichment and handling

protocols/SOPs and rosters for exercise management

protocols/SOPs and rosters for socialisation and handling management

protocols/SOPs and rosters for enrichment management, including rotation and disinfection of toys/enrichment items.

# Retirement

protocols/ SOPs for desexing and/or long term fertility management

protocols/SOPs for assessing suitability for rehoming or euthanasia of retired breeding animals

protocols/SOPs for finding suitable homes for retired animals.

# Sale preparation

health assessment for kittens before sale (where the business undertakes vaccination of kittens)

vaccination protocols/SOPs for puppies and kittens before sale

protocol for providing new purchaser information pack, health/vaccination certificates, desexing certificates (where appropriate), microchip registration certificates and transfer forms, etc.

# Animal return

protocol for obtaining veterinary documentation (where required) for animals being returned to the business

protocol for quarantine (may be general quarantine SOP) for animals being returned to the business

protocols for assessment for resale and policies regarding animals deemed not suitable for resale

protocol for refund payments.

# Risk assessments

complete animal safety risk assessments on all areas of the facility in which animals are held (even for just short periods of time). You should be looking for areas where animals can injure themselves, areas where they could escape and areas where they could ingest items that may be detrimental to their health and welfare

complete staff/human safety assessment risk for all areas of the facility.