Guide for Victorian   
dog and cat community   
foster care networks   
and rescue groups

Authorised by the Victorian Government Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport & Resources (DEDJTR), 1 Spring Street Melbourne Victoria 3000. January 2016

Printed by DEDJTR

ISBN 978-1-74146-976-9 (print)  
ISBN 978-1-74146-977-6 (pdf)

© Copyright State of Victoria. Except for any logos, emblems, trademarks, artwork and photography this document is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 Australia licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Disclaimer  
This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

This document is also available in PDF and accessible Word format at www.vic.gov.au/pets

Contents

1. Introduction

2. Definitions

3. Administration

3.1. Partnerships

3.2. Section 84Y agreements

3.3. Legal obligations

3.4. Surrendered animals

3.5. Stray animals

3.6. Declared dogs

3.7. Trap, Neuter, Release (TNR) schemes

4. Community Foster Care Network Operations

4.1. Key Roles

4.2. Zoonoses - diseases which can be transmitted to humans from animals

4.3. Animal transport vehicle

4.4. Quarantine

4.5. Isolation

4.6. Euthanasia

4.7. Public Liability Insurance

5. Records

5.1. Operation records

5.2. Animal records

5.3. Registered Veterinary Practitioners Agreement

5.4. Foster Care Agreement

5.5. Health Management Plan

6. Management of dogs

6.1. Nutrition

6.2. Health Care

6.3. Vaccination

6.4. Housing

6.5. Exercise, enrichment, socialisation and handling

6.6. Whelping and Lactating

7. Management of cats

7.1. Nutrition

7.2. Health Care

7.3. Vaccination

7.4. Housing

7.5. Exercise, enrichment, socialisation and handling

7.6. Queening and Lactating

8. Caring for Animals in Special Circumstances

8.1. Pregnant and Lactating Bitches and Queens

8.2. Juvenile Animals

8.3. Emaciated Animals

8.4. Elderly Animals

9. Sale of animals

9.1. Guarantee

10. Appendix

Body condition score chart - Dog

Body condition score chart - Cat

1. Introduction

This best practice guide provides Victorian dog and cat rescue groups and community foster care networks with guidance on meeting minimum legislative requirements and maximising the welfare of domestic animals being cared for and rehomed.

In Victoria, community foster care networks and rescue groups are essential in assisting to reduce the number of animals located in pounds and shelters. The process of rehabilitating and rehoming dogs and cats can be greatly assisted by these groups and helps reduce the number of animals euthanised due to not being able to find new homes.

2. Definitions

These definitions are provided solely for the purpose of interpreting this guide.

Community Foster Care Network

A Community Foster Care Network (CFCN) coordinates and may provide temporary care for dogs and cats from shelters, pounds or surrenders in people’s homes (private residential premises). A CFCN seeks permanent housing for the dogs or cats in care. Most CFCNs work with a network of foster carers to enable the CFCN to rehabilitate and rehome more animals.

A CFCN could be any size from small through to very large and may be operating with a single person or as a complex organisation involving many people.

A CFCN is not considered a Domestic Animal Business - Animal Shelter as the number of animals kept on one property is limited to housing animals within the council and planning requirements. Most councils in Victoria limit the number of cats and dogs that can be kept on any one property.

CFCN or Rescue Group?

For the purpose of this guide a rescue group and CFCN are the same thing.

DEDJTR

Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources.

Domestic Animal Business - Animal Shelter

An animal shelter is an establishment that takes in and cares for large numbers of lost, injured, stray or unowned dogs and cats for the purpose of rehabilitation and rehoming. A Shelter is likely to be located on a single site with room to house multiple animals and must have all relevant Council permits, including registration with local council as a domestic animal business. An animal shelter must also comply with the Code of Practice for the Operation of Pounds and Shelters.

Note: If the rescue group meets this definition, then please speak to the local council about registration as a Domestic Animal Business – Animal Shelter.

Foster Carer

A foster carer is a person who undertakes temporary care of an individual or special group of animals for the purpose of giving the animals care until they can be rehomed. Most foster care takes place in a person’s home which enables specific care and treatment.

Foster carers have a very important role in providing rehabilitation and care for animals in an environment outside a pound or shelter, ensuring that the animals have the best chance at being rehomed.

Sell

Includes barter or exchange and also agreeing to sell or offering or exposing for sale or keeping or having in possession for sale or sending forwarding delivering or receiving for or on sale or authorizing directing causing suffering permitting or attempting any of such acts or things.

3. Administration

3.1. Partnerships

Partnering with a pound or shelter is a great way to build relationships and help solve the animal homelessness problem in the community. Many pounds and shelters depend on rescue partners to help reduce their animal populations.

In Victoria, a pound or shelter is required to have s84Y agreement with any group or individual that offers to rehabilitate or rehouse animals on their behalf. This guarantees that the welfare needs of the animals will be met and the animals will be given the best opportunity to be rehomed.

Many rescue groups also accept surrendered animals direct from owners, which is seen as a positive way to have a pet rehomed to a suitable family.

NOTE: if you are a CFCN that takes in surrendered animals directly from owners, ensure you obtain a signed microchip transfer form to allow you to transfer the microchip registration details into your name until the dog or cat is ready for its new home. It is also important to ensure all animals on your property are registered with local your council even if they are only with you for a short period of time. This is explained further in section 3.3.

3.2. Section 84Y agreements

A section 84Y agreement is a document that sets out the requirements of rehoming animals from Victorian pounds. Most pounds are run by Councils and the law gives them the power to enter into an agreement in writing with a Shelter, CFCN, Foster Carer or Individual. These agreements are called s84Y agreements, due to the section of the   
law that makes allowance for the rehoming and foster care.

Different types of section 84Y agreements exist to accommodate a range of situations where animals can be rehomed.

Animal Shelters

• Animals coming into a shelter from a pound are under a section 84Y(cb) agreement, that allows the shelter to retain custody of, sell or destroy any dog or cat. Shelters can then either directly sell the animals for rehoming or form s84Y agreements with CFCNs and foster carers to rehouse the animals. The shelter must ensure that the animals are desexed and microchipped prior to being sold or given to a CFCN to be rehomed.

• Example; a large animal shelter will offer animals for sale to new owners but may also enter into agreements with breed specialised CFCNs to optimise the chances of rehoming specific animals.

Community Foster Care Networks

• Animals coming into the CFCN direct from a pound are under the section 84Y(c) agreement to sell the dog or cat. It may be part of the agreement that the CFCN undertake the desexing and microchipping of the animals, and this must be done before they can be sold.

• Animals coming into the CFCN direct from a shelter are under the section 84Y(ca) agreement to sell the dog or cat. It is a legal requirement that the dog or cat is desexed and implanted with a microchip before they leave the shelter.

Foster Carers

• In most cases, the animals come to a foster carer under a foster care agreement and must return to the pound, shelter or CFCN for rehoming. The foster carer is not responsible for the desexing or microchipping as this must be done by group that the carer has the foster care agreement with.

Not all CFCNs have section 84Y agreements with pounds and shelters, as they may accept animals to be rehomed from other sources. For instance, animals being rehomed from outside Victoria and animals that may be surrendered directly from owners. Where this is the case, the CFCN are considered the new owner of the animal and should ensure that the animals are desexed and microchipped before they are sold.

The following flow chart provides the pathways available for the management and rehoming of dogs and cats.

3.3. Legal obligations

Every person that works with animals has an obligation to know what laws they must abide by, for both the welfare of the animal and person caring for that animal. The legislation in Victoria is a tiered system that consists of Acts, Regulations, Codes of Practice and Council Local Laws.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (POCTA) seeks to protect animals from neglect and cruelty and sets out offences for failing to properly care and provide for a dog or cat including the provision of proper and sufficient food, water, shelter and vet treatment as well as offences such as deliberate cruelty, ill treatment, causing unnecessary pain or suffering, abandonment of cats and dogs and transport of dogs on moving vehicles.

The Domestic Animal Act 1994 (DAA) seeks to protect the community from animals becoming a nuisance or danger and sets out requirements for keeping cats and dogs. The following summary applies to CFCN and foster carers:

• Every dog and cat over 3 months old must be registered with the Council in which they are located.

• Every dog and cat must be microchipped to be registered with Council.

• Every dog and cat must wear their Council registration tag when outside the property in which they are kept.

• Dogs must be adequately confined to the house / yard and must not be allowed to stray.

• Dogs and cats must not be allowed to cause nuisance   
(ie excess barking).

• Owners of dogs and cats must be over 18 years old.

In addition to these legislative obligations, there are local government laws which regulate the way in which dogs and cats are kept. The following summary applies to CFCN and foster carers:

• limits on numbers of dogs or cats that may be kept on a property without an excess animal permit

• mandatory de-sexing orders for dogs and cats in some local government areas

• cat curfews (keeping cats indoors at night - house, enclosure, shed or garage) to protect native wildlife

• leashing requirements for dogs in public places

• collection of dog faeces in public places.

It is the responsibility of the person keeping a dog or a cat to know what their Council allows.

It is important to remember that in all cases, the foster carer must ensure that the dog or cat is registered with the local council for the duration of its stay. Victorian councils can issue a monetary fine to the carer of any unregistered dog or cat and also have the power to seize any unregistered animal.

3.4. Surrendered animals

Where a dog or cat owner surrenders an animal directly to a CFCN, that CFCN is considered the new owner and is required to take on full ownership responsibilities. This includes making sure the animal is registered with Council, microchipped and vaccinated.

If a CFCN accepts a surrendered animal for rehoming, that CFCN needs to seriously consider whether the animal is suitable for rehoming based on its health and behaviour, and ensure rehoming is in the best interests of the animal. The CFCN may need to seek further veterinary assistance to make these important decisions and ensure that the welfare of the animal is paramount.

Where an animal is surrendered to the CFCN for rehoming, the CFCN should take on the responsibility for:

• an eight day quarantine period to monitor health and behaviour

• establishing health status through a comprehensive health check by a registered veterinary practitioner

• assessing whether there are any behavioural issues that require remedial action.

A quarantine period may not be needed if the animal has been previously fully vaccinated, has a current vaccination certificate and has no infectious diseases.

3.5. Stray animals

It is important to remember that if a lost, abandoned or stray dog or cat is delivered to a CFCN or any person, it must still be taken to a pound to establish if the owner of the animal can be found. A veterinarian cannot legally do this for you if they do not have an 84Y agreement with local council.

Exemptions to the requirement to “offer up a seized dog or cat” (take a stray dog or cat to the pound) are if:

• the person who picked up the animal has a section 84Y Agreement in place with Council that allows them to access microchip information

• the animal is injured – this means it must be taken directly to a registered veterinary practitioner.

3.6. Declared dogs

Declared dogs in Victoria refer to animals that have been declared by a Council to be a menacing dog, dangerous dog, guard dog or a restricted breed dog. There are a large number of laws and restrictions around keeping a declared dog and further information is available at www.vic.gov.au/pets.

It is important to note that if a CFCN think they may have a declared dog surrendered to them, then the microchip can be checked by the local council and advice will be provided on what the rehoming options might be. Declared Restricted Breed dogs cannot be rehomed under any circumstance and it is a legal offence to do so.

3.7. Trap, Neuter, Release (TNR) schemes

TNR schemes are illegal in Victoria under the DAA, as releasing an unowned cat back onto the streets is considered to be abandonment. Other TNR issues include failing to register cats with the local council and not complying with requirements to prevent cats causing a nuisance. A lack of preventative and ongoing veterinary care could also lead to offences under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986.

4. Community Foster Care Network Operations

4.1. Key roles

There are a range of key roles that may feature in a CFCN, depending on the size and structure of the group. While not every group will have individuals identified to undertake specific roles, it is important that the function of each role is covered by the CFCN.

CFCN Manager

The manager is usually the person that oversees the CFCN and how it operates.

The manager of a CFCN is responsible for:

• the overall management and conduct of the CFCN

• ensuring compliance with relevant legislation

• the health and wellbeing of all animals in the CFCN

• promoting and supporting relevant formal and informal training for volunteers

• having a written agreement with sufficient veterinary practitioners to provide prompt treatment, other than first-aid, and, if necessary, euthanasia

• the protection of volunteer health

• the development and maintenance of an emergency management plan

• acting on reports of responsibilities by the operations manager or volunteers

• ensuring the maintenance and retention of records.

The manager should establish a written agreement with one or more veterinary practitioners to undertake the veterinary and health management for the CFCN.

A health management plan for animals cared for by foster carers should be developed in consultation with a veterinary practitioner, and reviewed on an annual basis and/or whenever veterinary practitioners change, whichever is more frequent.

For any given business, the manager may act as operations manager and foster carer. Similarly, the operations manager may act as a foster carer at any time. That is, they may undertake the duties of another type of staff member.

Operations Manager / Co-ordinator

The operation manager should have significant experience or qualifications in the management of dogs and cats, in order to meet their physical and behavioural needs.

The operations manager is responsible to the CFCN manager for the day to day operation of the CFCN which includes:

• ensuring the health and wellbeing of all animals in the CFCN

• reporting to the manager on matters of compliance and injury/illness within 24 hours

• carrying out and communicating the directions of the veterinary practitioner to foster carers

• identifying and monitoring pregnant animals

• supervising of foster carers and volunteers

• maintaining and collecting records and statistics

• providing advice on the supervision of daily feeding, watering, and inspection of all animals

• providing advice on the maintenance of an overall level of hygiene in the CFCN, including the disposal of waste materials

• providing prompt first aid and veterinary attention for animals when required

• responding to emergency situations for both humans and animals including evacuation procedures

• monitoring physical and psychological health of animals

• seeking relevant expert advice for adverse behavioural changes in an animal

• clearly articulating the roles and responsibilities of volunteers and critical stakeholders including registered veterinary practitioners, foster carers and vehicle transporters

• ensuring the CFCN is meeting the requirements to sell animals

• contributing to the development of and carrying out of emergency management plans and actions in the event of an emergency

• monthly checking of animals currently placed in the CFCN

• ensuring all animals within the network are appropriately microchipped and registered with the local council in which they reside.

• maintaining copies of surrender forms and microchip transfer forms.

Foster Carer

Foster carers are the backbone of many CFCNs —without a strong network of foster providers, the CFCN simply could not take in as many animals. Having a structured fostering program is essential to an organisation’s ability to care for animals.

Foster carers, including volunteers, should be experienced and competent to properly manage the type of animals kept by the CFCN.

Foster carers are responsible to the operations manager for carrying out the following:

• daily feeding, watering and inspection of all animals in their care

• prompt reporting of any sick, injured or dead animals

• daily cleaning of animal housing areas; that is removal of faeces and soiled food, hosing out, replacing soiled bedding, cleaning of litter trays and feeding and drinking utensils

• administering medication and treatment as prescribed by a veterinary practitioner

• routine disinfection of animal housing areas and equipment

• exercising, socialisation and handling of animals

• provision of environmental enrichment for the animals

• record keeping and ensuring animals are registered with the local council in which they reside.

The foster carer needs to:

1. Immediately report to the operations manager animals showing any signs of pregnancy, whelping, queening or oestrus, or animals displaying any of the following symptoms:

**Injury or illness**

- any serious physical or behavioural abnormality

- any change in normal behaviour in an animal indicative of an animal health or welfare concern

- apparent pain

- bleeding or swelling of body parts

- ear inflammation, discharge and/or discomfort

- bloating of abdomen

- difficulty or inability to urinate or defecate

- fits or staggering

- inability to stand or walk

- lack of appetite

- lameness

- patchy hair loss

- matted or cotted coat

- weight loss

- mastitis

- scratching of coat or ears

- observation of parasites

- swollen or inflamed third eyelid

- any other signs that health or wellbeing is compromised.

**Infectious diseases**

- coughing

- diarrhoea, especially if bloodstained

- red or brown coloured urine

- repeated sneezing

- runny nose

- runny or inflamed eyes

- vomiting.

2. Isolate any animal showing signs of infectious disease and disinfect their housing, bedding material and feeding and drinking utensils. Foster carers must take care not to spread infection from one area to another on their hands, clothing or footwear.

Transporter

Animal transporters are a critical part of being able to move an animal once identified as being in the care of the CFCN. The private transport of individual animals is most common for CFCNs, but even this activity requires consideration of the risks and care taken.

Any transporter for a CFCN must be experienced or adequately trained to carry out the following tasks:

• assessing, handling, and caring for animals being transported

• ensuring the hygiene and cleanliness of the vehicle and the cages and equipment used in the vehicle, including routine cleaning and disinfection

• cleaning and disinfecting the cargo area according to infectious disease protocol after an animal showing signs of infectious disease has been removed, before the next animal is placed in the cargo area

• inspecting animals at least every 2 hours, or more frequently on veterinary advice, and providing water; cleaning cages where necessary

• ensuring cages are secured within the vehicle and ensuring appropriate paperwork is collected and delivered to the appropriate person with the animal.

Animals must be transported for the minimum time practicable, taking into consideration the most direct route between the location where the animal was collected and the destination.

Registered Veterinarian

A key relationship in a CFCN is that with one or a number of registered veterinary practitioners.

*A registered veterinarian can assist with:*

• assessing all new animals that come into care

• developing a health management plan

• providing quarantine and isolation facilities

• providing treatment and advice for sick, injured, elderly or juvenile animals

• undertaking all veterinary procedures ie desexing, microchipping, vaccination, health checks, euthanasia.

Animal Behavioural Assessors/ Trainers

An important relationship during the rehabilitation and rehoming process is access to expert advice to assess and put in place remedial actions for adverse behaviours that may affect the wellbeing of the animal and its prospect of a successful rehoming.

There are many animal behavioural specialists who can provide professional advice on individual animals but also can provided targeted advice for how to manage animals in the CFCN.

Such specialists can assist you to better understand an animal’s behavioural and training needs, its limitations and develop an assessment and remediation protocol to suit.

Volunteers

Volunteers serve in many capacities within CFCNs by contributing time, energies or talents that help to fulfil the group’s mission. Volunteers fulfil many additional and important roles that may include:

• dog walking

• animal grooming

• fundraising

• record keeping

• advertising & publicity

• managing social media.

4.2. Zoonoses - diseases which can be transmitted to humans   
from animals.

An important consideration for all individuals working in or visiting a rescue group or CFCN location is the need to recognise the potential health risk for humans when working with animals. Some animals may have diseases that can be transmitted to humans (zoonoses). To protect human health a list of common zoonoses associated with animals should be included in the health management plan.

All personnel working with cats, especially women of childbearing age, must be made aware of the risk of contracting toxoplasmosis.

Human health must be protected through the provision of, or access to:

• an induction regarding health and hygiene practices for animals and humans upon commencing foster caring

• tetanus immunisation

• a thorough review of the health management plan for the network

• personal protective clothing and equipment (such as boots, coats, overalls, etc.)

• hot and cold hand washing facilities with soap at every property where foster care is taking place

• emergency planning options and arrangements in the event of a large scale emergency, natural disaster or personal emergency.

4.3. Animal transport vehicle

Where more than one animal is to be transported, vehicles used for the transport of animals must have provision for non-compatible animals to be physically separated and restrained or individually enclosed by compartment or cage; that is,

• a design that is both escape-proof and prevents the protrusion of head and/or limbs of any animal carried

• weatherproof with adequate ventilation of vehicles, both when stationary and in motion

• constructed of materials and a design that allows for effective cleaning and disinfection

• areas of the vehicle containing animals must be maintained between 10 and 320C at all times.

Cats must be individually caged within a vehicle. Queens with kittens may be caged together where the cage is sufficiently large enough for all cats to lie comfortably.

Dogs must not be transported in the cabin of animal transport vehicles unless restrained or enclosed in a compartment or cage.

No animal may be transported in the boot of a sedan.

4.4. Quarantine

All animals must be vaccinated and serve an eight day quarantine period prior to being made available for rehoming. The only exception is if the animal was previously vaccinated and presented with a current vaccination certificate and is free from infectious disease.

At the end of the quarantine period, all animals should again be examined by the operations manager or a veterinary practitioner to assess their suitability for sale.

4.5. Isolation

All CFCNs need to provide an area for isolation for animals suspected of having an infectious disease, or have a written agreement with a veterinary practitioner to provide isolation facilities off site.

Isolation housing must be physically separated by an impervious barrier or a distance of at least ten metres from other types of animal housing. Animals must be maintained in an area approved in the animal health management plan – with particular reference to the area’s airflow, workflow and cage or pen design.

All animals confined in isolation housing must be under the supervision of a veterinary practitioner and the fate of an animal must be decided by a veterinary practitioner.

4.6. Euthanasia

While the purpose of animal rescue is ultimately to ensure animals are rehomed, in some cases dogs and cats cannot be rehomed due a range of reasons. Some of these animals may have to be euthanised based on veterinary advice, due to age or disease related health issues.

Where this is the case, euthanasia must be by barbiturate overdose carried out by a veterinary practitioner, except in emergency situations. In emergency situations, a person associated with the CFCN may carry out euthanasia under the direction of a veterinary practitioner only.

The veterinary practitioner providing approval to carry out emergency euthanasia by a CFCN must provide a written certificate or letter stating that permission was given, when the permission was given, why permission was given, and the approved form of euthanasia.

Any method of emergency euthanasia must be humane. Blunt force trauma is not considered a humane form of euthanasia for dogs and cats.

Puppies and kittens 8 weeks and under requiring euthanasia must be euthanised by intraperitoneal injection of barbiturate by a veterinary practitioner as per the *American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals.*

4.7. Public liability insurance

If a CFCN requires any person to visit a home or business for the purpose of rehoming animals, or if any person visits a property associated with the CFCN, then the group must consider taking out public liability insurance. It can cover potential liability to third parties for personal injury or property damage. All persons associated with a CFCN have a responsibility to those visiting or engaging in activities on their premises (known as ‘duty of care’).

5. Records

While every group is different, record keeping is vitally important for the smooth and transparent operation of a CFCN. Having strong day-to-day operations will help ensure that the animals receive the best care and have the best opportunity to find permanent homes.

The ability to review what the CFCN has done in the past is the best way to make adjustments and plan where to concentrate resources in the future. For example:

• if the CFCN is not getting enough adopters, perhaps it is time to change the adoption procedure and policies

• if the CFCN is not getting enough animals with strong rehoming prospects, perhaps it is time to review the intake processes or rehabilitation processes.

Depending on the size and scale of the CFCN, the process of collecting data and maintaining records may be relatively informal, using simple spreadsheets. In other cases where the CFCN operates with a large number of animals and foster carers, it may be useful to consider using a software package. There are many packages available such as Shelter Mate or Shelter Buddy.

The CFCN manager should ensure that the records detailed below are collected and kept for a period of no less than 5 years after the animal has been sold, given away, or has become deceased.

When the CFCN ceases all animal health and sale records must be retained by the manager for 5 years.

5.1. Operation records

Business records should include the following:

• a complete and up to date list of all persons working for the CFCN, including the manager, operations manager, foster carers, transport drivers and volunteers

• for each individual: contact details, experience and/or qualifications, training history and tetanus vaccination status

• a list of the experience and / or qualifications of foster carers

• the ability of foster carers to handle animals with specific types of medical or behavioural issues

• emergency management and evacuation plans including site maps

• the current health management plan

• the written agreement/s for the veterinary practitioner and complete contact details

• any other contracts and contact details for external animal service providers

• all records related to the fostering, selling and rehoming of animals

• all records relating to surrendered animals, including previous owner, microchip number, copies of transfer of ownership papers, health record and vaccination status at the time of entry into the business

• a complete copy of any guarantee health statement

• copies of any standard operating procedures

• monthly animal inventory records

• financial expenditure.

5.2. Animal records

All treatment records of any type must include the: date and time of the treatment administration, person prescribing the treatment, dosage and details of treatment, person administering the treatment, dosage administered, name and signature of person administering the treatment corresponding to the animal being treated, and any relevant observation of the animal during and post treatment.

Animals under 12 weeks of age

Animal record files should be established at birth for each individual animal born, and maintained according to the following requirements until the ownership of the animal changes hands or the animal is deceased.

For each animal under 12 weeks of age in the business, the following records should be kept:

• name (or other identification)

• microchip number (when implanted)

• sex

• breed

• birth date (or where the animal was purchased from another breeder or private person and birthdate is unknown an approximate age based on veterinary assessment)

• distinguishing features

• a complete health care and veterinary history including:

- vaccination records

- internal and external parasite control

- heartworm records (dogs only)

• disposal records including date and method of disposal, and the name and address of new owners

• a copy of the vaccination certificate and breeder health declaration for the animal

• total length of stay at each step in care, rehabilitation and rehoming

• name, address and contact number of the purchaser

• return records, including date, reason for return and copies of supporting documentation, where applicable.

Animals 12 weeks of age or older

For each animal 12 weeks of age or older in the business, the following records should be kept:

• council registration certificate

• name (or other identification)

• microchip number

• sex

• breed

• birth date (or where unknown an approximate age based on veterinary assessment)

• distinguishing features

• animal acquisition date and details of previous owner (where applicable)

• a complete health care and veterinary history including:

- vaccination records

- internal and external parasite control

- heartworm records (dogs only)

• disposal records including date and mode of disposal, and the name and address of new owners

• total length of stay at each step in care, rehabilitation and rehoming

• return records, including date, reason for return and copies of supporting documentation, where applicable.

5.3. Registered veterinary practitioners agreement

A written agreement between the CFCN and a veterinary practitioner, who has relevant experience in small animal health and management, should be established and include arrangements for:

• the use of the veterinary practitioner’s facilities for the treatment of animals

• the provision of isolation housing if the CFCN does not have a separate isolation area and the supervision of animals in isolation at the CFCN

• advice and development of the health management plan for the business

• providing vaccination certificates for dogs and cats being sold from the CFCN

• providing a general health check for all CFCN animals

• providing veterinary assistance for the CFCN at all times and provision of treatment and/or services to the CFCN within 6 hours of notification that veterinary attention is required

• 24 hour contact for treatment or provision of services through an alternative 24 hour or emergency practice.

5.4. Foster care agreement

A written agreement between the CFCN and a foster carer, who has relevant experience in managing dogs and/or cats should include:

• the expectations of the CFCN in relation to the foster carer

• record keeping requirements

• reporting requirements

• financial arrangements for covering costs (feed, veterinary, grooming)

• how long the animal may be placed in care

• arrangements for the return of the animal for rehoming

• any specific physical, behavioural and environmental needs of the animal

• any scheduled veterinary appointments for procedures

• the provision of any ongoing veterinary treatment including administration of drugs

• specific housing requirements ie not with other dogs/ cats

• an assessment of the suitability of the dog for the foster carer’s environment ie house with children

• expected progress and outcomes while the animal is in care

• a specific emergency and evacuation plan for the CFCN

• an ability to meet all relevant council requirements for the keeping of animals.

5.5. Health management plan

Every CFCN should have a health management plan which is reviewed annually. Health management plans should be formulated in consultation with a veterinary practitioner and an animal behavioural specialist.

The health management plan might include protocols for:

• assessment for admission of new animals

• quarantine and movement of animals

• provision of appropriate diet for all animals

• hygiene, disinfection and disease prevention

• vaccination programs

• external parasite prevention and treatment programs including screening for ear mites, dermatophytes, ticks, and ringworm

• internal parasite prevention and treatment programs

• investigation and treatment of animals showing signs of disease

• response to a general outbreak of disease

• grooming requirements

• approved methods of euthanasia for emergency situations

• birthing of animals

• management of isolation facilities

• exercise, environmental enrichment and socialisation programs

• assessment programs for the health and welfare of animals being offered for sale

• behavioural and welfare assessment of animals on a daily basis

• risk assessments of housing and exercise areas and risk management plan/s

• pest management

• development of emergency response plans for both humans and animals.

A copy of the health management plan should be made available to every person associated with the CFCN.

Further information on developing a health management plan and emergency response plan is available at   
www.vic.gov.au/pets/

6. Management of dogs

6.1. Nutrition

Dogs must be provided with food that has sufficient nutritional value to meet their daily requirements and maintain their body condition at a level that is appropriate for their age, size and condition. This amount may also vary with climate, medical requirements and activity level.

Adult dogs should be fed a minimum of once daily or where they are fed more frequently it is important to ensure their daily requirements are not exceeded.

Dogs should also be fed raw bones regularly as these contribute to good dental health (there are also alternative products available). Cooked bones should not be fed as they can splinter and cause serious internal injuries. Offal should not be fed to dogs because of the risk of hydatid tapeworms.

Food available for dogs must be stored in a sealed container that is vermin proof and preparation of food must be conducted in hygienic areas which must be cleaned and disinfected after food is prepared. The carer must hold a minimum of five days’ worth of food.

All food must be provided in suitable receptacles, with uneaten food also removed daily and replaced with fresh food.

Provision of a plentiful supply of clean, cool water is critical– even consider putting ice cubes in each water bowl and provide multiple bowls that are fixed so they can’t overturn.

Dogs must have:

• access to clean drinking water at all times with water containers checked daily and maintained in a clean condition

• containers that are not easily tipped over and large enough or refilled often enough to provide access to water 24 hours a day

• containers that – if there are puppies– are safe and can’t cause injury or drowning.

As a general guide the amount of water daily for an adult dog or cat is 50 ml per kg and depends on factors such as diet, weather, amount of exercise as well as the status of the animal (e.g. lactating).

6.2. Health care

Consistent with the health management plan, a registered veterinary practitioner should be consulted to help develop a program of disease management for each animal with regular veterinary checks built into the plan for that particular animal. This should include regular health and disease management activities including:

• treatment for internal and external parasites and worms

• vaccination

• dental check-ups

• grooming

• nail clipping.

Each animal’s health and welfare should be checked daily including examining an animal’s physical condition, signs of ill health - such as allergies and other skin disorders - and that the animal is eating, drinking, toileting and behaving normally. Veterinary advice should be promptly sought when animals show signs of injury or ill health - following immediate isolation – to provide the best opportunity to return to good health. Puppies should be checked at least twice a day.

Further signs of ill health that might be observed include:

• bleeding or swelling of body parts

• ear inflammation, discharge and/or discomfort

• bloating of abdomen

• difficulty or inability to urinate or defecate

• coughing or vomiting

• diarrhoea

• red or brown coloured urine

• repeated sneezing or runny nose

• runny or inflamed eyes

• fits or staggering

• inability to stand or walk

• lack of appetite

• lameness

• weight loss

• mastitis

• scratching of coat or ears

• observation of parasites

• swollen or inflamed third eyelid

• whelping or queening.

6.3. Vaccination

In any good foster care program, vaccination of new animals coming into the CFCN should be a priority. It reduces disease risks for existing animals and protects the new animals.

Where vaccination status is unknown, dogs should receive the C5 vaccine. All unvaccinated dogs, should spend at least 8 days quarantined (completely separated) from other dogs to ensure they are not carrying an infectious disease. Dogs of unknown vaccination and health status should not be fostered out until their disease status is established.

6.4. Housing

Backyard housing

Most CFCN dogs that are waiting to be rehomed will be kept in the home of a foster carer. The housing requirements in a domestic situation are likely to be far different from a dog that is contained to a pen at a pound or shelter.

A domestic backyard should be maintained in a safe, clean and hygienic condition at all times. The backyard must have:

• enough space for dogs to move freely, urinate and defecate away from sleeping and eating areas and be cleaned daily so that yard is free of faeces

• good fencing to prevent escape

• a design that prevents children accessing the area in which the dog is located

• kennels that are large enough for the dog to stand, turn around and lie comfortably

• kennels that are waterproof and off the ground to prevent flooding, and openings that are away from the direction of wind and rain and are in shade, particularly during periods of hot weather

• beds that are raised off the floor and not made of concrete or metal as these can cause welfare issues in extremes of weather

• soft warm bedding in cold weather, taking into account any additional requirements for dogs particularly susceptible to cold, e.g. short haired dogs, puppies or older dogs may require dog coats

• protection from weather, with natural elements such as trees providing good measures of protection.

Enclosure or pen housing

Where a dog may be housed in enclosed or restricted areas, these should meet minimum size requirements as detailed in the following table:

Minimum Enclosed Area Sizes

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Height of Dog (cm) | Min Area  (sq. m) | Min Width  (cm) | Min Height  (cm) | Increased Floor Area For Each Puppy (8-16 wks) (sq. m) |
| 70 cm + | 15 | 240 | 180 | 0.5 |
| 40 cm - 70 cm | 10 | 180 | 180 | 1.0 |
| < 40 cm | 7 | 120 | 180 | 1.5 |

As a general rule, approximately one third of the area should be weatherproof, with the remainder being maintained in a safe, clean and hygienic condition at all times. The enclosure must have:

• access to natural lighting

• good fencing to prevent escape

• a design that prevents children accessing the area in which the dog is located

• enough space to allow dogs to move freely, urinate and defecate away from sleeping and eating areas and be cleaned daily so that areas are free of faeces

• adequate ventilation if housing is in an enclosed area or building

• kennels that are large enough for the dog to stand, turn around and lie comfortably

• kennels that are waterproof and off the ground to prevent flooding, and openings that are away from the direction of wind and rain and are in shade, particularly during periods of hot weather

• beds that are raised off the floor and not made of concrete or metal as these can cause welfare issues in extremes of weather

• soft warm bedding in cold weather, taking into account any additional requirements for dogs particularly susceptible to cold, e.g. short haired dogs, puppies or older dogs may require dog coats.

• protection from weather, with natural elements such as trees providing good measures of protection.

Multiple housing of animals

Dogs generally should be housed separately unless surrendered together or if compatible and having been assessed as suitable for rehoming together. If dogs are housed together, it is important that each animal still has a separate sleeping area and food container.

Where there is more than one dog housed together, dogs must be socially compatible to avoid fights. While female or de-sexed dogs can usually be safely housed together, care should be taken if housing entire males with other entire males or entire females. For multiple housed dogs, each dog must have its own sleeping mat.

6.5. Exercise, enrichment, socialisation and handling

It is important that all dogs have a minimum level of exercise. An area must be securely fenced and designed to prevent escape with direct supervision by a person, particularly when more than one animal is placed in area, to ensure animals are not in danger of attack or injury.

Where exercise occurs within the backyard, at least half of the exercise period must include interaction with a human such as walking on a lead or throwing a ball and dogs should be removed from their backyards a minimum of two sessions weekly for the purpose of handling, socialisation, enrichment or exercise.

Where dogs are housed continuously indoors, at least one full exercise session per day must be outside (weather permitting).

It is recommended that lactating female dogs be offered   
exercise outside their housing area, allowing them a break   
from their puppies.

Puppies less than 8 weeks should be moved outside of their housing area for exercise each day, this might be to another area   
of the house or yard.

Dogs of all ages must be provided with a minimum amount of daily exercise, socialisation, handing and enrichment. Further details are provided in the following tables.

Exercise and Enrichment for Dogs

| Category | Exercise Requirements | Environmental Enrichment |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Puppies  0 to 4 weeks | Normal movement within whelping box and mother’s pen | Provide a variety of different surfaces within enclosure that expose puppies to different textures (e.g. hard floor, soft bedding, newspaper, artificial grass, turf) |
| Puppies  4-8 weeks | Normal movement and play within the mother’s pen  Can include playing with toys and interaction with humans | Provide a variety of different surfaces and textures within the enclosure  Provide a variety of toys within the enclosure to develop motor skills and play behaviour  Must rotate toys on a weekly basis |
| Puppies  8-16 weeks | Provide a minimum of 20 minutes run/play time daily within a secure area outside of primary housing enclosure  Exercise may include:  introduction of daily walks on lead  basic obedience training  training working dogs for farm work  training hunting or retrieving dogs for such activities | Provide a variety of different surfaces within the enclosure that expose puppies to different textures  Provide a variety of toys within the enclosure to develop motor skills and play behaviour  Rotate toys on a weekly basis  May wish to provide noise simulation CD’s |
| Dogs  16 plus weeks | Minimum 30 minutes exercise twice daily with at least 2 hours between each exercise session  Exercise may include:  on lead walking or off leash run/play time within a secure area  competition training  training working dogs for farm work  training and participation in retrieval activities | Provide toys such as rope and squeaky toys, rubber toys and rotate weekly.  May also provide food dispensing toys that encourage foraging – treat balls, stuffed kongs, frozen food, bones  May utilise competition training, crate training and training hunting / retrieving activities as alternative forms enrichment. When using these, they must occur at least 3 x weekly and must be interchanged with other forms of enrichment |
| Senior dogs  7 years plus | Same as adult dog unless modified under health management plan | Same as adult dog unless modified under health management plan |
| Pregnant bitches (1-7 weeks) | Same as adult dog unless modified under health management plan | Same as adult dog unless modified under health management plan |
| Pregnant bitches  (7 + weeks gestation and lactating) | Provide gentle exercise for a minimum 20 minutes 2x daily in an area containing natural daylight  Exercise may include on-lead exercise or off-leash in a secure fenced area being directly monitored/ supervised  Exercise modifications must be under the direction of a vet practitioner | Same as adult dog unless modified under health management plan |
| Dogs puppies injured , ill or recovering | Under guidance of a registered veterinary practitioner | Under guidance of a registered veterinary practitioner |

Socialisation and Handling for Dogs

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Category | Socialisation | Handling |
| Puppies  0 to 4 weeks | Include exposure to humans through daily handling  Remain with mother and other litter mates unless under veterinary advice | Include 5 minutes human handling per puppy daily from 7 days of age |
| Orphaned puppies  0-4 weeks | Include exposure to humans through daily handling  Remain with other littermates where possible, unless under vet advice | Handling of orphaned puppies outside of normal feeding and cleaning must be conducted under the direction of a vet practitioner |
| Puppies  4-8 weeks | Include exposure to humans through daily handling and interactive play using toys  Remain with mother and other littermates until 6 weeks of age unless under vet advice  May include exposure to vaccinated puppies from other litters from 6 weeks of age in a separate pen, for 10 minutes per day where practical | Minimum of 30 minutes human handling per litter daily |
| Puppies  8-16 weeks | Include exposure to humans through daily handling and interactive play using toys  Include exposure to a variety of other vaccinated dogs that are socially compatible where practical | Minimum of 30 minutes human handling per puppy daily |
| Dogs  16 plus weeks | Include exposure to humans through daily handling and positive interactions such as play time outside of daily cleaning and feeding routine  Include play and exercise time with a variety of other vaccinated dogs that are socially compatible | Minimum of 30 minutes human handling per dog daily |
| Senior dogs  7 years plus | Same as adult dog | Same as adult dog unless modified under health management plan |
| Pregnant bitches  (1-7 weeks) | Same as adult dog | Same as adult dog unless modified under health management plan |
| Pregnant bitches  (7 + weeks gestation and lactating) | Same as adult dog – although reduced exposure to other dogs | Same as adult dog unless modified under health management plan |
| Dogs puppies injured, ill or recovering | Under guidance of a registered veterinary practitioner | Under guidance of a registered veterinary practitioner |

The type of exercise, socialisation and enrichment activity can vary depending on the stage of life the animal is in,   
the point in the care, rehabilitation and rehoming process it is in, its current housing, and the period of time for which   
it is in care.

It is important to remember that during a quarantine period:

• exercise can occur by encouraging activity such as hiding food

• environmental enrichment should be provided using equipment that can be disposed of, sterilised or decontaminated

• human interaction should be encouraged but human safety and health must be taken into account

• in the case of dogs, they must be singularly exercised except puppies or kittens from the same litter or where surrendered together.

If there is an exercise area suitable for quarantined animals, the area and route to the area must be disinfected after use. Any equipment used such as grooming equipment should be allocated to that animal and be able to be sterilised, disposed of or decontaminated.

During the post-quarantine period:

• dogs can be exercised (no more than two per person) outside the home (subject to a risk assessment) provided they are restrained by a chain, cord or leash held by a trained or experienced person

• human interaction is strongly encouraged including activities such as grooming.

Toys and washable enrichment items should always be washed with hot soapy water when soiled, and disinfected. Dishwashers are suitable for disinfection at 65 plus degrees celsius using appropriate dishwashing detergent.

6.6. Whelping and lactating

It is important the body condition of pregnant or lactating bitches is maintained within an ideal body weight to avoid development of metabolic disease. Bitches usually have increased nutritional requirements to enable maintenance of body weight while feeding.

Pregnant and lactating bitches and puppies of 6-12 months must be fed a minimum of twice a day, with puppies   
of 6 weeks to 6 months being fed a minimum of three times a day.

At weaning, puppies should be provided with 3-4 meals spread through the day, which can be reduced to 2-3 meals per day at around 16 weeks and then a single meal of adult dog food at around 6-9 months. Feeding schedules may be different for large breed pups as they take longer to mature.

7. Management of cats

7.1. Nutrition

Food available for cats must be stored in a sealed container that is vermin proof and preparation of food must be conducted in hygienic areas which must be cleaned and disinfected after food is prepared. The carer must hold a minimum of five days’ worth of food.

Cats must be provided with food that has sufficient nutritional value to meet their daily requirements and maintain their body condition at a level that is appropriate for their age, size and condition.

Cats also need to be fed at least once a day but it is recommended that this amount be split into two meals. A moderately active cat generally requires around 70 kcal x body weight kg of food a day.

A cat diet should never be solely vegetables nor fresh meat.

Cats and kittens can be lactose intolerant so feeding cow’s milk is not recommended – there are lactose free milk products specifically designed for cats.

All food must be provided in suitable receptacles, with uneaten food also removed daily and replaced with fresh food.

Cats must have:

• access to clean drinking water at all times with water containers checked daily and maintained in a clean condition

• containers that are not easily tipped over and large enough or refilled often enough to provide access to water 24 hours a day

• containers that – if there are kittens – are safe and can’t cause injury or drowning.

All water and feeding utensils should be cleaned daily using chemicals in accordance with manufacturer’s instructions.

All food and water bowls must be cleaned at least twice weekly.

7.2. Health care

Consistent with the health management plan, a registered veterinary practitioner should be consulted to help develop a program of disease management for each animal with regular veterinary checks built into the plan for that particular animal. This should include regular health and disease management activities including:

• treatment for internal and external parasites and worms

• vaccination

• dental check-ups

• grooming

• nail clipping.

These activities should be undertaken by an experienced person or registered veterinary practitioner noting that in the case of cats, scratching posts can be provided – clipping of nails is not recommended as blunt nails will affect cats’ ability to climb and escape danger.

Irrespective of the program in place however, health and welfare should be checked daily including examining an animal’s physical condition, signs of ill health - such as allergies and other skin disorders - and that the animal is eating, drinking, toileting and behaving normally. Veterinary advice should be promptly sought when animals show signs of injury or ill health - following immediate isolation – to provide the best opportunity to return to good health. Puppies and kittens should be checked at least twice a day.

Further signs of ill health that might be observed include:

• bleeding or swelling of body parts

• ear inflammation, discharge and/or discomfort

• bloating of abdomen

• difficulty or inability to urinate or defecate

• coughing or vomiting

• diarrhoea

• red or brown coloured urine

• repeated sneezing or runny nose

• runny or inflamed eyes

• fits or staggering

• inability to stand or walk

• lack of appetite

• lameness

• weight loss

• mastitis

• scratching of coat or ears

• observation of parasites

• swollen or inflamed third eyelid

• whelping or queening.

7.3. Vaccination

In any good foster care program, vaccination of new animals coming into the CFCN should be a priority. It reduces disease risks for existing animals and protects the new animals.

Where vaccination status is unknown, cats should be vaccinated for infectious enteritis and feline respiratory disease. All unvaccinated cats, should spend at least 8 days quarantined (completely separated) from other cats to ensure they are not carrying an infectious disease.

If the CFCN does not have quarantine facilities, then they will need to be established. This may include making arrangements with a registered veterinary practitioner to do so. Cats of unknown vaccination and health status should not be fostered out until their disease status is established.

7.4. Housing

The confinement of cats is critical for the welfare of the animal. Cats should generally be confined to the property from dusk until dawn and preferably at all other times. This protects cats from being injured or killed due to car accidents, fights or poisoning, and prevents them from being stolen or from catching diseases such as cat flu and feline AIDS.   
Cat confinement also prevents predation on wildlife.

Enclosures must be maintained in safe clean and hygienic conditions with no sharp edges. Cat litter must be cleaned daily to remove urine and faces, and placed away from eating and sleeping areas. Disinfectants containing phenol must never be used around cats.

Enclosures where there are multiple cats should contain no more than eight de-sexed cats per pen1. Entire females can be housed together but males must be separate. All however, need separate sleeping areas, litter trays, bowls and scratching poles, with climbing planks and scratching poles having at least two joined levels.

Cats are generally sedentary and can be confined without risk providing their environmental needs are met. However, where cats are permanently enclosed, these areas should meet minimum size requirements as detailed in the   
following table.

Minimum Enclosed Area Sizes

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Single Cat or  Up to 3 Kittens | Min Area (sq. m) | Min Width (cm) | Min Height (cm) |
| Quarantine Period | 0.49 | 70 | 50 |
| Transitional | 1.5 |  | 90 |
| Module | 0.8 | 90 | 180 |
| Colony Pens | 2.0 | 200 | 180 |

Cats should always be provided with:

• access to natural lighting

• adequate ventilation if housing is in an enclosed area or building

• space to allow cats to move freely, urinate and defecate away from sleeping and eating areas and be cleaned daily so that areas are free of faeces

• beds that are raised off the floor and not made of concrete or metal as these can cause welfare issues in extremes of weather

• protection from weather.

7.5. Exercise, enrichment, socialisation and handling

Cats need regular exercise and to respond to   
visual stimulation – this is especially important   
for solitary cats.

Cats require some exposure to sunlight to ensure   
good health and must be protected from hazards   
such as electric appliances, power cords, poisons   
and water.

Exercise and socialisation for cats can be encouraged through play time in a secure area. Useful items to encourage play might include toys, climbing ledges, scratching poles, hide and retreat areas, vertical spaces, sunbaking or heat bank areas, pheromone or aromatherapy areas, music, and human interactions – including grooming.

Cats of all ages must be provided with a minimum amount of daily enrichment, socialisation and handing. Further details are provided in the following tables.

Enrichment, Socialisation and Handling of Cats

| Category | Environmental Enrichment | Socialisation | Handling |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Kittens  0–4 weeks | Provide with exposure to a variety of textures/surfaces (such as hard surfaces, soft bedding, paper, etc.) | Provide daily exposure to humans via daily handling from 7 days of age  Remain with mother and other littermates unless under veterinary advice | Must be weighed daily from birth to ensure weight gain  Must be handled for a minimum of 5 minutes per kitten per day |
| Orphaned kittens  0–4 weeks | Provide exposure to a variety of textures/surfaces (such as hard surfaces, soft bedding, paper, etc.)  May wish to provide noise  simulation CDs | Provide daily exposure to humans via daily handling from 7 days of age  Must remain with other littermates where possible, except under veterinary advice | Weighed daily from birth to ensure weight gain  Handle for a minimum  of 5 minutes per kitten per day |
| Kittens  4–8 weeks | Provide with:  climbing and perching areas  scratch poles  hide areas  a variety of toys they can roll, pounce on, capture and bite  exposure to variety of items that stimulate the senses (i.e. catnip,  cat grass etc)  Rotate toys weekly  May wish to provide noise  simulation CDs | Provide daily exposure to humans via daily handling  Remain with mother and littermates except under veterinary advice  May begin socialisation with other animals/cats of appropriate vaccination status and temperament | Handle for a minimum  of 15 minutes per kitten per day |
| Kittens  8–16 weeks | Must be provided with:  climbing and perching areas  scratch poles  hide areas  a variety of toys they can roll, pounce on, capture and bite  exposure to variety of items that stimulate the senses (such as catnip, cat grass etc)  Rotate toys weekly | Provide with daily exposure to humans through handling and interactive play using toys outside of daily cleaning/feeding routine  Provide with opportunity to socialise with other animals/cats of appropriate vaccination status and temperament  May begin harness/lead training | Handle for a minimum of 30 minutes per kitten per day |
| Adolescent and adult cat  16+ weeks | Must be provided with:  climbing and perching areas  scratch poles  hide areas  a variety of toys they can roll, pounce on, capture and bite  exposure to variety of items that stimulate the senses (such as catnip, cat grass, etc.)  Rotate toys weekly | Provide daily exposure to humans through handling and interactive play using toys outside of daily cleaning/feeding routine  Provide opportunity to exercise/socialisation with other socially compatible animals  May include walking on a lead and harness | Handle for a minimum of 30 minutes per cat per day |
| Cats/kittens — injured, ill, or recovering from ailment | Under guidance of veterinary practitioner | Under guidance of veterinary practitioner | Under guidance of veterinary practitioner |

The type of exercise, socialisation and enrichment activity can vary depending on the stage of life the animal is in,   
the point in the care, rehabilitation and rehoming process it is in, its current housing, and the period of time for which   
it is in care.

It is important to remember that during a quarantine period:

• exercise can occur in the animal’s own pen or cage by encouraging activity such as hiding food

• environmental enrichment should be provided using equipment that can be disposed of, sterilised or decontaminated

• human interaction should be encouraged but human safety and health must be taken into account.

If there is an exercise area suitable for quarantined animals, the area and route to the area must be disinfected after use. Any equipment used such as grooming equipment should be allocated to that animal and be able to be sterilised, disposed of or decontaminated.

During the post-quarantine period:

• up to eight cats can be exercised together in a completely enclosed facility provided they are of the same sex   
or are de-sexed2

• human interaction is strongly encouraged including activity such as grooming.

Toys and washable enrichment items should always be washed with hot soapy water when soiled, and disinfected when being transferred between pens. Dishwashers are suitable for disinfection at 65 plus degrees celsius using appropriate dishwashing detergent.

7.6. Queening and lactating

It is important the body condition of pregnant or lactating queens is maintained within an ideal body weight to avoid development of metabolic disease. Queens usually have increased nutritional requirements to enable maintenance of body weight while feeding.

Kittens also require more food per kg of body because they need energy for maintenance as a result of activity and growth. Ideally, kittens up to 12 weeks of age should be fed 3-4 meals a day and from 12 weeks – 6 months they should receive 2-3 meals a day and from 6 months 1-2 meals a day.

8. Caring for Animals in Special Circumstances

8.1. Pregnant and lactating bitches and queens

A pregnant bitch or queen has increased health requirements and requires additional veterinary checks.

In the last 10 days of pregnancy an animal due to whelp should be moved to individual housing – if not there already – and provided with privacy from other animals on the property (or moved to another location where they can be appropriately cared for).

Whelping animals (those beginning and in the process of giving birth) should be carefully monitored and must be provided with warm, soft bedding. After whelping, bedding should be replaced and the housing area cleaned.   
The animal should continue to be provided with warm, weatherproof sleeping quarters and soft bedding. The bed   
must be raised off the floor, but not at a height that would cause injury to a puppy or kitten should it fall out. Bedding must be changed regularly and housing areas cleaned of faeces, wasted food, and dirty water at least daily, and disinfected weekly.

Puppies and kittens must not be weaned before seven weeks.

Once an animal is lactating, it should have access to a separate area that can allow them temporary respite from their kittens or puppies.

8.2. Juvenile animals

The purpose of juvenile foster care is to allow a healthy kitten or puppy to be cared for in preparation for sale   
and to ensure the kitten or puppy is healthy, and the age and weight required for vaccination and desexing prior   
to being rehomed.

8.3. Emaciated animals

Animals that have come into care in emaciated or very skinny body condition will need to be checked thoroughly by a veterinarian as soon as possible. The cause of the emaciation will need to be determined to establish the necessary treatment, whether it be a specific diet and or medication.

Severely emaciated animals need a great deal of specialised care, in some cases it may be inappropriate or even an act of cruelty to transport the animal long distances to foster care. A CFCN must assess each animal on their own merits as to their suitability to undergo transport and seek veterinary advice if unsure.

8.4. Elderly animals

Animals that are identified as being of a mature age, will have specific health and welfare needs that should be met. The animal should be checked by a veterinarian as soon as possible and any specific needs should be met by the carer. Considerations for the comfort of elderly animals may include:

• having minimal stairs and steps in the care home

• keeping the environment clear from objects that may injure an animal with poor sight

• keeping the animal warm with a jacket or coat

• moderating the level of exercise relative to the animal

• seeking advice on the nutritional needs of the animal.

9. **Sale of animals**

All animals being sold/ rehomed from a CFCN should be accompanied with a health declaration, including details of any known physical abnormality at the time of sale and how that abnormality may affect the short- and long-term health and welfare of the animal, and a vaccination certificate stating the date of the last vaccination and due date of the next vaccination.

All animals being sold must have current vaccinations in accordance with the manufacturer’s recommendations and their vaccination, heartworm (dogs only) and parasite control records must be provided to the new owner.

All animals being sold or given away from the CFCN must be implanted with a microchip by an authorised implanter and must be accompanied by a signed transfer of ownership form which is provided to the new owner upon collection of the animal. It is recommended that the CFCN obtain a signature on the microchip transfer form from the purchaser and submit the form on behalf of themselves and the purchaser. This will ensure that microchips are transferred into the new owner’s name promptly. A photocopy of the signed form should be provided to the purchaser.

Purchasers of desexed animals must be provided with a copy of the desexing certificate.

Animals may be sold with specific agreement to provide ongoing training or behavioural assessment, this should be clearly documented as to who will provide this and under what conditions.

Animals may be sold at any time but must not permanently leave the CFCN or foster carer before 8 weeks of age.

The CFCN has responsibility for the health and welfare of the animal and it is important that any new situation is assessed for what might suit the animal, the prospective new owner and their suitability for ownership.

When deciding whether a prospective adopter is suitable, some of the aspects that should be considered are:

• how the people in the house feel about having a pet

• the history of the person who is taking responsibility for the animal – including previous pets

• their readiness to take an animal to the vet if necessary

• where the pet would live

• why the person wants the pet

• whether there are existing pets in the home

• what breed is the person thinking about and will it fit in with their current lifestyle

• the makeup of the people residing at the residence

• future plans such as whether they are moving house or perhaps about to have a baby

• how social life or work obligations might impact on the ability of the person to care for the pet

• what are their backup plans if they go on holiday for example

• any health issues in the family that may be affected by the pet

• if renting, does the landlord agree to an animal being homed at the property – consider seeking this agreement   
in writing.

New owners should be provided with literature about:

• appropriate feeding

• parasite control

• health, including procedures for emergency treatment during the guarantee period

• housing

• responsible pet ownership, including current legislation covering the registration of pet animals and training opportunities available

• importance of training dogs and socialisation for cats and dogs

• vaccination.

9.1. Guarantee

A CFCN may consider putting in place a sale guarantee to protect both the CFCN and new owners.

For example:

• Where an animal is returned to the CFCN within 3 days of sale, for any reason not supported by a statement from a veterinary practitioner, the CFCN must take back the animal and refund 75% of the purchase price.

• Where an animal is returned to the CFCN within 21 days of sale accompanied by a statement from a veterinary practitioner that the animal is unacceptable for health reasons, the business must take back the animal and refund 100% of the purchase price.

• If an animal is diagnosed with, suffering from, dies of, or is euthanised from a physical defect or disease that is traceable to the point of sale within 3 years of purchase, the CFCN must refund 100% of the purchase price where the owner of the animal provides supporting statements from a veterinary practitioner, including test results where a suitable test is available. Owners of the animal must make veterinary reports and test results available to the CFCN for the CFCN to obtain their own veterinary advice (second opinion).

Test results and death certificates must be linked with the animal’s microchip number.

The payment of refunds should be made upon presentation of:

• the animal for the 3-day return clause

• the animal and a signed veterinary certificate for the 21-day return clause.

For refunds being sought under the 3-year clause, the CFCN should be given sufficient time to have an independent veterinary assessment of any test results, veterinary statements, etc. It would be reasonable to assume this independent veterinary assessment could be accomplished within 6 weeks of the owner of the animal supplying the necessary documentation. Therefore, the refund should be made within a period of 6 weeks of initial presentation of veterinary statements and test results or as soon as practicable after that.

Under the 3-day and 21-day clauses, the owner cannot keep the animals and request a refund. Under the 3-year clause the owner may choose to keep the animals, but request a refund to help cover veterinary/care costs.

The guarantee for refund does not apply to animals that have had full disclosure of health issues that may result in death or disablement, whereby the owner has signed a purchase declaration.

10. Appendix

Body condition score chart - Dog

Emaciated

• Individual ribs, spine and pelvis prominent and evident from a distance.

• Lack of muscle mass.

• Little or no body fat.

• Rump hollow.

• Waist prominent when viewed from above.

• Abdomen obviously tucked up.

• Neck thin.

• No fat on tail.

Veterinary advice must be sought.

Thin

• Ribs, spine and pelvis bones visible and easily felt.

• Little body fat.

• Neck thin.

• Abdomen tucked up.

• Little fat on tail.

• Obvious waist when viewed from above.

Increase feeding and worm dog if not wormed recently. (ensure all-wormer used – some products do not cover all worms).

Seek veterinary advice if dog remains underweight or unsure of feeding or worming regime.

Ideal

• Ribs and spine can be felt, last few ribs may be visible.

• Dog should have a waist when viewed from above.

• Belly is tucked up when viewed from side.

• Good muscle mass.

• Rump well muscled.

Overweight

• Ribs and spine not visible but can be felt.

• Fat deposit on tail.

• Little or no waist when viewed from above, rounded appearance, back appears broadened.

• Dog squarish along back line when viewed from side.

• Abdomen not tucked up, may appear rounded underneath.

Reduce feed intake or provide lower calorie feed. Increase exercise.

Seek veterinary advice if unsure of appropriate diet or concerns over exercise regime.

Obese

• Ribs and spine not visible and difficult to feel.

• Tail has obvious fat deposit.

• No waist and back broadened when viewed from above.

• Belly obviously rounded and possibly distended.

• Dog square or rounded up along back line when viewed from side.

Seek veterinary advice on diet and exercise regime.

Body condition score chart - Cat

Emaciated

• Individual ribs, spine and pelvis prominent and evident from a distance.

• Lack of muscle mass.

• Little or no body fat.

• Rump hollow.

• Waist prominent when viewed from above.

• Neck thin.

• No flank fold (under belly), abdomen very tucked up.

Veterinary advice must be sought.

Thin

• Ribs, spine and pelvis bones visible and easily felt.

• Little body fat.

• Neck thin.

• No flank fold (under belly), abdomen tucked up.

• Obvious waist when viewed from above.

Increase feeding and worm cat if not wormed recently (ensure all-wormer used – some products do not cover all worms).

Seek veterinary advice if cat remains underweight or unsure of feeding or worming regime.

Ideal

• Ribs and spine can be felt, last few ribs may be visible.

• Flank fold (under belly) maybe visible from side.

• Cat should have a waist when viewed from top.

• Good muscle mass.

Overweight

• Ribs and spine not visible but can be felt.

• Little or no waist when viewed from above, rounded appearance.

• Flank fold (under belly) clearly visible and will wobble when cat moves. Belly and chest rounded.

• Large ventral fat pad covering hind legs.

Reduce feed intake or provide lower calorie feed. Consider options to increase exercise level of cat.

Obese

• Ribs and spine not visible and difficult to feel.

• Tail has obvious fat deposit.

• No waist and back broadened when viewed from above.

• Flank fold (under belly) hangs down and will sway when cat moves, belly and chest very rounded.

Seek veterinary advice on diet and exercise regime.

vic.gov.au/pets