



**AnimalKind**  
BCSPCA Accredited

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## Companion Animal Services Standards:

Dog Daycare & Walking, Animal Boarding & Grooming  
January 2023

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**BCSPCA**  
SPEAKING FOR ANIMALS

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS  
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## Preface

To help more animals in the community, the BC SPCA and the University of British Columbia (UBC) Animal Welfare Program recognized the need to evaluate and promote animal-related businesses that are committed to good welfare practices within their industry. Through this research partnership, AnimalKind – the BC SPCA’s animal welfare accreditation and referral program – was created. AnimalKind businesses use science-based practices and share BC SPCA values. AnimalKind was developed with funding from the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies and the Vancouver Foundation, and ongoing support from BC SPCA donors.

The BC SPCA is one of the largest animal welfare organizations of its kind in North America. Established in 1895 under the provincial *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA Act)*, the Society’s mandate is to protect and enhance the quality of life for domestic, farm and wild animals in British Columbia (BC). As a registered charity, the BC SPCA operates community animal centres, education and adoption facilities, veterinary and spay/neuter clinics, a wildlife rehabilitation centre, a provincial animal helpline, and a provincial office. In addition to province-wide programs for advocacy, government relations, humane education, and scientific research, Special Provincial Constables enforce the *PCA Act* and *Criminal Code of Canada* to fulfill the Society’s law enforcement functions.

## Introduction

### Why did the BC SPCA create standards for companion animal services?

Since 2019, the BC SPCA has been offering accreditation to dog training businesses who follow the AnimalKind Dog Training Standards. This program assists guardians to find humane trainers who use reward-based training methods supported by science. To help our supporters and the public choose a dog daycare, dog walking, pet boarding or grooming service, the BC SPCA has created **voluntary standards** for these companion animal services.

The BC SPCA values the essential services that companion animal businesses provide for animals and their guardians, and wishes to help guardians select businesses who are committed to using only humane handling and reward-based care. Humane handling refers to the training of, or caring for an animal without using pain, fear, or physical or verbal intimidation techniques. Similarly, reward-based care refers to any handling technique, tool or device that the animal associates with rewards and functions to increase their cooperation. Evidence-based animal handling and training methods are informed by research findings, including data and peer-reviewed scientific literature.

### How were the standards developed?

Research and development of the AnimalKind Companion Animal Services Standards (the “standards”) was informed by: relevant scientific literature; peer-review from animal behaviour and training academics and veterinarians; in-person discussions, written feedback and survey responses from owners and staff of dog daycare, dog walking, animal boarding, and grooming businesses in BC; widely accepted ethical principles and animal behaviour and welfare science; and applicable laws of BC and Canada. In addition, existing standards and certifications for dog daycare and walking and animal boarding and grooming were consulted<sup>1-21</sup>.

The BC SPCA recognizes that scientific knowledge is continually evolving, and that evidence on some topics related to companion animal services is still lacking. Where scientific evidence is not yet available, the values of the BC SPCA as expressed in position statements (in particular, Animal Training, Dog Welfare, Cat Welfare, Companion Animal Handling and Restraint, and Companion Animal Confinement)<sup>22</sup> guided standards development.

### Which animals do the standards apply to?

The standards apply primarily to dogs and cats; however, many aspects could also apply to the care of small companion animals, such as rabbits, guinea pigs, and rodents. The term “dog” refers to domestic dogs of all ages of the species *Canis lupus familiaris* and “cat” refers to domestic cats of all ages of the species *Felis sylvestris catus*.

**Which sections of the companion animal services standards apply to each business?**

Some companion animal services businesses only offer one type of service (e.g., dog daycare) while others offer multiple services (e.g., dog and cat overnight boarding, animal pick-up and drop-off and grooming).

**Sections A, B, C and D apply to all businesses.** Additional sections apply for other services offered:

Standards Section	Companion animal service					
	Dog Daycare & Social Groups	Dog Overnight Boarding	Dog Walks	Animal Pick-Up & Drop-Off	Cat Overnight Boarding	Animal Grooming, Nails & Baths
A. Humane Companion Animal Care & Handling	X	X	X	X	X	X
B. Business Practices	X	X	X	X	X	X
C. Animal Intake & Record Keeping	X	X	X	X	X	X
D. Emergency Preparedness	X	X	X	X	X	X
E. Facilities: Environment, Cleaning & Building Systems	X	X			X	X
F. Dog Daycare & Social Groups	X					
G. Short-Term Dog Overnight Boarding & Individual Housing		X				
H. Dog Walking			X			
I. Animal Pick-up & Drop-off				X		
J. Short-Term Cat Overnight Boarding & Individual Housing					X	
K. Animal Grooming						X

## A. Humane Companion Animal Care and Handling

Section A applies to all companion animal businesses (daycare, walking, boarding, and grooming).

### Standard 1: Humane methods that are reward-based and evidence-based are used to handle, train and interact with companion animals

- 1.1. Methods used to handle, train, and interact with animals focus on rewarding and positively reinforcing desired behaviours.
- 1.2. Methods used to prevent and manage unwanted animal behaviour focus on making the undesirable behaviour unrewarding using environmental modification, removal of a reward, differential reinforcement of an alternative behaviour, and systematic desensitization and counterconditioning to replace undesired behaviours with desirable behaviours or change the animal's emotional response.
- 1.3. Methods used to handle, train, and interact with animals emphasize positive animal-human relationships and proactively minimize animal fear and stress.
- 1.4. Businesses have a written animal welfare policy to communicate humane animal care and handling expectations to caregivers.

A number of scientific studies have assessed the effects of training dogs with reward-based methods versus aversive-based methods on dog welfare as summarized in recent literature reviews<sup>23-26</sup>. Studies have also assessed the effects of handling and training methods for cats and rabbits and shown the welfare benefits of reward-based handling<sup>27-35</sup>.

The BC SPCA acknowledges that no one scientific study is perfect; however, taken together, the research points towards the same conclusion: aversive-based handling methods have negative welfare consequences for companion animals and, reward-based methods are equally as effective (and in some cases, more effective) in achieving care and handling goals. In addition, reward-based care has positive welfare consequences for companion animals.

Positions and standards advocating for the use of humane, reward-based and evidence-based animal handling methods have been adopted by the BC SPCA and other animal protection organizations<sup>14,22,36-40</sup>, veterinary organizations<sup>13,41-45</sup>, and associations for professional animal trainers<sup>46-49</sup> in Canada and worldwide. Furthermore, some veterinarians have developed reward-based guidelines and programs for other veterinarians and pet guardians. For example, Dr. Sophia Yin's Low Stress Handling<sup>®</sup> education and certification program teaches methods that do "not involve coercion, dominance, or other negative training methods"<sup>50</sup>. Similarly, Dr. Marty Becker's Fear Free<sup>®</sup> education and certification program teaches veterinary and other companion animal care professionals how to "prevent and alleviate fear, anxiety and stress and improve an animal's emotional wellbeing"<sup>3,21</sup>, and Cat Friendly Veterinary Interaction Guidelines produced by feline veterinary specialists educates veterinary professionals on cat handling approaches to minimize fear<sup>35</sup>.



**Standard 2: Handling methods, devices, or tools that cause pain, injury, anxiety, fear, or distress to companion animals are not used**

- 2.1. Use or sale of any handling method, device, or tool that is designed to cause, or that causes, pain, injury, anxiety, fear, or distress to an animal is prohibited.
- 2.2. Use of any method, device, or tool that a particular animal has a consistent aversive reaction to is prohibited for that animal (even if the method, device, or tool is not designed to be aversive).

**Examples of aversive handling and training methods**

*Adapted from AnimalKind Dog Training Standards<sup>16</sup>*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ hitting, ‘bonking’, poking, punching, kneeling, kicking, pinching, jabbing, squeezing, or biting any part of an animal’s body</li> <li>▪ pinning an animal on the ground (“alpha roll”)</li> <li>▪ forceful restraint (e.g., holding by the tail or feet, head lock)</li> <li>▪ holding an animal under water</li> <li>▪ asphyxiation, including hanging or helicoptering</li> <li>▪ choking with hands</li> <li>▪ rubbing an animal’s face in urine or feces</li> <li>▪ scruff shaking or scruffing</li> <li>▪ throwing or pushing an animal</li> <li>▪ throwing anything at an animal to cause pain or fear (excluding food rewards)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ using a startling noise (e.g., coin tin)</li> <li>▪ forcing anything down an animal’s throat (excluding prescribed medications)</li> <li>▪ food or water deprivation</li> <li>▪ physical confinement used to punish an animal</li> <li>▪ unnecessary use of force to move an animal from one area to another (i.e. dragging on leash)</li> <li>▪ prolonged social isolation used to punish social animals</li> <li>▪ harsh verbal corrections</li> <li>▪ spray bottle or spraying with hose</li> <li>▪ intentional leash corrections (‘pop’)</li> <li>▪ cinching of thorax, abdomen, or prepuce with a leash or harness</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

**Examples of aversive devices and tools**

- electronic shock collars (aka static or e-collar) (including remote activated, bark activated, and boundary fences)
- prong (aka pinch) collars (including plastic and metal)
- choke chains
- slip collars and slip leashes without a stopper to prevent continuous tightening around neck
- anti-bark collars (any type)
- spray collars (e.g., scented spray, compressed air)
- muzzles that prevent panting or drinking
- clamshells and mesh bags
- scruffing or clip restraints (e.g., “clipnosis”, “clipthesia”)

The list above is not exhaustive. Any method, device, or tool that a particular animal has a consistent aversive reaction to is prohibited for that animal (even if the method, device, or tool is not designed to be aversive). Where appropriate, animal caregivers may use shaping and/or systematic desensitization and counterconditioning to build a positive association with a method, device, or tool that is not designed to be aversive (e.g., basket muzzle, carrier or crate, nail trimmer, hair clippers). Systematic desensitization refers to a behavioural treatment for phobias that involves slowly presenting the animal with increasingly strong

fear-provoking stimuli while keeping the animal under threshold (in a relaxed state)<sup>51</sup>. Counter-conditioning refers to the procedure of repeatedly pairing an initially fear-inducing stimulus (conditioned stimulus) and a positive stimulus (unconditioned stimulus e.g. food, attention). After related pairings, the animal becomes conditioned to elicit a positive emotional response to the previously fear-inducing stimulus<sup>51</sup>.

Use of the aversive handling and training methods, devices and tools listed above are prohibited because they are likely to cause pain, fear, distress, or physical injury and may result in increased behavioural problems, including aggressive behaviour. Methods of handling or restraint should be the least physically restrictive and most effective method available and be applied for the minimum amount of time and force necessary<sup>52</sup>. Handling methods should minimize fear, pain, stress and suffering for the animal and protect both the animal and caregiver from injury<sup>52</sup>. In the case of an emergency situation likely to result in harm or injury to a person or animal, animal caregivers may use a quick intervention that does not otherwise conform to the standards in order to ensure safety (e.g., grabbing an animal to stop an aggressive behaviour or to protect the animal's safety).

**Forceful restraint:** Restraint may be allowed for short-term use if it is used as minimally as possible. When restraining cats, the least amount of restraint possible should be used instead of full body restraint<sup>29,53</sup>. If a procedure occurs on a regular basis, then the animal should be trained using systematic desensitization and counterconditioning and cooperative care techniques.

**Electronic shock collars:** Shock collars are prohibited because they cause pain and result in negative emotional consequences in dogs<sup>23,25,26,54-58</sup>. In addition, Canadian and international animal protection<sup>22,38-40</sup> and veterinary organizations<sup>41-45</sup> and associations for professional animal trainers<sup>46-48</sup> have spoken out against the use of electronic shock collars. Shock collars are illegal in 10 European countries and several states in Australia<sup>23</sup>.

**Prong and choke collars on dogs:** The use of prong, choke collars is associated with stress behaviours in dogs<sup>54,55</sup> and their use is not associated with better training success compared to non-punishment-based collars<sup>59</sup>. Veterinary organizations strongly discourage the use of prong, choke and pinch collars in favour of more humane alternatives<sup>44,45,60</sup> as have many other animal organizations<sup>22,38-40,47,61</sup>.

**Slip collars and slip leashes:** Slip leashes with a stopper to prevent continuous tightening around neck may be used as a short-term management tool. For routine movement of animals, the use of tools which do not constrict around the neck are encouraged, such as flat buckle collars, harnesses, and martingale collars (only if appropriately fitted to the circumference of the neck when tightened).

**Anti-bark collars:** Anti-bark collars that emit sounds, vibrations, scented spray, or a hiss of cold air when dogs vocalize are associated with increased animal stress<sup>62</sup>. While these devices can be effective in the moment, they do not address the underlying cause of the behaviour (e.g., separation anxiety, territorial aggression). RSPCA Australia<sup>39</sup> and the Association of Pet Dog Trainers UK<sup>47</sup> are explicitly against the use of any collars that emit aversive scents or sounds. Similarly, RSPCA South Australia<sup>61</sup> and the Australian Veterinary Medical Association<sup>43</sup> denounce the use of citronella collars.

**Muzzles:** Muzzles that allow natural behaviours, such as panting or drinking (e.g., basket muzzles), are strongly recommended when a muzzle is required. Muzzles should be fitted appropriately to allow comfortable wear for the size and shape of the animal's head. Use of more restrictive muzzles (e.g., nylon muzzles) as a method to stop barking or chewing is not permitted. However, nylon muzzles may be used for a short time (i.e., a few minutes) for safety while grooming or handling an injured or sick animal.

**Scruff clips:** The majority of currently available evidence suggests that tools such as scruff clips or “clipnosis”/“clipthasia” clips, which are designed to immobilize cats, are aversive to cats<sup>33,35,53,63</sup> and should not be used.

### **Standard 3: Animal caregivers are trained in humane animal care and handling**

- 3.1 Animal caregivers, have the skills and knowledge to provide humane care and the caregiver training plan is described in a written standard operating procedure (SOP) that includes training on:
  - a) the business’ animal welfare policy;
  - b) the use of humane animal handling methods and the relevant SOPs which describe the specific requirements for each animal care task they perform (e.g., walking, bathing, grooming, supervising group play, safe handling of animals with high bite risk);
  - c) the evidence-based reasons for avoiding use of aversive handling methods, devices, and tools;
  - d) interpreting the body language of the species of animals they will provide care for, including how to identify signs of fear, stress, aggression, and sickness;
  - e) safe management of animals to reduce risk of injury to themselves from animals and injury between animals (e.g., bites, scratches); and
  - f) the business’s emergency response plans.
- 3.2 Caregivers are included in reviews of incidents of aggressive behaviour, escape, injury, or sickness (see standard 10.1 for details of incident review).
- 3.3 Up-to-date records of caregiver training activities are kept, including incident reviews and any ongoing continuing education (e.g., date, training topic and method, qualifications gained).
- 3.4 A trained caregiver directly supervises and is responsible for ensuring the welfare of animals receiving care from trainee caregivers and volunteers.
- 3.5 The business owner is aware of the limitations of their own expertise and their caregivers’ expertise, and when required, refer to, and/or consult with a reward-based animal trainer or behaviour expert to resolve behaviour management challenges, or a veterinarian to address animal health concerns.

Companion animal caregivers include any staff member or volunteer who handle and/or provide care to the animals. This includes roles such as daycare attendants, dog walkers, groomers, kennel attendants and drivers who are responsible for loading and unloading animals. When support is required to solve animal behaviour management challenges, working with AnimalKind accredited trainers is the preferred option ([www.animalkind.ca](http://www.animalkind.ca)). When working with an animal trainer not accredited by AnimalKind, the business owner should ensure that the trainer only uses reward-based training methods and does not use methods, devices or tools that are prohibited by AnimalKind (see standard 2).

**Standard 4: Sick or injured animals are promptly identified and cared for**

- 4.1 Businesses have a written SOP describing how to respond to incidents of animal injury or sickness, including common minor injuries (e.g., minor cuts or scrapes, nails cut below the quick).
- 4.2 Animals who are sick or injured are promptly separated from other animals.
- 4.3 Clients are contacted as soon as possible to inform them of their animal's sickness or injury.
- 4.4 Veterinary attention is sought immediately for animals experiencing an acute medical emergency (e.g., excessive bleeding, broken limb, collapse, unconsciousness, bite perforating the skin, etc.).
- 4.5 All veterinary instructions for the animal are followed if the animal remains in the care of the business.

**Standard 5: Acts of cruelty and neglect are not tolerated**

- 5.1 Acts of cruelty must not occur, including, but not limited to:
  - a) causing deliberate injury to an animal using a prohibited training method, device, or tool; and
  - b) hitting or beating of an animal.
- 5.2 Acts of neglect must not occur, including, but not limited to:
  - a) failure to prevent dehydration during care;
  - b) failure to meet an animal's dietary needs during care;
  - c) failure to provide medications critical to animal health during care;
  - d) failure to prevent overheating or freezing during care;
  - e) transporting, or holding animals in environments or vehicles that are too hot or too cold; and
  - f) failure to obtain immediate veterinary attention for an animal experiencing an acute medical emergency (e.g., excessive bleeding, broken limb, collapse, unconsciousness).

Acts of cruelty and neglect are included in these standards to ensure clear identification of critical animal welfare failures for which there is zero tolerance. This requirement and terminology is adapted from the animal welfare auditing standards produced by the Professional Animal Auditor Certification Organization (PAACO), an independent and internationally-recognized animal welfare auditing organization<sup>64</sup>.

## B. Business Practices

Section B applies to all companion animal businesses (daycare, walking, boarding and grooming).

### Standard 6: Business models align with a commitment to protect animal health and welfare

- 6.1 Businesses identify one or more veterinary care providers who are in good standing with the College of Veterinarians of British Columbia (CVBC) and accessible to the business during the hours that animals are in their care.
- 6.2 Animal caregivers and other staff have not been convicted of an offence involving animal cruelty, and have not had animals seized pursuant to any federal or provincial legislation.
- 6.3 Non-professional dental scaling services (aka “cosmetic cleaning of the visible portion of a dog’s or cat’s teeth”, “above the gum line dental care”, and “anaesthesia-free dentals”) are not sold or promoted.
- 6.4 Businesses that sell and promote food products for animals (including raw animal protein food products) do not use their business marketing (e.g., website, blog, print material) to specifically promote the use of any food for the treatment (or as part of treatment) of a disease or a medical condition (i.e., do not make therapeutic nutritional recommendations).
- 6.5 Referrals to or partnerships with other companion animal businesses ensure that the business referred to only use humane animal care and handling methods and do not use methods, devices or tools that are prohibited by AnimalKind (see standard 2).

The BC SPCA does not endorse non-professional dental scaling services due to the potential to induce high levels of stress and fear from animal handling and restraint practices<sup>52</sup> and the health risk to dogs and cats from undiagnosed dental disease. When non-professional dental scaling is used, there is also risk of damaging tooth enamel and increasing risk of dental disease<sup>65</sup>. Guardians should obtain advice on their animals’ dental health from a veterinarian.

It is acceptable for businesses to recommend that clients ask their veterinarians about nutrition options in general or for particular conditions, and to make general statements to clients about well-established, non-specific health information related to diet (e.g., overfeeding can cause obesity, chocolate is toxic to dogs). However, therapeutic nutritional recommendations should only be made by veterinarians.

It is acceptable for businesses to link to, or provide print materials with information on food products, including nutritional and health claims, as supplied by the manufacturer of the food product, and to host nutritional seminars given by veterinarians or credentialed animal nutrition experts (i.e., with an animal nutrition degree). However, businesses should be aware that food manufacturers often make claims of health benefits that are not specific to a disease or medical condition (even when there is lack of scientific evidence to justify these claims). In addition, many health claims are preventative in nature (e.g., “reduced risk of cancer”) or only loosely related to health (e.g., “increased vitality”, “easier weight control”).

Animal caregivers are permitted to suggest to their clients a type of food reward to use as a possible positive reinforcer for the animal. However, if animals have any dietary health concerns (e.g., food allergy, diabetes), then a veterinarian should make the food reward recommendation. In general, the BC SPCA discourages the feeding of raw animal protein food as the whole diet to dogs and cats due to veterinary and public health concerns associated with these diets<sup>66</sup>.

**Standard 7: Ethical and legal business practices are followed**

- 7.1 Liability insurance is held by the business.
- 7.2 A receipt for services rendered is provided to each client.
- 7.3 Businesses operate in compliance with municipal and regional business licensing requirements and animal responsibility bylaws (e.g., leashing, animal waste disposal).
- 7.4 Businesses operate in compliance with WorkSafeBC regulations, where applicable.
- 7.5 Businesses provide truthful representations of animal caregiver qualifications and experience in communications to clients (e.g., website, marketing material).
- 7.6 Businesses do not disclose identifying information about clients or their animals to others outside their business without the clients' written informed consent, unless required by law.

**Standard 8: Communication with clients is respectful and ensures clients understand how their animals will be handled, housed and cared for**

- 8.1 Businesses disclose in writing (i.e., in a contract or waiver) and explain in plain language to ensure clients understand (i.e., avoiding abbreviations or jargon) all of the following:
- a) the methods, equipment or tools they will use to handle, train and interact with animals, and manage unwanted animal behaviour;
  - b) the number of animals per caregiver;
  - c) how animals will be monitored overnight (if applicable);
  - d) the location and type of enclosure the animals will be housed in;
  - e) the daily care routine, including feeding, watering, elimination opportunities, cleaning schedule, and duration of time that interaction with caregivers is provided;
  - f) the number of dogs being walked at one time by one caregiver (if walking service is offered);
  - g) whether dog walking will occur on or off leash (if walking service is offered);
  - h) the veterinary care provider used by the business;
  - i) the business's policy on unclaimed animals; and,
  - j) that clients will be contacted following any incidents of aggressive behaviour, escape, injury or sickness that involve their animal(s) (also standard 4.3).
- 8.2 Businesses obtain written permission from clients prior to photographing or video recording the animals in their care and sharing images on social media.
- 8.3 Businesses obtain written permission from clients to seek veterinary care for their animal(s) in the event of serious, acute injury or sickness.
- 8.4 If an animal death occurs while in care, businesses provide an explanation and any supporting documentation to clients to assist them to understand what occurred.
- 8.5 Businesses and their employees treat clients and members of the community with respect and consideration.

## C. Animal Intake and Record Keeping

Section C applies to all companion animal businesses (daycare, walking, boarding and grooming).

### Standard 9: Intake procedures and record keeping protect animal health and welfare

- 9.1 Prior to admitting an animal into a facility or social group, (i.e., at daily intake) animals are visually screened for observable signs of injury or sickness. Animals displaying signs of coughing, sneezing, vomiting, diarrhea, excessive panting or drooling, lethargy or injury are not admitted.
- 9.2 Prior to assuming care of an animal for the first time, businesses ensure they have the animal's full contact and identification information, including:
- a) name(s), email(s), and phone number(s) of client(s);
  - b) animal name;
  - c) species;
  - d) age;
  - e) sex and reproductive status (e.g., intact, in heat, spayed, neutered);
  - f) physical description (e.g., breed, colour, distinctive markings);
  - g) any identification numbers (e.g., microchip, ID tag, tattoo); and
  - h) name(s), email(s), phone number(s) of clients' emergency contact(s).
- 9.3 Prior to assuming care of an animal for the first time, businesses ensure the incoming animal is protected against diseases that pose a risk in companion animal services environments by requiring:
- a) dogs: proof of up-to-date vaccinations for DA2PP (distemper, adenovirus 2, parainfluenza, parvovirus) and CIRDC (Canine Infectious Respiratory Disease Complex or Kennel Cough) plus any additional vaccines as recommended by a local veterinarian for lifestyle and use of companion animal services (current titre test may replace the DA2PP requirement if supported by the dog's veterinarian);
  - b) cats: proof of up-to-date vaccinations for FVRCP (feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, panleukopenia) plus any additional vaccines as recommended by a local veterinarian for lifestyle and use of companion animal services (current titre test may replace the FVRCP requirement if supported by the cat's veterinarian); and
  - c) proof of up-to-date internal and external parasite control as recommended by a local veterinarian.



- 9.4 Prior to assuming care of an animal for the first time, businesses obtain the following health information for the incoming animal:
- a) food allergies;
  - b) veterinary clinic name and contact information;
  - c) medical and health history (e.g., allergies, past injury or illness, sensitive body part);
  - d) feeding instructions, including frequency and quantity of food (if applicable); and
  - e) instructions for administration of any medication (if applicable).
- 9.5 Prior to assuming care of an animal for the first time, businesses ensure they have a complete understanding of the behaviour profile of the incoming animal by asking clients to disclose:
- a) the animal's preferred behavioural motivators (e.g., food treats, toys, play, etc.);
  - b) whether the animal has a history of biting or exhibiting other forms of aggression (e.g., scratching) towards conspecifics, other animals, or people;
  - c) whether the animal has any specific fears or unusual behaviours; and
  - d) walking behaviour (for dogs).
- 9.6 To ensure understanding of any changes in animal health and welfare, businesses verify with clients that the information for each animal is still correct and update intake records to reflect changes:
- a) annually; and
  - b) if the animal has been away from the business for longer than 6 months.
- 9.7 Animals with a bite history, bite risk, or high risk of other forms of aggression are only admitted into a facility if environmental management, handling procedures, safety equipment, and caregiver training are sufficient to allow for safe care that meets the animal's welfare needs.

A business is considered to be assuming care of an animal for the first time when the very first admission of the animal into their care occurs. This includes the first time an animal is admitted into a physical facility, or into a social grouping of animals, or into a transport vehicle.

Vaccination requirements are consistent with guidelines from the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA; <https://www.aaha.org/aaha-guidelines/2022-aaha-canine-vaccination-guidelines/home/>) and American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP; <https://www.aaha.org/aaha-guidelines/2020-aahaaafp-feline-vaccination-guidelines/feline-vaccination-home/>) for animals who attend companion animal services locations. Rabies is a recommended core vaccine for all cats and dogs, but is considered outside the scope of this document as rabies is not a commonly acquired disease in a companion animal services setting, and this vaccine is not legally required in BC. Caution is advised with titre tests as they may not fully characterize disease protection. The BC SPCA recommends that guardians consult with their veterinarian regarding appropriate vaccinations and parasite control for their animal and geographic location.

**Standard 10: Records of incidents of animal aggression, escape, injury, sickness, or death are actively maintained and evaluated**

- 10.1 Businesses keep written records of all incidents of animal aggression, escape, injury, sickness, or death that occur with animals in care including:
- a) name(s) of the animal(s) involved;
  - b) description of the incident and response (date, time, place, what occurred);
  - c) explanation of why veterinary care was or was not obtained;
  - d) when and how clients were contacted and client response; and
  - e) description of incident follow-up steps that were taken.
- 10.2 Animal care and intake procedures are evaluated and revised if the number of incidents within the prior 12 months exceeds any of the following thresholds:
- a) more than two animal fights per year requiring medical care to animals or staff;
  - b) more than two serious bites (level 3 or higher on the Dunbar Bite Scale) to people or animals per year requiring medical care to animals or staff;
  - c) more than two injuries per year requiring medical care to animals or staff;
  - d) more than two instances of serious sickness per year requiring medical care to animals; or
  - e) more than two outbreaks of infectious disease (e.g., canine infectious cough, intestinal parasites).

When thresholds are exceeded, this suggests that current practices are unsuccessful in preventing incidents and policies and preventative practices should be reviewed and improved when possible. The use of a threshold (aka “red flag”) of more than two animal fights or bites is used in other companion animal services standards<sup>4,67</sup>. To guide assessment of bite severity, Dr. Ian Dunbar’s Dog Bite Scale<sup>68</sup> is also referenced in other standards<sup>6</sup>. A Dunbar Level 3 bite is one that causes:

“One to four punctures from a single bite with no puncture deeper than half the length of the dog’s canine teeth. Maybe lacerations in a single direction, caused by victim pulling hand away, owner pulling dog away, or gravity (little dog jumps, bites and drops to floor)”<sup>68</sup>.

## D. Emergency Preparedness

Section D applies to all companion animal businesses where the guardian is not present during the service (typically daycare, walking, boarding and grooming).

### Standard 11: Emergency response plans protect animal health and welfare

- 11.1 Written emergency contact phone numbers are readily accessible (e.g., programmed into cell phones, posted next to landline phones).
- 11.2 An animal first aid kit is readily accessible.
- 11.3 Businesses have a written SOP for emergency response that describes:
  - a) how animals will be evacuated from a location or building;
  - b) the location of leashes and travel crates (if applicable);
  - c) the alternate means of providing food, water, and animal containment or shelter; and
  - d) the plan for power outages and extreme weather events.
- 11.4 Businesses have a written SOP for the response to a lost or escaped animal that includes:
  - a) how other animals in the group will be contained (if applicable);
  - b) when to notify a supervisor and other caregivers to help search;
  - c) a search plan appropriate for each species in care;
  - d) when municipal animal control should be notified; and
  - e) when and how the client will be notified.

### Standard 12: Procedures for unclaimed or abandoned animals protect animal welfare

- 12.1 Businesses have a written policy for unclaimed or abandoned animals that describes:
  - a) the duration of time that the business will hold an animal without satisfactory contact from the client or emergency contact; and
  - b) the plan for unclaimed animals (e.g., surrender to animal control/protection agency or rescue organization, or re-home by the business).
- 12.2 Multiple attempts to reach both the client and client's emergency contact(s) are completed and times and date(s) of attempts are documented.

## E. Facilities: Environment, Cleaning and Building Systems

**Section E applies to companion animal businesses housing animals in a building during the service.**

(Additional standards for group and individual animal enclosures are in later sections.)

### Standard 13: The environment of indoor facilities protects animal health and welfare

- 13.1 Entry ways into areas with animals have double-gates or doors to prevent animals from escaping.
- 13.2 Animals cannot access environmental hazards such as sharp objects, garbage, cleaning agents, or other noxious materials.
- 13.3 Flooring materials are solid and non-porous to facilitate cleaning.
- 13.4 Air quality (e.g., odour, ventilation, humidity) of the indoor environment ensures animals and people can breathe comfortably.
- 13.5 Temperature at the animals' level in the indoor environment is maintained between 15 to 26 °C.
- 13.6 Sound in an indoor environment housing dogs is, on average, maintained below 85 dBA for 90% of the time that animals are present, and peak noise levels do not exceed 125 dBA (for grooming dryer sound see standard 32.6).
- 13.7 Sound in an indoor environment housing cats is, on average, maintained below 70 dBA for 90% of the time that animals are present, and peak noise levels do not exceed 85 dBA (for grooming dryer sound see standard 32.6).
- 13.8 In facilities that house both dogs and cats, at least one door separates dog and cat areas; the door is kept closed at all times to minimize noise, except when it is in use.
- 13.9 Natural light, or artificial light that approximates natural light schedules, is bright enough to allow effective observations of animals.

Requirements for natural light are consistent with other companion animal facility standards<sup>5,7,13,20</sup>. Temperature ranges for facilities are consistent with those recommended by other standards<sup>1,2,7,13</sup>. However, individual animals may require higher or lower ambient temperatures to maintain safe body temperatures due to age, health, or breed characteristics (e.g. brachycephalic, coat thickness)<sup>13,69</sup>. Therefore, monitoring of individual animals is required (and described in later sections) to ensure they can comfortably maintain safe body temperature.

Sound is measured as “equivalent sound levels (Leq)” and referred to as “average sound” for simplicity. The average sound can be measured using high quality smart phone apps that have passed validation tests against professional sound meters. Some examples of sound measuring apps are the NIOSH app for iPhone smart phones (<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/noise/app.html>), and the Decibel X app for Android smart phones (<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.skypaw.decibel>). The highest sound level from dogs barking in a kennel or shelter environment reported in the scientific literature is 125 dB (linear weighting)<sup>70</sup>. Forced air dryers used in grooming salons can reach sound levels of 100-110 dBA. However, hearing damage in dogs has been found to occur at 100 dBA<sup>71</sup> and high sound levels can cause stress and fear responses in many companion animals.

**Standard 14: The environment of outdoor facilities protects animal health and welfare**

- 14.1 Outdoor enclosures are fully fenced, meet local bylaws for fence height, and do not allow animals to climb, jump, or dig their way outside of the enclosure.
- 14.2 Entry ways into outdoor enclosures have double-gates or doors to prevent animals from escaping.
- 14.3 Animals cannot access environmental hazards such as sharp objects, garbage, cleaning agents, or other noxious materials.
- 14.4 Enclosures ensure animals can move out of the sun and precipitation.
- 14.5 Drainage ensures that the majority of space in the enclosure is clear of deep mud or standing water.
- 14.6 Outdoor enclosures ensure companion animals are not accessible to the general public.
- 14.7 Outdoor enclosures keep companion animals safe from wildlife that is dangerous to them and prevent cats from interacting with wild birds or animals.

**Standard 15: Facilities are maintained with regular cleaning and sanitation**

- 15.1 Animal waste (e.g., feces, urine, vomit) in indoor areas, excluding within a designated litter box, is removed when discovered.
- 15.2 Businesses have a written SOP describing species-appropriate daily cleaning and sanitation procedures for indoor enclosures, including:
  - a) spot cleaning to remove animal waste, including from litter boxes;
  - b) cleaning with detergent; and
  - c) sanitizing with disinfecting agent that is effective against parvovirus, following manufacturer instructions, and approved for use in animal facilities.
- 15.3 Feces are removed from outdoor areas at least once per day, urine and feces are removed from litter boxes at least once per day.
- 15.4 Food and water bowls are washed and disinfected at least once per day.
- 15.5 Facility rodent and wildlife control is carried out in accordance with AnimalKind Wildlife and Rodent Control standards<sup>72</sup>.

**Standard 16: Facilities are monitored to ensure effective operation of building systems**

16.1 Facility building systems are monitored daily and businesses keep written records of completed daily monitoring to ensure that:

- a) temperature and ventilation systems are functioning;
- b) no damage has occurred to animal enclosures; and
- c) no hazards have been introduced to animal enclosures.

16.2 Facilities have security systems, smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, remote monitoring for power outages and notification systems with designated emergency contacts (primary and alternate).

## F. Dog Daycare and Social Groups

Section F applies to companion animal businesses offering dog daycare or housing dogs in social groups.

### Standard 17: Social group enclosures promote dog welfare and positive dog-dog interactions

- 17.1 Social group enclosures provide sufficient space for each dog to move freely throughout the space and the ability to stay several body lengths away from other dogs.
- 17.2 Social group enclosures provide places for dogs to hide, withdraw from play, and rest.
- 17.3 All dogs are offered or can access fresh, clean water during group play, either ad lib or at intervals that do not exceed 60 minutes.
- 17.4 Toys and enrichment items (e.g., balls, chew toys) are inspected for damage and unsafe items are discarded.

By emphasizing animal outcomes (i.e., dog can move freely in the space) over specific enclosure size measurements, the requirements for social groups are intended to ensure that caregivers evaluate each dog's individual needs and body language (see standards 18 and 19). A range of space requirement measurements for dogs in social group enclosures can be found in pet care industry housing standards. These range from between 3.7 to 9 m<sup>2</sup> per dog (approximately 40 to 100 sq. ft. per dog)<sup>3,4,67</sup> and 6 m<sup>2</sup> (approximately 65 sq. ft.) for the first dog plus 3.5 m<sup>2</sup> (approximately 38 sq. ft.) per additional dog<sup>7</sup>.

**Standard 18: Size, composition and supervision of dog social groups promotes positive dog-dog interactions**

- 18.1 Prior to joining a social group, each dog is evaluated for their suitability by:
- a) reviewing behavioural information provided by the client (see standard 9); and
  - b) observing the dog meeting another dog.
- 18.2 Dogs with high bite risk or bite history are not housed in social groups.
- 18.3 Caregivers follow a reward-based handling procedure (described in a written SOP) for the gradual introduction of new dogs to a social group.
- 18.4 Group composition matches dogs by considering size, age and play style to ensure that the body language of all dogs is mostly positive for the duration of each social group session and the occurrence of negative dog-dog interactions (e.g., prolonged growling, bullying, aggression) is minimal.
- 18.5 The number of dogs in a single social group enclosure does not exceed 20.
- 18.6 The planned ratio of animal caregivers physically in the space with the dog social group is at least one caregiver per 10 dogs.
- 18.7 Dog social groups are continuously supervised by caregivers to check that all dogs are still present (i.e., have not escaped) and appear healthy (i.e., engaged, alert, and showing no signs of sickness or injury).

The ratio of caregivers to dogs describes the expected, average supervision ratio. However, on occasion the ratio may be exceeded to accommodate an extra dog attending, or an unexpected short-term event (e.g., if a dog becomes ill and a caregiver must leave to take the dog for veterinary care).



**Standard 19: Behaviour management of dog social groups is reward-based and prioritizes the emotional welfare of dogs**

- 19.1 Dogs have a choice to participate in group play, and the duration of a play session does not continue beyond a dog's:
- a) willingness to participate; or
  - b) physical limitations.
- 19.2 Caregivers monitor dog interactions and recognize and address negative body language and undesirable emotional states that are observed (e.g., fear, stress, lack of engagement, aggression).
- 19.3 Dogs who exhibit repeated or prolonged negative body language indicating fear, stress or aggression, or perform repeated escape behaviours are removed from the social group.
- 19.4 Caregivers follow reward-based handling procedures (described in a written SOP) to respond to common behavioural challenges, including:
- a) unreliable recall;
  - b) excessive barking;
  - c) excessive energy; and
  - d) conditioning to wear a basket muzzle.
- 19.5 A written SOP for how to respond to incidents of dog aggression (e.g., biting, fights) describes:
- a) how staff can protect themselves from injury;
  - b) how dogs are to be handled and separated, including the hierarchy of interventions to be used (e.g., a loud noise or water spray before physical separation methods); and
  - c) how dogs are to be assessed for injury.
- 19.6 Equipment for separating fighting dogs must be readily accessible within the group enclosure.

Dogs should not be forced to participate in a group play session (although it is recognized that these dogs may still be in the group enclosure). For example, it is recommended that dogs have a blanket, towel, crate or quiet area where they may choose to retreat to while in the group enclosure.

## G. Short-Term Dog Overnight Boarding and Individual Housing

Section G applies to companion animal businesses offering short-term dog overnight boarding with dogs housed individually or in small family groups.

### Standard 20: Size and physical features of individual overnight enclosures protect and promote boarded dog health and welfare

- 20.1 During overnight care dogs are housed individually or in small family groups (e.g., two or three dogs from same household).
- 20.2 All overnight enclosures for dogs provide:
- identification using cage cards to display the dog's name, age, physical description, the client's name, and any relevant health and behaviour details;
  - continuous access to clean drinking water;
  - a clean, dry sleeping area with a sleeping platform or bed for each dog; and
  - a window or opened section into the enclosure, and sufficient light to allow quick, visual checks of animals to occur.
- 20.3 When crates or small single cages are used for the overnight enclosure and dogs are moved to larger enclosures in the daytime (e.g., social group enclosures) the business ensures:
- dogs are crate-compatible prior to accepting them into care (i.e., test the willingness of the dog to enter and stay in the crate);
  - crates provide sufficient space for the dog to stand, sit, turn around, lie down fully extended (i.e., flat on their side), and make other normal postural adjustments (e.g., morning stretches with full extension of head and neck); and
  - time spent in the crate does not exceed 10 hours per 24-hour period (i.e., crates are not used as 24-hour housing for boarded dogs).
- 20.4 When conventional kennels are used to provide the primary housing for the duration of a dog's time in a boarding facility (i.e., 24-hours per day, except during exercise time as described in standard 22), the enclosure additionally provides:
- sufficient space in sleeping area for the dog to stand, sit, turn around, lie down fully extended (i.e., flat on their side), and make other normal postural adjustments (e.g., morning stretches with full extension of head and neck);
  - sufficient space for the dog to stand on their hind legs without touching the top of the enclosure;
  - sufficient space for the dog to sit, sleep, and eat away from areas of the enclosure where they defecate or urinate; and
  - minimum total floor space of 4.5 m<sup>2</sup> (approximately 48 sq. ft.).

These space size minimum measurements were developed with the understanding that exercise and social interaction requirements will also be followed, and that this is short-term, not lifetime, dog housing. By emphasizing animal outcomes (i.e., dog can turn around) over enclosure size measurements, the space requirements for dogs in individual housing (conventional kennels and crates) are intended to ensure that caregivers evaluate each dog's individual space needs. Therefore a larger dog, such as a giant breed, in a conventional kennel may require floor space greater than 4.5 m<sup>2</sup> (48 sq.ft.) in order to accommodate postural changes and to achieve separation between sleeping/eating areas and elimination areas. This approach is consistent with other dog boarding guidelines<sup>18,60</sup>.

**Standard 21: Proactive monitoring of boarded dogs ensures dog health and welfare**

- 21.1 A minimum of four welfare checks are completed per day for each dog, including:
- a) immediately upon caregiver arrival at the facility in the morning; and
  - b) prior to the last caregiver leaving the facility in the evening.
- 21.2 Each welfare check ensures animals have not escaped and monitors them for:
- a) sickness or injury;
  - b) performance of abnormal behaviour;
  - c) adequate consumption of food and water; and
  - d) performance of normal (expected) behaviour.
- 21.3 A method of written communication (e.g., white board, paper checklist) is used to ensure that dog monitoring is completed and that concerns are communicated to other caregivers.
- 21.4 The building is monitored overnight (e.g., caregiver conducting late night checks, remote video, security system with designated call person available to respond to alerts).

**Standard 22: Care routines and behaviour management of boarded dogs promote health and welfare and prioritize the exercise needs and emotional well-being of dogs**

- 22.1 The planned ratio of animal caregivers is at least one caregiver per 10 dogs.
- 22.2 Daily care routines are described in a written SOP and minimally provide dogs with:
- a) the opportunity for at least 60 minutes per day of positive social interaction with caregivers consisting of one 30 minute session and three additional sessions of 10 minutes each. Social interaction can include activities such as walking, playing with caregiver, brushing, petting, and providing food puzzles and treats);
  - b) two opportunities for exercise per day which can be part of social interaction (e.g., walks, play in outdoor space);
  - c) four opportunities for elimination outside of housing enclosure during each 24-hour period;
  - d) two feeding periods per day;
  - e) administration of medication as per veterinary instructions; and
  - f) at least two enrichment items (e.g., toys, puzzle feeders).
- 22.3 Caregivers follow reward-based handling procedures (described in a written SOP) to respond to common stress-related behaviours, including:
- a) fearfulness;
  - b) excessive barking or vocalization;
  - c) excessive chewing or destructive behaviours; and
  - d) wall bouncing or spinning.
- 22.4 Caregivers carefully attend to the emotional state of dogs with a bite history or high bite risk to avoid conflict with other dogs, animals, or people while in care.
- 22.5 A written SOP for how to respond to incidents of dog aggression (e.g., biting, fights) describes:
- a) how staff can protect themselves from injury;
  - b) how dogs are to be handled and separated including the hierarchy of interventions to be used (e.g. a loud noise or water spray before physical separation methods); and
  - c) how dogs are to be assessed for injury.

Requirements for caregivers to offer social interactions to animals are consistent recommendations in other companion animal housing standards. For example, the Association of Shelter Veterinarian's guidance states "Regular positive daily social interaction with people is essential for all socialized dogs and cats" (p. 45)<sup>13</sup>.

## H. Dog Walking

**Section H applies to companion animal businesses offering dogs walking for the purpose of exercise and socialization (i.e., does not apply to short duration walks for the sole purpose of providing elimination opportunities).**

### Standard 23: Planning and equipment for dog walks protects dog health and safety

- 23.1 The walking route and approximate return time are pre-scheduled and provided in advance to the supervisor or an emergency contact designate.
- 23.2 Dog walkers carry a charged mobile phone on walks with emergency numbers programmed. When cell coverage is unavailable, an alternate communication device is used (e.g., two-way radio, satellite phone).
- 23.3 Dog walkers carry and use one leash per dog.
- 23.4 Dogs wear at least one form of visible identification with phone number (e.g., identification tags).
- 23.5 Dog walkers carry water for dogs unless walking in an area with an accessible, clean freshwater source, unless the walk duration is less than 30 minutes and the dog is returned to housing with a water source.
- 23.6 Dog walkers carry an animal first-aid kit containing bandaging materials, blunt tip scissors, a cold pack, and disinfecting wipes.

**Standard 24: Size, composition and supervision of dog walking groups promotes dog welfare and positive dog-dog interactions**

- 24.1 The number of dogs walked at one time by a single walker:
- a) does not exceed the requirements of the business's liability insurance or municipal bylaws;
  - b) ensures all dogs remain safe and under control of the walker; and
  - c) does not exceed six dogs.
- 24.2 Prior to joining a walking group, each dog is evaluated for their suitability by:
- a) reviewing behavioural information provided by the client (see standard 9); and
  - b) observing the dog meeting another dog.
- 24.3 Dog walkers follow reward-based handling procedures (described in a written SOP) for the gradual introduction of a new dog into a walking group.
- 24.4 Group composition matches dogs by considering size, age, and energy level to ensure that the body language of all dogs is mostly positive for the duration of each walk and the occurrence of negative dog-dog interactions (e.g., prolonged growling, bullying, aggression) is minimal.
- 24.5 Dog walkers continuously supervise the dogs to check that all dogs are still present (i.e., have not escaped) and appear healthy (i.e., engaged, alert, and showing no signs of sickness, injury, or physical inability to continue the walk).

The maximum number of dogs that a single walker can legally walk is dependent on local municipal regulations and any limits that their liability insurance requires. For example, the insurer ProFur<sup>73</sup> sets the maximum as six while the Capital Regional District commercial dog walker permit<sup>74</sup> maximum is eight. Additional considerations include the size and energy level of the dogs and the experience of the walker.

**Standard 25: Behaviour management of dog walking groups is reward-based and prioritizes the emotional well-being of dogs**

- 25.1 The duration of a walking session does not continue beyond a dog's:
- a) willingness to participate; or
  - b) physical limitations.
- 25.2 Dog walkers monitor behaviour and dog-dog interactions, and recognize and address negative body language and negative emotional states (e.g., fear, stress, lack of engagement, aggression).
- 25.3 Caregivers follow reward-based handling procedures (described in written SOPs) to manage common walking behavioural challenges, including:
- a) leash pulling;
  - b) excessive barking; and
  - c) conditioning to wear a basket muzzle (e.g., for dogs that pick up garbage).
- 25.4 A written SOP for how to respond to incidents of dog aggression (i.e., biting, fights) describes:
- a) how walkers can protect themselves from injury;
  - b) how dogs are to be handled and separated including the hierarchy of interventions to be used (e.g., a loud noise or water spray before physical separation methods); and
  - c) how dogs are to be assessed for injury.

**Standard 26: Risks associated with off-leash walks are proactively managed**

- 26.1 Dog walkers practice and positively reinforce dog recalls multiple times during off-leash walks.
- 26.2 Dog walkers conduct head counts of dogs at several intervals during a walk.
- 26.3 GPS tracking collars are worn by all dogs in an off-leash walking group.
- 26.4 Dog walkers are familiar with the walking environment(s) and leash dogs in areas that easily allow off-leash dogs to encounter environmental hazards (e.g., slippery terrain, sudden drop-offs, observable wildlife, turbulent water, ingestion/inhalation of noxious materials, roads).

## I. Animal Pick-Up and Drop-Off

**Section I applies to companion animal businesses offering animal pick-up and drop-off (i.e., transport of companion animals on trips of short duration).**

### **Standard 27: Health and physical safety of animals is protected during transport**

27.1 Vehicles are licensed and receive routine maintenance (documented with written records).

27.2 Drivers are licensed and insured.

27.3 A trained animal caregiver travels with the animals (may also be the driver) and keeps a written record of the name and contact information for each animal on the trip.

27.4 Dogs are physically secured when travelling in a vehicle by either:

a) confinement within a crate that provides enough space for the dog to stand, sit and turn around; or

b) a leash attached to a harness and secured to an attachment point within the interior of the vehicle (leash length permits dogs to stand, sit, and lie down, but does not cause dogs to become entangled).

27.5 The number of leash-secured dogs per vehicle does not exceed the space allowance needed for each dog to stand, sit, and turn around.

27.6 Dogs with a high bite risk or history of inter-dog aggression are only transported using a crate that separates them from other dogs.

27.7 Cats are transported in a compartment that is separated from dogs.

27.8 Cats are physically secured when travelling in a vehicle by confinement within a crate which provides enough space for the cat to stand, sit, and turn around.

27.9 Vehicle interior ventilation and temperature in the animal compartment (including inside crates) are controlled and monitored using a thermometer to ensure temperature does not exceed 26°C when animals are inside the vehicle.

27.10 Animals are not left unattended in a vehicle for longer than 15 minutes, and only if temperature control is assured (e.g., air conditioning is left on).

27.11 Caregivers follow reward-based handling procedures as described in a written SOP for the introduction of unfamiliar dogs into the vehicle.



**Standard 28: Emergency plans protect animal health and safety in case of accident or delay in transit**

- 28.1 Vehicles carry bowls and sufficient water to provide all animals being transported with water.
- 28.2 A written SOP describes the response plan for animal care in case of a vehicle accident or unexpected delay.

ICBC recommends that animals be secured inside vehicles when being transported<sup>75</sup>. It is the preferred practice of the BC SPCA to secure animals within crates that are attached to the interior of the transport vehicle when they are transported between BC SPCA locations. [Section 72 of the BC Motor Vehicle Act](#) and [Section 9.3 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act](#) prohibit the transport of an unsecured animal in the exterior part of a motor vehicle (for example, the back of a pick-up truck). Animals must be confined or secured to prevent them from falling from the vehicle or being injured during transport.

## J. Short-Term Cat Overnight Boarding and Individual Housing

Section J applies to companion animal businesses that offer short-term overnight cat boarding.

### Standard 29: Size and physical features of individual enclosures protect and promote boarded cat health and welfare

- 29.1 During overnight care cats are housed individually or co-housed in small, compatible family groups (e.g., two or three cats from same household).
- 29.2 All overnight enclosures for cats provide:
- identification using cage cards to display the cat's name, age, physical description, the client's name, and any relevant health and behavioural details;
  - sufficient floor space to ensure each cat can stand, sit, turn around, lie down fully extended and make other normal postural adjustments, and stand on their hind legs without touching the top of the enclosure, and is not less than 1.0 m<sup>2</sup> per cat (equals approximately 10 sq. ft.)
  - continuous access to drinking water and placement of food located away from the litter box;
  - access to one clean litter box per cat that is large enough to comfortably fit the cat;
  - at least one raised sleeping platform or bed per cat located away from litter box(es);
  - at least one perching opportunity per cat;
  - at least one hiding opportunity per cat (e.g., a Hide, Perch & Go box); and
  - a window or opened section into the enclosure and sufficient light to allow quick, visual checks of animals to occur.
- 29.3 All overnight enclosures for co-housed boarded cats additionally provide:
- sufficient extra floor space to ensure floor space per cat is not less than 1.5 m<sup>2</sup> per cat (equals approximately 16 sq. ft.); and
  - at least one extra litter box so that total number of boxes is greater than number of co-housed cats.
- 29.4 Co-housed cats that exhibit aggression towards one another must be separated and re-housed individually.

These space size minimum measurements were developed with the understanding that exercise and social interaction requirements will also be followed, and that this is short-term, not lifetime, cat housing. By emphasizing animal outcomes (i.e., cat can turn around) over enclosure size measurements, the space requirements for cats in individual housing are intended to ensure that caregivers evaluate each cat's individual space needs. A larger cat may require floor space greater than 1.0 m<sup>2</sup> (approximately 10 sq. ft.) in order to accommodate postural changes and to achieve separation between eating area and litter box. This approach is consistent with other cat housing guidelines<sup>13</sup>.

**Standard 30: Proactive monitoring of boarded cats ensures cat health and welfare**

- 30.1 A minimum of four welfare checks (health and behaviour) are completed per day for each cat including:
- a) immediately upon caregiver arrival at the facility in the morning; and
  - b) prior to the last caregiver leaving the facility.
- 30.2 Each welfare check ensures animals have not escaped and monitors them for:
- a) sickness or injury;
  - b) performance of abnormal behaviours (e.g., excessive vocalization or grooming; aggression);
  - c) adequate consumption of food and water;
  - d) normal elimination; and
  - e) performance of normal (expected) behaviours.
- 30.3 A method of written communication (e.g., white board, paper checklist) is used to ensure that welfare checks are completed and that any concerns are communicated to other caregivers.
- 30.4 The building is monitored overnight (e.g., caregiver conducting late night checks, remote video, security company monitoring with designated call person available to respond to alerts).

**Standard 31: Care routines and behaviour management of boarded cats approximate familiar care routines and prioritize the emotional well-being of cats**

- 31.1 The planned ratio of animal caregivers is at least one caregiver per 10 cats.
- 31.2 Daily care routines are described in a written SOP and minimally provide:
- a) the opportunity for at least 60 minutes per day of positive social interaction with caregivers consisting of one 30 minute session and three additional sessions of 10 minutes each. Social interaction can include activities such as playing with caregiver, brushing, petting, and food puzzles and treats;
  - b) two opportunities for supervised exercise per day which can be part of social interaction (e.g., play with caregiver, time in an outdoor catio or out of individual enclosure);
  - c) two feeding periods per day;
  - d) administration of medication as per veterinary instructions; and
  - e) at least two enrichment items (e.g., toys, puzzle feeders).

- 31.3 Caregivers follow reward-based handling procedures (described in a written SOP) to respond to stress-related cat behaviours including:
- a) fearfulness;
  - b) excessive hiding (not leaving hiding area);
  - c) prolonged lack of eating;
  - d) urination outside of litter box;
  - e) excessive vocalization;
  - f) excessive grooming; and
  - g) aggression.
- 31.4 A written SOP for how to respond to incidents of cat aggression (i.e., biting, fights) is in place and describes:
- a) how caregivers can protect themselves from injury;
  - b) how cats are to be handled and separated including the hierarchy of interventions to be used (e.g., using a physical barrier to separate, such as a piece of cardboard); and
  - c) how cats are to be assessed for injury.

Requirements for caregivers to offer social interactions to animals are consistent with recommendations in other companion animal housing standards. For example, the Association of Shelter Veterinarian’s guidance states “Regular positive daily social interaction with people is essential for all socialized dogs and cats” (p 45)<sup>13</sup>. Offering opportunities for social interactions and play with caregivers is important as available research suggests this can help cats cope with stressful situations<sup>76</sup>.

## K. Animal Grooming

**Section K applies to companion animal businesses offering grooming (e.g., bathing, brushing, fur/hair trimming, cuts, nail trimming).** (Section K does not apply to brushing done as an enrichment activity).

### Standard 32: The grooming space promotes animal well-being and a positive grooming experience

- 32.1 Layout of the grooming salon entry and exit areas, and/or appointment arrival and departure scheduling, ensures animals do not have to meet.
- 32.2 When waiting for grooming activities or for pick-up, cats and dogs are housed in separate areas with at least one door of separation between them.
- 32.3 Temporary enclosures protect and promote animal health and welfare by ensuring:
  - a) animal identification cage cards display the animal's name, age, physical description, the client's name, and any relevant health and behavioural details;
  - b) sufficient floor space for each animal to stand, sit, turn around, lie down fully extended and make other normal postural adjustments; and
  - c) animals are compatible with the housing prior to accepting them into care (i.e., the willingness of the animal to enter and stay in the enclosure is assessed).
- 32.4 Animals are offered drinking water at least once every 30 minutes.
- 32.5 Grooming tables have non-slip surfaces.
- 32.6 Procedures for the safe use of cage and stand dryers are described in a written SOP and include:
  - a) sound mitigation; and
  - b) continuous monitoring of animal while dryer is in use.
- 32.7 Tools or devices used to keep animals safe on the grooming table do not constrict around the neck (e.g., collar with flat buckle, slip leash with a stopper to prevent continuous tightening).

### Standard 33: Grooming methods and behaviour management of animals are reward-based and prioritize the emotional well-being of animals

- 33.1 Initial grooming visits are scheduled with extra time to accommodate animals who are more fearful of grooming.
- 33.2 Groomers follow the reward-based handling procedures (described in a written SOP) to:
  - a) condition animals to commonly used grooming equipment; and
  - b) respond to and mitigate an animal's fear or anxiety.

If possible, groomers can consider scheduling “meet-and-greet” first appointments with new animals where no grooming takes place<sup>21</sup>. This can help to ensure the animal has a positive first encounter at the groomer’s facility.

**Standard 34: Proactive monitoring of animals being groomed ensures their health and safety**

- 34.1 Animals are not left unattended on the grooming table, bathtub, or under a cage or stand dryer.
- 34.2 During the grooming session (i.e., bathing, brushing, cutting, drying), groomers monitor animal health, and recognize and address signs of sickness or injury.
- 34.3 During the grooming session, groomers monitor animal behaviour, and recognize and address negative body language and undesirable emotional states (e.g., fear, stress, anxiety). If the animal is experiencing prolonged negative body language, the animal is given a break, or grooming is stopped, or the grooming plan is altered.
- 34.4 When animals are temporarily housed (i.e., before or after the groom), a minimum of one welfare check (health and behaviour) per hour is completed for each animal.
- 34.5 Each welfare check ensures animals have not escaped and monitors them for:
  - a) sickness or injury; and
  - b) performance of abnormal behaviour.
- 34.6 A method of written communication (e.g., white board, paper checklist) is used to ensure that welfare checks are completed and that any concerns are communicated to other groomers and caregivers.

## Appendix 1 – Summary of required written policies, SOPs and record-keeping

<b>Section</b>	<b>Standard #</b>	<b>Description</b>
A. Humane Companion Animal Care & Handling	1.4	POLICY – animal welfare policy
	3.1	SOP – caregiver training plan
	3.3	RECORD KEEPING – caregiver training activities
	4.1	SOP – responding to incidents of animal injury or sickness
B. Business Practices	8.1	RECORD KEEPING – client contract/wavier
	8.2	RECORD KEEPING – photo/video permission
	8.3	RECORD KEEPING – veterinary care permission
C. Animal Intake & Record Keeping	9.2	RECORD KEEPING – animal contact and identification information
	9.3	RECORD KEEPING – animal vaccination & parasite control information
	9.4	RECORD KEEPING – animal health information
	9.5	RECORD KEEPING – animal behaviour profile
	10.1	RECORD KEEPING – incidents of animal aggression, escape, injury, sickness, or death that occur while in care
D. Emergency Preparedness	11.1	RECORD KEEPING – written emergency contacts
	11.3	SOP – emergency response plan
	11.4	SOP – lost or escaped animal plan
	12.1	POLICY – for unclaimed or abandoned animals
E. Facilities: Environment, Cleaning & Building Systems	15.2	SOP – daily cleaning and sanitation procedures
	16.1	RECORD KEEPING – daily facility building systems monitoring
F. Dog Daycare and Social Groups	18.3	SOP – reward-based handling procedure for the gradual introduction of new dogs to a social group
	19.4	SOP – reward-based handling procedures to respond to common behavioural challenges of dogs in social groups
	19.5	SOP – responding to incidents of dog aggression
G. Short-Term Dog Overnight	21.3	RECORD KEEPING – welfare checks for boarded dogs
	22.2	SOP – daily care routines for boarded dogs

<b>Section</b>	<b>Standard #</b>	<b>Description</b>
Boarding & Individual Housing	22.3	SOP – reward-based handling procedures to respond to common stress-related behaviours in boarded dogs
	22.5	SOP – responding to incidents of dog aggression
H. Dog Walking	24.3	SOP – reward-based handling procedure for the gradual introduction of new dogs to a walking group
	25.3	SOP – reward-based handling procedures to respond to common walking behaviour challenges of dogs
	25.4	SOP – responding to incidents of dog aggression
I. Animal Pick-Up and Drop-Off	27.1	RECORD KEEPING – routine maintenance of vehicle(s)
	27.3	RECORD KEEPING – animal name and contact information
	27.11	SOP – reward-based handling procedure for the introduction of unfamiliar dogs into the vehicle
	28.2	SOP – animal care plan case of vehicle accident or delay
J. Short-Term Cat Overnight Boarding & Individual Housing	30.3	RECORD KEEPING – welfare checks for boarded cats
	31.2	SOP – daily care routines for boarded cats
	31.3	SOP – reward-based handling procedures to respond to common stress-related behaviours in boarded cats
	31.4	SOP – responding to incidents of cat aggression
K. Animal Grooming	32.6	SOP – safe use of cage and stand dryers
	33.2	SOP – reward-based handling procedures for grooming
	34.6	RECORD KEEPING – welfare checks for animals at the groomers



## Appendix 2 – Definitions

**Animal welfare:** An animal's quality of life. An animal's welfare depends upon both his/her physical health and affective or emotional state. Animals experience good welfare when they are able to experience positive feelings arising from pleasurable activities and the fulfillment of behavioural needs, and when they are free from poor physical health and negative feelings (e.g., pain, discomfort, hunger, fear, frustration).

**Anxiety:** A negative emotion experienced in response to a perceived potential threat. Animals experience anxiety most often in new and unfamiliar situations and respond by heightening their vigilance in order to assess the potential for danger. Anxiety differs from fear in that it is anticipatory, and may or may not have an identifiable stimulus.

**Audit:** An audit is a planned and documented activity performed by qualified personnel to determine by investigation, examination, or evaluation of objective evidence, the adequacy and compliance with established procedures, or applicable documents, and the effectiveness of implementation.

**Aversive-based handling:** Any handling method, device or tool that an animal perceives as physically or emotionally uncomfortable.

**Caregiver:** Any staff member or volunteer who handles and/or provides care to the animals. This includes roles such as daycare attendants, dog walkers, groomers, kennel attendants and drivers who are responsible for loading and unloading animals.

**Cat:** Domestic cats of all ages of the species *Felis sylvestris catus*.

**Client:** An individual person who hires the companion animal service for their animal.

**Counter-conditioning:** The procedure of repeatedly pairing an initially fear-inducing stimulus (conditioned stimulus) and a positive stimulus (unconditioned stimulus e.g. food, attention). After related pairings, the animal becomes conditioned to elicit a positive emotional response to the previously fear-inducing stimulus.

**Desensitization:** A behavioural treatment for phobias that involves slowly presenting the animal with increasingly strong fear-provoking stimuli while keeping the animal under threshold (in a relaxed state).

**Distress:** A severe negative affective state caused by physical and/or psychological factors. Physical distress may arise when an animal is hungry, thirsty, too hot, too cold, diseased, injured or in pain to an elevated degree. Psychological distress may arise when an animal experiences fear, anxiety, frustration, or depression to an elevated degree.

**Dog:** Domestic dogs of all ages in the species *Canis lupus familiaris*.

**Dog training:** Actions undertaken to manage or modify a dog's behaviour at all ages, including activities aimed at socializing dogs, teaching dogs to perform desired behaviours and inhibit undesired behaviours, and preventing the development of problem behaviours. Dog training also refers to teaching guardians about normal dog behaviour, dog communication and dog body language, and teaching guardians how to humanely manage or modify their dog's behaviour.

**Evidence-based handling methods:** Animal handling methods that are informed by objective evidence, including data and peer-reviewed scientific literature.

**Fear:** A negative emotion experienced in response to a perceived real and immediate threat, usually accompanied by a physiological stress response. Unlike anxiety, fear always has an identifiable stimulus.

**Guardian:** A person who or an organization that is primarily and financially responsible for the welfare, care and management of an animal.

**Humane:** Promoting good welfare and minimizing suffering.

**Humane handling:** Handling or caring for an animal without using pain, fear, physical or verbal intimidation techniques.

**Reward-based training:** Any training technique, tool or device that an animal does not perceive as physically or emotionally uncomfortable.

**Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):** Established or prescribed methods to be followed routinely for the performance of a designated operation or in designated situations.

**Stress:** The physiological response to a stimulus in order to help an animal cope with his/her environment. The stress response can be associated with either positive emotions (e.g., excitement, arousal) or negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, frustration), depending upon the nature of the stimulus or the animal's perception of that stimulus. Chronic stress is detrimental to an animal's health and welfare.

**Trainer:** An individual who performs animal training.

**Welfare:** see **Animal Welfare**.

**Wellbeing:** Generally used to denote good welfare.

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