

Useful Contacts

Animal Health and Welfare

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Dog Warden Service

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SSPCA

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Grampian Police

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Animal Policy



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Statement of Intent

The purpose of this document is to set out the Council's policy on a range of animal welfare issues and to provide interested parties with information and guidance.

The Council is of the view that we all have responsibilities to our fellow creatures. This document seeks to inform Aberdeen's citizens about these responsibilities and how best they can be met.

1. The Council endorses the principle of five freedoms for animals and in circumstances within its control will endeavour to ensure that they are met:
 - Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition - by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
 - Freedom from discomfort - by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
 - Freedom from pain, injury or disease - by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
 - Freedom to express normal behaviour - by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind
 - Freedom from fear and distress - by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

2. The Council will ensure that, so far as it falls within its powers, the requirements of all legislation relating to animal welfare will be rigorously enforced.

Where there is latitude for interpretation the Authority will favour the option most beneficial to the welfare of animals.

Where possible, the aim of this Authority will be to adopt an educational and advisory role to facilitate these objectives and at the same time ensure businesses comply with the relevant statutes.

Where necessary, formal enforcement action such as the service of Enforcement Notices and the reporting of serious matters to the Procurator Fiscal will be used to ensure the principal objectives of animal health and welfare are achieved.

In selecting the appropriate approach to enforcement, the Authority will be mindful of the Council's corporate goals of customer care, quality, fair treatment and service delivery.

3. This policy will be periodically reviewed so that amendments to legislation or further developments in animal welfare can be embodied in the policy.

Pets in Council Houses

All Council tenants are required as a condition of their tenancy to obtain prior consent from the Council to keep an animal on the property. The usual policy is to allow one animal per property but exceptions may be made, depending on circumstances. Certain pets won't be allowed in multi-storey flats or maisonettes. Guide dogs and hearing dogs are permitted in all properties.

Permission to keep a dog is dependent on the dog being registered with the Council's Dog Registration Scheme. Specialist advice will be sought when permission is requested to keep an exotic species.

No animal classified as a dangerous wild animal or a dangerous dog will be permitted in Council housing.

In any other circumstances permission will only be granted when the Council is satisfied, based on risk assessment that:

- It is not contrary to the public interest on the grounds of safety, nuisance or otherwise.
- The applicant is considered a suitable person in terms of being able to adequately care for the animal concerned.
- The condition of the property and facilities provided are adequate to meet with the requirements of the 5 freedoms.

Farm Animals

Council officers will periodically visit farms to ensure accurate records are kept of livestock, with the aim of disease prevention. They will make checks on livestock vehicles and vessels, to ensure that they are suitably maintained, that animals are fit to travel, and that they are not overcrowded.

Licensed Animal Establishments

The Council issues licences for those conducting a business of:

- Animal Boarding (kennels, catteries).
- Dog Breeding.
- Pet Shops.
- Riding Establishments.
- Sale of young cats and dogs.
- Zoos.

Those who wish to keep dangerous wild animals will also require to have a licence.

The Council will endeavour to ensure that only competent persons are granted a licence and that current best practice is used in assessing the acceptability of welfare standards within licensed premises. Veterinary assistance will be sought when necessary.

Performing Animals

The Council will not permit on Council land any circuses or other activities which include performing acts by captive wild animals. Council staff will monitor performing animal acts on private land and will use their statutory powers when it is found that the health or well-being of the animals are being compromised.

Where necessary the enforcing officers will consult with or seek specialist advice from a qualified veterinary surgeon, the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals or any other recognised authority on the particular animals involved.

Wildlife

Reference should be made to The Nature Conservation Strategy for Aberdeen 2010 -15 that details how Aberdeen City Council is committed to protecting and conserving our natural environment for the benefit of biodiversity and for the citizens of Aberdeen now and into the future.

When it becomes necessary for a particular species to be controlled on Council land minimum distress must be caused to the animals. Only trained personnel using acceptable methods and equipment will be employed. Killing should be avoided where appropriate alternative methods are available. Shooting on Council land will be allowed only within the context of species control and the use of lead gunshot is discouraged. Prior permission of the Council will be required for any proposed control measures.

Fishing

This Council recommends that anglers follow the code of welfare of the Aberdeen and District Angling Association and those outlets issuing fishing permits ensure that information relating to the welfare of fish is supplied.

Animals in Education

No mammals, birds, reptiles or fish will be kept in schools. Invertebrates (snails, worms, spiders, etc) may be kept for a period of study under teacher supervision and returned unharmed to their natural habitat thereafter.

Ethical Procurement

The Council is committed to considering the ethical treatment of animals in its procurement policy.

Responsible Ownership

The Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act places a duty of care on all pet owner or keepers to ensure that the welfare needs of their animals are met. This means that it is now not only an offence to cause or allow a pet to suffer but it also places a responsibility on the owner or keeper to meet certain minimum standards of care for their animal. If you are responsible for an animal you must provide for its basic needs:

- You must provide a suitable environment and accommodation. The animal must have sufficient room, a comfortable resting area, adequate shelter and a suitably clean environment free from hazards.
- You must provide a suitable diet. This should be wholesome and nutritious, meeting the animal's nutritional needs. Food should be provided in sufficient quantity to meet the animal's requirements without overfeeding and causing obesity. Overfeeding can cause as many welfare problems as underfeeding. Clean fresh water should always be available.

- You must provide the opportunity for your pet to exhibit normal behaviour. This may mean providing sufficient exercise opportunities, sufficient space or toys to play with.

Some animals require the company of their own kind and must be given the opportunity to interact with animals of their own kind or suitable substitutes.

Consideration should be given when mixing animals to ensure that they socialise well and no one individual animal is bullied excessively. It should be remembered that solitary animals may require increased human interaction.

You should protect your animal from suffering, pain, injury and disease. If your animal becomes sick or injured it must be given the appropriate treatment and, when necessary, should be taken to a vet.

Animals should also be protected from fear and distress by providing conditions which avoid mental suffering.

If the animal is owned by a child under the age of 16 it is ultimately the responsibility of the adult who cares for the child to meet the animal's needs.

To support this, it is now illegal to sell an animal to anyone under the age of 16. The guardian of the child will have the responsibility for the pet and so it is the guardian who must purchase the pet.

Dogs

Dog fouling, abandonment, aggressive behaviour and nuisance from barking are all faults of irresponsible ownership. The Council's Dog Wardens are actively involved in promoting responsible ownership amongst school children and can also offer useful advice on dog care. Complaints regarding stray dogs, dog fouling and any other dog related nuisance will be responded to and whilst the primary approach will be through the use of advice and persuasion, when necessary, formal action will be taken to ensure compliance.

Owners are encouraged to have their dogs registered with the Council by being micro chipped. This will enable the return of a straying dog to its owner with minimum delay.

A leaflet 'Living with Dogs' published by the Council is available free on request or can be found at www.aberdeencity.gov.uk