

## Canine Catch-Neuter-Return (CNR) Good Practice Guides

### Preparing appropriate kennels for street dogs at the neuter clinic

#### Learning Outcomes:

1. Relate the five welfare needs to the preparation of a suitable kennel facility
2. Review the positives and negative welfare implications of group versus individual kennelling

Research suggests that new surroundings, new routines, unfamiliar sights, sounds and smells, and unfamiliar people and dogs is stressful for dogs.

Kenneling environments are practical for restraining dogs pre- and post-operatively in CNR programmes, but result in social and behavioural restrictions which may be detrimental to dog welfare. Each dog is an individual and thus there will be individual variability in how dogs perceive the stressors in the kenneling environment and will exhibit different behavioural responses despite being housed in the same conditions.

Kenneling, caging or confinement of dogs during the CNR process is usually of a short duration, typically twenty-four hours to seven days depending on the programme and the physical health of the dog, and so confinement stress is relatively acute. Despite the short duration of confinement, we must still strive to meet the welfare needs of each dog and prepare an appropriate kennel facility to meet those needs.

#### The Five Welfare Needs



The need for a suitable environment



The need for a suitable diet



The need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns



The need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals



The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease

#### The need for a suitable environment



- There should be choice in their environment within the confines of the cage or kennel – outside run, soft bed, hiding place, elevated area, cool floor if hot country etc.
- Sheltered from extremes of weather – the cage or kennel should offer protection from rain, wind or direct sunshine.
- Dry, warm and comfortable – a clean, dry, bed of some description should be available for the dog, ideally off the ground to allow easy cleaning of the area. The use of a simple, easy to clean material for a bed, such as rubber mats, or sacks can make a huge difference to provide comfort to the dogs. Hard floors or wire bottom cages are

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	<p>not comfortable. As a general rule, if the temperature is too hot or cold for you, then it is too hot or cold for the animal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each dog is an individual and some dogs may require more provisions. If a dog is shivering with a hunched posture, it could be that the dog is cold and may require more hessian sacks or blankets in the kennel to provide sufficient warmth and comfort. Shivering can also be a sign of fear or anxiety.</li> <li>• Natural daylight where possible – animals must not be kept in the dark for long periods of time as this is unnatural and will impact on their eyesight and behaviour. Similarly, they should not be exposed to 24 hours of light. Lights should be switched off at night so that they are able to get a full night's sleep.</li> <li>• Secure so that the animal does not need to be tied up – tying animals up restricts their ability to get comfortable or move around naturally and can be stressful.</li> <li>• Quiet and stress free – loud noises such as machinery or shouting can stress patients and strong smells should also be avoided as their sense of smell is much stronger than ours.</li> <li>• Allows the animal to feel safe e.g. no cages stacked up on top of each other, no threatening animals nearby etc.</li> <li>• Large enough to allow the animal to stand up, move around and stretch out, hiding area, bed, food and water bowls.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The need for a suitable diet</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh water must always be freely available and within reach for the dog, bowls may be attached to the wall or kennel door in some way so that it is less likely to get spilled and contaminated from urine or faeces.</li> <li>• An appropriate diet must also be provided at least twice daily, unless the dog needs to be starved prior to surgery.</li> <li>• Diet of good nutritional value – rice is ok as part of the diet but should be combined with meat as well</li> <li>• Puppies or malnourished individuals will require additional meals.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being unable to go out of the kennel to go to the toilet is a stressor to dogs. Allowing the dogs out of the kennel at least twice a day into a larger sandy or grassy area to go to the toilet can help alleviate their stress. This also provides mental stimulation as we need to consider both the physical and psychological needs of the dogs. The dog's toileting area should be away from their sleeping and feeding area.</li> <li>• Dogs must not be tied up in their cages or kennels. Not only can they injure themselves by getting tangled up in the rope or chain, but they are unable to get comfortable, move away from anything that frightens them (which is stressful), or get closer to anything they are interested in (this is frustrating).</li> <li>• If a dog is sociable and seeking attention then human contact can help alleviate some stress caused by isolation or confinement.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>The need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dogs are usually very sociable animals and socially isolating them can be stressful so should be for as short a duration as possible.</li><li>• Group housing allows dogs to interact with each other, but it is important that dogs are given choice in this. This is done by ensuring there is sufficient space for the number of dogs in the area, with individual kennels available for dogs to retreat to if they want.</li><li>• Housing dogs together where resources are limited, is incredibly stressful and should be avoided. Group housing, increases the risk of dogs experiencing physical injury as a result of dog fights or infectious diseases and so groups should be monitored.</li><li>• There must be individual isolation kennel facilities available, for dogs with suspected infectious disease for the safety of other dogs and the staff. These kennels require higher levels of disinfection when cleaning, and staff need to wear clean gloves and wash hands before and after handling these potentially contagious individuals.</li><li>• The kennels ideally should not be facing each other. Having animals constantly face each other in their cages can raise stress levels as they can feel threatened by the constant staring or barking. It can also be very frustrating if a dog wants to get to another dog and can't.</li><li>• Dogs may need to be housed according to age group or reproductive status e.g. puppies should not be housed with unrelated adult dogs, females in heat should not be housed with males who may still try and mate them after surgery.</li></ul>
<p><b>The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure each dog is treated appropriately for pain and regularly assessed for any deterioration in condition. Animals that are in pain suffer from a multitude of problems – tachycardia, hypertension, delayed wound healing, sleep deprivation, anorexia, depression (reported in humans), stress that then impacts on the immune system, reduced mobility, wound interference and behavioural changes.</li><li>• As veterinary professionals our responsibility is always to the animal and we must first and foremost “Do no harm”. If we are not equipped, skilled or knowledgeable enough to perform a procedure then this must be considered.</li><li>• Kennel cards or patient records need to be kept next to the dog so that every dog can always be identified.</li><li>• The condition of the kennels should be assessed regularly. Damage to paint or cracks in tiles, or damaged bars etc. can harbour ticks, bacteria and viruses as well as potentially causing physical harm to the dog.</li><li>• Kennels must be kept clean to prevent contamination of any post-surgical wounds as well as preventing the spread of diseases such as parvo virus and distemper. This thorough cleaning must also be applied to food and water bowls and bedding and any other items in the kennel after use with any dogs.</li></ul>

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### Setting up a kennel

Whether pre or post-surgery, dogs should be provided with a clean, comfortable, adequately sized kennel when they are hospitalised in the clinic. If the dogs are not individually kennelled, thought must be given to how many dogs can be safely housed together including size, age, sex, and reproductive status.

A bed (piece of cardboard, blanket, towel, old clothes) should be provided in the cage or kennel for each dog to ensure every dog has a comfortable place to sleep especially when recovering from the surgery. This is particularly important for dogs in wire bottom cages. Even painful animals will have a better experience if offered some level of comfort in the form of a bed.



Photo = Post-surgery dogs on the right appearing more comfortable due to access to a bed, compared to the post-surgery dogs on the left who do not have access.

Fresh, nutritious food should be provided after surgery, if it is not contraindicated, and be easy for the dog to reach. It is imperative that fights are not able to occur over food which could lead to injuries. Dogs should either be fed in individual kennels or have their own bowl, sufficiently distanced from the other dogs, with a member of staff watching over to interrupt any squabbles that break out.

Fresh water should always be available and in a container that cannot be tipped over.



Photo = A water bowl made from an old plastic container and attached to the cage bars to prevent spillages

Where possible, the hospitalised dog should be taken outside or have access to grass, to urinate and defecate at least twice a day. This is understandably not possible with many free roaming dogs but it



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is inadvisable to have dogs toileting in their kennels where they lie and eat as it causes the kennel to become wet and dirty. Wet and dirty kennels can result in the dogs' surgical wounds becoming infected and it attracts flies to the area. Any faeces or urine should be cleared away as soon as possible.

Once the dogs have been released, the kennels should be thoroughly swept out, bedding discarded or washed, walls, floors and doors disinfected with an appropriate agent for the appropriate contact time, rinsed (if necessary) and allowed to thoroughly dry before the next dogs arrive.

### Checklist:

- ✓ Kennel environments are stressful and may negatively impact dog welfare
- ✓ Appropriate shelter and bedding must be provided
- ✓ Access to fresh water at all times
- ✓ Fed at least twice daily on an appropriate diet
- ✓ Group kennels enable socialisation but increases risk of physical injury
- ✓ Individual isolation kennels must be available for sick or injured dogs

### References:

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