



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine

# Code of practice for Sellers and suppliers of pet animals

07 May 2021

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## INTRODUCTION

This voluntary Code of Practice is intended to provide guidance to sellers and suppliers of pet animal as part of their care and management of those animals. [The Animal Health and Welfare Act](#) 2013 (No. 15 of 2013) obliges anyone who has an animal in his or her possession or control to safeguard the animal's health and welfare.

The main principles of this Code of Practice are:

- animals must be kept in an environment and accommodation that is suitable, clean and hygienic;
- animals must be supplied with appropriate food and liquids;
- animals must be protected from pain, suffering, injury, disease and fire;
- animals must be allowed to exhibit normal behaviour patterns;
- sellers/suppliers must not misrepresent the breed/species of the animal, and must not withhold any information that may have a bearing on a decision to buy such an animal;
- sellers/suppliers must discourage and not promote impulse purchases;
- only animals that do not pose a threat to public safety, public health, animal welfare or the environment (if they are deliberately released or escape) should be sold;
- sellers/suppliers must provide printed information to prospective buyers on the appropriate care of the species; on any necessary hygiene procedures and on avoidance of infectious diseases that can be transmitted from animal to human;
- sellers/suppliers must inform the buyer of the lifespan of the animal being sold and the size that it will attain when mature;
- measures should be put in place to minimise the potential for transmission of infectious diseases from animals to people.

If you have a question about this Code of Practice, please contact:

Pet Sales Register

Animal Health Division

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, 4C

Agriculture House

Kildare Street

Dublin 2

D02 WK12

[petsalesregister@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:petsalesregister@agriculture.gov.ie)

## PART 1

### THE BASICS

- The operation of selling or supplying pets should not pose a danger to the health or welfare of animals or humans. The owner/operator of the premises should have appropriate written procedures in place, accessible to all staff, to prevent the risk or spread of disease and to protect public health.

The premises should:

- be structurally sound and maintained in a sanitary condition;
- have adequate, well-maintained hand washing facilities;
- have adequate equipment and procedures for the proper disposal of waste products and material, including bedding.
- The owner/operator should establish a relationship with a Private Veterinary Practitioner, who has agreed to be the nominated PVP, and who is knowledgeable about the species kept, sold or supplied.
- The accommodation and equipment provided should enable animals to exhibit normal behaviour patterns. The accommodation should provide enough space to allow animals to stand, move around (including flying, burrowing etc), stretch and rest.
- Animals must be given a diet suitable to their species.
- They must be adequately protected from pain, suffering, injury, disease, and the elements.
- A suitable isolation area must be provided for sick or diseased animals.

### WHAT LEGISLATION APPLIES TO THE SALE OF PET ANIMALS?

#### **Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013**

The **Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013** (No. 15 of 2013) obliges anyone who has an animal in his or her possession or control to take all necessary steps to ensure that

- the animal's health and welfare is safeguarded. They must take into account the animal's nature, type, species, breed, development, adaptation, domestication, physiological and behavioural needs and environment, in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge;
- the animal does not threaten the health or welfare of another animal;
- enclosures used to contain the animal are constructed and maintained so that they do not cause injury or unnecessary suffering to the animal.

The Act is also concerned with the sale of animals (Section 21). Animals for sale must be kept in suitable accommodation taking into account the size, temperature, lighting, ventilation, and cleanliness of the accommodation.

The Act says that the animal must be supplied with, and have access to, a sufficient quantity of suitable food and drink. The Act also sets out considerations to be taken into account with regard to the age at which an animal is sold. It says that animals must be safeguarded against fire, environmental or other hazards.

The Act also prohibits the sale of an animal to anyone under 16 years of age. It prohibits giving an animal as a prize to anyone under 16 unless he or she is accompanied by an adult. The Act also requires anyone who possesses or controls an animal intended for sale or supply to ensure that all reasonable precautions are taken to prevent the spread of disease or a disease agent among animals or to human beings.

Sellers and suppliers of 6 or more pet animals in a year must register with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine by completing the relevant application form, available at [www.agriculture.gov.ie](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie). Applicants for entry onto the register will be asked to confirm that they have read and understood this Code of Practice and have made it accessible to staff. The Code should form part of the training of new employees.

Sellers and suppliers of pets must comply with the relevant transport legislation.

### **EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species**

The [EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species](#) sets out rules for the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species within the EU. The current EU list of invasive alien species (the Union list) and further information on this EU regulation may be found on the National Parks and Wildlife Service website <https://www.npws.ie/>, and the European Commission website [https://ec.europa.eu/info/index\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/index_en).

The sale of any species listed on the Union list should be ceased immediately. Any further stocks of listed species should not be purchased.

### **European Communities (Birds & Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011**

The **European Communities (Birds & Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011** restricts the importation, distribution, sale or release of approximately 70 species of plants and animals considered to be harmful invasive alien species of national concern. It is an offence to breed, reproduce, release, sell or import an animal listed as an invasive alien species.

## **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)**

All animals and birds listed in [Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species \(CITES\)](#) (also known as EC Annex A) **must** have a valid EC Trade Certificate (Article 10) for any commercial activity, and requires a unique identifier - either a microchip transponder or closed ring - as appropriate. ***Any Appendix I/ EC Annex A CITES-listed specimen cannot be displayed, advertised or offered for sale without a CITES Certificate.***

For specimens listed in [Appendix II/III](#) (EC Annex B/C) there is no requirement to have a CITES certificate in order to display, advertise or offer them for sale, but the vendor must be able to provide evidence that the specimens were legally acquired.

For the most up to date information, please see the EU website on CITES legislation: [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/legislation\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/legislation_en.htm)

## **EU Habitats Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora**

Animals listed in [Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive](#), such as otters and bats, are afforded strict protection and should not be sold. It is not considered appropriate to sell animals listed in [Annex V](#) of the EU Habitats Directive, such as hares and frogs, which may be subject to exploitation.

## **Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2012**

Trade in any species protected under the [Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2012](#) may require a wildlife dealer's licence. Queries should be directed to the [Wildlife Licensing Section](#) of the National Parks & Wildlife Service.

Trade in birds of prey may require a falconry licence under the Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2012 and, again, queries should be directed to the National Parks & Wildlife Service.

## PART 2

### STAFF

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SELLER/SUPPLIER**

The seller/supplier of pet animals has a duty to provide for the needs of animals under his or her control. This includes:

- accommodation and equipment that suits the physical, social and behavioural requirements of the species ( for example, climbing, burrowing etc);
- protection from people, other animals and adverse environmental conditions;
- not allowing the public to handle animals to avoid stress to the animal, injury to the public and transmission of zoonotic diseases;
- space to stand, move around, stretch, fly and rest;
- protection from disease, injury and distress;
- clean and hygienic conditions;
- supervision of employees;
- supervision and maintenance of records;
- supervision of feeding, watering and inspection of animals;
- arrangement of prompt veterinary or other appropriate treatment in cases of injury or suspected disease;
- ensuring purchasers are fully informed of the responsibility and costs involved in the care and welfare of any animal they purchase.

Animals must be inspected at frequent intervals to ensure their wellbeing and immediate and appropriate action must be taken in cases of sickness or injury.

An emergency telephone number for a private veterinary practitioner should be displayed on the premises.

Dogs and cats should not be left unattended for prolonged periods of time.

### TRAINING

The seller/supplier must ensure that:

- at least one full-time member of staff has sufficient knowledge of the care of animals stocked;
- all employees should undergo an induction which prepares them for the care and handling of animals;
- comprehensive reference materials on each species are available for use by staff.

Staff must be trained in the potential infection risk to humans from animals (zoonotic infections, i.e. zoonoses) and preventive measures:

- the human health risks associated with animal contact, and the control measures required to reduce the risks;
- the most common/serious types of pathogens and the animals associated with them;
- the basic control measures for preventing and controlling infection, **including training in explaining specifically to visitors the importance of GOOD HAND WASHING for both adults and children;**
- the importance of supervision of visitors in contact areas;
- children under 5 years should not be permitted contact with reptiles;
- first aid training (in case of bites/scratches/other injuries);
- cleaning and disinfection procedures;
- the importance of a high level of good personal hygiene.



## **PART 3**

### **HOUSING**

#### **ENCLOSURE DESIGN**

All enclosures should be suited to the species, type and number of animals housed in them. Enclosures should be maintained in good repair to prevent the possibility of injury, the risk of escape and the spread of disease. They should allow the timely removal of the animals in the case of emergency.

Enclosures should be constructed from non-toxic, non-absorbent, non-porous materials, or be appropriately treated and be impervious to moisture. All junctions, hinges, joints, flaps and openings should be fully cleanable. They should be cleaned daily and disinfected before new batches of animals are introduced. Wood is not an appropriate material as it cannot be thoroughly cleaned.

It must be ensured that sensory contact between prey and predator species is avoided. An area to hide away, if needed, should be provided.

Accessories should be appropriate to the species and should enrich the environment to stimulate the performance of natural behaviours.

If wire or grid flooring is used, it should be made of galvanised or stainless steel, or plastic-coated wire, and be of adequate gauge to support the animal without sagging and prevent the animal's digits from passing through the openings.

#### **ENCLOSURE SIZE**

Animals should have the space to feed, sleep, sit, stand, lie with limbs extended, stretch and move about. Cages should be a sufficient size to allow animals to exhibit natural behaviours such as play.

Special provision should be made to prevent the young of any species being crushed or suffocated.

**These are indicative minimum requirements for cages and enclosures**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Minimum floor area (cm<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Minimum width (cm)</b>	<b>Minimum height (cm)</b>	<b>Maximum number of animals</b>	<b>Increased area for each additional animal (cm<sup>2</sup>)</b>
<b>RABBITS</b>					
Young (6-12 weeks)	6000	60	50	6	300
Adults	6000	60	50	2	600
<b>Species</b>	<b>Minimum floor area (cm<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Minimum width (cm)</b>	<b>Minimum height (cm)</b>	<b>Maximum number of animals</b>	<b>Increased area for each additional animal (cm<sup>2</sup>)</b>
<b>GUINEA PIGS</b>	2500	50	40	4	600
<b>MICE</b>					
Young	600	20	20	10	300
Adults	600	20	20	5	300
<b>RATS</b>					
Young	2000	50	22	12	200
Adults	1500	50	22	5	300

**BIRDS (note that some require specialist keepers)**

<b>Display cage dimensions</b>	<b>Indoor</b>	<b>Outdoor</b>	<b>Indoor</b>	<b>Outdoor</b>	<b>Indoor</b>	<b>Outdoor</b>	<b>Indoor</b>	<b>Outdoor</b>
<b>Approx length of bird</b>	<b>Minimum floor area (cm<sup>2</sup>)</b>		<b>Maximum number of birds</b>		<b>Minimum height (cm)</b>		<b>Increased area for each additional bird (cm<sup>2</sup>)</b>	
100mm (10cm)	900	15000	6	100	30	180	150	150

**Zebra finches, Cubans, Double bars, Orang-breasted waxbills, Fife canaries**

200m m (20cm)	1600	15000	10	75	40	180	200	200
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**Neophemas, Budgerigars, Yorkshire canaries, Varied lorikeets, Musk lorikeets**

300m m (30cm)	6000	60000	10	100	100	180	6900	600
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**Rosellas, Cockatiels, Rainbow lorikeets, Bronzewing pigeons**

400m m (40cm)	6000	60000	4	40	100	180	1500	1000
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**King Parrots, Princess and Superb, Ringneck parakeets, Galahs and Corellas**

500m m (50cm)	6000	60000	3	30	100	160	2000	2000
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**EXERCISE FACILITIES**

Suitable facilities must be available for animals to exercise and to exhibit normal behaviour patterns. Dogs and puppies should be exercised according to breed and age, at least twice a day.

**TEMPERATURE**

Premises in which enclosed animals are kept must be maintained at the correct temperature and humidity level for each species. Temperature monitoring devices should be installed and a record kept.

**OUTDOOR DISPLAYS**

If animals are displayed outdoors, they must have protection appropriate to their species. This includes shelter from the elements and an area to hide away.

## **VENTILATION**

The spread of airborne infections can be a significant risk. Ventilation is important in relation to disease control, decreasing smell accumulation and preventing excessive humidity. Ventilation must be provided in interior areas without the creation of excessive, localised draughts. The premises must provide adequate exchange of air to ensure that the atmosphere is constantly fresh and clean.

## **LIGHTING**

Lighting must be appropriate to the species and sufficient to enable the proper inspection of animals. Natural lighting should be maximised where possible and appropriate.

## **PART 4**

### **EQUIPMENT**

#### **FEEDING AND WATERING EQUIPMENT**

Feeding and watering equipment must be readily accessible to animals in an appropriate fashion, in line with the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013.

The equipment must be stable, non-toxic, and constructed in a way and of materials that allow efficient cleaning and disinfection.

Feeding and watering equipment must be positioned to minimise the risk of urine and faecal contamination. The equipment must be kept in a clean and sound condition, and cleaned out at regular intervals.

Water containers must be positioned so as to minimise the risk of spillage.

#### **DISPOSAL OF WASTE**

The premises must have equipment to ensure the sanitary disposal of animal waste (including soiled bedding), soiled water, food scraps and similar materials.

Cats must be provided with litter trays and the litter cleaned/replaced regularly.

#### **FIRE AND OTHER EMERGENCIES**

Sellers/suppliers must ensure that health and safety regulations are complied with. Written procedures detailing what to do in emergencies, including the evacuation of livestock, must be put in place. Staff must be made aware of these procedures and a copy must be displayed for staff to refer to. Evacuation drills should be regularly carried out.

Fire-fighting equipment must be installed and staff should be trained in its use.

The seller/supplier, or a designated key holder, must be available to visit the premises quickly in case of emergency.

Contingency plans should be in place for heating, ventilation and aeration/filtration systems. Some species are very sensitive to temperature fluctuation.

## **PART 5**

### **ANIMAL HEALTH**

#### **FEEDING PROCEDURES**

Animals must be provided with water and freshly prepared food in sufficient quantity and frequency to ensure optimal health and growth, in line with the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013. A veterinary surgeon should be consulted on the diet of debilitated animals.

Animals fed in groups must be fed under supervision to ensure that each individual animal gets the required amount of food.

#### **HYGIENE**

A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) should detail the cleaning and disinfection regime and the procedure for cleaning between periods of occupation.

Excreta and soiled bedding should be removed at least daily and more often if necessary.

Staff should wash/disinfect and rinse their hands after handling animals. The premises must have adequate, well-maintained hand-washing facilities, with running hot and cold, or warm water (eg mixer taps), liquid soap and adequate drying facilities, e.g. disposable paper towels, for the use of both staff and visitors. Reusable towels are not appropriate. Open or pedal-operated waste bins should be emptied as necessary. Cleansing wipes or sanitising gel are not acceptable substitutes for proper hand washing in a pet shop.

Hand washing facilities should be near to animal handling areas. These facilities should have signs with messages such as:

- EVEN HEALTHY ANIMALS MAY SPREAD INFECTION TO PEOPLE
- WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER HANDLING ANIMALS OR BIRDS
- MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD'S HANDS ARE PROPERLY WASHED
- WASH HANDS WELL WITH WARM WATER AND SOAP, RINSE, THEN DRY THOROUGHLY

The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HSPC) has a poster on hand washing:

<http://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/gastroenteric/pettingfarms/File,15819,en.pdf>.

## **TIERED ACCOMMODATION SYSTEM**

Where accommodation is tiered, water, food or other droppings must not be allowed to enter the lower housing except for centralised fish systems or aviaries where perching and ground birds are housed together.

## **INTRODUCTION OF NEW ANIMALS**

Newly acquired litters must not be mixed with existing stock until they have been checked by a vet and have been socialised.

Puppies, kittens, rabbits, guinea pigs, rats, mice, gerbils and hamsters should not be held in isolation.

The introduction to a new environment and transportation is stressful for animals. They should be given a period of acclimatisation before being offered for sale. Where animals are obtained for sale to a specific client it may be acceptable for it to be sold immediately.

## **HANDLING OF ANIMALS**

Animals must be protected against stress or injury from other animals, or from excessive handling or interference from visitors. In general, handling should be avoided as much as possible, and children should not be allowed to handle animals. It is difficult to tell when reptiles are distressed, so it is advisable not to handle them at all.

Appropriate gloves should be used when handling animals to reduce the risk of the spread of disease (however, gloves are not a replacement for handwashing).

However, handling is important to the social development of puppies and kittens and is desirable in ***moderation***.

Any animal that is distressed by excessive viewing or handling must be removed.

## **SICK AND INJURED ANIMALS**

The seller/supplier should be familiar with the signs of common diseases. Sick and injured animals must be referred to a veterinary practitioner for treatment, and not put on public display. Failure to seek prompt veterinary treatment may constitute an offence under the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013.

Sick and injured animals should be housed in such a way that they pose no risk to other animals and are protected from both other animals and the public.

Animals known to be or suspected of being sick, injured or diseased must not be sold.

An animal suspected of having a contagious disease (and those sharing its enclosure) must be strictly isolated.

For ornamental fish, in-line UV treatment or other sterilising devices effectively provide a means of isolating individual tanks in multiple tank systems. They must be a proper size and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

### **PARASITE CONTROL**

Suitable treatment for external parasites must be provided.

Suitable treatment for internal parasites must be provided to safeguard the health of the animals and of any children who might handle them.

### **DISEASE PREVENTION**

All reasonable precautions must be taken to prevent the outbreak and spread of disease. No animal which is suffering from, or is suspected of having come into contact with any other animal suffering from, any infectious or contagious disease, or which is infested with parasites, should be brought into or kept on the premises unless effectively isolated.

All purchasers of any animal must, before the sale, be advised of its vaccination status and common diseases for that species.

### **AGE OF ANIMALS**

Dogs and cats must not be sold until they are at least 8 weeks old. Dogs must be microchipped from the age of 12 weeks, or before they are transported from the place where they were born.

Rabbits must not be sold until they are at least 6 weeks old.

Guinea pigs/hamsters must not be sold until they are at least 4 weeks.

Rats and mice must not be sold until they are at least 4 weeks.

### **DISPOSAL OF DEAD ANIMALS**

Animals that die must be appropriately disposed of. Cause of death should be established where possible and recorded.



## PART 6

### ADVICE FOR CUSTOMERS

Potential customers should be given printed information with advice on the general care and feeding of the animal including:

- the need for follow up vaccinations;
- the desirability and advantages of neutering dogs and cats;
- information on restricted dog breeds;
- common diseases, including diseases that can be transmitted between animals and humans, their prevention and management;
- the appropriate diet for the animal (or a diet sheet);
- any other specific behavioural or health requirements;
- the legal requirements (including licensing, microchipping and registration of dogs, permits for wildlife etc).

Customers should be given the EC Trade Certificate (Article 10) for CITES listed species.

Pet shops and other sellers/suppliers should carry printed health and safety information on the risks posed by species and risks posed by zoonoses (diseases transmitted between people and animals).

Both potential customers and staff should be provided this information. It should include preventive measures, in particular in relation to the potential risk to the health of children under the age of 5 associated with contact with reptiles. Reptiles should not be kept as pets in a house where there are children under 5 years.

Printed information could include links to the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) website:

- Child Safety and Health around Pets <http://www.hpsc.ie/A-Z/LifeStages/Childcare/File,13785,en.pdf>
- What diseases could your pet or other animal be carrying? <http://www.hpsc.ie/A-Z/Zoonotic/Petsandotheranimals/BrowsebyAnimal/>
- Pets and other animals: Infectious Disease Risks <http://www.hpsc.ie/A-Z/Zoonotic/Petsandotheranimals/>

## **PART 7**

### **TRANSPORT**

Care should be taken during transport to ensure animals are suitably restrained and enclosures are out of direct sunlight.

They must be provided with adequate food and water and dogs must be given opportunities to relieve themselves.

Animals must not be sent through the post under any circumstances.

## **PART 8**

### **SPECIAL CONDITIONS FOR CERTAIN ANIMALS**

#### **DOGS AND CATS**

- Dogs and cats must not be put on display, physically offered for sale or sold until they are at least 8 weeks of age.
- Dogs must, before they are sold, be microchipped, and vaccinated against distemper, hepatitis and parvovirus, and accompanied by a current vaccination certificate issued by a veterinary practitioner.
- Cats must not be sold unless vaccinated against feline viral respiratory disease(s) and accompanied by a current vaccination certificate issued by a veterinary practitioner.
- Clean water, fit for human consumption, should be available for cats and dogs, at all times, and changed daily. In communal animal areas, there should be at least one feeding and water bowl for each animal. Cats should be offered at least two separate meals a day approximately 8 hours apart during the daytime. Eating vessels should be cleaned after each meal and drinking vessels should be cleaned at least once a day. After weaning, puppies/kittens must be fed at least three times daily. Dogs and cats must be fed a balanced and complete diet that allows them to maintain good health and growth, keeping in mind the needs of different ages and breeds.
- The ambient temperature of the kennel must be a minimum of 18oC as puppies/kittens are relatively sensitive to low temperatures.

Floors of animal enclosures must be lined with absorbent disposable material that can be readily removed and replaced. Bedding areas should be kept clean and dry. A place to lie down should be lined with soft material which will prevent skin lesions from soiling or pressure sores.

- Cats must be provided with litter trays (at least one per cat) containing a sufficient depth of suitable clean litter material, such as commercial cat litter, sawdust, shavings, sand or shredded paper.
- Litter trays must be changed, washed and disinfected in line with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Each unit should be cleaned, disinfected and dried at a change of occupancy. Care should be taken to protect animals from disinfectant poisoning or injury such as caustic burns.

- Enclosures should include a protected area where animals can hide. If dogs/cats are in the vicinity of other dogs/cats, each dog/cat should be able to control their view of other dogs/cats.
- Suitable exercise facilities must be provided. Dogs must have the opportunity to exercise according to their individual needs. This can be provided by allowing them access to an exercise area to run freely, or by walking them on a lead.
- Any yard for group exercise must be supervised, and care must be taken to avoid mixing incompatible dogs, fighting and the transmission of infectious disease.
- Cats and dogs should be provided with toys to provide opportunities to perform natural behaviour such as hunting or play. Cats should be given facilities for scratching which are disposable or capable of being easily cleaned and disinfected. Individually housed dogs should be given something to chew unless contrary veterinary advice is given.
- There should be appropriate daily socialisation and training of puppies and kittens. All cats and dogs should have the opportunity for human contact daily. Cats and dogs should be groomed when necessary to ensure their coats are free of mats.
- Litters of puppies/kittens must not be mixed until they have been on the premises for seven days or have shown no sign of infectious disease for seven days. Puppies are particularly susceptible to disease as they have immature immune systems.

Isolating healthy puppies and kittens does not allow them to exhibit natural behaviour patterns. When litters are mixed they should be of similar size, age and temperament, and they should be supervised.

- These animals must be checked at start, middle and end of a business day and at beginning and end of a non-business day.

<p><b>SPECIAL CONDITIONS FOR RABBITS, HAMSTERS, RATS, MICE AND OTHER SMALL MAMMALS</b></p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All species must be correctly sexed and housed in same sex groups as soon as it is possible e.g. rabbits at 8 weeks, hamsters immediately, unless they are for sale as a breeding pair.</li> <li>• Mixed species must not be housed together. Guinea pigs and rabbits are unable to effectively communicate and may find the presence of the other distressing.</li> <li>• All enclosures must provide environmental enrichment to allow animals to exhibit normal behaviour patterns. Wooden gnawing blocks must be provided.</li> </ul> |
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- Enclosures must be big enough to ensure that each rabbit can make 3 consecutive hops and stretch fully on their back legs. A hiding place must be provided.
- Nest boxes must be provided for breeding females.
- Suitable non-toxic bedding must be provided and discarded daily. The whole pen should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- A secluded, darkened sleeping area must be provided.
- Litters under 1 week of age should be disturbed as little as possible and be kept in special maternity cages.
- Water should be constantly available. When using bottles with a nipple drinker for drinking water, the tip should not come into contact with bedding or food.
- Ambient temperature must be a minimum of 12°C and a maximum of 18°C. Rabbits can tolerate cold better than heat; temperatures above 21 °C can result in heat stroke and death. Air conditioning units, or fans as a minimum, should be available to maintain a safe temperature.
- These animals must be checked at start, middle and end of a business day and at beginning and end of a non-business day. Routine checks will insure that any health problems or concerns are picked up quickly. Rabbits in particular can die within hours of disease being manifest.

#### **SPECIAL CONDITIONS FOR GUINEA PIGS**

- Guinea pigs must have continual access (all day and night) to good quality hay or grass – this is essential for maintaining healthy teeth and a healthy digestive system. Muesli-type mixes should not be given. Fresh water must always be available.
- Guinea pigs need a large weatherproof home that is raised off the ground.
- The hutch should be lined with a 2-5cm deep layer of clean wood-shavings or shredded paper, with soft hay or straw on top. The sleeping area should contain clean, dry hay, straw or shredded paper as bedding.
- The hutch should be cleaned at least once a day, by removing any shavings or bedding that are wet and dirty, removing any uneaten fresh food, and cleaning the food and water containers before refilling them. Guinea pigs are very social animals and need the company of other guinea pigs. Littermates of the same sex should live together, as this minimises the chance of their fighting. Males and females should not be kept together, as they will breed.

- Guinea pigs need a lot of exercise, and should be provided with toys. They also need places to hide.

<b>SPECIAL CONDITIONS FOR FERRETS</b>
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- Ferrets must be at least eight weeks old and fully weaned.
- Ferrets must be housed with batch companions. Ferrets are naturally social animals that depend on the companionship of their own kind. Lone ferrets often suffer depression including poor appetite and lack of enthusiasm to move or play.
- Adult hobs (males) require individual accommodation. Each adult ferret must be assessed to determine their housing requirements which depend on age, temperament, sex and time of year.
- Litters of ferrets must not be mixed. Ferrets can be carriers of disease; not mixing will reduce the risk of disease spreading and reduce stress.
- Ferrets must be checked at the start, middle and end of a business day, and at the beginning and end of the day of a non-business day. Some diseases can rapidly develop and prove fatal. Ferrets are very energetic; regular checking will ensure they are safe and secure.
- The minimum enclosure size must ensure that each ferret can perform 5 large bounds lengthwise the equivalent of 150 cm, 4 large bounds depth wise and the ability to stretch and climb 120cm. Enclosures must be placed on a hard surface and anchored to the ground. Ferrets require a toilet space area removed from their sleeping or eating areas.
- Sleeping quarters must be draft-free and dark. They must ideally be raised with access via a slip-proof ramp or climbing tube. Ferrets seek dark areas for sleeping and sleep for long hours, up to twenty a day in the winter. Their natural instinct is to hide while sleeping.
- Pens must be situated out of direct sunlight or other heat source. Ambient temperature must be a minimum of 15°C and maximum 20°C. Ferrets tolerate cold better than heat.
- Ferrets must be fed a balanced and complete diet that allows them to maintain good health and growth, recognising the physiological status and special needs of differing ages and species. Clean water must be supplied in both a heavy based bowl and a secondary water bottle attached to the side of the enclosure.

## **SPECIAL CONDITIONS FOR REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS**

- It should not be assumed that reptiles all have the same requirements for heat, light, food, water, humidity and shelter.
- Stocking and density must be appropriate to the species. Most reptiles and amphibians are not social and may, therefore, be kept individually.
- Snakes may be housed individually or in small groups, if appropriate. Snakes known to be cannibalistic, e.g. king snakes (*Lampropeltis* sp), should be housed individually.
- Only lizards of similar size and from similar habitats should be kept communally. Lizards known to be cannibalistic, e.g. *Gambelia* sp, should be housed individually. Generally adult male lizards in breeding condition should not be housed together, and groups of lizards housed communally should be regularly observed for signs of aggression.
- Only terrapins of similar size and habit should be kept communally. Note that some species of terrapins are on the EU list of invasive species. Tortoises of different species should not be kept in the same enclosure and adult males in breeding condition should not be housed together.
- Only species of frogs and toads of similar size, and from similar habitats, should be kept communally. Mixing of frogs and toads is not generally recommended. Cannibalistic species, such as horned frogs (*Ceratophrys* sp.) and African bull frogs (*Pyxicephalus* sp.) should be housed individually.
- Newts and salamanders: only species of similar size and from similar habitats should be kept communally. The import of salamanders into Ireland is regulated under the Animal Health (Trade in Salamanders) Regulations 2019 (S.I. No. 245/2019).
- The enclosure size must be appropriate to the species.
  - Snakes: the length of the enclosure should be no less than two-thirds the overall length of the snake.
  - Lizards: the length of the enclosure should be three times the snout-to-vent length (nose to hind legs) of the lizard, or larger.
  - Tortoises and terrapins: the length of the enclosure should be four times the length of the animal, or larger. For aquatic species (terrapins) the enclosure should allow the animal to swim adequately, i.e. have water depth at least 6 times that of the animal. Terrapins must also have an adequate basking area.
  - Frogs and toads: the length of the enclosure should be at least three times the length of the animal, or larger. For sedentary species such as horned frogs (*Ceratophrys* sp.) and African bull frogs

(Pyxicephalus sp.) the enclosure can be smaller. Fully aquatic species should be able to swim adequately, i.e. water depth should be at least 4 times the depth of the animal.

- Newts and salamanders: the length of the enclosure should be at least three times the snout-to-vent (nose to hind legs). Aquatic species should be able to swim adequately, i.e. water depth should be at least 4 times the depth of the animal.
- Ambient and basking temperatures should be appropriate to the species concerned, with the following guidance for commonly kept species:
  - Snakes: ambient day time 24-30°C, basking 33-38 °C. Night time ambient 21-27°C, no basking. Humidity <60% desert species, >60% others
  - Lizards: desert species ambient day time 27-30°C, basking 35-43°C. Night time ambient 21-27°C, no basking. Humidity <60%
  - Lizards: rainforest species ambient day 23-27°C, basking 35°C. Night time ambient 21-24°C, no basking. Humidity >60%
  - Chameleons [and cloud forest species]: ambient day 18-24°C, basking 28-35°C. Night time ambient 16-19°C, no basking. Humidity >60%
  - Tortoises: ambient day time 27-30°C, basking 35-43 °C. Night time ambient 24-27°C, no basking. Mediterranean species should have access to a humid hide and tropical species will require higher humidity
  - Terrapins: water temperature should be appropriate to the species, i.e. temperate species minimum water temperature of 16-19°C, tropical species 27-29°C with basking area 29-38°C
  - Frogs and toads: ambient day 18-27°C, night ambient 16-21°C, no basking (with some exceptions). Humidity >80%
  - Salamanders and newts: ambient day 18-27°C, night ambient 16-21°C, no basking (with some exceptions). Humidity >80%
- These are guidelines only, and individual species will have specific requirements. Staff should have access to relevant reference material (books, internet etc.).
- Basking spots may be provided by convection or radiant heat sources (e.g. light bulb, or heat mat), as appropriate to the species.
- Ventilation should be appropriate to the species and should allow sufficient change of air without jeopardising the temperature or humidity in the enclosure.
- Lighting must be appropriate to the species.



- Species requiring UVB lighting, e.g. diurnal lizards and tortoises, should have appropriate UVB emitting lamps. These should be replaced according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Mercury Vapour or Metal Halide UVB emitting lamps may also be used to provide a daytime heat source.
- UV light sources must not be screened by non-UV transmitting glass or plastic.
- Animals should have areas of shade so that they can escape from the light if desired.
- Substrate should be appropriate to the species and may include newspaper, paper towel, bark chip, wood chip, terrarium humus, moss, gravel, calcium carbonate, terrarium sand etc.

- Décor should be appropriate to the species and should not be harmful, e.g. sharp rocks, toxic or injurious plants.
- The enclosure should be furnished in such a fashion as to allow inhabitants to exhibit natural behaviour such as climbing and hiding.
- Feeding habits vary between species and between individual animals.
- Feed for snakes should be humanely killed.
- Reptiles are shy feeders and should be fed outside normal opening times, unless the animal has a special requirement.
- Food supplements (vitamin and minerals) should be provided as appropriate.
- Fresh foods (salads) should be kept refrigerated where appropriate.
- Frozen foods intended for use must be stored in an appropriate deep freeze and defrosted thoroughly before use.
- Feeding records for hatchling snakes should be kept and made available to purchasers.
- Amphibians and reptiles require a shallow pool of water.
- Reptiles should have enough fresh water to fully immerse themselves, to assist with the process of shedding their skin.
- Certain species, such as chameleons, do not drink from standing water and should be offered water appropriately, e.g. by a dripper system or sprayer.
- Enclosures should be disinfected as necessary and always between different batches of animals. Disinfectant should be appropriate for the contaminants likely to be encountered.
- Adequate hand-washing facilities should be available for staff to use between animals.
- Handling should be kept to a minimum at all times, unless the animal is being socialised. Staff should receive training on how to handle animals and they should only be handled by competent staff.
- Customers wishing to handle animals prior to purchase should be supervised and offered facilities to wash their hands afterwards.

## SPECIAL CONDITIONS FOR FISH

- Water changes must be adequate to maintain good water quality in relation to population density.
- Fish showing signs of illness must be attended to immediately and, where necessary, separated from other fish to prevent the spread of disease or molestation by healthy fish.
- Measures must be in place to prevent the escape of fish.
- Filtration equipment must be adequate for the species and population densities and be effective at all times.
- Heaters must be adequate for the species and population densities and effective at all times.
- Water chemistry should be checked regularly.
- Fish must be protected from environmental extremes.
- All fish nets should be disinfected daily.
- All electrical equipment such as lights and thermostats should be regularly checked for correct performance.
- Fish tanks should be cleaned to remove excessive algal build-up from the tank walls.
- Customers should be advised that unwanted, dead, diseased or injured aquatic animals should never be dumped into sewerage or natural waterways due to the adverse risks to natural biodiversity.

### WATER QUALITY CRITERIA

Minimum water standards	Cold water fish	Tropical fish	Tropical marine Species
Minimum dissolved oxygen mg/l	6	6	4
Maximum free ammonia mg/l	0.02	0.02	0.01
Maximum nitrite mg/l	0.2	0.2	0.125
Maximum nitrate mg/l (above ambient tap water)	50	50	40
Minimum Ph	n/a		8.1

## **SPECIAL CONDITIONS FOR BIRDS**

- Birds should be housed in a bird room that is in a separate part of the premises with an extraction fan system. This is to remove as much feather dander and dust as possible from the premises and thus reduce the potential for the zoonotic diseases.
- Birds must be caught by the least stressful method and subjected to minimal handling.
- Only staff with specialised knowledge must handle birds.
- Pinioning of wings is an unacceptable practice. The clipping of wing feathers is acceptable when undertaken under the guidance of a veterinary practitioner or an experienced bird-keeper.
- Hand-reared birds must be fully feathered and self-sufficient before sale.
- Birds must be fed out of suitable containers and not directly off the floor, except where it is a species requirement.
- In addition to dry feed, fresh fruit, greens, nectar or seeding grasses must be supplied as appropriate to the species to provide variety and nutrient supplementation. Grit and other vitamin/mineral supplements should be available to reduce the potential for nutrient deficiencies.
- Enclosures should provide freedom of movement and capacity for exercise or flight, as appropriate to the species. Sufficient perches, roosting areas and feed and water stations must be provided to meet the needs of all birds in a cage or aviary.
- Perches must be of a diameter, construction and material appropriate to the species held, and must be placed to prevent contamination of food and water containers. Perches must also be positioned to ensure that birds' tails are not in contact with the cage substrate, and to provide easy access to food and water.
- Environmental enrichment must be provided. This may include the provision of toys or other enrichment devices.
- Bird enclosures must be protected from environmental extremes and hazards.
- Care should be taken with new equipment. New galvanised wire may be toxic, especially for parrots. The risk of 'new wire disease' can be reduced by allowing the wire to be weathered for 4 to 8 weeks or by washing with a mild acidic solution, e.g. vinegar, and rinsing with water.

- To maintain hygiene standards where cages and aviaries have solid floors, the floor should be covered with a suitable non-toxic disposable material.
- Other than in exceptional circumstances, pools and ponds should be avoided in sales cages or aviaries.
- Birds showing signs of illness must be attended to immediately and separated from other birds to prevent spread of disease or molestation by other birds. A heated hospital cage should be provided for the isolation and treatment of sick or injured birds in an area to which the general public does not have access.
- Any abnormal behaviour should be rapidly identified and competently managed and treated.
- Outdoor cages and aviaries should be designed and constructed so as to minimise the threat posed to birds by predators.
- Birds traded should not be misrepresented as to sex, age, origin, species or breeding history and soundness.
- The application of rings for identification purposes requires careful selection of the appropriate ring and its application. Some species, especially as adults, should not be ringed because of the risk of self-mutilation. Special care is needed should a ring require removal, for example, to attend to a leg injury.
- Birds with overgrown beaks should not be used for breeding unless the overgrowth is due to a curable disease, the bird is undergoing treatment and the breeding would not be detrimental to the health of the bird or its offspring.
- Excessively long nails should be trimmed without drawing blood. Nail overgrowth may be indicative of inadequate conditions, particularly in small cages.

***Please note that the information provided above does not constitute exhaustive advice, and is not a substitute for seeking advice from your Private Veterinary Practitioner.***

## PART 9

### USEFUL CONTACTS

Pet Sales Register  
Animal Health Division  
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine  
Agriculture House 4C  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2  
petsalesregister@agriculture.gov.ie  
www.agriculture.gov.ie

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Disease Control Hotline (no. for Avian Influenza)  
Phone number during office hours: 076 106 4403  
Phone number out of office hours: 1850 200 456

For queries relating to invasive alien species, CITES, or wildlife licensing please contact the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

Information on Invasive Alien Species legislation and policy, CITES, and wildlife licence application forms is available from the NPWS website.

National Parks & Wildlife Service  
Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs  
7 Ely Place  
Dublin 2 IRELAND D02 TW08  
Tel: +353 (01) 888 3242  
Web: [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)

Invasive Alien Species: [biodiversitypolicy@ahg.gov.ie](mailto:biodiversitypolicy@ahg.gov.ie)  
CITES: [cites@ahg.gov.ie](mailto:cites@ahg.gov.ie)  
Licensing: [wildlifelicensing@ahg.gov.ie](mailto:wildlifelicensing@ahg.gov.ie)