



Dog Ownership

Animal welfare requirements of owning a dog

What are the general requirements of owning a dog?

Dog owners must house the animal in a way suitable for its species and behaviour. They must be able to ensure that the dog has access to an outdoor space outside of a kennel and must have contact to a caregiver multiple times a day for sufficient durations. Regular contact to other dogs should be enabled. Owners who have multiple dogs on the same piece of land are to keep them together as a group unless there are important reasons that prevent this in isolated cases. Accommodations must be designed so that each dog in the group has a space to lie down and food available to them individually. Uncontrolled increases in the number of animals must be prevented. A puppy may only be separated from its mother after eight weeks of age. Puppies under the age of twenty weeks must have at least four hours of contact with a caregiver each day. It is prohibited to use a prong collar or other items that cause the dog pain (e.g. choke chain) while training or caring for the dog.

What are the requirements for keeping a dog outdoors?

Dogs kept outside must have access to shelter, as well as a place to lie down outside of this shelter that is protected from the elements, and offers shade and warmth, is soft or flexible and malleable, and has been designed so that the dog can stretch out in a lateral position.

What are the requirements for the shelter?

The shelter must be made from material that is heat-insulating and is not damaging to health. It must have enough space for the dog to move around in a way that is appropriate to their typical behaviour, stand up, turn around, and be able to stay dry while fully stretched out. The inside should be designed in such a way that the dog can keep the shelter warm with its body heat (e.g. size, bedding, heating).

What requirements apply to keeping a dog in a kennel?

Dogs kept in a kennel must have an empty floor space of 6-10 m² depending on their size, in addition to shelter and a space to lie down. The length of each side must be at least double the length of the dog's body and no side may be shorter than two metres. The height of the enclosure must be measured so that the dog cannot reach the upper limits with its front paws. For each additional dog kept in the kennel, an additional half of the aforementioned floor space must be provided. Bitches with puppies must be provided with double the aforementioned floor space. One side of the kennel must offer the dog an unobstructed view of the outside. Dogs must not be tied inside the kennel. Kennelled dogs must also be able to access the outdoors. Exercise and social contact must be adapted based on the dog's breed, age, and health status. At a minimum, the dog must be able to access the outdoors for at least one hour – however, this is not sufficient for highly energetic breeds.

Withers height (cm)	Up to 50	over 50 to 65	over 65
Min. floor area (m²)	6	8	10

What requirements apply to keeping a dog in a room or enclosed spaces?

Dogs may only be kept in rooms or enclosed spaces that have enough natural light and fresh air. If the dog is kept in a room or enclosed space that is not intended for human habitation, the area that allows daylight to enter must be at least one eighth of the floor area, unless the dog has permanent access to the outdoors. In cases of little natural light, the space must be illuminated in a way that corresponds to the natural day-night rhythm.

If the dog is kept in a space that cannot be heated, they must be provided with a shelter or similar facility that protects them from the cold and wind, as well as a heat-insulating space to lie down outside of the shelter that is soft or flexible and malleable.

If the dog is kept in a room or enclosed space that is not suitable for human habitation, the minimum dimensions for the unrestricted floor space are the same as for a kennel (6-10m², depending on the withers height. The length of each side must be at least twice the length of the dog's body and no side may be shorter than two metres).

There may be no live equipment or devices that emit electrical impulses that the dog could reach with its front paws.

It is prohibited to confine dogs in flight, transport or other crates. Exceptions only apply for the duration of transporting the dog in a suitable means of transport (car, plane, train).

What requirements apply to tethering dogs?

As of 01 January 2023, dogs may no longer be tethered.

What requirements apply to breeding dogs?

The bitch must be provided with a whelping box no later than three days before her estimated due date until the puppies have been weaned. The whelping box must meet the following conditions:

- The size of the box must be appropriate to the bitch and the expected number of puppies. The bitch must be able to lay fully extended in a lateral position.
- It must be possible to monitor the puppies' health and air temperature.
- The internal lateral walls must be fitted with spacers.
- The surface must be easy to clean and disinfect.

A whelping box is not necessary if the bitch and puppies are kept outside and their shelter meets the criteria mentioned above. It must be possible to ensure an air temperature that does not cause puppies to get too cold or too hot within the whelping box or shelter. In general, the air temperature is too cold for the puppies if it reaches below 18 degrees Celsius during their first two weeks of life. A bitch with puppies must be able to move away from her puppies. Puppies kept indoors must have access to the outside at least once daily once they reach five weeks of age. The outside area must be appropriate to the number and size of the puppies.

Owners who breed dogs for commercial purposes (more than two bitches capable of reproducing) must have one caregiver per 5 dogs and her puppies. This caregiver must have demonstrated to the relevant authorities that they have the necessary knowledge and abilities. A caregiver may care for up to three bitches and their puppies simultaneously.

What general obligations do owners have to their dogs??

Owners must:

- Provide water in sufficient quantities and of sufficient quality in the dog's usual living area at all times.
- Check the dog's accommodation twice daily and immediately rectify any issues.
- Remove waste daily and ensure that their accommodation is clean and free of vermin.
- Provide the dog with appropriate food in sufficient quantities and of sufficient quality.
- Regularly care for the dog and take responsibility for their health.

Owners who keep their dog in their car, conservatory or other enclosed space must ensure a suitable temperature and sufficient fresh air.

Activities requiring a permit in accordance with Section 11 of the Animal Welfare Act (TierSchG)

An animal welfare permit is required for the following activities:

- Breeding:
 - ▶ Keeping more than two bitches capable of reproducing
- Dog training of specialist protection dog training:
 - ▶ Training or instructing others in training dogs
- Dog boarding/dog daycare/facilities similar to animal shelters
 - ▶ Caring for and keeping dogs that are not your own
- Moving or brokering dogs/trading:
 - ▶ Surrendering foreign dogs against a protection contract
- Animal-assisted interventions:
 - ▶ For example therapy dogs, ...

These activities may only be carried out once a permit has been issued.

Dog accessories contrary to animal welfare and the use of accessories contrary to animal welfare

- It is prohibited to use any type of electrical stimulation device (e.g. wireless fence, electrical dog training collar, barking devices). This applies even if the device is capable of emitting electrical impulses.
- Collars with air pressure or spray devices are also contrary to animal welfare due to the risk of incorrect connections.
- Automatic-release collars: These react to an type of barking, including barking that is part of the dog's normal behaviour/communication or barking caused by separation anxiety. There is also a risk of incorrect triggering. Anti-barking devices that trigger automatically when the dog barks are contrary to animal welfare.
- Prong collars and choke chains without a failsafe are prohibited under Section 2 (5) of the Animal Welfare Act (TierSchHuV).
- Dog crates: It is essential that the animal can decide to enter or leave its shelter of its own volition at any time. Housing or confining a dog in a closed crate can therefore not be considered providing the dog a safe place of retreat. If dogs are kept in rooms or enclosed spaces (e.g. dog crates) that are not intended for human habitation, then this essentially meets the criteria for keeping dogs in kennels in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act (TierSchHuV). They must therefore meet the minimal requirements for kennels (6-10 m² depending on the size of the dog).

Breeding of defects and show ban

It is **forbidden** to show dogs or organise dog shows if:

- Body parts (particularly the ears or tail) have been completely or partially amputated in a way that is contrary to animal welfare
- Pain, suffering or damage will result from hereditary factors
 - Body parts or organs are missing, do not function properly or are malformed
 - Behavioural disorders occur
 - Any contact with other dogs will result in pain or preventable pain or damage to the dog itself or other dogs
 - Keeping the dog means it will be in pain, experience preventable suffering or damage.

The same applies for other events where dogs are compared, inspected or assessed.

Penalties and fines

Violations of the Animal Welfare Dog Ordinance constitute administrative offences punishable by fines up to 25,000 Euros.

Note: The legal guidelines that serve as the basis for dog ownership are:

- The Animal Welfare Act (TierSchG),
- The Animal Welfare Dog Ordinance (TierSchHuV), and
- The Lower Saxony Law on Dog Ownership (NHundG)

The details included on this information sheet do not claim to be exhaustive. The relevant legal bases remain unaffected. For more information, please contact your Office of Veterinary Affairs and Consumer Protection.