

NKK's Ethical Guidelines for Keeping and Training Dogs

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1. Background

Dogs have been kept as working and companion animals for thousands of years. Few other animals are as fundamentally adapted to living with humans as the domestic dog. Today, dogs are kept in Norway for many reasons. Many family and recreational dogs are kept primarily for their companionship, and thus play an important role in the lives of both children and adults. Other dogs are primarily kept for utility purposes, such as hunting and service dogs, which are of great benefit to society. NKK is confident that most dog owners in Norway keep and treat their dogs properly. All dogs need regular

mental stimulation through various forms of training and activation, as well as the opportunity for natural behaviour, such as being able to run freely. However, it is necessary to be considerate and flexible to ensure that both dog and owner can enjoy their companionship without disturbing their surroundings.

2. Objectives

These guidelines aim to facilitate good dog welfare, thus enabling dogs to live long, healthy lives to the benefit of themselves, their owners and society. The guidelines also describe norms for the training of dogs. For the Norwegian Kennel Club, it is important that dog welfare is ensured by keeping and training dogs in an ethically sound manner. The guidelines are intended to cover all forms of dog keeping and training.

3. General approach

Dogs are to be treated well and kept in such a way as to satisfy their need for exercise, activation and social interaction with other dogs and humans. Good dog husbandry also includes that dogs should not cause any significant nuisance to their surroundings. Excrements must be removed from places in which they could be a nuisance.

4. Definitions

Crate (cage): a closed container that the dog can be confined to, often designed for transport and travel. Crates usually provide less room for the dog than pens.

Pen (indoor): enclosures for dogs, often separated from the remainder of the house by gates, dividers, etc.

Animal welfare: a dog's own experience of its mental and physical state, as a result of its attempts to cope with its environment¹.

Electric fence: a mechanism connected to a source of electricity to cause an electric shock upon contact, designed to contain animals within a restricted area. Such a fence can be visible, with aboveground wires or mesh wires, or so-called invisible, in which the dog receives an electric shock when passing a buried wire.

Handler: someone who leads and handles a dog. A handler does not have to be the dog's owner.

Instructor: someone who works directly with dog owners and their dogs, to teach the owners about training their dogs.

Correction: command of disapproval, usually to prevent undesirable behaviour.

¹ Definition from the research group on Ethology and Domestic Animal Environment, NMBU 2014. This is a specification of an older definition by Donald Broom, and was subsequently adopted by the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food as the basis for the new Animal Welfare Act.

Living quarters: the place in which a dog spends (most of) its time, with or without the use of crates or pens.

Prong collar: a collar with spikes pointing towards the dog's neck that pinches or sticks the dog's skin when the leash is tightened.

Positive reinforcement: achieving well-being as the result of a behaviour, thus making the dog more likely to repeat the behaviour. Generally referred to as rewarding.

Trainer: someone who works directly with dogs to either train or change behaviour.

Training: purposeful changing of a dog's behaviour with guidance from humans (can be conscious or non-conscious).

5. Cynological knowledge

5.1 Owner's and instructor's responsibilities

Anyone responsible for dogs must have basic knowledge about dogs' natural needs, behaviour and reactions in general, and about breed-specific physical and mental characteristics. Every dog owner or handler must do their best to use this knowledge when training dogs. Furthermore, one must be familiar with the main principles for training and activating dogs. Instructors should be well versed on training theory, dogs' behaviour and sensory abilities, as well as breed-specific characteristics, and base their work on this knowledge. Trainers and instructors should know how to communicate with dogs, select the approach with the greatest chance of success and continuously assess the progress of the training. Owners and instructors should acquire know-how and experience about the situations that can provoke, reinforce or neutralize aggressive and other undesirable behaviour. Anyone involved in training dogs should be aware that the results can be affected by such daily care as feeding and social interaction with humans and other dogs (or lack thereof). If the knowledge required in accordance with this paragraph is inadequate, necessary information is to be acquired through literature, courses, etc.

5.2 Legislation

Anyone responsible for dogs must be familiar with the Animal Welfare Act and the Dog Act and their pertinent regulations. These define the legal framework for keeping dogs in Norway. According to the Animal Welfare Act, parents and guardians shall not allow children under 16 years of age to have sole responsibility for a dog.

6. Health

6.1 Health care and grooming

It is important to sufficiently look over and groom a dog's coat, nails, ears, teeth and mouth. The coat must be kept neat and clean, a dog should not have a dirty or matted coat. Nails should be trimmed regularly, and eyes and ears cleaned when necessary. Specific physical features that require additional care, like skin or lip folds, should be regularly checked and groomed when needed. Teeth and mouth should be groomed

according to the individual dog's needs. Plaque and tartar should be removed regularly; at least often enough to avoid inflammation or irritation of the gums. For some breeds or individual dogs, this means cleaning and brushing quite often.

A sick or injured dog shall receive necessary care. A vet should be contacted when needed and the dog is to be treated appropriately.

6.2 Euthanasia

A dog that is suffering and terminally ill, either physically or mentally, and without reasonable hope of regaining an acceptable quality of life, should be euthanized by a vet or another competent person in accordance with current regulations.

7. Food and water

Dogs must have a nutritious, well-balanced diet based on the needs of the individual dog's breed, age, activity level and health. The amount of food should be adapted to the individual dog to enable it to sustain its optimal weight. A dog should thus be neither thin nor overweight. Dogs are to be fed at least once per day, and have access to fresh water. In freezing conditions, dogs should be given tempered water at least twice a day, or provided with other water access that avoids immediate freezing of the water. Owners must also make sure that their dogs are given sufficient amounts of water in hot weather, during training, etc.

8. Dog's living environment

8.1 Physical environment

Places in which dogs are kept must have sufficient lighting and ventilation, normal humidity and a temperature suitable for the breed/individual dog. Consideration should also be taken to noise conditions in rooms where several dogs are kept together.

8.2 Crates

Dogs must not have crates as their primary living quarters. If a dog is to be kept in a closed crate, e.g., during transport or at shows, competitions or training, it must have at least enough space to sit, get up and turn around, stretch and lie down in a natural position. Dogs should be gradually accustomed to being in crates to avoid any discomfort. The duration for which a dog can be reasonably kept in a crate depends largely on the dog's wellbeing during containment.

8.3 Pens

Indoor dog pens must comply with the minimum space requirements shown in Table 1, and dogs should additionally have access to an outdoor run. Floor space is to be increased by 50 % for each additional dog in the pen. Groups of dogs should be put together in such a way as to avoid any discomfort among the dogs. Dividers between pens should enable social interaction between dogs. Dogs that do not know each other should not be put together without supervision. Dogs that react aggressively to or show fear of each other must not be kept together, and should be kept out of sight of each other, e.g., by installing a solid divider between pens.

8.4 Bitch with puppies

Bitches with puppies must have their own pen or enclosure to ensure sufficient protection from other dogs, depending on the puppies' age.

Height at withers (cm)	Min. surface area (m ²)	No side shorter than (m)	Min. height (m)
< 40	2	1	0.8
40-65	3	1.2	1.2
> 65	5	1.5	1.5

Table 1. Minimum space requirements for dogs kept in pens. If possible, dogs should additionally have access to an outdoor run.

8.5 Keeping dogs outdoors

Dogs can only be kept outdoors if they have the necessary mental and physical characteristics. Dogs kept outdoors must have access to a doghouse, shed, etc. to provide protection against the elements. Such housing must ensure an acceptable ambient temperature for the dog through use of isolation and/or straw or blankets, depending on the specific dog's needs. Dogs kept outdoors should also be able to meet their daily needs for exercise, grooming, stimulation and social interaction with other dogs and/or humans.

Dogs should not be primarily kept tied, chained or on a cable run. Tethered dogs must be regularly checked to avoid injury. Whenever possible, alternatives such as outdoor pens should replace the tethering of dogs. However, if a dog is kept tied or chained, the Food Safety Authority's guidelines for keeping dogs outdoors and the Norwegian Sled Dog Association's guidelines for responsible sled dog husbandry must be complied with. No more than four adult dogs should be kept together in an outdoor pen without supervision.

8.6 Hygiene

Any place in which dogs are kept must be kept sufficiently clean. Excrements must be removed regularly. The surface of outdoor pens should be adequately drained, and snow removed as needed.

9. Transporting dogs

Dogs must be kept safe and secure during transport, with no risk of being hit by luggage or other objects, e.g., by using a crate or harness. For maximum traffic safety, it is recommended to use a crate or carrier designed for use in cars. To ensure sufficient support for the dog, the crate should not be too big. Dogs that are transported in a crate must have at least enough space to sit, get up and turn around, stretch and lie down in a natural position (see § 8.2). For professional transportation, such as on specially designed trailers or trucks, dogs must be kept in regulation size crates.

During transport dogs must be given water regularly, at intervals adapted to the season and temperature. Dogs must not be left in cars unattended, as to avoid overheating or freezing.

10. Exercise and training

10.1 Exercise, activity and social contact

Dogs must be exercised, trained and exercised to meet their needs for physical and mental activity and social interaction. By keeping a dog sufficiently active, frustration can be avoided, ensuring that the dog is well adapted and thus provides maximum benefit and enjoyment to its surroundings. The dog should have social contact with humans and/or other dogs. Dogs should have contact with humans at least for a few hours daily through social interaction, stimulation, walking, training or other activities. Dog owners or handlers must make sure that dogs are physically fit for the intended training or activities, and that the dogs get sufficient rest afterwards.

Dogs should be walked, exercised or activated at least three times a day, if kept indoors and without access to an outdoor run or equivalent. Puppies, older or sick dogs should be taken outside more often, according to their needs. Dogs kept outdoors or in caged runs should have social contact and be exercised at least once a day. Puppies and young dogs should regularly be exercised and trained alone to stimulate independence and self-confidence.

10.2 Ethically sound training

Obedience and physical training must always take dog welfare into consideration. In order to obtain a confident, well-functioning dog, it may be necessary to adjust the dog's behaviour at some points. The main training approach should be the use of positive (reward-based) reinforcement. Corrections can only be used as an exception, when the use of positive reinforcement alone has not given the intended results.

Especially during the early phases of learning a new behaviour, dogs should be rewarded generously for each small step in the right direction. Also during subsequent training, rewards should always be preferred to corrections. The demands placed on the dog, e.g., regarding behaviour, activities or living environment, must never exceed its abilities.

10.3 Corrections and reprimands

In all training, progress is best achieved when the desired behaviour is gradually acquired through systematically structured learning phases, in close cooperation between dog and handler. By rewarding the desired behaviour, correction that is unpleasant for the dog can be avoided in most cases.

Dog owners and trainers must decide when corrections are needed. Making such a decision can be challenging. Not only is the type of correction important, but also the situation and the dog's sensitivity. In most cases, a verbal reprimand and/or body language should be sufficient. However, should a physical correction be necessary as part of a dog's training, the correction must be timed correctly (as close in time to the deed as possible) so that the dog understands why it has been reprimanded. This can often be difficult, and it is extremely important that it is done correctly. If you have no experience in the use of corrections, you should seek expert assistance.

Corrections should never be unnecessarily harsh, have to be timed correctly and always adapted to the individual dog, the deed in question and the situation. Corrections must not be driven by the handler's anger or lack of self-control. Corrections experienced by

the dog as random might make the dog feel insecure, scared or induce aggression, and could be a violation of the Animal Welfare Act. Fearful or clearly submissive dogs must not be corrected.

10.4 Especially painful methods

The use of electric devices in dog training is prohibited in Norway. However, there is an exception for electric collars (e-collars) used for aversive conditioning against chasing certain livestock species, and only when the trainer is competent and authorized for the use of e-collars. Anti-barking collars that deliver an electric shock when the dog barks and so-called invisible electric fences are also prohibited. The use of barbed wire is prohibited in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act.

Prong collars must not be used for dog training.

10.5 Controlling dogs in public

Dogs must be under sufficient control to ensure that they do not cause harm or nuisance to others. The dog should be under control when leashed as well as when unleashed. This implies that the handler should be able to call back their dog in all situations when it is off leash. For leashed dogs, leash length should be adapted to the conditions to ensure that the dog is under control. It is polite to let your dog greet other people only when invited to do so.

10.6 Fighting behaviour

One must not work up or incite dogs to turn on each other, other animals or people, except in connection with legal hunting or service dog activities. Hunting and service dog work also includes the training and organized testing for such purposes. Dog fights and comparable activities, as well as training for such, are prohibited.

11. Breeding

NKK's Ethical rules and regulations for breeding (Code of Ethics) and *NKKs Breeding Strategy* and must be complied with. All breeding should preferably be performed in accordance with the objectives and guidelines of the respective breed clubs.

More about animal welfare and the requirement to prevent dogs from being a nuisance to others:

- Lov om dyrevelferd (Animal Welfare Act), www.lovdata.no
- Lov om hundehold (Dog Act), www.lovdata.no
- Stortingsmelding nr 12 (2002-2003), white paper on animal husbandry and animal welfare. www.stortinget.no
- Odelstingprop. nr 15 (2008-2009), draft resolution on the Animal Welfare Act. www.stortinget.no
- NKK's rules and regulations, www.nkk.no

More about euthanasia:

Regulations on euthanasia of cats and dogs, www.lovdata.no

More about keeping dogs outdoors:

- Food Safety Authority - Guidelines for keeping dogs outdoors, www.mattilsynet.no
- Norwegian Sled Dog Association - Guidelines for responsible sled dog husbandry, www.sleddogsport.no

More about transporting dogs:

Regulations on transporting live animals, www.lovdata.no

More about using electricity in dog training:

Regulations on the use of electricity in training dogs, www.lovdata.no

More about keeping and training dogs:

NKK's information brochures: *Do you want to become a dog owner*, and *Welcome, puppy*. www.nkk.no

More about breeding:

Ethical rules and regulations for breeding (Code of Ethics), and *NKKs breeding strategy*, www.nkk.no