



Photo by Paul Fletcher

- Find out how to take proper care of your pet - including their diet, exercise, behavioural and social needs. Ask your vet for information and advice
- You have to keep your dog healthy, from managing their weight to vet care when needed. Remember that regular vaccinations, worming and treatment for parasites like fleas is a vital part of any dog's health care
- Don't leave your dog in a car or tied up outside a shop as this can cause unnecessary suffering – which is an offence under the Act
- Make sure that your dog is clearly identified with a collar and tag at all times

For further information about the Acts and your responsibilities as a dog owner, you can contact the following organisations:

Department of Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
08459 335577

www.defra.gov.uk
Royal Society for the Prevention
of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)
0870 3335999

www.rspca.org.uk
British Veterinary Association
020 7636 6541
www.bva.co.uk

Be a responsible owner and neuter your dog – it's simply the best choice for you and your pet.

**If you are interested in rehoming a dog, supporting Dogs Trust or for more information and factsheets about all aspects of dog ownership, please visit www.dogstrust.org.uk or contact:
Dogs Trust
17 Wakley Street
London
EC1V 7RQ**

**Tel: 020 7837 0006
Reg. Charity Numbers: 227523
and SC037843**



Changes in Animal Welfare Law



Photo by Andy Catterall

The New Animal Welfare Act 2006 is now effective in England and Wales, while Scotland has the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. A key part of this new law is the 'Duty of Care' that all owners and keepers of pet animals must follow.

Any person responsible for an animal - either permanently or on a temporary basis - is now required by law to ensure their welfare. Owners of animals are responsible for their care even when the animal is away from them, for example when the owners are on holiday.

What does this mean?

The new legislation will not affect responsible dog owners. However, anyone who does not apply good standards of animal care will be dealt with more effectively by the relevant authorities.

Your 'Duty of Care'

As a pet owner you have a legal duty to ensure the welfare of all animals in your care. You need to be aware that your animal has the following needs:

- A suitable environment
- A suitable diet
- To exhibit normal behaviour pattern
- To be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease



- Suitable housing, either with or apart from other animals

Suffering can be either mental or physical, and a dog owner can be found guilty of causing harm to an animal by the things they do or the things they don't do. Even if someone doesn't know that their actions could cause suffering, they still can be prosecuted.

The Acts also mean that the enforcing authorities can take action where suffering could be caused, before it happens.

How is this enforced?

The Acts can be enforced by the Police, Local Authorities or national authorities such as DEFRA. They can call on vets and appoint Inspectors if needed to help them.

If a person is found not to meet the Duty of Care requirements, an Inspector can issue them with an 'Improvement Notice' which will give details on how they have failed to meet these standards, steps they should take to meet them and a deadline for carrying out improvements. If these are not made within the given time, they may then be prosecuted.

In some more serious cases, an Inspector may even take the animal away from

the home or kennels and further vet treatment can be given under order of a Magistrate's Court.

People who are prosecuted may be banned from owning or keeping animals, or from having any say over the care of animals in the future.

The maximum penalty for committing an offence under the Acts is up to 51 weeks imprisonment, a fine of up to £20,000, or both.

What do I need to do?

As a dog keeper, you are responsible at all times for your pet's welfare, even if they are left in someone else's care for periods of time.



Photo by Paul Fletcher