

Conditions and Guidance for Cat Boarding Establishments 2019

Section A: Environment-

Poor housing has a substantially negative impact on both the health and wellbeing of cats. Housing systems must be suitable for the needs of the species in question. The cattery must be designed, built and managed to provide safe, disease free, comfortable, clean, draught free, animal friendly conditions, which are minimally stressful and which offer environmental choice for the animal, sensory stimulation, physical and mental exercise.

Cattery construction and principles of design

- The correct design and construction of a cattery is vital to prevent escape, minimise disease spread and stress to the cats and to make maintenance and hygiene management straightforward and achievable by cattery proprietors.
- For disease control there must be no possibility of cats within the cattery (other than those from the same household), or other animals outside the cattery, coming into direct contact with each other or contacting droplets sneezed out by cats.

Designs must include:

- Cat units with sleeping accommodation (with solid sides) and an individual attached run.
- Sneeze barriers between units or alternatively some catteries have gaps between units.
- An enclosed area (corridor or lobby) outside the cat unit to minimise escape.
- Provision to isolate cats if necessary.
- Ancillary facilities including separate kitchen area.

Physical construction and integrity

- The cattery must be safe, secure and free from hazards, to minimise any chance of injury to a cat or escape of a cat.
- The cattery must be structurally sound.
- The cattery must be constructed of materials that are robust, safe and durable and be well maintained in good decorative order and repair.
- There must be no sharp edges, projections, rough edges or other hazards which present risk of injury to a cat.
- Windows must be escape proof at all times.

- Doors must have secure latches or other closing devices.
- All wire mesh/fencing must be strong and rigid and kept in good repair to provide an escape-proof structure.
- Electrical equipment must be installed in line with current legislation and maintained in a safe condition.
- Drainage must be effective to ensure there is no standing water in the cattery as this can be a reservoir for infectious agents.
- Any drain covers in areas where cats have access must be designed and located to prevent toes/claws from being caught.
- An enclosed area (safety corridor or lobby) is essential to ensure that if cats manage to slip out from their individual cat unit they are still kept safely inside the cattery.
- The floor must be finished to produce a smooth, impervious surface that is easy to clean and disinfect. Holes or gaps between tiles or paving slabs are not acceptable.
- External doors/ gates must be lockable and staff must have easy access to keys in case of an emergency.
- There must be a safe, secure, waterproof roof over all the cat units (sleeping accommodation and run) and safety corridors.

Cat Units

- Cats from different household must not share cat units.
- There must be adequate lighting in the cat unit
- Ventilation must be appropriate all year round (both cool in hot weather and avoiding draughts in winter).
- All interior surfaces to which cats have access must be durable, smooth and impervious, capable of being cleaned and disinfected and be kept in good decorative order and repair. Ceilings must be capable of being easily cleaned and disinfected.
- Each unit must be easily accessible and easy for staff to clean all areas.

Litter trays

- Litter trays of a suitable size or type must be provided at all times
- Each unit must allow for sufficient space between the litter tray, resting space and eating area.
- Trays must be impermeable, easy to clean and disinfect (or disposable).
- A safe and absorbent litter material must be provided.
- In multiple cat units there must be adequate litter trays.
- Trays must be regularly and appropriately cleaned.

Sleeping accommodation

- Cats need separate sleeping accommodation, which must be large enough to allow cats to move and lie comfortably and provide enough space to spread resources.
- Cats like warmth and some indoor cats are used to high ambient temperatures.
- All heating equipment must be installed and maintained in a safe condition.
- Soft bedding materials must be provided and adapted if necessary for old, young or infirm cats to help regulate their body temperature. Bedding must be made of material that is easy to wash/disinfect or is disposable.

Exercise run

- Must be large enough to allow cats to play/exercise.
- Communal exercise areas must not be used.

Fire and emergencies

- Appropriate steps must be taken for the protection of animals in case of fire or other emergencies.
- The licensee shall ensure that a responsible person shall at all times be in, or within reasonable distance from the premises for the purpose of giving warning and taking other necessary steps in the event of fire or other emergency. In the case of premises which are locked up, outside business hours, the licensee shall appoint a responsible person residing within reasonable distance of the premises to have custody of the key. The name and contact details of such person shall be displayed in legible characters at the front of the building.

Section B: Diet

Drinking

- Water should be available at all times. Clean water must be provided daily in a clean container.
- Water and food bowls should be non-porous and easy to clean/disinfect.
- Wide water bowls allow cats to drink without bending their whiskers.

Eating

- There must be exclusive facilities, hygienically constructed and maintained for the storage and preparation of food for the cats.
- Clean, safe containers must be provided for the storage of foods and must be insect and rodent proof.

- Cats must be fed a balanced diet suitable for their age, health status, and lifestyle. The type of food, specific diet or prescription diet is usually by agreement with the owner
- Food must be unspoilt, palatable and free from contamination.
- For healthy adult cats at least 2 meals a day, must be offered at a minimum of 8 hours apart, as appropriate to the individuals requirements.
- Food must not be left for excessive periods.
- Food intake must be monitored daily.
- Cats displaying marked weight loss/gain must be evaluated by a vet and treated as necessary.

Section C- Behaviour

Physical and mental health can affect cat behaviour. Cats are intelligent active creatures but changes can upset them, as can being off their own territory. Some cats become bored or stressed in a boarding situation. This can lead to poor appetite, shedding viruses or greater susceptibility to disease. Staff should be appropriately trained to recognise common behaviours and behaviour changes. A regular routine will help cats to predict what is going to happen.

- Hiding is a behaviour that cats can use to help them cope with changes in environment. Providing cats with places to hide can reduce stress.
- Encouraging cats to play can be a good way of keeping them active.
- Environmental enrichment such as changing toys regularly can reduce boredom.
- Cats must be provided with suitable facilities for scratching. Any scratching surfaces must be disinfected between uses for different cats or disposed of.
- The cattery environment should be as calm and quiet as possible with noise producing equipment located as far away from other animals as possible.
- Cats must not be exposed to excessive noise of barking boarded dogs or other excessive/ continuous noise.

Section D- Company

- Most adult cats will only be friendly to siblings or certain other cats they live with. Strange cats are usually avoided. Cats can find the presence of other cats very stressful and can suffer if they cannot avoid cats with whom they are not familiar or do not like. Housing cats at high densities increases the potential for them to be stressed. Only cats from the same household may share a unit.
- Cattery staff should find out from the owner and monitor each cat to ascertain how much human contact it wants and adapt to provide this.
- Cats must always be handled humanely and appropriately to suit the requirements of the individual cat.

Section E- Health and Welfare

Register

In order to keep cats healthy the proprietor needs to have an organised system for registering and monitoring all cats at the cattery.

- A register must be kept of all cats boarded and available to key members of staff and to DEFA officers if requested. Records should be backed up and records kept for a minimum of 24 months.
 - Date of arrival and departure
 - Name, sex, description of cat and microchip number (if appropriate)
 - Number of cats sharing from same household
 - Name, address, phone number and email of owner (including emergency contact details).
 - Cat's veterinary surgeon
 - Cat's diet and relevant requirements
 - Cat's relevant medical history
 - Consent form e.g. for veterinary treatment
 - Record of vaccination

Disease control

- Preventing cat-to-cat contact, ensuring excellent hygiene protocols and management protocols to minimise stress can reduce the risk of disease spread.
- The movement of people through the cattery should be minimised and supervised.
- Cats must be vaccinated against feline infectious enteritis and against feline respiratory viruses (feline herpesvirus and feline calicivirus).
- Suitable isolation facilities must be available and used when necessary
- Where required wiping of eyes, grooming and other cleaning regimes must be carried out frequently enough to keep the cat clean and comfortable providing it is safe to do so.