

PET SHOP BEST PRACTICES

By virtue of the nature of the pet shop business, which involves the sale of live animals as pets to the public, pet shops have a responsibility to (1) ensure the well being of the animals, (2) promote responsible pet ownership, (3) ensure that they educate the public so that they (the public) can make informed choices and (4) ensure that they provide appropriate sales and after sales service to the reasonable satisfaction of their customers.

To ensure the well being of the animals and that regulatory requirements are met, the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA) requires pet shops to comply with the conditions of their pet shop licence. On top of mandatory compliance with the conditions, pet shops can do more to raise industry standards of animal welfare, professionalism and customer service. The list of pet shop best practices below aims to offer some direction to the pet shops to achieve this.

GENERAL PRACTICES

Animal Display Area

1. The animal display area:
 - (a) Has a ventilation / exhaust system which keeps the air fresh and clean at all times (as a guide it should allow about 10 to 15 air changes per hour)
 - (b) Has a washing point
 - (c) Is kept clean, dry and tidy at all times.

Housing

2. Cages are made of material that is strong, non-toxic, corrosion-resistant and easy to clean and disinfect, such as stainless steel and aluminium. Rusted and damaged cages are not used.
3. Collapsible or flimsy cages are not used. If used, they are for holding animals temporarily while display cages are being cleaned and they are placed directly on the floor or on a stable structure.
4. Cages / tanks that are placed in rows are at least 1 metre apart to allow easy housekeeping. Cages / tanks are not stacked higher than 2 tiers per row and are properly secured. Food, waste and wastewater do not fall to the cages / tanks below.

Animal Care and Management

5. All new animals arriving in the shop are rested at least 72 hours before being sold.
6. The animals' environment is enriched through provision of objects and activities to keep the animals occupied.
7. Nest boxes or materials, towels or thick bedding are provided, as appropriate, so that the animals can be comfortable and feel secure.
8. Materials, such as newspaper (in sheets or shredded) or urine liners, are provided to facilitate toilet training.

9. All animals are allowed to exercise, and socialise, as appropriate.
10. Only compatible animals from the same litter are kept together.
11. Cages / enclosures with incompatible types of animals are not placed in close proximity.
12. Animals are acquired from known sources that are reliable and consistent in producing healthy animals that are of good quality.

Food and Food Preparation

13. The appropriate type and amount of food are fed at a frequency suited to the animal and its age.
14. Food preparation is done in a clean area that is separate from the wash area.
15. Food storage containers are properly sealed to keep the food fresh and wholesome.

Shop Presentation and Housekeeping

16. The shop has good presentation. The display of pet products is neat and tidy and does not cause congestion in the shop.
17. The premises are kept clean, dry and tidy. Food remnants, animal waste, wastewater and floor washings are properly disposed of.
18. There are no foul odours in the shop.
19. All items used for the animals are cleaned and disinfected regularly. Drinking and feeding receptacles are non-toxic and corrosion-resistant.
20. The shop takes appropriate measures to ensure the animals do not cause noise, smell or hygiene nuisance to neighbouring premises.
21. The shop has adequate pest control measures.

Customer Education & Service

22. The shop sends staff for formal basic training.
23. The shop ensures that correct information on pet care is provided to customers. It provides free literature on pet care for distribution to customers and carries comprehensive pet care materials for customers to purchase. It displays posters promoting responsible pet ownership.
24. Pedigree certificates are delivered to customers within given time as promised.
25. The shop has a system, e.g. a checklist, to screen customers to determine whether they will make responsible owners.

26. The shop does not sell animals to children not accompanied by adults.
 27. The shop provides good customer and after sales service
 28. The staff is knowledgeable about pet care and responsible pet ownership.
 29. The shop signs an agreement with its customers on the terms of purchase. This agreement includes a guarantee that the shop will allow a replacement, full refund or partial refund as follows, and as agreed between the customer and pet shop:
 - (a) If the animal purchased falls sick from an infectious disease within 7 days of purchase and a veterinarian verifies in writing that the disease was contracted prior to purchase, a replacement or full refund will be given;
 - (b) If the animal develops a life-threatening disease or condition within a year of purchase and a veterinarian verifies in writing that it is genetic and inherited from its parents, a replacement or full or partial refund (at least 50% of the purchase price) will be given.
 30. The shop practises good business ethics and honours all agreements.
- are not placed near to shop windows. They are provided with low-intensity soft lighting, hiding places (retreats) and raised resting areas.
39. Stressed animals are moved to an isolation area away from the display area. The isolation area provides a quiet, secure environment for recuperation.
 40. The animals are not housed close to dogs, cats or other incompatible animals.
 41. The cages have solid sides with a piece of clear perspex door with ventilation holes for easy viewing. If wire mesh is used, they are small enough to prevent escape and will not cause injury.
 42. A proprietary dust bath, or fine sand or bird grit (1 cup) mixed with talcum (1 teaspoon), is provided. The bath tray is cleaned at least every 2 to 3 days. There is minimal disturbance caused to the animals when cleaning out the used bath material.
 43. Appropriate food is provided to the animals, and includes commercial pellets, hay, grass, carrots and leafy vegetables.
 44. The animals are provided with a block of soft wood or mineral to keep their teeth trim and in good condition.

SPECIES-SPECIFIC PRACTICES

For Shops Selling Dogs

31. Drinking water is provided in water bowls.
32. There is an exercise area for the dogs. The dogs are let out at least twice a day to exercise for at least half an hour each time.
33. Puppies are provided with enrichment objects such as toys, chewing items and towels.

For Shops Selling Cats

34. Kittens are provided with enrichment objects such as toys and scratch posts and are provided with opportunity to climb.
35. A litter box of adequate size is provided.

For Shops Selling Small Mammals

36. The animals are provided with a chewing block to keep their teeth trim and in good condition.
37. Exercise wheels are provided for gerbils, hamsters and mice.

For Shops Selling Chinchillas

38. Chinchillas are maintained in a quiet, low-stress environment and insulated from outside disturbance. They

For Shops Selling Birds

45. Perches are made of soft wood and are of a size suitable for the birds to grip comfortably. No sandpaper is used on the perches. Perches are not placed directly over one another or over food or drinking bowls.
46. Chains used to restrain birds to a perch are sufficiently long or it has a movable ring that slides along the perch to allow the bird to move easily along its length. The leg ring is able to swivel on the leg and the bird is comfortable.
47. The birds are fed the appropriate type and amount of food according to their age and species. Seed-eating birds are fed a good mix of seeds. No single type of seed, such as sunflower seed, is fed on its own.

For Shops Selling Fancy Fish

48. Dead fish, fish waste, wastewater and floor washings are properly disposed of.

(Note: For items that will not be evident on inspection, such as "customer education and service" items, documentation should be presented for verification.)

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