

Prompting Professional Curiosity - Signs of Poor Welfare in Dogs

The following points are provided by the RSPCA for professionals to use when looking at, or asking about a dog within a property. They should not be considered exhaustive but are intended to prompt a professional's curiosity as to the state of the dog's welfare along with suggested courses of action.

The points relate to Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act, 2006 which imposes a duty of care on a person who is permanently or temporarily responsible for an animal. This duty of care requires that reasonable steps in all the circumstance are taken to ensure that the welfare needs of an animal are met to the extent required by good practice. The welfare needs are:

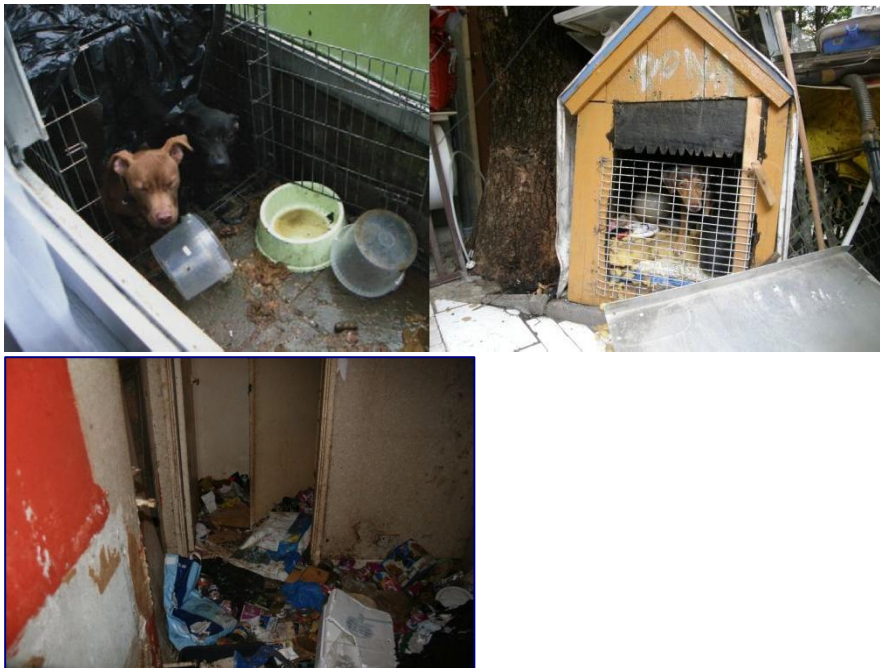
- The need for a suitable environment
- The need for a suitable diet
- The need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- The need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals
- The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

During the visit ask if there is a dog in the property including the back garden. If there is, and the dog isn't in the same room as yourself, ask to see it.

When looking at the dog ask yourself or the owner:	What would be a cause for concern:
Is the general environment in which he is kept clean, dry, warm and quiet? If he is a crate ask why he is confined.	See Appendix I for examples of unsuitable environments. A dog crated permanently.
Does the dog have access to fresh drinking water somewhere in the house?	No evidence of continuous supply of fresh drinking water.
Does the dog have access to any toys in the house and is he exercised regularly, at least once daily?	Nothing for dog to interact with and dog is not exercised on a regular daily basis.
Does the dog appear relaxed and calm in your presence? If he is kept separate when visitors come to the house ask why? If more than one dog, do they appear to get on well together?	Dog is observed to, or owner states that, the dog displays behaviour which suggests he is very frightened or unhappy, see Appendix b and c.
Does he appear in good health? Look at his coat, eyes, body condition, nails, ability to walk soundly and for any abnormalities such as large lumps, fur loss or injury.	See Appendix III for examples of dogs which are unhealthy.

If you are concerned about the dog's welfare please call the RSPCA's National Cruelty Line on 0300 1234999. Depending on the circumstances an Inspector may be tasked to visit the property. However, with only 325 Inspectors and 130 000 complaints received per year, it is not possible for the RSPCA to investigate every complaint and in some cases alternative courses of action may be suggested and advice given.

Appendix I: Environments - these photos illustrate the types of environments which are considered unsuitable.

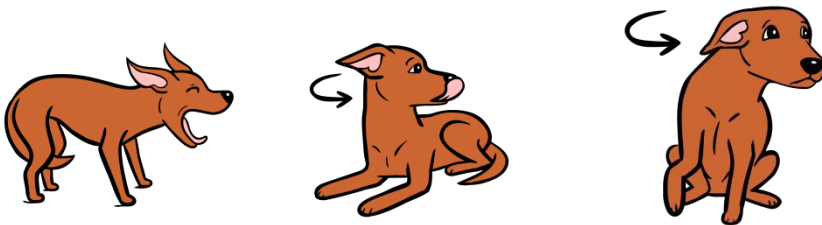


Appendix II Dog behaviour

- a. Dogs which want to meet people will look happy



b. Dogs that are uncomfortable and don't want you near them will show a variety of behavioural signs



c. Dogs which want you to stay away or move away from them will also show a variety of behavioural signs



Appendix III Healthy dogs - these photos illustrate dogs suffering from skin conditions and emaciation.

