

# THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



## Department of Agricultural Resources

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## **PUPPY AND DOG HEALTH PROTOCOL:** **GUIDELINES FOR PET SHOPS AND ANIMAL SHELTERS**

Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources  
Division of Animal Health

This document offers guidance to Massachusetts pet shops and shelters about:

- examining puppies and dogs upon arrival and when signs of disease are observed;
- providing veterinary care; and
- providing routine care.

This document supplements state statutes and regulations. For the most part, this document describes minimum requirements imposed by these laws. Pet shop licensees should be familiar with the state statute, M.G.L. Chapter 129, Section 39A, and the Bureau of Animal Health's regulations on pet shops, 330 CMR 12.00, to ensure compliance with their obligations. While publicly owned animal pounds (shelters) are not subject to the pet shop statute and regulations, they are subject to other animal laws such as the import law described below, and they are encouraged to apply all of the suggestions in this protocol to further the health of their animals.

### **Interstate Transport**

Any person shipping dogs into Massachusetts from another state must comply with 330 CMR 3.00 and the USDA's Animal Welfare Act, 7 U.S.C. Chapter 54, Section 2131 et seq. Puppies must be at least eight weeks of age at the time of shipment. An official certificate of veterinary inspection (OCVI) or health certificate from the state of origin must accompany each puppy or dog. Each puppy or dog must be identified with collar identification numbers that correspond to the health certificate and shipping documents.

Consistent with federal standards, puppies and dogs must be shipped in crates or carriers with food and water containers and at reasonable temperatures. Whether the animals arrive by truck or air, they should be transported as safely and humanely as possible.

Even when pet shop licensees or shelters are not responsible for transport, they are integral to enforcement of the federal law. If puppies arrive at a pet shop or shelter and are not in good health, licensees or shelter operators should report problems to the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services' Eastern Regional Office (919-716-5532), and the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture, Division of Animal Health (617-626-1795).

## **Arrival**

A qualified person should check all animals at the time of arrival. A qualified person is one with training and/or experience to critically evaluate animals, identify that something is abnormal, unusual, or a possible sign of disease or illness, and determine whether an animal needs immediate attention or whether the veterinarian should be called. A qualified person need not be a veterinarian or veterinary technician, but must have appropriate skills and adequate time to evaluate each animal. Licensees and shelters should designate one or more people as their “qualified person(s).”

Massachusetts pet shop regulations require that all pet shop puppies must be:

1. isolated for a minimum of 48 hours by the clock after arrival, with no new additions being made to the room during this period; and
2. checked by a licensed veterinarian after the isolation period and prior to being offered for sale.

The accompanying form will assist the qualified person to evaluate the puppies at the time of arrival. Each puppy should have a corresponding completed form for the veterinarian to consult when she or he makes a medical examination.

## **Signs of Illness**

When there is any indication that an animal is ill, pet shop regulations require that it be immediately removed from the sales floor or isolation (new arrival) room and placed in the quarantine (sick) room and evaluated by a qualified person. This person should use reasonable judgment and common sense to either call the veterinarian or immediately bring the animal to the veterinarian. Shelters are encouraged to follow this practice as well.

Because of the nature of young animals, exposure to a sick animal can easily spread illness to one or more of the remaining animals. It is therefore important that licensees, shelters, and their employees actively monitor other animals in the general population for signs of illness.

Puppies are vulnerable to many types of diseases and illness due to several factors:

- **Immature immune system:** Much of a puppy’s natural disease protection comes from his or her mother. Genetics, environment, and husbandry all play a role in the dam’s ability to confer protection to her offspring. A Massachusetts pet shop or shelter has no control over conditions under which an out-of-state puppy is bred and raised. However, pet shops and shelters are urged to contact the USDA at 919-716-5532 whenever they suspect that out-of state conditions are inadequate.
- **Shipping fever and stress:** Virtually all species of young animals are susceptible to a variety of diseases due to the effects of commingling and the stress of shipment. Stressful factors include changing feed, water, schedule, and environment. Pet shop licensees and shelters should expect that some of the animals shipped to their stores will become sick. The 48-hour isolation provides an opportunity for signs of disease to manifest themselves and for licensees and others to observe and become aware of problems.

Most infectious diseases of puppies are of three major types: respiratory disease, gastrointestinal illness, or skin disease. Serious respiratory diseases include distemper, kennel cough, roundworms, and pneumonia. Skin diseases include sarcoptic and demodectic mange. Serious gastrointestinal diseases include parvovirus, corona virus, and internal parasites including coccidiosis. These should be considered highly contagious; any animals exhibiting signs should be immediately isolated in quarantine (sick) rooms.

Other conditions, such as hernias, lameness, hormonal skin diseases, and allergies, for example, may be potentially serious but are generally not contagious.

The accompanying form will assist the qualified person to evaluate the puppies at the time that signs are noticed. Each puppy should have a corresponding completed form for the veterinarian to consult when she or he makes a medical examination.

### **The Evaluation Form**

The evaluation form will assist the qualified person to assess each puppy at arrival and if an animal displays any signs of illness. It is not the job of store or shelter personnel to diagnose disease or prescribe treatment. It is, however, the job of store and shelter personnel to observe the animals, recognize that a problem may exist, contact the veterinarian, and follow the veterinarian's advice.

For each animal upon arrival and upon signs of illness, the qualified person should complete an evaluation form. The form has instructions to guide the evaluation but it assumes that the qualified person has basic competency and familiarity with the type of animal being evaluated. Thus, the qualified person should be able to tell, for example, that the color of the dog's gums is abnormal, the skin is dry or oily, or the dog's ears smell bad.

### **Veterinary Care**

Every pet shop is required to have a licensed veterinarian available to assist them and render medical care. Shelters are strongly encouraged to have the same. Pet shops or shelters and their veterinarians should develop a specific program of veterinary care including vaccinations, treatment for internal and external parasites, nutrition, personnel training, biosecurity measures, and other preventive care to address the needs of the store or shelter and its animals. Pet shop and shelter personnel should be trained to take an accurate temperature, administer oral medications, weigh an animal, and recognize illness and an emergency.

Every pet shop and shelter should have the following items, sized appropriately for the animals brought into the shop or shelter, to address routine needs:

1. Thermometer
2. Scale
3. Unused gloves and clean smocks
4. Cleaning and disinfecting supplies and materials (including virucidal disinfectant)
5. Gauze
6. Karo syrup and eyedropper
7. Hot water bottle (or substitute container)
8. Towels
9. Isopropyl Alcohol
10. Quiet, well-lit place with examination table for veterinary exams that can be properly disinfected.

## **Routine Daily Care**

### **A. Cleanliness Practices**

In addition to disinfecting surfaces and changing smocks and gloves after handling ill animals, one of the most important practices in preventing the spread of disease and protecting animal and human health is conscientious hand washing. Thorough hand washing helps stop germs from spreading. Pet shop and shelter personnel should wash their hands in accordance with the following procedure, particularly after handling a sick or symptomatic animal:

1. Use soap and warm running water.
2. Rub hands together to make a good lather.
3. Wash all parts of the hands:  
backs of hands  
wrists  
between fingers  
under fingernails.
4. Rinse with water.
5. Dry hands with a paper towel.
6. Turn off the water using a paper towel, not bare hands.

### **B. Housing [See 330 CMR 12.03(3)b]**

Pet shop regulations require (and the Department strongly suggests for shelters) that puppies and dogs must be housed in an area that allows them to sit, stand, lie down, and turn easily. If the floor is wire, it must not sag due to the animal's weight. The gauge must be small enough that the puppy's feet do not fall through.

Enclosures must be cleaned often enough to keep them sanitary and prevent odors. Remove organic material first, then disinfect the contact surfaces. Remember that some chemicals can be toxic and/or irritating to skin or mucous membranes. Rinse surfaces thoroughly and allow them to dry before returning the puppy to the cage.

### **C. Feeding**

At 8 weeks of age, most puppies should be fed a good-quality "puppy" food 3 times daily, approximately 8 hours apart. As puppies get older, at 16 weeks of age, twice-daily feeding may be sufficient. Follow the store or shelter veterinarian's recommendations.

Most toy breeds require smaller meals as often as 4 to 6 times per day to prevent hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). Again, follow the store or shelter veterinarian's recommendations.

It is normal for puppies to feel the urge to defecate soon after eating. It is extremely beneficial for pet shop and shelter personnel to take puppies to a separate area after eating to allow them to defecate. While it may appear to be inconvenient, encouraging defecation away from eating areas is very helpful for housebreaking young dogs.

Clean water should be available at all times. If the puppies are group-housed, be sure that there are enough feed bowls and water bottles for all puppies and that they each have access to them. Watch out for the bullies.

#### **D. Socialization**

Each puppy—whether cute or not, shy or boisterous—should be handled individually each day. The Department recommends that each puppy have at least 30 minutes of attention daily, but no less than 10 minutes of one-on-one time with a person. Although group housing is common after the isolation period, human contact is important to canine development and enhances the puppy's likelihood of purchase or adoption and successful adjustment to a new family.

#### **E. Exercise**

All dogs need exercise outside of their cages every day. Puppies need the opportunity to walk, run, and play to facilitate musculo-skeletal development and improve coordination. Exercise becomes increasingly important as puppies grow older. The simple ability to walk on-leash improves a puppy's chance of finding a good home.

## Evaluation Form for New Arrivals and Dogs with Signs of Illness

1. General Information:			
Person Making Evaluation: _____		Date of Evaluation: _____	
Reason for Evaluation: <input type="checkbox"/> New Arrival <input type="checkbox"/> Signs of Illness		Temperature: _____ °F <b>If temperature is above 103° F or below 100° F, call the veterinarian immediately!</b>	
Dog Color ID #: _____		Age: _____	Sex: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Breed: _____		Weight: _____ lbs. _____ oz.	

2. Observations:	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Observe the puppy's attitude and alertness, movement size, and shape. Check unusual activities:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Headshaking  <input type="checkbox"/> Scratching  <input type="checkbox"/> Limping  <input type="checkbox"/> Vomiting  <input type="checkbox"/> Tremors  <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Listen and check any of the following that exist:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Coughing  <input type="checkbox"/> Sneezing  <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty Breathing  <input type="checkbox"/> Gagging  <input type="checkbox"/> Wheezing  <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>

**Look at the dog's face and circle any of the following potential problems:**

<b>Left Eye:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Discharge	<input type="checkbox"/> Redness	<input type="checkbox"/> Cloudy	<input type="checkbox"/> Third Eyelid Up	<input type="checkbox"/> Hair Loss or Redness on Skin
<b>Right Eye:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Discharge	<input type="checkbox"/> Redness	<input type="checkbox"/> Cloudy	<input type="checkbox"/> Third Eyelid Up	<input type="checkbox"/> Hair Loss or Redness on Skin
<b>Nose:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Discharge	<input type="checkbox"/> Crusty	<input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Material		
<b>Left Ear:</b>	<u>Inside</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Redness	<input type="checkbox"/> Discharge	<input type="checkbox"/> Odor	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty
	<u>Outside</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Redness	<input type="checkbox"/> Swelling	<input type="checkbox"/> Hair Loss	
<b>Right Ear:</b>	<u>Inside</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Redness	<input type="checkbox"/> Discharge	<input type="checkbox"/> Odor	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty
	<u>Outside</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Redness	<input type="checkbox"/> Swelling	<input type="checkbox"/> Hair Loss	
<b>Mouth:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Bite	<input type="checkbox"/> Discharge	<input type="checkbox"/> Abnormal Gum Color	<input type="checkbox"/> Crust or Scabs at Corners	

**Examine the dog's head, neck, back, body, belly, and tail (including between the legs and beneath the tail) and note the following:**

Redness	Where:
Hair Loss	Where:
Foreign Material	Where:
Wetness	Where:
Dryness	Where:
Oiliness	Where:
Sores	Where:
Scabs	Where:
Scaliness	Where:
Discoloration	Where:

**Record any other observations or concerns, such as signs of dehydration, discomfort, or hotness.**

# Evaluation Form for Determining the Need for Veterinary Care

(Do I need to call the veterinarian about this dog?)

<b>1. General Information:</b>		
Date Completed: _____	By Whom: _____	Dog Collar ID#: _____

<b>2. Look for signs that may indicate <b>respiratory</b> problems:</b>		
Coughing	Ocular (eye) Discharge	Increase in Temperature
Sneezing	Nasal (nose) Discharge	Difficulty in Breathing
<b>IF ANY OF THESE CONDITIONS ARE PRESENT:</b>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Isolate the animal in the quarantine (sick) room</li> <li>2. Take and record the dog's temperature: _____ ° F</li> <li>3. Call your veterinarian immediately</li> <li>4. Sanitize your hands and any equipment you used before handling another animal</li> </ol>		

<b>3. Look for signs that may indicate <b>gastrointestinal</b> problems:</b>		
Vomiting	Gagging	Regurgitation
Absence of Stools	Not Eating	Straining when Defecating
Diarrhea: Note consistency and look for mucous or blood		
<b>IF ANY OF THESE CONDITIONS ARE PRESENT:</b>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Isolate the animal in the quarantine (sick) room</li> <li>2. Take and record the dog's temperature: _____ ° F</li> <li>3. Call your veterinarian immediately</li> <li>4. Collect stool sample and refrigerate in a clean container</li> <li>5. Sanitize your hands and any equipment you used before handling another animal</li> </ol>		

<b>3. Look for signs that may indicate <b>skin</b> problems:</b>					
Itching	Redness	Moistness	Sores	Scaliness	
Dryness	Bald Spots	Bumps	Oiliness	Smells Bad	Scabs
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Isolate the animal in the quarantine (sick) room</li> <li>2. Take and record the dog's temperature: _____ ° F</li> <li>3. Call your veterinarian immediately</li> <li>4. Sanitize your hands and any equipment you used before handling another animal</li> </ol>					