

# 5. Animal Care Practices for Some Common Animals

## Overview

We are providing a set of care guidelines for the various types of animals generally involved in cruelty complaints. We have presented the minimum conditions that should be present to ensure that the animals are receiving basic care. In addition, we have added recommendations that ideally should be followed.

We also have described what to look for in terms of the appearance of the animals and the environmental conditions that are symptoms of neglect and cruelty. If these are present, call a veterinarian to examine the animal(s).

In some cases the neglect and cruelty will be obvious even to an untrained eye. In others it may be more subtle, but if you become familiar with the following animal care practices, you will be better prepared to recognize it.

It is important to note that animal care practices can vary from breed to breed, and even from animal to animal, depending on many different factors. These guidelines are intended to give you a basis with which to make an informed decision about the care and health of the animals in your investigation, but they are not all mandates of state law. Any divergence from these recommended practices may not – in and of itself – constitute a violation of Title 13. For example, pet owners are not required by law to neuter their animals.

In most cases, *educating* animal owners about proper care and nutrition for their animals is enough to rectify the situation, and these practices can be used for that purpose as well. Title 13 outlines its purpose under Section 351 (a), which is to “prevent cruelty to animals.” It goes on to say that “in implementing this subchapter, enforcement officers are encouraged to educate the public on requirements of the subchapter and, when appropriate, to seek voluntary resolution of violations.”

# DOGS

Terminology

Female - Bitch

Male - Male

## • **Basic Animal Care Practices**

- Fresh, clean water (in a spill proof container) should be accessible at all times (See also Title 13, Section 351 (17) for definition of “adequate water”).
- Should be fed at least once a day with a good quality dog food of adequate quality and in sufficient quantity to develop and maintain a healthy body condition (See also Title 13, Section 351 (16) for definitions of “adequate food” and “adequate water”, and Appendix IV, “Purina Body Condition System for Dogs”).
- Even if the dog is outside for short periods, it should have shelter available to protect it from the elements (See also Title 13, Section 365, Shelter of Animals).
- Important - with regard to being outside in winter weather, the hair coat, body condition, size and age of dog must be taken into consideration. Short haired dogs, thin haired dogs, thin dogs, very young dogs, old dogs, and/or very small dogs should not be left outside for extended periods in cold weather because they are not able to withstand the cold. They should only be let outside at appropriate intervals that meet individual needs and for short periods of time in order to relieve themselves.
- Keeping a dog outside – We do NOT recommend that dogs be constantly kept outside alone because dogs by nature are social animals and have a psychological need to be with their human families. However, if for some reason a dog is kept outside, the owner should provide a dog house that meets the following standards (see also Appendix IV, “Dog House Plans”).
  - The dog house should accommodate the size of the dog; that is, it should be large enough to allow the dog or dogs to get inside and move about. However, it should not be too large because in cold weather it must permit the dog’s body heat to accumulate inside the structure to provide some warmth. The dog’s breed, physical condition and age must be considered when determining whether a dog house meets its needs. The structure should:

- Be raised at least two inches off the ground to prevent it from sitting in pooled water.
  - Be shaded during the hot weather months; during the winter, the doorway should have a flap of windproof material to cover it.
  - Contain sufficient bedding, such as straw or wood shavings, that are changed often enough to remain dry and clean.
- To ensure that a dog's water does not spill, a water pail should be securely attached to the dog house.
  - Food should be increased during the winter months to provide the extra calories necessary for warmth, and water must be offered frequently to counteract its freezing.
- Tethering (chaining) a dog — any tethering should be done for brief periods of time to allow a dog some exercise. While state law does not specifically restrict the length of time an animal can be tethered or the type of restraint used, it does restrict the *length* of the chain. Title 13, Section 365(f) states that “A dog chained to a shelter must be on a tether chain at least four times the length of the dog as measured from the tip of its nose to the base of its tail, and shall allow the dog access to the shelter.” The dog's shelter should provide him with access to shade and protection from rain and snow. (see also Appendix IV, “How to Help a Chained Dog” and “The Facts about Chaining and Tethering”).

Problems associated with constant tethering:

- Abnormal restriction and/or isolation that can result in behavior problems (for example, compulsive behaviors such as spinning; anxiety; fearfulness; aggression).
- Chains can get tangled and result in the dog being strangled or dangerously restricted.
- Exposes dogs to attack by other dogs and wildlife.
- Owners forget to check the dog's collar and the collar can become embedded in the dog's neck (This is a case of neglect and the owner can be charged with cruelty under Section 352 of Title 13).

As an alternative to tethering—to provide exercise only—we recommend placing a long cable between two trees or poles. A ring can be attached to the cable and the dog's chain or lead attached (clipped) to the ring.

- **Additional recommendations**

- The dog should have yearly veterinary exams to ensure its proper health and to provide preventative vaccinations, vector-borne disease testing, and recommended medication, etc. A rabies vaccination—for both dogs and wolf hybrids—is required by law (See Title 20, Chapter 193, Section 3581a (a))
- The dog should be spayed or neutered. This will prevent the birth of additional litters and may provide health and behavior benefits for the dog as well. Check with your local shelter (See Appendix I, Animal Shelters and Rescue Organizations in Vermont) about available low-cost spay/neuter programs. Also check with the Agency of Agriculture regarding the state-subsidized Spay Neuter Incentive Program for income eligible families. (See Chapter 7, Title 20, Chapter 193, Section 3816, Animal Spaying and Neutering Fund.)

- **Signs of neglect/cruelty - what to look for**

Appearance of animal: listless; dull hair coat; thin (ribs showing, sunken-in flanks); hair loss and scabs; diarrhea; chronic cough; heavy flea infestation; vomiting; nasal or ocular discharge; pronounced lameness; bare ear tips and other body areas, which could indicate sarcoptic mange, frost bite or other skin disease. (see also Appendix IV, “Tufts Animal Care and Condition Scale” and “How to Tell if a Dog or Cat May Need Veterinary Care”).

**IMPORTANT**: *Remember to check for a collar which is too tight, and for overgrown or ingrown nails, especially dewclaws, i.e., the “thumb nails” on the first digits, which tend to overgrow since they don’t contact the ground.*

Housing Conditions: overturned water bowl (water should be in spill proof container); frozen or dirty water, lack of adequate food; lack of adequate shelter from elements; ground covered with fecal matter; strong odor of urine.

Behavior: depressed; lack of response to attention; excessively fearful; aggressive; excessive vocalization; shy; constant scratching, biting at body; repetitive behaviours (circling, spinning); ingestion of objects.

If any of the elements above are present, call a veterinarian to examine the animals.

# CATS

Terminology

Female - Queen

Male - Tom

## • **Basic Animal Care Practices**

- Fresh, clean water in a spill proof container should be accessible at all times (See also Title 13, Section 351 (17) for definition of “adequate water”).
- Should be fed at least once a day with cat food of adequate quality and in sufficient quantity to develop and maintain a healthy body condition (See also Title 13, Section 351 (16) for definition of “adequate food” and Appendix IV, “Purina Body Condition System for Cats).
- Indoor cats must be provided with accessible litter pans and litter material, cleaned daily to prevent urine and fecal buildup and odor (See Title 13, Section 365 (g) for living space requirements for cats).

## • **Additional recommendations**

- Although not required by law, cats should have yearly veterinary exams to ensure their health and to provide any necessary medications and vaccinations against feline distemper, rabies, and (optional) feline leukemia. A rabies vaccination *is* required by law for “domestic pets”, which includes cats. (See Title 20, Chapter 193, Section 3581a (a))
- The cat should be spayed or neutered. This will prevent the birth of additional litters, and may provide health and behavior benefits for the cat as well.
- We believe that a primary responsibility of a cat owner is to protect cats from outdoor hazards by keeping them inside; however, if a cat is let outside or kept outside, it should have access to proper shelter, such as a barn, garage, etc. where it can maintain its body temperature. Feline leukemia testing and vaccinations are strongly recommended for outside cats.

## • **Signs of neglect/cruelty - what to look for**

Appearance of animal: listless, runny nose and eyes; congested breathing; ear mites; sores from fighting or skin disease; thin body; matted fur; vomiting;

diarrhea; parasites; hair loss (possibly from frost bite or skin disease). (see also Appendix IV, “How to Tell if a Dog or Cat May Need Veterinary Care”).

Housing Conditions: inadequate number of clean litter boxes; dirty or frozen water; lack of available adequate food; lack of shelter; overcrowding - overcrowding causes stress and infectious disease.

Behavior: excessively aggressive; fearful; unresponsive to attention; self-mutilation; constant scratching, biting at self; excessive vocalization.

If any of the elements above are present, call a veterinarian to examine animals.

## HORSES

Terminology

Female - Mare

Young female - Filly

Male - Stallion

Young male - Colt

Castrated male – Gelding

### • **Basic Animal Care Practices**

*NOTE: Feed and water requirements will vary considerably depending on the age of the animal, its size, amount of exercise or work that it performs, and physiologic status (e.g. whether pregnant or lactating, climate, etc.)*

*Remember that The Agency of Agriculture must be consulted before any enforcement action is taken involving livestock or poultry (Title 13, Section 354 (3) (a))*

- It is critical that fresh, clean water be accessible at all times. Horses are prone to serious gastrointestinal issues and other health concerns from dehydration.
- Should be fed as follows:
  - Good or high quality forage is the cornerstone of a horse’s diet, and is typically sufficient for the average horse’s caloric needs. A 1000-pound horse will eat between ½ and ¾ of an average 40 pound bale of hay per day; for a pony or small breed, 1/3 bale.

- There are exceptions for medical issues, older horses, or horses in work. Owners should consult with their veterinarian for the right advice on nutrition and any special dietary needs their horse may have.
- All feed should be rotated, kept dry and fed off the ground to avoid mold.

- Salt blocks are recommended — either white salt or preferably trace mineralized salt (red blocks).
- Should be provided with shelter that affords them protection from heavy rain, snow, and high wind. The shelter should also provide sufficient shade in the summer. (NOTE: *According to Title 13, Section 365 (Shelter of Animals) “. . . all livestock . . . must be provided with . . . adequate natural shelter or a three-sided, roofed building with exposure out of the prevailing wind and of sufficient size to adequately accommodate all livestock maintained out-of-doors . . .”*)
- Stalls can be box stalls (minimum 10' by 10' per horse) or straight or tie stalls (only permits the horse to stay in a straight alignment, that is, it can stand and lie, but cannot turn around.) If confined to a straight stall, daily turnout should be provided. Natural light should be available and horses should not be overcrowded.

- **Additional recommendations**

- A horse's worm burden is specific to each animal. They should be dewormed based on their fecal egg counts. Owners should consult with their veterinarian to develop a worming regimen.
- At a minimum, should be vaccinated for rabies and tetanus on an annual basis; other vaccinations as recommended by veterinarian.
- Should receive proper hoof care. Hooves require trimming approximately every 6 to 12 weeks. A horse does not always require shoes. Shoeing depends on the condition of the horse's feet, the type of work the horse does, the road surface it travels on, and how often it travels. As a general rule, a horse who wears his hoof wall quicker than he grows it needs shoes.
- Teeth should be checked annually and floated (filed down) as necessary.

- Need to “graze” (i.e. have access to grass or hay). Ideally, hay should always be available whether inside or outside. The total time devoted to grazing and chewing hay should amount to approximately 18 hours a day. (This should minimize wood chewing.)

- **Signs of neglect/cruelty - what to look for**

Appearance of animal: thin (ribs and vertebrae prominent); halter and other harness or saddle sores (check to see if halter has grown into the horse’s head); halter should not be kept on constantly; excessive hoof length (possibly with tips of hooves turned up); a hoof which is spongy on the bottom side and has a foul odor; bite wounds from other horses ; skin problems; ocular discharge; labored breathing; lameness or inability to rise.

Housing Conditions: lack of fresh water or food available; no shelter; overcrowding; no place to lie down; excessive manure and urine build-up; standing on muddy ground with no dry areas. *NOTE: Insufficient manger space for the number of horses can result in a competitive situation which causes the weakest animals to be excluded from the food source.*

Behavior: head down and unresponsive; inactive; indifferent to surroundings and visitors; excessively fearful; excessive rolling on the ground or biting at their sides; displays excessive aggression toward other horses; odd standing behaviour (not putting weight on one leg), lying on the ground excessively; standing with weight on hind quarters, etc. can all be signs of lameness, founder, or laminitis, and indicate a need for veterinary care.

If any of the elements above are present, arrange to have a veterinarian examine animals.



# CATTLE

Terminology

Female - Cow

Young female - Heifer (has not yet had a calf; often considered less than 2 years of age)

Male - Bull

Castrated male - Steer

Young animal, either sex – Calf

## • **Basic Animal Care Practices**

*NOTE: Feed and water requirements will vary considerably depending on the age of the animal, its size, amount of exercise or work that it performs, and physiologic status (e.g. whether pregnant or lactating, climate, etc.)*

*Remember that the Vermont Agency of Agriculture must be consulted before any enforcement action is taken involving livestock or poultry (Title 13, Section 354 (3) (a))*

- It is recommended that fresh, clean water be accessible at all times.
- Should have good quality forage or mixed ration available or be able to graze adequate pasture. Supplemental grain should be provided if needed to meet the additional nutritional demands of lactation, gestation, growth, cold weather or to compensate for poor forage or pasture quality. As a general guideline, consult the National Research Council (NRC) on cattle nutrition. Unless provided for in a mixed or complete ration, a trace mineral lick should be made available. Vermont is a selenium deficient state so special attention should be paid to selenium supplementation, either oral or injectable.
- It is preferable that hay (with the exception of big bales) and grain should not be dumped on the ground, but rather placed in a manger or hay rack, or in case of grain, in a bucket, or other container.
- All feed should be kept dry to avoid mold.
- Unless already provided for in a mixed or complete ration, salt blocks should be available — either white salt or preferably trace mineralized salt (red blocks).
- Should be provided with shelter that affords them protection from heavy rain, snow, and sun. This shelter can be natural or man made. Shelter

should provide shade, windbreaks, adequate ventilation and a dry surface to lie down for all animals. Animals should be able to maintain a relative state of cleanliness in their environment. (NOTE: *According to Title 13, Section 365 (Shelter of Animals) “. . . all livestock . . . must be provided with . . . adequate natural shelter or a three-sided, roofed building with exposure out of the prevailing wind and of sufficient size to adequately accommodate all livestock maintained out-of-doors . . .”*)

- Confined cattle should have dry bedding - can be sand, sawdust, shredded paper, straw, packed manure (if dry). In the winter, there should be enough bedding to provide insulation from the cold floor/ground.

- **Additional recommendations**

- Hoof trimming is not necessary unless the hooves are excessively long.
- Vaccination and de-worming protocols should be developed with a veterinarian.
- All calves (including dairy bull calves) should receive adequate colostrum (cows' first milk, rich in nutrients and antibodies) within 6 hours of birth. Calves have a limited ability to digest hay, grass or forages until after weaning at about 2-3 months of age.
- Castration and de-horning should occur before weaning with a veterinarian's consultation.

- **Signs of neglect/cruelty - what to look for**

Appearance of animal: rough or patchy hair coat; sunken eyes; change in behaviour; change in respiration; change in feed or water consumption; nasal and/or ocular discharge; reduced abdominal fill; change in manure consistency; lameless and inability to rise are all signs that an animal may be ill. Note that dairy cows are by nature “bony” in the hip area and may normally appear thin during early stages of lactation; however, one sign of an emaciated dairy cow may be a protruding back bone and sunken eyes.

Housing Conditions: no place to exercise for adult animals (although tie stalls and stanchions are acceptable housing systems); no dry place to lie down; no water or food; overcrowding or a strong ammonia odor (not just a manure odor) due to lack of ventilation, are not acceptable practices. Insufficient manger space for the number of cattle can result in a competitive situation where the weakest animals can be excluded from the food source.

Behavior: Loud and frequent bellowing from many of the animals in a group may occur when cattle are hungry/thirsty and feed/water has not been provided.

If any of the elements above are present, arrange to have a veterinarian examine animals.

## SHEEP

Terminology

Female - Ewe

Male - Ram

Castrated male - Wether

Young sheep of either sex – Lamb

The act of giving birth - Lambing

- **Basic Animal Care Practices**

*NOTE: Feed and water requirements will vary considerably depending on the age of the animal, its size, amount of exercise or work that it performs, and physiologic status (e.g. whether pregnant or lactating, climate, etc.)*

*Remember that the Agency of Agriculture must be consulted before any enforcement action is taken involving livestock or poultry (Title 13, Section 354 (3) (a))*

- Fresh, clean water should be available at all times. If ewes are lambing in small pens (jugs), water should be removed during active labor. Fresh water should be provided immediately after lambing.
- Sheep are ruminants and should have a forage-based diet, with supplemental grains as needed. Prepared or textured grain mixes should be formulated especially for sheep so as to avoid any added copper. Fermented feeds can be used with caution to avoid spoilage as sheep are more sensitive to listeria than cattle.
- Trace mineral supplementation is important as Vermont is a selenium-deficient state. A loose trace mineral supplement including but not limited to selenium and iodine with salt formulated for sheep should be available at all times.
- Any and all diet changes should be made gradually to avoid overconsumption/indigestion.
- Don't overfeed grain and other concentrates to wethers, which are especially prone to urinary calculi, resulting in an inability to urinate.

- Should be provided with shelter that affords them protection from heavy rain, snow, high wind, and sun, and a dry place to rest. (NOTE: *According to Title 13, Section 365 (Shelter of Animals) “. . . all livestock . . . must be provided with . . . adequate natural shelter or a three-sided, roofed building with exposure out of the prevailing wind and of sufficient size to adequately accommodate all livestock maintained out-of-doors . . .”*)

- **Additional recommendations**

- Parasitism is a **major** cause of death in sheep, usually during the grazing season. Routine de-worming of all animals is *not* recommended because of the limited availability of medications and documented parasite resistance. Owners should contact their veterinarians or extension agent to develop a strategic de-worming protocol suited to their particular situation.
- Sheep can be vaccinated for rabies and clostridial disease (including tetanus) annually.
- Should have their hooves trimmed as needed to avoid lameness and abnormal growth.
- Must be sheared annually to prevent matting and infestation with maggots (known as flystrike). During the grazing months it's important to examine all animals at least monthly to determine parasite load.
- If docking tails and castrating rams, it should be done at an early age (<1 week) to minimize pain and trauma. Consult your veterinarian for proper procedures.

- **Signs of neglect/cruelty - what to look for**

Appearance of animal: too thin - note that, with an unshorn (unclipped) sheep, you must *feel* the body of the animal to determine if it is underweight; maggots near genital area or skin folds; ocular or nasal discharge; excessive hoof length - look to see if sides of hoof have overgrown and curled under the bottom of hoof; limping; animal “walking” on knees; bottle jaw (swelling under the jaw) can be an indication of parasitism; horns growing around into face or skull.

Housing Conditions: lack of food, water, and/or shelter are not acceptable; overcrowding or insufficient feeding area may cause the less aggressive sheep to be excluded from the food source; overcrowding in an unventilated barn can lead to pneumonia.

Behavior: dull, minimally responsive; drooping head; fleece or hair loss in breeds that do not shed; straining to urinate (saw-horse stance). If any of these elements are present, call a veterinarian to examine animals.

## GOATS

Terminology

Female - Doe

Male - Buck

Castrated male - Wether

Young animal, either sex - Kid

The Act of Giving Birth – Kidding

### • **Basic Animal Care Standards**

*NOTE: Feed and water requirements will vary considerably depending on the age of the animal, its size, amount of exercise or work that it performs, and physiologic status (e.g. whether pregnant or lactating, climate, etc.)*

*Remember that The Agency of Agriculture must be consulted before any enforcement action is taken involving livestock or poultry (Title 13, Section 354 (3) (a))*

- Fresh, clean water should be accessible at all times. If does are kidding in small pens (jugs), water pails should be removed during active labor. Fresh water should be provided immediately after kidding.
- Goats are ruminants and should have a forage-based diet with supplemental grains as needed. Dairy breeds tend to be thinner than meat breeds. Fermented feeds can be used with caution to avoid spoilage as goats are more sensitive to listeria than cattle.
- Trace mineral supplementation is important as Vermont is a selenium-deficient state. A loose trace mineral supplement, including but not limited to selenium and iodine with salt, should be available at all times.
- Any and all diet changes should be made gradually to avoid overconsumption/indigestion.
- Don't overfeed grain and other concentrates to wethers, who are especially prone to urinary calculi, resulting in an inability to urinate.
- Should be provided with shelter that affords them protection from heavy rain, snow, sun, and drafts. A stand of trees, shed or barn can all be considered shelter. There should be enough air circulation to control

humidity without being drafty. *According to Title 13, Section 365 (Shelter of Animals) “. . . all livestock . . . must be provided with . . . adequate natural shelter or a three-sided, roofed building with exposure out of the prevailing wind and of sufficient size to adequately accommodate all livestock maintained out-of-doors . . .”*)

- Sanitary conditions should be maintained (that is, dry, clean bedding). Kids are especially susceptible to unsanitary conditions, but all goats must be provided a dry place to rest.

- **Additional recommendations**

- Should have hooves trimmed as needed to avoid lameness and abnormal growth.
- Can be vaccinated for rabies and clostridial disease (including tetanus) annually.
- Parasitism is a *major* cause of death in goats, usually during the grazing season. Routine de-worming of all animals is *not* recommended because of their limited availability and documented parasite resistance. During the grazing months, it is important to examine all animals at least monthly to determine parasite load.

- **Signs of neglect/cruelty - what to look for**

Appearance of animal: too thin (normally should feel slight padding over bony areas); excessive hoof length (look to see if sides of hoof have overgrown and curled under the bottom of hoof); limping; animal “walking” on knees; bottle jaw (swelling under the jaw) can be an indication of parasitism; horns growing around into the face or skull.

Housing Conditions: overcrowding or insufficient feeding area may cause the less aggressive goats to be excluded from the food source; overcrowding in an unventilated barn can lead to pneumonia; wet conditions with no dry bedding or dry areas to lie down; filth.

Behavior: dull, minimally responsive, not interested in surroundings (well-cared for goats are typically very friendly and curious); drooping head; hair loss; straining to urinate (saw horse stance). If any of the elements above are present, arrange to have a veterinarian examine animals.

# PIGS

Terminology

Female - Sow

Young female - Gilt (female that has not yet given birth)

Male - Boar

Castrated male - Barrow

Young weaned pig, either sex – Shoat

## • **Basic Animal Care Practices**

*NOTE: Feed and water requirements will vary considerably depending on the age of the animal, its size, amount of exercise or work that it performs, and physiologic status (e.g. whether pregnant or lactating, climate, etc.)*

*Remember that the Agency of Agriculture must be consulted before any enforcement action is taken involving livestock or poultry (Title 13, Section 354 (3) (a))*

- Fresh, clean water should be accessible at all times. Pigs are especially susceptible to salt toxicity without sufficient water.
- Should be fed complete pig ration at least twice a day; many complete pig rations are available on the market today. Vermont state law prohibits the feeding of food waste or garbage to swine without a permit (See Title 6, Chapter 113). They can be fed table left-overs only from one's own household that are free of any plastic spoons, wrappers, animal bones, etc. They may be fed fruits and vegetables from the garden. Area should be large enough to allow all animals access to food.
- Don't need a salt block as long as they get a minimum of 1 to 2 pounds daily of a complete swine ration.
- Hoof trimming is not necessary.
- Should be provided with shelter that protects them from rain, snow, direct sunlight and drafts. Pigs are very susceptible to sunburn. Concrete, sloped pens that can be hosed down, expanded metal or slotted floors, or a clean, bedded pen are suggested for housing. If they are kept on concrete, they should be offered a forkful of sod once a week to chew on. Straw should be used in cold weather to help keep them warm. Shelter should allow enough room so that pigs are not overcrowded.

*IMPORTANT: In the summer, shade is extremely important; if they are not provided with sufficient shade, pigs may die of heat exhaustion. They should have some method to cool them in the heat (a lawn sprinkler or some other cooling method). It is NOT acceptable to have them in the mud constantly, however they should have mud available in order to wallow and help them cool off. Pigs enjoy an occasional mud bath, but must have a clean, dry area available to them as well.*

- Shelter should allow enough room so that the pigs are not overcrowded.

- **Additional recommendations**

- De-worming and vaccinations should be based on veterinarian recommendations.

- **Signs of neglect/cruelty - what to look for**

Appearance of animal: A droopy/straight tail can indicate ill health (happy, healthy pigs have a tightly curled tail); thinness; scratching (usually indicates presence of lice); limping.

Housing Conditions: sloppy manure- and/or trash-laden pens; lack of ventilation; lack of light; no dry areas for them to be dry and clean; overcrowding can lead to disease and sickness in pigs, and will prevent the weaker ones from gaining access to food sources; pigs must have a muddy area where they can wallow.

Behavior: dull, minimally responsive, listless, not interested in surroundings; drooping head.

If any of these elements are present, call a veterinarian to examine the animals.

## **RABBITS**

Terminology

Female - Doe

Male – Buck

- **Basic Animal Care Practices**

- Fresh, clean water should be accessible at all times. Water should be placed in metal or ceramic water containers or bottles especially made to



hang on side of hutch. In the winter, if rabbits are outside, water should be changed often (2-3 times daily) to prevent freezing.

- Hay is the most important element in a rabbit's diet to keep the digestive track working properly and teeth worn. They should have constant access to dust-free hay. Pet rabbits do not require pellets unless they are underweight. Fruit and carrots can be given at a rate of 1 tablespoon per 2 pounds of body weight daily. Avoid high fat and starchy foods. As a guideline for diet, have 85-90% grass hay available at all times, and 10-15% greens. If pellets are fed it should only be 1/8 cup per day and should be high fiber.
- Must have access to pieces of hard wood to gnaw on in order to keep teeth worn down. Dried hardwood branches are good choices as long as they are untreated.
- Although rabbits can live outdoors with proper housing, they should be housed indoors year-round to ensure protection from temperature extremes and predators. Ideal temperature is 60-70 degrees F with good air circulation.
- If they are kept outside they should be provided protection from drafts, rain, direct mid-day sun, and predators.
- A "hiding" area/box is also necessary, and should be at least 18 inches off the ground.
- If kept in a basement, a dehumidifier is recommended to avoid damp conditions that may lead to respiratory diseases.
- Rabbit housing should be cleaned daily. The housing should be large enough for the rabbit to stand upright, stretch out fully and take 3 hops. Minimum should be 3 times the length of the rabbit when fully stretched out. The hutch should be raised off the floor to allow the feces to fall through. They should have a solid area for resting and if wire is used it should be small enough so the rabbit's foot does not slip through. This will vary with the size of the rabbit.
- Aromatic shavings (cedar, pine) should not be used. Recycled paper (eg carefresh), hay, wheat based litters (eg. Eco-straw) or aspen shavings are some options.
- NOTE: rabbits do not eat their feces, they eat cecotrophs directly from their anus, which is how they get their vitamins.

- Solid surfaces with a litterbox are preferable to wire flooring.
  - Rabbit hutches should be cleaned daily. Hutch should have a box approximately 12" X 12" with dry bedding. The rest of the hutch should have a wire mesh (1/2") floor.
  - To prevent overcrowding and further breeding, each hutch should only contain one adult rabbit, or two adults of the same sex if they get along, or an adult female with her litter.
- **Additional recommendations**
    - Rabbits should have yearly veterinary exams to check for diseases, parasites, and for malalignment of teeth and “lumps” of the skin.
    - Rabbits need at least 3-r hours of exercise outside of housing every day. Digging and chewing are natural behaviours, so wires, plants and other hazard should be safe-guarded in the play area.
    - Rabbits should be spayed or neutered by a veterinarian experienced with rabbit surgeries. This will prevent unwanted litters, spraying in males, and uterine cancer in females.

- **Signs of neglect/cruelty - what to look for**

Appearance of animal: thin; fur in poor condition; sores from scratching; portions of ears missing due to frostbite or fights from overcrowding; obesity; sore hocks; external parasites such as lice and fleas; lumps on the skin; ocular or nasal discharge.

Housing Conditions: overcrowded conditions; dirty pens and built-up feces; must be sufficient space to permit all rabbits (including smaller ones) access to food.

Behavior: dull, minimally responsive, not interested in surroundings, depressed; no appetite. Most rabbits are naturally shy of strangers.

If any of the elements above are present, call a veterinarian to examine the animals. (See also Appendix III, “Rabbit General Health Assessment Form”).

# BIRDS (parakeets, canaries, parrots, etc.)

Terminology

Female - hen

Male - cock

- **Basic Animal Care Practices**

- Fresh, clean water should be accessible at all times.
- Should have access to appropriate seed mix or pelleted diet at all times. Seed container should be checked to ensure that it really contains seed and is not filled with the empty seed hulls. Fresh fruits and vegetables should also be provided daily for most birds.
- Should have a perch or several perches to rest on and to move about.
- Should have access to “cuttlebone” or some other type of material that allows the bird to sharpen its beak. Also provides a source of calcium.
- Should be provided with a cage that allows them to move about freely. Cage should be placed in area free from drafts. Room in which birds are kept should be temperate in temperature - not too hot and not too cold.
- Cage should be cleaned on a regular basis to prevent buildup of feces and to prevent diseases.

- **Additional recommendations**

- Veterinary care for routine beak trimming as needed; also to check for respiratory and intestinal diseases.

- **Signs of neglect/cruelty - what to look for**

Appearance of animal: feathers fluffed up (indicates fever, illness, or that room temperature is too low.); hard to tell if emaciated, but best indicator is to feel the bird's breast bone to determine if it is too prominent.

Housing Conditions: overcrowding (weaker birds bullied and pecked by dominant ones); filthy cage; no fresh water or food.

Behavior: dull, minimally responsive, not interested in surroundings, depressed; drooping; “hunched” with feathers fluffed.

If any of the elements above are present, call a veterinarian to examine the animals.

## CHICKENS/DUCKS/GEESE

### Terminology

	<u>Chickens:</u>	<u>Ducks:</u>	<u>Geese:</u>
Female	hen	duck	goose
Male	rooster	drake	gander
Young	chick	duckling	gosling

### • **Basic Animal Care Practices**

*NOTE: Remember that the Agency of Agriculture must be consulted before any enforcement action is taken involving livestock or poultry (Title 13, Section 354 (3) (a))*

- Fresh, clean water in clean containers should be accessible at all times. Daily cleaning is recommended.
- A complete balanced diet, designed for each type of poultry and its life stage, should be available at all times.
- Poultry should be provided oyster shell or coarse-ground limestone to help maintain their calcium levels, and grit to help them digest their food.
- Poultry should be provided with shelter that protects them. The coop should be free of drafts during the winter and well ventilated in the summer.
- Poultry can die of heat exhaustion in the summer and suffer from frostbitten combs in the winter. Fans can be utilized in the summer and heat lamps in the winter to keep the temperature over 32°F; if the water in the coop is not frozen, the temperature is okay.
- A 6-inch layer of shavings or saw dust should be spread on the floor to absorb droppings and give the birds a place to take a dust bath. Newspaper is not recommended for brooders and hay is best for ducklings.
- Proper ventilation in the poultry house will minimize ammonia odor and reduce moisture and disease organisms. Caked or wet litter should be removed as soon as it forms to keep the house clean and dry.

- Protect flocks from predators by keeping them penned within good, sturdy fencing, and closing the coop door each evening after the flock goes to roost.

- **Additional recommendations**

- The flock should be checked daily to spot diseases or parasites. For more information about identifying, preventing and treating poultry diseases and parasites, owners should contact their local veterinarian.
- Proper biosecurity is essential for preventing disease introduction in a flock. For most flocks, diseases are rare as long as the flock doesn't come into contact with other flocks. New birds should be kept separated from existing flocks for 30 days. Shared garden tools, lawn equipment, or poultry supplies should be disinfected prior to use.

- **Signs of neglect/cruelty - what to look for**

Appearance of animal: thin (feel the breastbone to see if it is prominent); unkempt feathers (healthy birds keep their feathers clean); frostbitten combs and wattles (red skin under chicken's chin); feather picking; abrasions because of overcrowding.

Housing Conditions: overcrowding - this can be fatal in chickens; too hot or too cold for safety of birds.

Behavior: dull, minimally responsive, not interested in surroundings, depressed; open-mouth breathing if respiratory diseases are present, if conditions are too hot, or when stressed.

If any of the elements above are present, call a veterinarian to examine the animals.

# GERBILS/GUINEA PIGS/HAMSTERS/MICE/RATS

Terminology (Guinea Pigs)

Female - Sow

Male - Boar

Young – Piglets

Terminology (Gerbils, Hamsters, Mice, Rats)

Female – Sire

Male – Dam

Young – Pups

- **Basic Animal Care Practices**

- Should have access to fresh, clean water at all times, preferably from water bottle hanging from side of cage.
- Should have a good quality food as appropriate for the species, usually a seed/pellet mixture. Guinea pigs require a pelleted food fortified with Vitamin C. Rabbit food should not be used for any of these small animals. Fresh vegetables are important in a guinea pig diet, but should be given in very small amounts to others.
- Should have an odor free, dry, commercially prepared absorbent bedding or shavings. If guinea pigs are housed on wire mesh, it should not be larger than 1/2" x 1/2" mesh.
- Should have something to gnaw on, such as a piece of untreated wood or branches from fruit (unsprayed), willow or maple trees.
- Females should be kept separate from males, except for breeding purposes.

- **Additional recommendations**

- Should have a small box to hide in, especially guinea pigs.

- **Signs of neglect/cruelty - what to look for**

Appearance of animal: fur - standing on end, or wet, or matted; runny eyes and nose; thin; wet rump; evidence of fighting, such as bite marks around eyes, ears or rump; diarrhea.

Housing Conditions: filthy cage; wet bedding and strong odor; lack of water and food (look under bedding, as all but guinea pigs may take food from dish and hoard it); overcrowded quarters; too hot a location. NOTE: *After they are 3 months old, hamsters should be housed alone.*

Behavior: unresponsive; animals fighting with each other.

If any of the elements above are present, call a veterinarian to examine the animals. (See also Appendix III, "Pocket Pet General Assessment Form").

## **SNAKES**

### • **Basic Animal Care Practices**

- Should have access to fresh, clean water at all times.
- All snakes are carnivores. They swallow their prey whole and utilize the entire bodies of their prey in their diet. Most snakes feed on small rodents, amphibians, birds, and insects. Providing a hiding place is essential, since most snakes will refuse to feed otherwise. A normal, healthy snake can be fed every week to ten days.
- The optimum temperature for most New England snakes is 75-80 degrees Fahrenheit. Boas, pythons and other tropical and semi-tropical species require slightly warmer conditions (78 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit). If exposed to direct sunlight and not afforded an opportunity to escape, the body temperature of a snake will rise dramatically and death can result.
- The cage floor should be covered with a dry, absorbent material such as newspaper, cloth towels, indoor-outdoor carpeting, or astro-turf. NOTE: *Never use kitty litter.*
- A cage measuring 3 feet by 18 inches by 18 inches is normally adequate for most snakes up to six feet in length.
- All snakes periodically shed their skins. During the opaque cycle, when they are preparing to shed, the snake becomes inactive and the skin colors take on a dulled appearance. The eyes will become clouded to the point they appear milky.

- **Additional recommendations**

- If live food is being offered, never leave it in the cage unattended. A snake that is not hungry may be mutilated without ever attempting to defend itself.

- **Signs of neglect/cruelty - what to look for**

Appearance of animal: abnormal bulges, backbone irregularities or kinks, gross skin lesions or missing scales, loose skin along the body, wheezing, mouth kept slightly open at all times, small red inflamed spots on the gums accompanied by excess amounts of mucous.

Housing Conditions: filthy cage; wet bedding, lack of water.

Behavior: Reluctance to move or feed over prolonged periods of time.

If any of the elements above are present, call a veterinarian to examine the animals.

## **TURTLES/TORTOISES**

- **Basic Animal Care Practices**

- Aquatic species of turtles need swimming water to swallow their food. The water should be deep enough for swimming and proper feeding (as deep as the animal's shell is long), and the temperature should be between 75 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit; terrestrial species of tortoises should have a non-metal water dish large enough to soak in and drink from. The water should be lukewarm and shallow, and offered at least once a day.
- Depending on species, young turtles and tortoises feed on small worms, insects, grubs, chopped lean meat, poultry, or fish; most turtles are carnivores . Most tortoises are herbivores, eating a variety of fruits and vegetables. NOTE: *It is not harmful or unusual for a turtle or tortoise to go on an unexplained fast for short periods of time up to one week.*
- Sunshine is necessary for the synthesis of vitamin D, which is necessary for their health and the growth of a strong skeleton and shell.
- A terrarium for a tortoise should be large enough to provide an ample exercise area along with an area in which the tortoise can hide. A



bedding of indoor-outdoor carpeting, newspaper, or cloth towels is appropriate. NOTE: *Avoid the use of kitty litter and wood chips.*

- **Additional recommendations**

- Bonemeal, which provides calcium and phosphorous, is a must in the diet for a healthy shell.

- **Signs of neglect/cruelty - what to look for**

Appearance of animal: soft or cracked shell, swollen eyes, pock marks on bottom of shell, white growths on the shell or skin.

Housing Conditions: Dirty substrate, dirty water, presence of uneaten or spoiled food.

Behavior: Reluctance to move or extend head/limbs from shell.

If any of the elements above are present, call a veterinarian to examine the animals.

## LIZARDS

- **Basic Animal Care Practices**

- Lizards are the most varied of all reptiles, ranging in size from less than an inch to over ten feet. They are carnivorous, insectivorous, herbivorous, and omnivorous. NOTE: *Do not feed lizards cat food because they can't digest the fish oil properly.*
- More lizards are killed due to improper heating than any other single cause. As for all reptiles, the three elements affecting the body temperature include radiant heat from the sun, indirect radiant heat from the rocks and surface layer of the ground, and ambient heat of the air.
- Again as for all reptiles, it is best to house the lizard in a cage large enough to allow a thermal gradient, by locating a heat source at one end and providing a cool retreat at the other. NOTE: *Never allow lizards to be subjected to direct sunlight in a glass enclosure without the ability to escape. They will quickly die from heat exposure.*
- Captive lizards acquire water in several ways: from plants, twigs, rocks or any other surface such as the cage walls (mist the cage or area around

the lizard with water twice a day), from a container (usually prefer to immerse themselves while drinking), and through the liquid contained in their natural diet.

- Flooring varies with each species. NOTE: *Avoid kitty litter because it will cause impaction.* Acceptable substrates for most lizards are newspaper, indoor-outdoor carpeting, or cloth towels.

- **Additional recommendations**

- Ultraviolet light is necessary for iguanas.

- **Signs of neglect/cruelty - what to look for**

Appearance of animal: sunken eyes, wrinkled skin, protruding hip bones in conjunction with a thin or sunken tail at the base, damaged mouth, bumps, cuts, sores, and poor coloration.

Housing Conditions: Should provide adequate space and be sufficient to the needs of the particular species.

Behavior: Judging behavior to determine animal cruelty is difficult because many lizards will “suffer in silence” long before they show any physical symptoms. The physical condition of the animal and its surroundings can be indicative of improper management (poor diet, unsanitary conditions, incorrect temperatures and overcrowding), which may constitute animal cruelty.

If any of the elements above are present, call a veterinarian to examine the animals.