

Code of practice for the care, management and rehoming of dogs for community fostercare networks and other rescue groups

1 Introduction

CFC networks and rescue groups are now regarded as a credible alternative form involved in companion animal welfare. New groups that do not operate in a responsible manner will ruin this hard fought for credibility. We cannot expect to not be regulated. If we do not regulate ourselves, external parties will do it, particularly as we are now recognised in the DAA. This Code is based on acceptable requirements, not minimum requirements as is the Code of Practice for Management of Pounds and Shelters. However, our primary aim is rehoming and saving lives which is not the purpose of this other Code.

2. Definitions

Community Foster Care network ("CFCN")

A not-for-profit group usually operating from a private residence (i.e. not a shelter) whose primary stated purpose is to save and place with foster carers those animals sourced from pounds, shelters, and/or owner-relinquished until new homes are found; that is they act as a third independent arm of rescue and not as a respondent of animals already 'safe' in a shelter, that is passed for adoption. A CFCN cannot be a shelter but can comprise kennels used for the purposes of quarantine, rehabilitation and short- term kennelling but is not open to the public for rehoming. The primary activity of the CFCN must remain its foster care network.

Rescue Groups

Not for profit groups whose primary stated purpose is to save and place animals sourced from pounds, shelters and/or owner-relinquished into new homes, but not necessarily operating as a CFCN. That is, they may be operating from kennels and hence a domestic animal business.

A group, whether calling itself a CFCN or rescue group, that does not meet Council bylaws and has an excessive number of animals, but limited rehoming is in effect a hoarder.

Breed Specific CFCN

Includes the definition of CFCN but may also source safe dogs from shelters. For the purposes of this Code they shall be referred to as CFCNs.

Breed Specific Rescue Group

Includes the definition of Rescue Group but may also source safe dogs from shelters. For the purposes of this Code they shall be referred to as Rescue Groups.

3. Compliance and Legal Responsibilities

All CFCNs and Rescue Groups are required to be aware of and comply with all relevant laws (local, Victorian and Federal).

All CFCNs and Rescue Groups are required to comply with the Code of Practice for the Management of Pounds and Shelter in as much as it is applicable to the mode of operation of a rescue group (noting it is an acceptable standard of care), and where a lack of compassion or cruelty would be result of following the Code. For example, a dog that jumps fences or barks, thus allowed to be killed under the Code, can be rehomed by a CFCN or rescue group in an environment where that behaviour will not occur.

All CFCNs and Rescue Groups should comply with the voluntary Code of Practice for the Private Keeping of Dogs (Victoria), noting that these are the minimum requirements as developed by the then Bureau of Animal Welfare. It is recommended good practice for the CFCN/Rescue Group to use the Code as the base document and develop their own 'best practice' to be provided to foster carers, or to use the DRAV handbook.

4. CFCN and Rescue Group Responsibilities

4.1 Rescue with:

- Pound – A S84Y agreement is required with Council or pound.
- Shelter –A Memorandum of Understanding is required.
- Individual Surrender – Formal surrender document is required with previous owner. If the person surrendering is not the owner and the dog is microchipped, the ownership form will need to be submitted to the applicable Register which will advise when the form is processed.

4.2 Quarantine – as per Code of Practice for Management of Shelters and Pounds with awareness and openness with foster carers and those handling dogs as to any risk factors.

4.3 Temperament testing – All dogs should be temperament tested. Foster carers are to provide regular updates on animals in their care. Any temperament issues will be managed by a qualified animal trainer and either resolved prior to rehoming or placed for adoption with full disclosure to a suitable adopter who commits to continue working on these issues, with the group's support and if necessary, a trainer.

4.4 Dealing with Pounds and Shelters

- To be at all times courteous, punctual and professional.
- If a group agrees to take a dog they should remove that dog in a timely manner, depending on what their agreement is with that pound or shelter.

- Confidential information passed on to them or discovered in dealing with a pound should be treated as such and not passed on, unless it is a breach of the Code of Management of Shelters and Pounds, in which case it should be discussed with the relevant Council or Shelter before proceeding with further action. DRAV or other experienced rescue adviser should provide advice if needed.

4.5 Assessment and introduction of foster carers

- All foster carers must be a minimum of 18 years of age.
- All foster carers must provide a written application which includes as a minimum:
 - Phone numbers to enable 24-hour contact
 - Full address details
 - Secondary contact.
- All foster carers shall be property checked, assessed for competence levels with training to be provided as needed.
- Foster carers should be provided with information on their group's philosophy and processes.
- An introductory manual should be supplied to the foster carer.

4.6 Placement of animals with foster carers

The CFCN/Rescue Group must enter into a Foster Care Agreement with each foster carer which as a minimum requires the following to be set out:

- The CFCN/Rescue Groups obligations such as veterinary care, requirements of the dog, contact procedure, and as a minimum:
 - Any information regarding quarantine
 - Vetwork performed or required
 - Any known problems or history of the dog
 - Provision of an ID Tag
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- The foster carers undertakings, as a minimum:
 - Nutrition
 - Security
 - Accommodation
 - Socialisation
 - Training
 - Return of the dog when requested
 - Meet with potential adopters
 - Maintain confidentiality
 - Current vaccination of their own dog (C5) to be requested but in some cases if the owner does not believe in yearly vaccinations, they may knowingly take on this risk.
 - Must have ability to separate dogs if foster dog is not desexed although immediate desexing is desirable.

4.7 Rehoming

- No animal is made available for adoption or rehoming without basic vetwork (desexing, C5 vaccination, worming, health check, microchipping, dental) having been carried out and any treatable health problems attended to.
- Animals must be rehomed with written vet assessments of age and health available: adopters must be made aware that different vets may have different views on age and health status or treatments.
- Members must conduct interviews/phone screens and property checks for all animals sought to be rehomed or adopted but may in extenuating circumstances accept photographs of property and references.
- Completion of an application form and phone screen must be part of any rehoming or adoption process. A property check is also desirable.
- Any adoption or rehoming agreement must be in writing.
- Where the adopter is in rental premises confirmation must be provided that the animal is allowed to reside there.
- It must be a condition of the adoption or rehoming agreement that the member offer a full refund in return of the animal for a minimum of a three-day period and members agree to take the animal back for any reasonable period (the minimum is 3 months).
- Advice from the group, or services of a trainer if needed, must be offered for at least an initial two-week period to help the adopter with any initial behavioural issues.
- Full disclosure of any issues will be made to the adopter.
- The member commits to help rehouse any animal adopted out by them at any time in the future.
- No puppy shall be rehomed prior to the age of 10 weeks except in exceptional cases.
- A dog that is already microchipped prior to coming to the group must be transferred to the group's name not direct to the new owner.
- Where a dog needs additional vetwork it is the responsibility of the group to pay for this, or to advise adopter of any pre-existing conditions.

5. Foster Carer Responsibilities

- Voluntary Code of private keeping for dogs is the minimum standard allowed.
- Abide by the processes and procedures of the CFCN or rescue group with which they are aligned.
- No tethering either at residence or outside the residence.
- Soft dry bedding should be provided.
- A coat supplied where applicable.
- Excessive crating, that is for more than four hours, is not acceptable.
- A procedure for flea and worm treatments will be developed and maintained – either as a foster carer responsibility or via approved veterinary visits.
- Annual vaccinations of foster carer's dogs will be kept current except as mentioned in previous point re foster carer's vaccinations.
- To take the dog to the vet recommended by the group as required.

6. Breeding and Reproduction

- Animals will not be used for breeding purposes under any circumstances.

- Animals will not be adopted or rehomed for any purpose other than as a companion animal or working dog.

7. Surgical procedures

All surgical procedures will be performed by a registered veterinary practitioner, with appropriate follow up and pain relief.

8. Housing

- If required to be kennelled with an external provider, only reputable kennels with the necessary certificates will be used.
- If long-term kennelling required, then arrangements shall be put in place to ensure the dog receives external stimuli on a regular basis. Kennelling for longer than two months is not recommended as behavioural changes may occur. Where this is necessary, extra steps should be taken such as providing walkers or enrichment to give the dog external stimulation.

9. Transport

- Dogs being transported for lengthy trips in a motor vehicle must be safely secured and provided with breaks at least every 4 hours.
- Dogs must be safely separated from each other in transport vehicles. Crates should be used for all smaller animals.
- Dogs must only be transported in the body of the car with appropriate air, not for example in the boot.
- Any animal to be transported by aeroplane, for any reason, must have a veterinary approval certificate testifying to their health status before undertaking such transport.
- Only reputable transport agencies shall be used.
- If group travel, information must be provided if any contact with infectious disease.

10. Training and socialisation

- Dogs with behavioural issues will be assessed and advised on by a qualified trainer before rehoming, and if necessary, a management plan provided.
- Dogs will be socialised with humans and other dogs on a regular basis.
- Training methods used will be positive reinforcement.

11. Killing

- No animal will be killed unless irredeemable behavioural issues or illness such that the quality of life is severely affected. In both such cases expert advice will be sought and documented.
- Killing will be performed by a qualified vet and by the most humane means available with sedation prior to final injection.

12. Record Keeping

- Full records of all animals will be kept. As a minimum these should satisfy agreements with pounds and shelters and as a minimum include the following with regard to each animal:
 - All vetwork performed
 - Microchip number
 - Rehoming details
 - Current location
- If an animal is disposed of other than by rehoming a full record of method and reason for disposal will be kept.