

Checklist for Aged Care Providers Residents Living with their Pets

Introduction

The checklist was developed for an aged care provider in South Australia who is considering the introduction of pets to live-in with the owner (the resident) in group housing (i.e. linked houses where each resident has their own bedroom).

This summarises the type of issues the aged care provider would need to consider including:

- ✓ Pet Policy
- ✓ Pet Application & Pet Agreement Forms
- ✓ Health Checks/ Behavioural Assessments
- ✓ Environmental/ Design Considerations
- ✓ Preventative Health Care
- ✓ Ongoing Management
- ✓ Support Pet Services.

Other aged care providers would need to tailor their policy and management practices to their specific environment.

The checklist was developed by Fiona De Rosa (Urban Planner and Dog Behavioural Trainer) in collaboration with Dr Fiona Warton (Veterinary Behaviourist) from South Australia.

1. Pet Policy

What is the policy for pets (i.e. dogs and cats) in your aged care facility?

"It was found that many of the retirement communities accepting pets were overly focused on size and breed restrictions to determine permissibility, despite the fact that little dogs can often be very energetic and noisy compared to some larger dogs" Dr Gaille Perry, Delta (cited in Wood, L., 2009.)

Example – Based on Halcyon Retirement Community Pet Policy

- Pets to be considered on a case-by-case basis
- A behavioural assessment of dogs to be undertaken by a qualified behavioural trainer
- Pets to be fully vaccinated
- Dogs to be de-sexed
- Dogs to be registered (cited in Wood, L., 2009.).

2. Pet Application & Pet Agreement Forms

It is a good idea to develop Pet Application and Pet Agreement forms.

Pet Application Form

Include information such as:

- Name, age, type, and description of the pet
- Vaccination information, council registration certificate, microchip certificate
- Dog training certificates.

Pet Agreement Form

The Pet Agreement form is to outline the role and responsibilities of the pet owner (the resident).

Check out the Australian Companion Animal Council (ACAC) Pet Application and Pet Agreement forms for rental properties. These forms could be modified for an aged care facility.

3. Health Checks / Behavioural Assessments

Pets to undertake a full health check by a VET prior to being accepted

You may like to develop a patient record, health card to detail any illness or ongoing issues that will require treatment or maintenance.

Undertake a behavioural assessment of all dogs prior to being accepted

A behavioural assessment must be undertaken by a qualified dog behavioural trainer.

Example – Behavioural Assessment

The behavioural assessment should include temperament and social skills of the dog including:

- Risk of injury to other animal and people
- Mental health of animals
- Suitability of animal to the specific environment
- Behaviour on lead
- Reactivity to noises, other animals, familiar and unfamiliar people.

4. Environmental/ Design Considerations

Consider the pet's indoor and outdoor environments including:

Environmental

- Suitability of size and type of dog to the specific environment
- Type, amount, quality of indoor/outdoor space for pets
- Availability of on and off-leash areas for dogs

Design

- Private room layout:
 - e.g. climbing opportunities, warm areas for cats, cat run
 - adequate space for bedding, crates
 - dog/cat door to a secure outdoor space
 - Will you need to retrofit the rooms to accommodate the animal's needs?
In the long-term, you may need to consider purpose built accommodation for both residents and pets.
- Access to outdoor areas:
 - Provide safe, secure areas. Areas to have shade, shelter, access to water, and non-toxic or irritating plants in or near the area.
- Consider secure off leash areas for dogs and their owners (your own private dog park).

Check out *Four Legs, Four Walls, Design Guidelines. A comprehensive guide to housing design with pets in mind* by Virginia Jackson.

Preventative Health Care

Develop minimum preventative health standards for all pets

The standards must include:

Dogs

- C5 vaccination for all dogs including annual booster
- 3 monthly worming (due to zoonotic potential)

Cats

- FIV testing for all cats to make sure they are negative, history to make sure they would not likely to be a chronic carrier of respiratory disease
- Minimum of F3 vaccination
- 3 monthly worming

All Animals

- Monthly flea control would need to be given to all animals or an environmental flea issue could develop with multiple animals living in the same environment.

Example – Preventative Health Plan

It is recommended that all animals be on a combination or all-in-one monthly product for flea and worm prevention. This will make it easier to implement, and all animals get their dose at the beginning of each month.

Prepare a Plan for Contagious Diseases

You should have a plan in place if one of the animals pick up a contagious disease e.g. ringworm, canine cough or cat flu. This is unlikely, but a plan of action needs to be in place.

Does your facility have the ability to isolate the pet until treatment is complete to limit any chance of spreading to other pets?

5. Ongoing Management

Some issues and questions for management of resident's live-in pets:

Responsibility

- Who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the pet?
- Who manages the pet when the owner is sick or unable to care for the animal?
- What arrangements are in place if the resident dies?
- Who is responsible for the daily exercise, feeding, medication, general care and grooming of the pet?
- Who is responsible for the waste management (i.e. cleaning up of indoor and outdoor spaces)?

Day-to-day Supervision

- Who will monitor the dogs stress levels (i.e. initial transition to a new environment and long term management)
- Who is responsible for cleaning of pet bedding and pet areas?
- How will you manage feeding, overfeeding, inappropriate food for dogs?

Behavioural Issues

- How will you deal with behavioural problems (e.g. excessive barking, jumping up)
- What is acceptable behaviour for a dog in this type of facility?

6. Support Pet Services

Develop a relationship with a local VET clinic that could care for pets, and ensure the preventative health care is kept up-to-date.

Consider other support services including:

- Dog behavioural trainer for behavioural issues
- Grooming & washing.

The authors strongly recommend that aged care providers employ dog trainers and support pet services that use positive reinforcement, force free training and pet care practices.

About the Authors

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References and Useful Websites

Australian Companion Animal Council (ACAC) <http://www.acac.org.au/>

Australian Veterinary Association http://www.ava.com.au/about_pets#vax

Virginia Jackson (2010) Four Legs, Four Walls, Design Guidelines. A comprehensive guide to housing design with pets in mind.

Wood, L. (Ed.) (2009) Living Well Together: How companion animals can strengthen social fabric. Petcare Information & Advisory Service and the Centre for the Built Environment and Health, The University of Western Australia.

Disclaimer: The advice provided in the checklist is of a preliminary nature and for information purposes only. A person should undertake independent enquiries and seek independent advice, on this subject matter.

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