Appropriate housing for dogs and cats

This topic first looks at the general requirements for housing dogs and cats and then explores in greater detail the specific housing requirements for dogs and cats.

The table below lists the general requirements:

| Accessibility                  | • Cleaning and disinfection.  
|                                | • Safe Handling of the animal (for animal and staff).  
|                                | • Maintenance work.  
|                                | • Rapid access in emergency situation.  
| Efficiency of design           | • Animal housing close to service area (food preparation areas, store rooms, etc).  
|                                | • Service fittings appropriately positioned, (eg handles, switches and service controls within easy reach; work surfaces at the correct height and situation; storage space suitable for equipment and stocks).  
|                                | • Construction materials should be easy to clean and dry with drains to remove water when cleaning (via a fall in the floor towards the drain), non-permeable surface materials should be used.  
| Adequate care facilities       | • Grooming and bathing areas for dogs.  
|                                | • Food storage and preparation areas. (If both dogs and cats are kept, separate areas should be allocated for the foods).  
|                                | • Treatment room (surgery).  
|                                | • Hospital and isolation facilities.  
|                                | • Whelping or puppy facilities (where appropriate to the purpose of the kennels).  
| Health, safety and fire prevention | • The accommodation should be designed to meet all the health and safety and fire regulations.  
|                                | • Adequate fire precautions should be in operation with all staff aware of procedures.  
|                                | • Safe construction materials should be observed.  
|                                | • Electric power-points should be covered with
### Designed for the purpose
- Designed for the purpose that the animals are housed for (eg quarantine kennels where high security from escape and contact between animals is of vital importance).

### Licensing and planning regulations
- Designed to meet all licensing, building and planning requirements and regulations.

### Cost and maintenance
- Construction materials and installations should be of a reasonable cost but able to withstand constant use with a balance between expensive and durable fittings and economy in construction.
- Materials used in the basic design should help keep maintenance required as low as possible. For example, metal fittings may become corroded by urine and chemicals used for disinfection; wooden window frames should be avoided, due to the need for frequent painting.

### Kennel construction and siting
- It is usual to site a kennel/cattery in a reasonably isolated position but close to a large area of population, particularly if purpose is boarding animals.
- Factors taken into account when choosing a site for commercial kennelling include:
  - Site suitable for building eg not sloping excessively, not liable to subsidence etc)
  - Sufficient space for the proposed kennels and ancillary building. (The space required depends upon the number of dogs to be housed and the type of kennel design to be built).
  - Good road access for clients. Access for goods delivery, etc.
  - Adequate space for parking of clients/delivery vehicles, etc.
  - Whether a licence and planning permission is likely to be granted.
  - Noise control: If not totally isolated or there is any possibility of future planning permission being
granted for building within the area surrounding the kennel site, (this cannot be totally ruled out) then sufficient space must be available to erect noise control structures (earth banks) around the kennels.

| Availability of local services | • Sewerage mains (mains or septic tank) where suitable for proposed use. Availability of electricity, gas etc.  
• Refuse collection or the possibilities of running an incinerator for kennel waste. |

### Housing for cats

**Cattery siting**

As for dog kennels, but noise control is not a major consideration.

The Feline Advisory Bureau recommends that dogs are not housed in close proximity. It is also recommended that 1/3 to 1/2 of an acre is sufficient for building accommodation for 45-50 cats and that cat cabins are built with the run to face north or north-west.

![Cat sitting on a blanket](image)

This is recommended for the following reasons:

- It reduces the possibility of overheating the sleeping compartments in the summer.
- It assists the drying out of runs after cleaning.
- Cats can sit in the sun.
- It is also recommended that the runs are built giving the cats maximum visibility of the surrounding area, to provide mental stimulation.
- Dog kennels can also be built facing north or north-west for similar reasons, if they are designed with the runs all facing the same way.
- Other factors, such as allowing maximum visibility, may lead to excessive barking; therefore a balance must be made to ensure sufficient mental stimulation to combat boredom but a low noise level.
Litter trays

Usually plastic, litter trays should be fully washable and filled (daily) with fresh absorbent material (eg wood shavings, vermiculite, dried clays or pelleted newspaper).

Sand is useful if other materials are not available, but it is not recommended because of its weight.

Fitting and equipment

Cats like to sit up high and if provided with a ledge will choose this over an area on the floor.

Scratching posts

Scratching posts are used by cats to sharpen claws and are an important addition to the pen or yard.
Kennels for dogs

Many new types of kennelling are appearing on the market aimed at all types of user, from the pet owner to the commercial kennel/cattery. The following are some examples of kennels:

- **concrete kennel bases with drainage**

  Where any type of demounting kennelling such as sectional kennels (or catteries) are erected, first lay a concrete base and drainage system. This base is laid on hard-core with a damp-proof membrane. The concrete is laid a minimum of four inches thick with a fall towards drains and/or drainage guttering. Precast concrete gutter units can be set into the concrete to assist water drainage towards the kennel and run drains.

  Drains are either connected to the mains effluent disposal system or other systems approved by the local Water Authority.

- **wooden kennelling**

  Generally wooden kennels are not recommended (unless covered by an impervious material) due to (a) the risk of escape by chewing out; (b) being impossible to disinfect properly.

  However, many private owners do use wooden kennels, as cross-infection is not such a common problem when only the owner's dogs are being accommodated.

  These kennels are relatively inexpensive and are easily erected and dismantled. Many designs are available.

- **fibreglass and other modern materials**

  Twin insulated fibreglass and other easily cleaned modern materials are likely to phase out the use of wood; they are as convenient and have many advantages such as the ease of cleaning and disinfection.

**Methods of soundproofing**

- **Absorbing the sound**
  
  - Use acoustic tiles or materials with similar properties on upper walls and roof (hard surfaces are preferable for hygienic reasons lower down).
  
  - Tiles must be out of dogs' reach (easily damaged if chewed or scratched).
  
  - Some acoustic tiles cannot be cleaned/disinfected easily - carefully use spray disinfectants for those that should not be wetted. Washable tiles are now available but can still be damaged with rough use.

- **Preventing the free passage and escape of sound**
o Construct the building to prevent free passage of sound down corridors (eg use double doors offset to one another).

o Double glazing throughout the kennels.

o Perimeter structures such as earth mounds or "buns" surrounding the kennels - require additional space and are expensive, but can be very effective. To be fully effective, must be at least as high as the kennel roof; must not be near neighbours with buildings higher than the mounds.

- Other effective structures that take up less space:
  o Green or willow walls of woven willow fencing and earth. Shrubs can be planted in these "walls" to stabilise and create attractive appearance.
  o Tree belts. Require large area for maximum effect with bushy non-deciduous trees/shrubs. Not effective until trees are well grown and even then not as effective as solid structures such as earth mounds.

**Security procedures**

- Preventing escape
  o All animals should be behind a minimum of 2 doors before they reach the outside world. This gives employees an opportunity to contain an escapee.
  o Staff must remember to shut all doors behind them as they enter or leave the premises. Heavy springs attached to the doors will assist in jogging your memory.
  o Don't leave windows or solid doors open while animals are loose, as gauze screens are very easily removed by stressed animals.
  o Don't leave animals unattended in the exercise yard unless it has a secure roof. Many dogs have been known to climb fences, squeeze through a hole and chew the strongest gauze weldmesh in an effort to escape.

*Preventing dogs and cats from coming into contact*

Ensure that each animal has been returned to its cage and securely locked in before releasing another.

*Hidey holes*

Don't leave cupboards or drawers open in case an animal should hide in them and be overlooked at lock up time.
**Maintenance**

Routinely check for wear and tear on hinges, locks, mesh welds and screens, as they may be hiding a weak spot which could be capitalised on.

**Preventing break-ins**

Remember, at the end of the day, make sure all doors and windows are locked. This prevents dishonest owners from stealing their dogs/cats back without paying, or thieves from stealing valuable animals from the cages.