Explanatory guide

Breeder reforms

Standards and guidelines, limits on fertile females, and the Dog and Cat Management Regulations



Government of South Australia
Department for Environment and Water

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Department for Environment and Water acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Nations of the land and waters we live and work upon and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Country.



Introduction

The South Australian Government made a commitment to ban puppy factories and improve confidence in the state's dog and cat breeding sector.

To achieve this, amendments were proposed to the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995*, which informs how we manage cats and dogs in South Australia. Consultation on these amendments was undertaken in 2024, with feedback received from stakeholders, local government, RSPCA SA, Animal Welfare League, veterinarians and the public.

The *Dog and Cat Management (Breeder Reforms) Amendment Act 2025* was passed in June 2025, and introduces significant reforms including:

- A new breeder licensing scheme – to replace the existing registration process and require dog and cat breeders to apply for a licence (subject to approval processes).
- Stronger penalties for dog attacks as a tougher deterrent for irresponsible owners.
- Improved powers to support councils to undertake compliance activities and enforce the Act.
- Amendments to improve the operation and administration of the Act.

In November 2025, some of these changes came into effect including:

- Increased penalties for dog attack and safety offences.
- Amended greyhound muzzle requirements.
- Amended council powers (in part).
- Revised powers to destroy cats.
- Updated Dog and Cat Management Board membership.

Other key elements, including breeder licensing, will be implemented in 2027 to allow time for the development of systems and processes to support the changes.

We're now seeking your feedback on a range of elements – including standards and guidelines, and updated regulations – which will help to implement the new licensing scheme and the remainder of the Amendment Act.



Have YourSAy

Before South Australia's new breeder licensing scheme and other changes to the Act can take effect, several supporting frameworks are needed.

We want to know what you think about:

- New standards and guidelines for breeding dogs and cats
- Limits on the number of fertile females held as part of a breeding licence
- Updated regulations

Your feedback will help us understand community views and shape how these reforms are implemented.

Read about the changes and complete the online questionnaire via **YourSAy** by **13 February 2026**.



Overview

South Australia's new breeder licensing scheme

The *Dog and Cat Management (Breeder Reforms) Amendment Act 2025* introduces a new comprehensive licensing scheme, requiring all breeders to be assessed against set criteria to obtain a licence. This will replace the current breeder registration system.

The new licensing scheme is designed to ensure breeders meet high standards of care, and that puppies and kittens are not bred from animals that have been inadequately housed, poorly cared for, or bred excessively. Robust monitoring and enforcement will apply, with new penalties for non-compliance.

Under the new licensing scheme, breeders (individuals and organisations) will be required to apply to the Dog and Cat Management Board (the Board) and be approved to hold a breeder licence. Large-scale breeders will need to meet higher compliance requirements and licence conditions may also include inspections (as required).

Breeders who apply for a licence must:

- Pay the **prescribed fee;** and
- Provide all information and records the Board requests (this may include details about the facilities, animal management and care practices, knowledge of breeding practices and relevant history)
- Have management plans in place to care for animals responsibly.

Prescribed Fee

Licence fees will be set closer to the launch of licensing and will follow a **cost-neutral** fee model.

A cost-neutral fee model charges just enough to cover service costs.

The Board will only grant a licence if it is satisfied that:

- The person applying or renewing is not disqualified from breeding under any corresponding Australian laws.
- Neither the applicant or current spouse/ partner has been convicted of **prescribed offences** in the past 5 years.

Breeding without a licence can attract penalties of up to $10,000, and serious welfare breaches may also lead to criminal charges under the *Animal Welfare Act 1985*.

Prescribed offences

See draft regulation 17C and 17D for the proposed list of offences.

We're seeking your views on

1 Standards and Guidelines for Breeding Dogs and Cats

The *Dog and Cat Management (Breeder Reforms) Amendment Act 2025* requires the Dog and Cat Management Board to publish new standards and guidelines. These intend to provide greater public confidence in the breeding sector.

These standards and guidelines are a distinct set of requirements developed specifically for those holding a breeder licence. They build on existing standards under the *Animal Welfare Act 1985* and draw on national comparisons and similar approaches used in other jurisdictions to promote a high level of animal welfare.

The standards and guidelines have been informed by sector engagement and feedback received through previous consultations, and we're now seeking your feedback on the draft document.

2 Limit on number of fertile females

The breeder licensing scheme introduces stricter controls to promote animal welfare and responsible breeding practices. Building on the existing cap of 50 fertile female dogs per owner or premises, the new policy will require breeders to declare the number of fertile females they breed from during the licensing process.

Key proposed limits include a maximum of 50 fertile females (dogs and cats combined) per breeding program and 20 per breeding facility. These measures, informed by benchmarking against other states, also account for animals sold under 'breeder's terms' where animals may be homed with families but are brought back to the breeder for breeding.

3 Dog and Cat Management Regulations

Following the introduction of the Amendment Act, a review of the *Dog and Cat Management Regulations 2017* has been undertaken to ensure the regulations support the implementation of the new breeder licensing scheme and other changes to the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995.*

While most regulations will remain the same, we're seeking your feedback on some proposed updates and new regulations.

1 Standards and Guidelines for Breeding Dogs and Cats

The Standards and Guidelines for Breeding Dogs and Cats set clear, enforceable minimum requirements for licensed breeders

The Dog and Cat Management Board will publish or adopt a new standalone set of standards and guidelines as part of the introduction of the new breeder licensing scheme.

The Standards and Guidelines for Breeding Dogs and Cats set minimum requirements for licensed breeders - including housing, animal care, record keeping, veterinary treatment, and the management of breeding animals and their offspring.

The revised document builds on the existing standards and guidelines for breeding companion animals (under the *Animal Welfare Act 1985*). The document has been drafted to draw on national comparisons and similar approaches used in other jurisdictions, ensure animal welfare protections, provide clear guidance for dog and cat breeders and the community, and support compliance.

We hear you!

Many of the inclusions in the draft standards and guidelines were informed by your feedback during the previous consultation process.



Key differences between existing standards and guidelines under the *Animal Welfare Act 1985* and the proposed *Standards and Guidelines for Breeding Dogs and Cats* under the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* include:

- **Breeding age and frequency** - maximum breeding age and limits on how often animals can have litters.
- **Caesarean section limit** - a female dog or cat cannot be bred again after three caesarean sections.
- **Veterinary exemptions removed** - Vets will no longer be able to approve breeding of animals beyond limits set for maximum breeding age, maximum number of litters, and frequency of litters.
- **Ban on Surgical Artificial Insemination (SAI)** - licensed breeders cannot use SAI.

Key requirements for dogs and cats are detailed below.

Proposed Standards for Breeding Dogs and Cats		
	Dogs	**Cats**
Breeding age (minimum)	12 months	12 Months
Breeding age (maximum)	6 years (female)	6 years (female)
Litter limits (maximum)	5 litters 3 caesarean section	5 litters 3 caesarean section
Frequency of litters	2 litters per 18 months	3 litters per 24 months
Age before sale (minimum)	8 weeks and fully weaned	8 weeks and fully weaned
Vet exam and health checks	Annual vet exam and post-partum check for mother and puppies within 8 weeks of delivering a litter.	Annual vet exam and post-partum check for mother and kittens within 8 weeks of delivering a litter.
Exercise and Enrichment	Must receive: • appropriate and adequate exercise daily, detailed within animal management plan. • adequate environmental enrichment daily, detailed within animal management plan.	Must receive: • appropriate and adequate exercise daily and must be allowed to climb or scratch, detailed within animal management plan. • adequate environmental enrichment, detailed within animal management plan.

Once a breeder is issued a licence, the breeder must comply with the standards and guidelines as an enforceable condition of their licence.



Failure to comply with the standards can result in penalties (including fines), licence suspension or cancellation, and in serious cases, prosecution. If a licence is suspended or cancelled, authorised persons will have powers to issue directions, and where necessary seize animals.

The standards and guidelines include the following document sections:

Introduction, application and definitions

- Overview and context for the document
- Explains structure, objectives and sections
- Defines key terms used within the standards

Responsibilities and competencies of owners and assistants

- Sets out the responsibility of breeders to ensure standards are met
- Adequate staffing and training is required to meet standards.
- Knowledge, competency and training requirements for animal and facility management

Animal facilities and accommodation

- Details requirements for facilities
- Provide clean water and safe, suitable housing
- Include isolation areas, security measures and emergency plans
- Follow hygiene and pest control programs

Animal management

- Require a documented Animal Health Management Plan
- Adequate exercise, enrichment and socialisation
- Health checks and vet visits
- Compliance with breeding rules (breeding age, suitability, rearing and retirement)

Transport

- Animals must be transported safely in line with requirements
- Food and water provided on long journeys
- Vehicles are safe, clean and temperature-controlled
- Animals must be fit for travel and transported for the shortest time possible

Requirements of sale

- Offspring must be 8 weeks and fully weaned before sale
- Animals must be parasite-treated
- Sellers must provide an Animal Health Declaration and full disclosure of health, temperament and history

Record keeping

- Breeders must keep detailed records for each animal (health, treatments, breeding history, sale details) for at least five years
- Produce records upon request

Requirements specific to dogs

- Dogs must be managed appropriately to ensure they do not wander at large
- Must not exceed litter limits or frequency
- Specific requirements for working livestock dogs

Requirements specific to cats

- Cats must be managed to ensure they can't wander
- Must not exceed litter limits and frequency
- Must be provided suitable housing



2 Limits on the number of fertile females

Maximum limits on the number of breeding females will apply to breeding programs and breeding facilities.

The Dog and Cat Management Board's current Breeder Registration Policy sets a cap of 50 fertile female dogs that can be kept on a single premises or by one owner for breeding purposes.

Under the new licensing scheme, breeders will be required to declare the number of fertile females they breed from as part of the licensing process. Setting limits on the number of fertile females, the number of litters per animal, and the minimum age for breeding are important measures to safeguard animal welfare and ensure responsible breeding practices.

Benchmarking against other states suggests that two key limits should apply to breeding operations.

Proposed limits

Maximum number of fertile females (dogs and cats combined) per breeding program **– 50**

Maximum number of fertile females (dogs and cats combined) per breeding facility **– 20**

This considers where dogs or cats are sold on breeder's terms and may still be used for future breeding. Breeder's terms mean the breeder sells an animal under specific conditions that continue after the sale. Often, the breeder retains breeding rights to allow for the animal to return to the breeder for a certain number of litters.

A breeder's licence will specify the number of fertile females that breeder is licensed to keep as part of their breeding program or facility. This approval will be based on the facilities, staffing and management plans in place as part of the breeding application.

Definitions

- **Breeding program:** the number of fertile females available to the breeder for breeding, but not kept in one location
- **Breeding facility:** the number of fertile females at a property
- **Fertile female:** female dog or cat above six months of age and not desexed

3 Dog and Cat Management Regulations

Regulations under the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* need to be updated to support the implementation of the new breeder licence scheme and other amendments.

The draft *Dog and Cat Management (Breeder Reforms) Regulations 2025* were developed following review of the existing *Dog and Cat Management Regulations 2017*. While most of the regulations remain consistent, some updates and new regulations are proposed to support the implementation. The proposed amendments to the regulations are set out below.

	Updated regulation	Explanation
⊗	3—Amendment of regulation 3—Interpretation Removal of definitions no longer required	Definition of **registered breeder** is removed. This definition is replaced with a definition for licensed breeder in the Amendment Act. Definition of **notice of extension** is removed as powers to grant an extension of time are also removed from the regulations (see regulation 11—Substitution of regulation 14).
✎	4—Amendment of regulation 6—**Payments into and out of Fund**	Following amendments to section 26(5) of the Act, the language under 'payments into and out of Fund' has been updated. These updates do not propose a change to the percentage provided into and out of fund.
✎	5—Amendment of regulation 7—Dogs held in custody of certain persons and bodies not required to be registered	All references to "registered veterinary surgeon" have been **amended to "veterinarian"** to align with current terminology used in the *Veterinary Services Act 2023*.
⊗	6—Deletion of regulation 8 **Removal of business registration**	Regulation 8 set out requirements for holders of business registration. The regulation is deleted as business registration is being removed from the Act as part of the reforms.
✎	7—Amendment of regulation 9—Dogs to wear registration disc	Regulation 9 is proposed to be amended to **remove references to business registration,** as this is being removed from the Act.
✎	8—Amendment of regulation 10 9—Amendment of regulation 12 **Requirements relating to microchipping and desexing dogs and cats**	Amendments to regulation 10 and 12 are proposed to reflect • Removal of powers to grant an extension of time • Updated terminology – veterinarian

Regulation update iconography							
⊕	New	✎	Amended	⊗	Removed	⇄	Substituted

	Updated regulation	Explanation
	10—Amendment of regulation 13—Exemption from sections 42A, 42E and 70 of Act	Updates to regulation 13 are required to refer to new breeder licensing provisions. The term veterinarian is also updated in this regulation.
	11—Substitution of regulation 14 **Deletion of regulation 14**—Board may grant extension of certain time periods	Regulation 14 (Board may grant extension of certain time periods) is proposed to be removed as it is not required. Should an animal require an exemption for desexing or microchipping, this can be provided by a veterinarian under regulation 13.
	11—Substitution of regulation 14 Insertion of regulation 14—**Recognition of certain interstate orders**	In South Australia, if a dog behaves dangerously or causes problems - such as attacking, chasing, or threatening people or animals - the council can issue an order under the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995*. These orders are designed to keep the community safe and make sure owners take responsibility for their dogs. New section 59C of the Act enables the minister to recognise a prescribed interstate order. This means that if a control order applies to a dog that moves from another state to South Australia, the same order can apply here. **New regulation 14** states that the minister must add the interstate order into the Board's official register (Dogs and Cats Online). When this is done, the interstate order is formally recognised.
	12—Substitution of regulation 15—**Power to destroy cats**	Amendments were made to section 63 of the Act (power to destroy cats) to clarify powers and circumstances where cats may be lawfully destroyed. The updated regulation 15 **specifies circumstances where an authorised person may destroy a cat.** Previously, these circumstances were outlined in the legislation but have been moved to regulations to provide greater clarity and enable future modifications if required.
	13—Amendment of regulation 16—**Power to seize and detain cats**	Currently, under the Act, only an unidentified cat may be seized. Regulation 16 has been drafted to provide that a council may seize an identified cat if: • the council has a by-law requiring cats to be controlled, secured or confined; and • the cat is not controlled, secured or confined as required by the by-law. This section supports local councils in enforcing cat control by-laws.

	Updated regulation	Explanation
⊕	14—Substitution of regulation 17—Meaning of to breed and bred **Breeder licensing regulations** 17—Meaning of to breed and bred 17A—Prescribed circumstances—section 70 17B—Exemption	Previous regulation 17 is removed as this regulation is replaced by the new breeder licensing provisions. Under the new breeder licensing provisions, owners will require a licence to breed a dog or cat. Definition of 'to breed' and 'bred' is established in the new licensing provisions. Draft regulation 17(1) identifies exemptions where an animal welfare organisation (as defined in the Act) or council will not be considered to have bred a dog or cat where: • the animal was already pregnant; or • the puppy or kitten had already been sired by the animal At the time the animal came into care. This means that in these circumstances, the animal welfare organisation or council would not require a breeder licence. Regulation 17(2), 17A and 17B states that the Board may prescribe additional circumstances where a person is not required to hold a breeder licence.

⊕	14—Substitution of regulation 17
	
	Breeder licensing regulations
	17C—Prescribed offences—section 71
	17D—Prescribed offences—section 71D
		New breeder licensing provisions outline that a licence will only be granted or renewed if the Board is satisfied neither the applicant, nor a current spouse or domestic partner of the applicant, has been found guilty of a prescribed offence within the previous five years.
		
		Additionally, the Board may suspend or cancel the breeder's licence if the licence holder is found guilty of a prescribed offence.
		
		A new regulation has been drafted to identify which offences will disqualify an applicant from being granted a breeder licence. The proposed offences are:
		• Any offence under Part 3 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1985*, including:
		  ○ Ill-treatment of animals.
		  ○ Participation in prohibited activities such as organised animal fights, live baiting or jumps racing.
		  ○ Possession or use of certain items, and failure to take certain steps in the case of vehicle accidents involving animals.
		• Contravention of a prohibition order under section 59A of the Act. Prohibition orders are issued in serious circumstances and prevent an individual from owning or being responsible for a dog.
		• Contravention of a Control (Dangerous Dog) Order. Dangerous Dog Orders are issued when dogs have been identified as dangerous and require owners to take certain steps to manage the dog.

	Updated regulation	Explanation
⊕	14—Substitution of regulations 17 **Breeder licensing regulations** 17E—Dealing with dogs and cats where breeder's licence suspended or cancelled	New breeder licensing provisions outline that if a breeder's licence is suspended or cancelled, any dogs or cats owned by that breeder must be managed according to a process set by the Dog and Cat Management Board. Regulation 17C states that an authorised person can seize and hold these animals - if needed - and can also issue written directions to the breeder (for example, instructions on food, housing, rehoming or vet care). Breaching these directions would be considered an offence with a maximum penalty of $5,000.
⊕	14—Substitution of regulation 17 **Breeder licensing regulations** 17F—Offence to sell etc dogs of prescribed breed	The Act states that a person who advertises, sells or gives away a dog of a prescribed breed is guilty of an offence, except if the dog is surrendered to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)(SA) or the Animal Welfare League (SA). This regulation expands on this and includes that the offence does not apply if a prescribed breed is surrendered to a council, or person / body approved by the Board.
✎	15—Amendment of regulation 18—Requirement that dog or cat be microchipped and desexed before sale—section 70 of Act **Breeder licensing regulations**	The existing regulations detail microchipping and desexing requirements prior to the sale of dogs or cats. These regulations are updated to reference the new breeder licensing provisions. The requirements for animals to be microchipped and desexed in accordance with the Act remain unchanged.
✎	16—Amendment of regulation 19—Information to be given to buyers **Breeder licensing regulations**	The existing regulations identify the information that must be given to buyers of dogs or cats. These regulations are also updated to reference the new breeder licensing provisions. Information required to be given to buyers remains unchanged.
✎	17—Amendment of regulation 20—Guard dogs	The existing regulation is amended to **remove the reference to business registration**, as business registration is being removed from the Act.

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