

Animal Welfare Code for Dogs Consultation Responses

We Asked

The purpose of the consultation by the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA) was to seek views on the draft Animal Welfare Code of Practice for Dogs.

The purpose of the Animal Welfare Code of Practice for Dogs, is to provide practical guidance to help you comply with the provisions of Section 6 of the Animal Welfare Act, 2023. It does not tell you precisely how to care for a dog, but summarises important things you should consider when making decisions about how best to care for your dog. The codes have been deliberately left vague in some areas because of the wide range of dogs this code applies to. There will be significant differences in how a working large breed dog should be cared for compared to a toy breed puppy.

Breach of a provision of the code is not an offence in itself but if proceedings are brought against someone under the Animal Welfare Act, 2023, the Court may look at whether or not they have complied with the Code in deciding whether they have committed an offence.

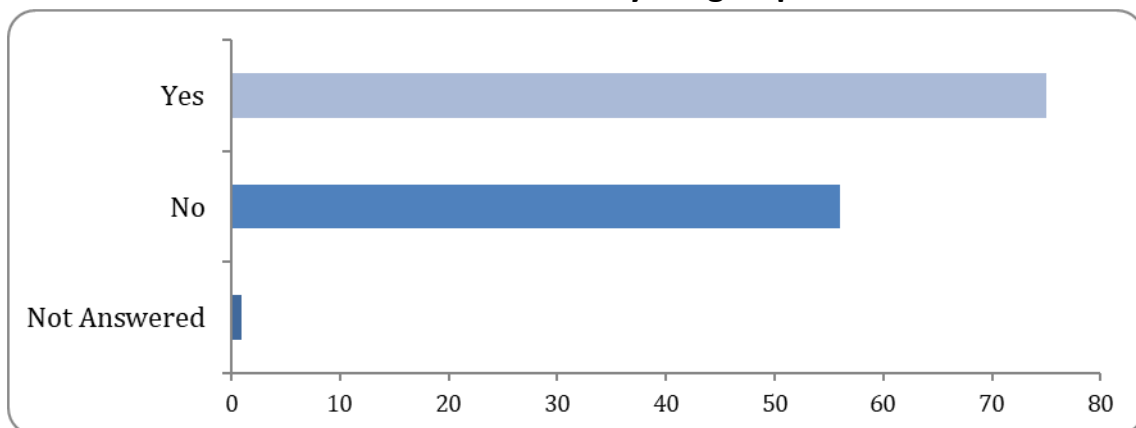
The code was heavily based on the English version of the Animal Welfare Code of Practice for Dogs. The Department asked a number of questions around the code of practice to gain views from the public and interested parties on the suitability of the code.

You Said

The Department for Environment, Food and Agriculture received 128 responses to the consultation. Of these, 124 responses were from individuals and 4 Responses were representatives of society/ company/ charity.

56.8% of respondents said that the code covered everything required. **19.7%** of respondents said there were things in the code they disagreed with. **76.5%** of respondents said there was enough detail in the code. **97.0%** said the code was understandable.

Does the content of the code cover everything required?



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	75	56.82%
No	56	42.42%
Not Answered	1	0.76%

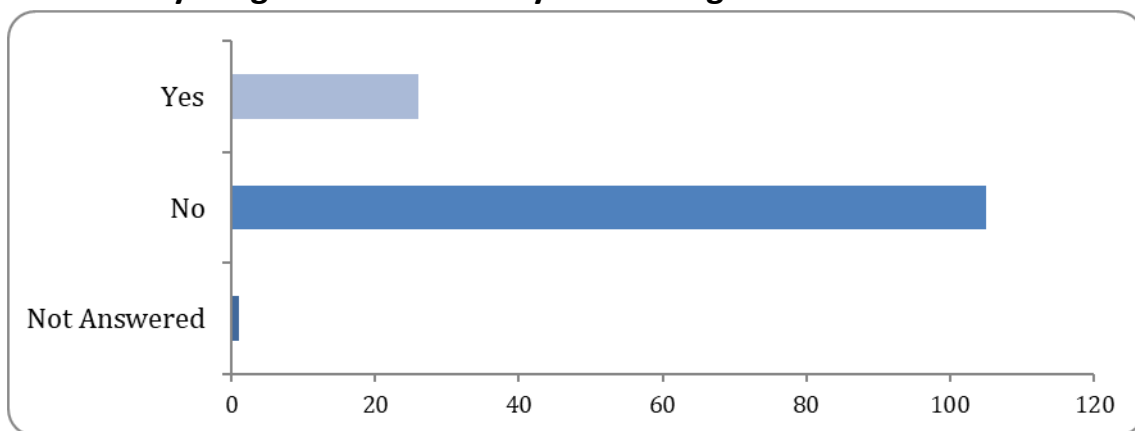
There were a number of comments around dog breeding. There is already legislation in place with regards to breeders that need to be registered (Breeding of Dogs and Cats Act 1981) and the Department plans to update this legislation in the near future. There were also a number of respondents wanting information adding about buying a puppy. Such information will be added to the code along with a suggestion that specific advice is sought from their veterinary practice.

There were a number of responses indicating they would like information in the code around control of dogs in general and specifically regarding aggressive dogs in public, the control of dogs when they are around animals other than sheep, and their control when they are around other dogs. The codes will be updated to reflect these requests. However, the Department feels it is unable to advise that dogs are always kept on a lead in all public places. Many dogs are walked safely off the lead, including on beaches on the Isle of Man.

There were a number of comments about cruelty to dogs, which is already covered by the Cruelty to Animals Act 1997. However, this will be mentioned in the beginning of the code to make people aware that there is legislation in place regarding animal cruelty on the Isle of Man and to advise that people contact the police if there are concerns relating to animal cruelty.

Two respondents mentioned noisy dogs causing distress to people living around them. This is beyond the scope of the animal welfare code for dogs. There is legislation in place around public nuisance, including noise, and this can be reported to DEFA.

Is there anything in the code that you don't agree with?



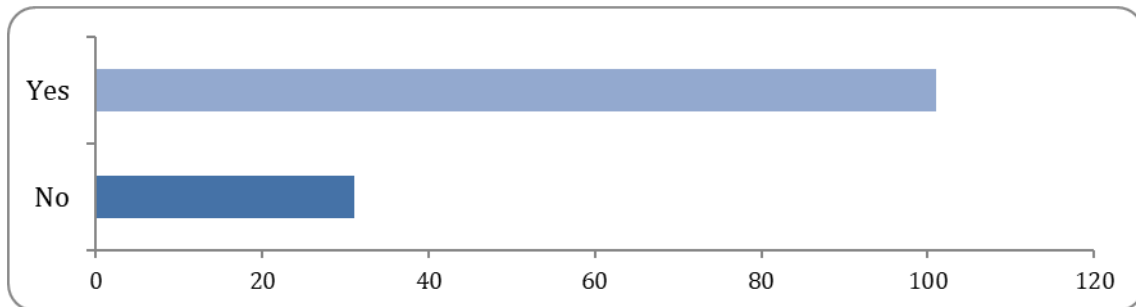
Option	Total	Percent
Yes	26	19.70%
No	105	79.55%
Not Answered	1	0.76%

One respondent wanted it to be an offense if a dog who is not on a lead attacks a member of the public or another dog. This area is already covered by the Dogs Act 1990 and any incidents can be reported to the police.

There are conflicting responses around the number of meals a dog should have a day, with three respondents saying dogs should be fed at least twice a day and one saying they don't need to be fed every day. Veterinary advice is generally that most dogs need to be fed at least once a day. However, this will vary depending on activity, breed and age of the dog. The code will be amended to say

suggest that this is discussed with your vet if you have any concerns about how often you should be feeding your dog.

Is there enough detail in the code?



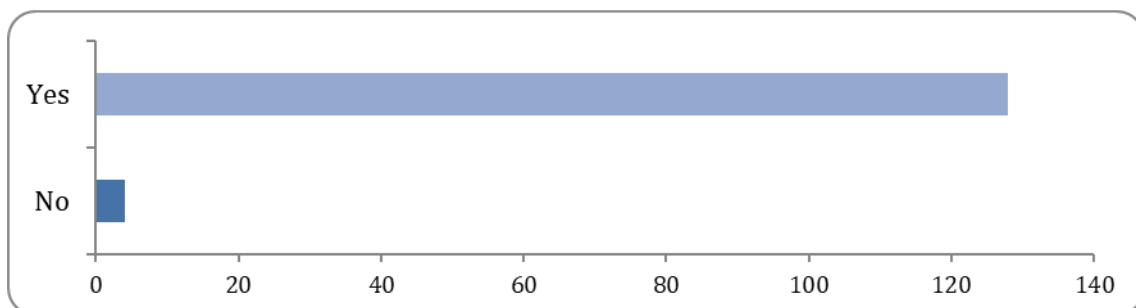
Option	Total	Percent
Yes	101	76.52%
No	31	23.48%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Five respondents requested the inclusion of more information concerning dogs being under control, especially in public. The code will be amended to reflect this.

Four respondents requested more information about dogs being left alone. This very much depends on what the dog is used to, where it is been left, the age of the dog etc. As this varies so much on the individual situation the Department has decided not to add any further information into the code in this regard.

There were a number of comments suggesting that the code is too vague. However, the respondents do not identify specific areas of concern. The code is largely based on the English code and, as such, it lacks specificity in some areas because it is aimed at trying to cover the welfare of a wide range of dogs including working dogs, small pet dogs, hunting dogs and farm dogs. The code is a guide and there are links to lots of further information in the back of the code. Additionally, further advice in many areas can come from your veterinary practice that will be better able to advise on the specifics for you and your dog.

Is the code understandable?



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	128	96.97%
No	4	3.03%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Most respondents said that the code is understandable. Those who disagreed said *“it’s clunky and repeats itself”*, *“do we seriously need this? Do vets, in person and online, not already provide all of this advice. It’s an answer to a question no one is answering”*, *“only by the judge”* and *“As a document it is clear. But there is no clarity as to what is the commitment, what are the rules. Perhaps an overview of all suggested what should you do, and an overarching ethos of what a dog owner should be/should provide and even what a dog’s behaviour/life should be. Would be helpful to clearly define what is not acceptable?”*. No changes have been made following these comments because the majority of people said the code was understandable.

Further comments

There were four comments about banning shock collars. There has been a separate consultation on this and the results will be published shortly.

There were a few comments about how the code will be advertised. If the Animal Welfare (Codes of Practice) Order 2024 (which approves the animal codes) is accepted by Tynwald, the codes will be published on-line and available for collection from the DEFA headquarters. Copies will also be given to any animal re-homing charities, licensed breeders, Veterinary practices and licensed boarding establishments. The Department also plans to issue a press release and put information on social media about the animal welfare codes.

All responses received during the consultation period have been carefully considered, and were valuable in both ensuring general satisfaction with the proposed code and in identifying some modifications that are needed or might improve the code in order that it can be finalised. They have also highlighted some areas of concern that, although outside the remit of the Animal Codes of Practice, may lead to earlier consideration of new secondary legislation under the Animal Welfare Act in certain areas.

We did

The Department is grateful to those individuals and organisations who took time to respond to the consultation and tell us their views on the proposed Animal Welfare Code of Practice for Dogs. As stated above a number of changes will be made to the code to reflect some of the responses received to the consultation. Whilst some of the responses to the consultation are outside of the scope of the code, the Department will look at addressing some of the other concerns in future policy development.