

Wood Green Animal Shelters - experience of kennel and cattery design for council and shelter operations

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with kennel and cattery design for smaller and larger (sanctuary) units. It details considerations which are critical to good design and lists many items important to the design stage. Kennel and cattery standards do need improvement, and education of providers, users and licensing authorities still has a long way to go. The 'parasol' Wood Green Animal Shelter (WGAS) kennel meets the listed criteria of good design and is available in kit form.

INTRODUCTION

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 gave a duty to local councils to seize and detain stray dogs. The 1988 Local Government Act had given them an option to deal with dogs, which the majority did not take up. Prior to this, the police dealt with strays. Police facilities consist usually of two kennels behind the station, and they were not usually built to any particular standard.

Just prior to the commencement of operation of the 1990 Act in 1992, many councils were discussing with police how they would jointly operate. Unfortunately the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) issued late advice that police should not work with local councils. This left many councils totally unprepared for kennelling provision.

The CIEH survey (Joint CIEH/JACOPIS 1991) at the time indicated that only seven councils had their own facilities. Councils were forced to negotiate with kennel managers in their district to house their stray dogs on a contract basis. This arrangement was 'new' to both sides. In England therefore there are boarding kennels, sanctuaries and people with an interest in animals who attempt to house and sometimes rehome!

1. SMALL FACILITIES

The law does not adequately cover this situation (Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963) because there is no power to inspect premises where owners haven't applied for a licence. Secondly a person is not regarded as needing to seek a licence by reason only of providing accommodation for other peoples animals in connection with a business of which the accommodation is not the main activity. There are therefore some very poor premises, built in a piece meal and unplanned manner, which are similarly run without proper concern for other than purely emotional input of saving animals. These premises are generally regarded as being in need of control.

2. KENNELS USED FOR BOARDING, ETC

These are licensed by local councils on an annual basis. Standards are not equally or properly enforced nationally. Some are good, some are awful. *Which* magazine carried out a survey (1993) by randomly inspecting premises across several counties as well as Scotland and Wales. Five vets were used to visit 62 establishments!

They found two premises unlicensed! Other defects included lack of concern for spread of infectious disease, shared cat exercise facilities, out of date pen design, cages 45cm high stacked in three tiers, absence of isolation facilities and a variety of other problems. This particular report was a follow up of a study two years earlier by the same magazine, which identified similar problems.

In 1991, Piper (1991) had requested input from Environmental Health Officers who were dissatisfied with the status quo. This led to a Working Party which produced a document for guidance (Joint CIEH IJACOPIS 1991; CIEH 1993).

The 'Trade' widely misinterpreted the results and following representations from the Industry Association, a further Working Party including nominees of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), British Veterinary Association (BV A), British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSA V A), Pet Trade & Industry Association (PTIA) and Feline Advisory Bureau (FAB) was brought into operation to report further. This report is due in October 1994.

The aims of the Group are to :

1. Improve standards;
2. Achieve consistency of enforcement;
3. Raise the profile of animal welfare and to remind owners that compliance with good standards is ECONOMIC.

ITEMS CONSIDERED:

- General construction;
- Size of facilities;
- Exercise facilities;
- Temperature;
- Lighting;
- Ventilation;
- Cleanliness;
- Disease control;
- Isolation facilities;
- Vaccinations;
- Register;
- Numbers permitted;
- Fire;
- Food, drinks, bedding, visits;
- Other (councils may add conditions)

Briefly, the following points were debated:

Construction

Submit a PLAN of site	Against noise emission
Use durable, impervious materials	Security of animal
Wire should be 14 s.w.g. (2mm)	Insulation -protect against temperature extremes
Mesh, not greater than 5 cm (2)	Walls, floors, ceilings easy clean, coved, sealed joints
To save energy loss	

Kennel sizes (Beynon 1991)

Dogs: Newly built kennels should have a sleeping area of 1.9 sq m (20 sq ft). An exercise area of 2.6 sq m (28 sq ft). Height of 1.8m (6 ft). American standards (HSUS 1990) stipulate kennel of 4 x 6 (24 sq ft), run of 4 x 8 (32 sq ft).

Cats: 4 x 4 x 6 (96 cu ft) for chalets where up to 2 cats from the same household may share (Hamilton-Moore and Cruickshank 1988).

Generally there should be no sharing of facilities, except where written agreement is obtained from the keeper of animals from the same household.

Holding pens should have limited use.

Strays should only be boarded following licensing approval and then kept separately from boarders.

Temperature

This is a tricky one!

A MINIMUM suggested temperature was 10 degrees C. In the UK this temperature is likely to occur overnight for about 7 months of the year .

The real problem is controlling a MAXIMUM temperature.

In the UK most days are usually below 26 degrees C. Our aim was to say that, where maximum ambient temperatures were above this, one had to consider how the animals were to be kept satisfactorily cool.

The particular aim was to suggest that this temperature should not be exceeded due to unsatisfactory construction or keeping of the animals.

Ventilation

- Adequate - and avoid draughts. Guidance: 4-8 air changes per hour.

Lighting

- Sufficient for visibility. Provide artificial lighting.

Cleanliness

- Daily clean. Remove excreta as necessary;
- Wash down;
- Disinfect;
- Waste is 'clinical' waste. Handle with care. Dispose of properly;
- Keep vehicles clean;
- Litter trays: approximately 45 x 30 x 7.5cm.

(Disinfectant use seems to be a major problem. Disinfectants chosen must be easy to use, effective against bacteria, viruses and fungi, safe in use, long lasting, economic, easy to dilute). Disease control (Beynon 1991)

Disease control involves consideration of many issues in kennel design and operation, including:

- Construction;
- Disinfection;
- Vaccination;
- Communal exercise area;
- Isolation facilities;
- Rodent control;
- Veterinary surgeon, call first signs of disease;
- First Aid kits;
- Muzzles;
- Prevention of doubling up;
- Protective barriers between units.

Register

Must include:

- Date of arrival and kennel number;
- Name;
- Identifying marks (tattoo, microchip);
- Description, breed, age, gender;
- Name, address, phone number of keeper, contact person and animals veterinary surgeon;
- Anticipated and actual date of departure;
- Health, welfare and nutrition requirements;
- Keep records for two years.

Food/Water

- Fresh;
- Daily change;
- Avoid spillages.

Kitchen facilities

- Separate area;
- Fresh/cooked meats, separate facilities;
- Sink; hot and cold water;
- Wash hand basin for staff.

ID system of kennel

- NUMBER;
- NOTICE: NAME and description of dog;
- Name of keeper;
- Date of arrival and departure;
- Feeding-habits.

Supervision

- Fit and proper person;
- Visit animals regularly.

Fire

- Tell police and fire brigade your name, address and phone number;
- Draw up EMERGENCY PLAN (where do animals go in case of fire?);
- Ensure electrical installation is safe, has circuit breaker and is tested regularly;
- Heating: Consider type and siting must not be placed to start fire or damage animal;
- Provide alarm;
- In UK a Fire Prevention Officer would inspect and require provision of fire extinguishers.

Guidance

- PROCEDURES should be produced for cleanliness;
- INSURANCE many different types;
- Model Register provided;
- Management of establishment is as important as standards (almost);
- ENCOURAGE COMPLAINTS, both to OWNER and LICENSING AUTHORITY.

'Other' considerations

- Remind of existing legislation in other spheres.

LEGISLATION IN ENGLAND:

Health & Safety at Work Act 1974

Duty of safety.

Accident book.

Safe systems.

5 employees must have safety policy.

Environmental Protection Act 1990

Duty of care (waste disposal).

Must not cause NUISANCE may be closed down.

Incinerators certain sizes or functions require annual licence.

Electricity at Work Regulations 1989

Test all appliances regularly.

Control of Substances Hazard to Health Regulations 1988

Reduce all chemicals on site to minimum. Number required at safest level possible. Zoonoses: advise staff and public.

Controlled Waste Regulations 1992

Faecal waste is 'clinical' waste -must be disposed of with particular care.

3. SANCTUARIES (American Humane Association n.d)

The basic principles of 2 (above) apply, but public access is greater and therefore DESIGN AND FLOW together with a PLAN are vital.

It is false economy to scrimp and save at the time of construction. Experience says you will pay several fold for poor and inadequate design. Proper design makes cleaning quicker and easier and disease control better .

You may save paying for additional staff who would otherwise be required due to poor design, construction, materials and planning of an establishment.

Be very wary of REFURBISHMENT. You are building to existing shapes and buildings and may be stuck with a lifetime of problems. Carefully assess your costs of capital and revenue expenditure before following this path. You may be left with large voluminous buildings that require heating, lighting, ventilation and cleaning.

Purpose made facilities are hard to beat - and you can place them where you want them to be so that your overall plan is achievable.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS (Meade 1992)

1. Control separation and flow of incoming public and animals to avoid congestion, animal noise and queues in reception. Animals 'in' should have a separate entrance. If you are dealing with strays and reclaiming, keep them separate.
2. Keep some holding pens near reception but separated and fairly well insulated for noise controls.
3. Try to keep offices for administration and reception insulated against noise.
4. Proper traffic patterns are essential.
Parking cars should flow (in/out) without bottlenecks or obstructions and without crossing human traffic flows (children entering the road from behind hedges).
Signpost site facilities so that general questions to reception are minimised.
Plan wide, open corridors that allow two way flow.
Separate different functions where possible (separate those who come to look, away from those wanting to rehome dogs).
Consider streamlining of procedures when demand is high. Can early completion of paperwork be made while queuing?
Is there scope for other entertainments:
 - i) while people queue -market, inform. entertain;
 - ii) for those in the family not interested in animals.

5. Ability to move animals safely while cleaning procedures completed. Kennels are frequently too wet. Humidity increases spread of kennel cough.
6. Design for ease of cleanliness. Provide drainage falls to floors. Proper drainage is vital. Have solid easy clean channels without covers (which gather dirt and are difficult to clean).
7. Effective ventilation. Easy to say difficult to do. Avoid placing fans near windows air travels in small circle but doesn't reach rest of building.
Think in terms of positive pressure (air inlet, as opposed to outlet).
Beware of a system which is too complicated - staff will nullify it!
8. Site euthanasia area with care. Have separate room, allow for a distinct disposal system which is procedure bound. Keep records of tags, times and animals. Ensure what enters shelter, exits it - and what arrives is booked in.
Euthanased dogs should be on an audit trail, so that external interference is minimal. Keep rooms locked.
If you incinerate, ensure chimney height is designed to ensure smells do not hit reception or viewing areas.
9. Kennels should be designed to minimise noise.
 - i) Visual separation of dogs (there are arguments on this issue regarding socialisation. I don't believe this is appropriate).
 - ii) Have adequate size for dogs. Design for one, but be able to hold two.
 - iii) All animals should be clean, dry and at comfortable temperature at all times.
 - iv) Consider noise control in designing construction. Also siting. How near is nearest potential source of complaint? Build in noise barriers - earth banks. Parasol kennels - radiating noise rather than block
Be aware that someone may come and build in a nearer position to your site than was the case when you built the kennel -design for site boundary noise limits.
10. Consider your long term plans. Will you expand? How many kennels may you add? Where will they go? Place administration buildings between kennels and other (external to site) buildings.
11. Think of facilities you may want but cannot afford yet:
 - Educational building;
 - Veterinary surgery/reception/hospital.

(You may start with one and wish to add others - will you have left sufficient space to void having to start again?)

Hamilton-Moore and Cruickshank (1988) suggest cattery design as largely being individual units - as for kennels - with 60cm spacing between each one, and sneeze barriers between cat bedding areas.

No communal exercise areas are recommended for cats. Some are provided for dogs - but I don't like it in animal boarding establishments. Wood Green Animal Shelters have communal area for both species. They work well for sanctuaries, but not for animal boarding establishments.

ENVIRONMENT: Consider something interesting for sanctuaries. Scratching posts, toys to climb etc (Hubrecht 1993)

CHALETS: Cats may be housed in an area where the bedding area is off the ground and accessed via a ladder. This is more economical of land use.

4. COUNCIL KENNELS

If councils provide long term facilities, they should build to the above standards. One particular consideration for councils is providing a short stay facility .Most strays which are reclaimed are collected within 48 hours. Councils may suffer unnecessary financial losses if all dogs are taken immediately to kennels - particularly when these may be some miles from town.

If two 'holding facilities' are provided for an overnight stop, then possibly 20 percent of running costs may be saved. Contract arrangements become more flexible. Operationally more alternatives present themselves (extra facilities for storage; judgement on dogs temperament; quicker returns; improved service, etc.).

5. PARASOLS

The Wood Green Animal Shelters circular kennel takes some beating! It is now produced in kit form and may be delivered worldwide. It represents experience and practice, and modifications have been incorporated into the design by BIS who now manufacture on behalf of WGAS.

All the above principles have been incorporated, so that they are extremely hard wearing (probable life of at least 20 years); easy to clean thoroughly (economies on kennel maid costs); incorporate noise and energy conservation insulation.

Flexibility of diameter is now possible so that the whole unit may be used for a variety of purposes.

The circular kennels only take about six weeks to erect. They have designed-in construction to allow completely correct falls (amazing how often this doesn't occur).

They are attractive in presentation, and therefore are more likely to achieve planning permission.

Extra sound insulation may be achieved by scraping away surface soil before laying base, and placing that soil as a 'protective' wall around the perimeter.

Flexibility of extending provisions on site using same design.

Units may be costed and planned accurately for future use.

Each unit holds 15 dogs and is costed around £40,000 so it allows competitive unit pricing.

The centre area may be used to increase animal interest and human interface regarded as important for long stay animals.

CONCLUSION

Good kennelling is a vitally important consideration which is so very often ignored. Designs to date have not been thoroughly researched and have not taken into account the compound effects of relevant standards. Starting from scratch can be difficult and confusing with limited sound practical advice available. Animal boarding and sanctuary facilities have basic design considerations. Traffic flow is more important for sanctuaries. Without proper planning it may become extremely expensive to operate and standards will stay poor. It is a WGAS aim to raise standards whenever possible. The provision of kit form 'parasol' kennels goes a long way to achieving this aim and should simplify the difficult decisions which STARTERS are required to face.

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