Company of Animals Animal Welfare Policy

1. Purpose and scope

This policy sets out how Company of Animals puts animal welfare at the centre of our business. It applies to our products and their development, our advice and marketing, our suppliers and partners, and activities involving animals under our care or supervision. Dogs are the main users of our products and the focus of this policy, but it applies equally to any other animal. The commitments here are in addition to the applicable animal welfare and product safety law in the regions in which we operate.

We aim to design products and provide guidance that consistently improve companion animals' welfare in everyday life. We consider safety alongside their physical comfort, ability to move, explore, play, learn, and develop positive relationships.

2. The Five Domains Model

The Five Domains Model is a structured, systematic framework for assessing animal welfare. It considers four areas that impact animal welfare: Nutrition, Physical Environment, Health and Behavioural Interactions. Evidence from these areas is then used to consider the fifth domain – the animal's Mental State. The first three domains concern, among other things, hunger, discomfort, pain and illness. The fourth domain – Behavioural Interactions – looks at interactions with the environment, other animals and human interactions, and their associated effects, whether that be positive or negative (Mellor et al., 2020).

The model recognises that good welfare requires more than avoiding suffering, and that positive experiences within each of the domains have the potential to positively impact an animal's psychological wellbeing. Opportunities for exploration, play, learning and any positive interaction can positively impact animal welfare. Whilst we cannot directly measure an individual animal's feelings, the Five Domains Model can be used to make a structured, systematic assessment, considering both benefits and possible harms in all domains (Mellor et al., 2020).

Domain	Considerations relevant to Company of Animals' products
1. Nutrition	Effect on drinking, eating or taking rewards. Contribution to nutrition, and fit within a balanced diet.
2. Physical environment	Comfort of fit, materials, pressure distribution, restriction of movement and ability to maintain body temperature.
3. Health	Impact on skin, coat, movement and respiratory system. Routes of product exposure: inhalation, ingestion and dermal contact. Product safety, including ingredient quality and microbiological safety, and durability. Foreseeable failure or misuse.
4. Behavioural interactions	Ability to sense, move, explore, play, make choices (agency) and interact with other animals, people and the environment.
5. Mental state	The overall experience arising from the other four domains, inferred from circumstances, behaviour and body language – both negative (fear, frustration, pain) and positive (comfort, interest, confidence).

3. How we put this into practice

Product design and review

Animal welfare is considered from the earliest stages of product development and throughout a product's life.

Every new or materially changed product receives a documented welfare assessment, weighing intended benefits against foreseeable welfare impact for the individual animal. Product development decisions draw on relevant available evidence, veterinary and behavioural expertise, product testing and customer feedback.

We consider the needs of the individual animal as well as the setting in which a product will be used. A product that improves safety or makes an activity possible must also be comfortable and suitable for that animal.

We make welfare claims only where the evidence supports them, state limitations plainly, and avoid suggesting that a product alone will resolve a behaviour problem without appropriate training.

Our guidance covers selection, directions for use, fitting, introduction, safe and appropriate use, indicators of discomfort, and when to seek professional help. We regularly review feedback so we can optimise products or directions for use.

Safety

Safety is considered throughout product design and development, taking into account materials, construction, formulation, foreseeable use scenarios (including potential misuse), chewing, ingestion, exposure to chemicals and contact with the animal. Products are assessed against their intended purpose and relevant risks to help minimise potential harm to animals and their handlers.

Some of our products are designed to reduce risk and provide safety as animals interact with people and their environment. Thoughtful product design can help dogs continue to walk, explore and engage with their surroundings, when otherwise those opportunities may be restricted.

We recognise some of our products may limit one or more of the Five Domains, and therefore have a potential impact on welfare. Where this happens, the product is designed to minimise this welfare impact, and a safety or welfare benefit must be established such as enabling walking, social contact or veterinary care that may otherwise be impossible. We weigh these through the following principles:

- **Proportion.** Restriction should be no greater, and last no longer, than its purpose requires.
- **Minimise impact.** We prioritise comfort and preserve normal behaviour wherever possible, for example muzzles that allow panting, drinking and taking treats, minimal pressure and adjustable fit.
- **Acclimatisation.** Our guidance sets out gradual, reward-based introduction, and advises stopping and seeking professional advice if a dog becomes distressed.
- **Training.** Equipment manages a situation but does not address its cause, so we encourage use alongside appropriate training and, where there is a risk of harm, professional advice. We state clearly that our products must not be used as punishment.
- **Review.** Owners are encouraged to revisit the need and reduce reliance where possible, recognising that some dogs need equipment long term.

Training, exploration and engagement

The Five Domains Model recognises that preferred food, training rewards and enjoyable interactions with people can contribute to positive welfare experiences, and describes the value of animals being able to exercise agency through interactions with their physical and social environment (Mellor et al., 2020).

Walking and other suitable activities provide opportunities for dogs to explore, make choices and engage with their surroundings. We provide training and walking tools that enable owners to give their pets clear guidance

while preserving their opportunity to move, explore and develop agency. We support training that helps animals learn through positive experiences that strengthen their relationship with the environment, other animals and people. Rewards should be meaningful to the individual animal: they may include treats, play, praise or an opportunity to take part in an activity it enjoys.

Training aids and well-designed equipment can help animals explore and interact with their environment, other animals and people safely and calmly. Where an immediate safety concern requires a behaviour to be managed, that behaviour should be interrupted calmly and proportionately, followed by redirecting and positively rewarding an alternative behaviour.

Treats and chews

Treats and chews complement a balanced diet and are not a replacement for it. They can also support natural behaviours such as chewing and foraging, and reinforce training, which contributes positively to welfare.

We provide clear feeding guidance, including calorie content, so owners can fit treats and chews into their dog's daily energy intake and activity, with recommendations that reflect age, size and weight. We list all ingredients so owners can avoid those their dog is sensitive to, and we do not use ingredients known to be harmful to dogs. We design for safety, considering size, texture and hardness for the dogs they are intended for and risks such as choking, obstruction and dental damage, and we advise supervision during use.

Care and grooming

Grooming and health products should support hygiene and comfort while respecting differences in coat, skin and individual sensitivity. We consider ingredient selection, formulation safety, material compatibility, product stability, microbiological safety, and ingredient and allergen transparency when designing and formulating our products. We provide clear directions for use and consider how application, fragrance and handling may affect the animal, as well as the intended care benefit.

Animals involved in our work

We do not carry out product testing that is likely to cause pain, suffering or harm. During product development, we may involve dogs and their owners in practical assessments to evaluate aspects such as fit, comfort, usability and suitability for intended activities.

Whenever animals take part in product development, demonstrations, photography, training or activities at our facilities or at any other location, we provide appropriate care and handling, supervision, rest breaks and ongoing monitoring of the animal's comfort and behaviour.

Participation is voluntary: owners give informed consent and may withdraw their animal at any time, and we monitor each animal's willingness to take part. Activities are stopped promptly if signs of discomfort or distress are seen, and any colleague present may stop an activity on welfare grounds.

We expect suppliers and contract manufacturers to comply with applicable animal welfare and product safety laws.

4. Accountability and review

- **Responsibility.** The Chief Executive Officer (Dr Emily Mugford MRCVS) has overall responsibility. All colleagues are trained on this policy and apply it in their roles.
- **Expert input.** We draw on suitably qualified veterinary and behaviour professionals, product design expertise, formulation specialists, and regulatory and compliance professionals to inform product development, safety and suitability for intended use.

- **Concerns.** Anyone can raise a welfare concern through office@wearecoa.com. We record and investigate complaints and adverse experiences, act on identified risks and update products, directions for use or communications.
- **Review.** We review this policy at least annually, and sooner if evidence, regulation or our range changes.

References

Mellor, D.J., Beausoleil, N.J., Littlewood, K.E., McLean, A.N., McGreevy, P.D., Jones, B. and Wilkins, C. (2020) 'The 2020 Five Domains Model: Including Human–Animal Interactions in Assessments of Animal Welfare', *Animals*, 10(**10**), 1870. https://doi.org/10.3390/ani10101870

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Approved by: Dr Emily Mugford

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