



# Preparing for your puppies to head off to their new homes

The time is fast approaching for your puppies to head off to their new homes. They have had their first vaccination, they are microchipped, and you have registered them with Dogs Victoria. It is time to prepare everything in readiness for their departure.

## **Important!**

*Under both the Victorian Government's rules and the Dogs Victoria Regulations, pups must not head off to their new homes prior to 8 weeks of age.*

*If any of your pups are headed to homes overseas, they cannot travel until they are at least 12 weeks and sometimes older, depending on the requirements of the country of import.*

## **Preparing the required documentation**

There is quite a bit of documentation and information that you are required to provide to each person taking ownership of one of your puppies. Most breeders find it easiest to prepare a file or folder for each pup so that all of the documents including certificates, contracts, registration papers and other information, are all in one place.

You can include anything you feel is relevant in your puppy information pack, but the minimum outlined in the Dogs Victoria Regulation 20.1.23 requires:

*A member shall provide to all recipients of dogs sold or otherwise disposed of by that member, written details of:*

- » *The breed characteristics;*
- » *Vaccination record and / or requirements including the due date of the next vaccination or recommended timing for next titre;*
- » *Responsible dog ownership information;*
- » *All documentation required by Dogs Victoria*
- » *Records on internal and external parasite control;*
- » *Records of microchip number with a signed transfer of owner form;*
- » *A desexing certificate (if applicable); and*
- » *A written health declaration in accordance with 20.1.25.*

## **Important!**

*Even though you will be providing the new owners with their puppy's paperwork, you should keep a copy of all important documents such as pedigree papers, vaccination cards, veterinary health certificates, microchipping records and health testing results and file these in your litter records.*

Although a lot of the required documentation is certificates and health records, you also want your puppy owners to have a resource that will answer many of their questions about owning and raising a healthy, happy puppy.

There needs to be information on feeding, exercise, grooming, housing, and the importance of training and socialisation.

You should include information on preventative health care – vaccination, worming and parasite control – as well as information on common breed health problems they might encounter during their dog's lifetime.



# Preparing for your puppies to head off to their new homes

The Responsible Pet Ownership section needs to include information about local council registration requirements, community expectations and legislation. Dogs Victoria has a [New Puppy Owner's Guide](#) that covers many of these topics, and there is plenty of information available on the [Animal Welfare Victoria](#) website.

Many breeders also choose to include photos and information about the parents of the litter, copies of the results of the parent's health clearances, and photos of the pups as they have grown.

You may also want to include information about your breed's affiliated Breed Club and how to become a member. If your breed club offers a 'Breeder Joined' membership option, you may choose to sign up your puppy purchasers so that they can receive the club newsletter and attend breed club events for the first year.

## **Important!**

*Many breeders choose to provide a lot of the general written information a week or two before the pups are due to leave for their new homes. This gives the new owners time to read it without the distraction of an adorable new puppy, and whilst they are very highly motivated to read everything. Having access to the information early helps them be properly prepared when the time comes to bring their new puppy home.*

## **Health declaration**

The idea of a 'Breeder Health Declaration' is to have full disclosure of any identified health issues at the time of sale so that the new owner is made aware of them. The new owner then has to sign off that they understand how these issues may affect the dog's health and welfare in the future before they agree to take the puppy home.

The information to be included in the 'written health declaration' is covered in Regulation 20.1.25:

*A member shall ensure that all dogs sold or disposed of by that member are in the best possible state of health.*

*Where any known physical abnormalities exist, a breeder health declaration shall be supplied which includes details of the known physical abnormality at the time of sale and how that abnormality may affect future health and welfare of the dog. This shall be signed in acknowledgement by the recipient.*

Dogs Victoria has a [template document](#) that you can use for this, or you can develop your own.

Regardless of the health status of each puppy, it is a good idea to provide a health declaration as part of your normal puppy sale documentation. To assist breeders, Dogs Victoria has a template health declaration form that you can use to meet this requirement.

The health declaration may cover off on things such as pups who have an irregular or abnormal bite, have an umbilical or inguinal hernia, or where a male puppy does not have two fully descended testes at the time of sale. It may cover off on pups who have sustained an injury prior to sale, or who have been born with a congenital defect.

Your veterinarian may have identified issues at your puppy's 6 week health check and vaccination visit. These should have been noted on the Puppy Health Check Veterinary Certificate (which you will supply to the new owner in the puppy information pack), but you still need to provide a health declaration at the time of sale.

## **Important!**

*Your veterinarian is the best source of accurate advice in regards to you providing information to potential puppy owners as to how any defects may affect the future health and welfare of the pup. Make sure that you discuss any issues with them so that you can complete your health declaration correctly.*



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## Contract of sale

Most breeders also choose to have a formal contract of sale document. The contract of sale document is signed by both the breeder and the new pet owner and clearly outlines the terms of the sale.

Most contracts of sale provide details of the puppy (name, microchip, registration type etc.) as well as outlining what is and is not included in the purchase price. There may also be details of any restrictions that you may have set on the puppy (i.e. 'not to be bred', 'not to be on sold', 'Limited Register registration' etc.), and rules relating to what should happen if the owners can no longer care for their pup.

### **Important!**

*Dogs Victoria has model [Agreements of Sale](#) available on their website for breeders to use, and some clubs have developed contracts of sale for their members. You might also want to ask your mentors what they include in their puppy sale contracts.*

Where the pup is being sold on 'breeder's terms' (where the breeder enters into an agreement with the new owner to still have breeding access/rights over the animal), there needs to be a clear description of the obligations for both parties, and a documented timeline for events to occur.

## Sale guarantee

It is a requirement that you offer your puppy purchasers a 'sale guarantee'. This outlines what occurs if the puppy becomes unwell or ill in the immediate post purchase period or if there are health issues detected that will impact the animal's health and welfare that have not been disclosed in the Breeder Health Declaration.

*Dogs Victoria Regulation 20.1.25 outlines the minimum standards in relation to sale guarantees:*

*With the exception of matters disclosed in the health declaration, a member shall abide by the following as a minimum practice when selling dogs;*

- Where a dog is returned to the member within 3 days of sale, for any reason not supported by a statement from a veterinary practitioner, the member must take back the animal and refund 75% of the purchase price.*
- Where a dog is returned to the member within 21 days of sale accompanied by a statement from a veterinary practitioner that the animal is unacceptable for health reasons, the member must take back the animal and refund 100% of the purchase price.*
- If an animal is diagnosed with, suffering from, dies of, or is euthanased from a physical defect or disease that is directly traceable to the point of sale within 3 years of purchase, the member must, subject to a second veterinary opinion, refund 100% of the purchase price where the owner of the animal provides supporting statements from a veterinary practitioner, including test results where a suitable test is available.*
- Owners of the animal must make veterinary reports and test results available to the breeder for the breeder to obtain their own veterinary advice (second opinion), and for the purpose of informing future breeding management.*

Most breeders add a clause to their contract of sale that insists that the new owner have the puppy checked by their own veterinarian within a specified time – usually within a week of purchase. This ensures that the new owner develops a relationship with their vet and provides independent confirmation of the puppy's health status.



# Preparing for your puppies to head off to their new homes

You might also want to consider outlining the details of what should happen should the puppy require emergency treatment within the sale guarantee period. At the very minimum, there should be a clause requiring the new owners to contact you as soon as the puppy becomes unwell and to keep you informed and updated as veterinary care is sought.

## Other items to consider including in your puppy packs

There are several other items that you may consider including in your puppy packs. What you decide to include is up to you, but you may be able to further assist your puppies have a smooth transition and help your new owners get off to a great start.

## Food

Most breeders will include some food for the puppy so that there are no sudden changes in diet at the same time as the stresses of moving to a new home. By providing enough food for at least three or four days, the new owners can gradually change the pup's diet (if they choose) whilst reducing the risk of tummy upsets.

Many of the larger pet food companies offer 'puppy packs' that breeders can order once they have a litter. These are often provided free of charge to breeders and can be a great way to provide some additional 'goodies' and samples of the food you may have been feeding when your puppies head off to their new home. Of course, these puppy packs are also designed to promote brand loyalty, so there are usually some 'extras' the owners can access by providing their details or signing up.

## Scented items

As the puppies will be moving away from their mother and littermates, some breeders like to include an item that has been in with the litter so that it carries a familiar scent. This may be a toy, blanket or another soft item that will hold scent well.

## Puppy safe toys

There are many types of dog toys on the market, and new owners are often overwhelmed by the selection. Choosing toys that are safe and appropriately sized for puppies can be confusing. Helping direct your puppy people to toys suitable for chewing or teething puppies, daily enrichment activities, or interactive play can be a great relationship builder.

Maybe in your puppy information, you mention the use of food releasing toys as a way to entertain pups, as an enrichment activity or to slow their eating – why not include a puppy sized version in your puppy pack along with instructions on how they are used. This way, you are setting the new owners up for success right from the start!

## Collars and leads

Another item you might want to include is a puppy sized collar and lead. Although many owners will have already been out shopping for collars, they may not have the right sized equipment when they come to collect their pup.

By providing a collar or lead, you make sure that if they have to stop on the way home to toilet the pup, they will have something to use to make sure the puppy does not accidentally escape.

## Pet insurance

Many breeders make use of introductory pet insurance offers as part of their puppy pack offering. Pet Insurance companies will often offer breeders a program where all new puppy owners are entitled to a period of free cover – generally around three months – if the breeder refers them and provides their details.

## Loan of items

Depending on your situation and location, you may also choose to loan your new puppy owners items that may help manage their new puppy in the first week or so.



# Preparing for your puppies to head off to their new homes

Probably the most commonly loaned item is a pen or crate. This may simply be to assist in getting the puppy home safely if they arrive without a suitable car restraint, but can also assist with toilet training or confinement when the puppy cannot be directly supervised. Once the new owners see the value of the item, they may choose to purchase their own equipment, or arrange a more permanent set up of their own.

## Grooming equipment and information

If you have a breed that requires specific grooming tools, sometimes it is best to provide an example of these in your puppy pack, or at least provide information about where the new owner could source the items. The brushes and combs sold in pet stores are often not suitable for certain kinds of coat, and many are of poor quality.

If yours is a breed that requires regular clipping, you may also want to include information about finding a good groomer, the type/style of haircut to ask for, and pictures of the breed (both adults and puppies) trimmed and not trimmed.

Some breeders also include links to other grooming resources such as Youtube videos showing how to bath, dry, comb and brush the breed correctly.

## Follow up and ongoing support

You are going to be anxious that your puppies transition into their new homes smoothly. Most new owners will be quick to call for advice, and many will send photos and updates regularly during those first few weeks.

Some new owners, especially first time pet owners, will take up a lot of your time in those first few weeks with seemingly endless questions and stories, but this usually means that they really want to get everything right and don't want to make any mistakes.

Most breeders will schedule a follow up call about 24 to 48 hours after the puppy heads to its new home. This gives the new owner a chance to ask any questions, and give you some reassurance that the puppy is settling in well. This should be followed up with reminders about worming, vaccinating, and even desexing when these become due.

As a breeder registered with Dogs Victoria, you are expected to provide ongoing support for every puppy you breed throughout their lifetime. This is something that sets Dogs Victoria breeders apart from other breeders whose input often ceases as soon as the money from the sale hits their bank account.

### *Dogs Victoria Regulation 20.1.21*

*A breeder shall be expected to maintain reasonable contact with the purchasers of dogs from that breeder and to offer continued advice and reasonable assistance.*

Breeding is hard work, and saying goodbye to puppies that you have raised can be very emotional. Hopefully, you have chosen homes that will love and care for your puppies as you do, and your puppies will go on to bring untold joy and happiness to their new families.

Most experienced breeders will tell you they have made life long friends with some of their puppy purchasers. Others will tell you they are still receiving Christmas cards and birthday updates from pups that they bred 10 or even 15 years ago!

This is one of the things that makes breeding dogs so worthwhile...