

# New laws for dog breeders in NSW



## What is changing?

The NSW government has introduced new laws to strengthen the welfare of dogs bred in NSW. These changes amend the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* and the *Companion Animals Act 1998* to ensure better standards, accountability and transparency in dog breeding activities. The new laws are being introduced in stages and apply to all dog breeders in NSW, including those with accidental litters.

### Key dates:



#### From 21 November 2024

Restrictions on dog numbers. Cap of 20 non-desexed female adult dogs (i.e. over 6 months of age) on premises. Breeders with more than 20 have until 1 December 2025 to comply or have an approved exemption in place.



#### From 1 December 2025

- Exemption for certain breeders who had more than 20 female adult dogs (i.e. over 6 months of age) on 24 October 2024, under certain conditions until 1 December 2035
- Mandatory breeder identification requirements
- Lifetime breeding cap for dogs and associated reporting requirements
- Minimum staff to dog ratio requirements
- ID requirements for the sale or transfer of dogs born on 1 December 2025.



#### From 1 December 2026

Breeders with an exemption to hold more than 20 non-desexed female adult dogs must not have more than 50.



#### From 1 December 2029

All breeders are required to comply with the [Animal Welfare Code of Practice for Breeding Dogs and Cats](#).





# Maximum number of female adult dogs

To protect animal welfare and ensure responsible breeding, NSW has introduced new limits following community consultation on the number of female adult dogs per premises.

From 21 November 2024, a dog premises\* must not have more than 20 non-desexed female adult dogs over six months of age (female adult dog\*\*). Transitional laws were introduced to help breeders with more than 20 female adult dogs to gradually reduce their numbers in a controlled way, to avoid negative impacts on animal welfare.

## Did you know?

- \*A dog premises includes residential premises and commercial premises, used or intended to be used for the accommodation, shelter or care of dogs. This also covers vehicles, aircraft, vessels, trailers, or caravans. If any of these are on or next to a dog premises, they will be considered part of the premises.
- \*\*The maximum female adult dog requirements do not apply in certain circumstances, such as the essential government services (i.e. police and corrections dogs) and specified animal welfare functions, such as for rehoming.

Transitional arrangements include:

A limited exemption is available for certain breeders from 1 December 2025 to 30 November 2035. Breeders who had more than 20 female adult dogs on their premises as of 24 October 2024 could apply for an exemption.

The exemption comes with strict conditions: no breeder can have more than 50 female adult dogs by 1 December 2026, they must follow the [Animal Welfare Code of Practice for Breeding Dogs and Cats](#), submit an annual report and make their premises available to be audited and inspected every two years. The exemption application process is managed by the NSW Office of Local Government.

## New offences for breaching the maximum cap of 20 female adult dogs:

- Penalty for individuals - a maximum of 1,000 penalty units (\$110,000), or 2 years imprisonment, or both; and for a corporation - a maximum of 5,000 penalty units (\$550,000)
- Penalty notice offence - \$1,000 for individuals and \$5,000 for a corporation





# Mandatory breeder identification

All dog breeders in NSW - whether regular, occasional, or accidental - must meet new mandatory identification requirements. These laws strengthen transparency in dog breeding across NSW and helps people buying a puppy know they're dealing with a reputable breeder.

From 1 December 2025, anyone breeding dogs will be required to obtain a breeder identification number, with some exceptions as detailed below. All existing breeder identification numbers for breeding dogs will have their dog breeder eligibility status set to inactive on 1 December 2025.

This means before that date:

- Breeders currently holding a voluntary breeder identification number will need to activate their dog breeder eligibility status by acknowledging and agreeing to comply with the new arrangements and provide updated details.
- Anyone using a membership number of a recognised dog breeder organisation will need to apply for a breeder identification number, as these will no longer be accepted in place of a breeder identification number.

If a dog becomes pregnant unexpectedly and the person in charge does not have a breeder identification number they must apply for one either within 14 days after becoming aware of the pregnancy or 7 days after the dog gives birth, whichever comes first.

To apply or reactivate your breeder identification number visit the [NSW Pet Registry](https://petregistry.nsw.gov.au) via the NSW Office of Local Government website: [petregistry.nsw.gov.au](https://petregistry.nsw.gov.au). To be a registered dog owner in NSW and hold a breeder identification number you must be 18 years or over.

There are exceptions to applying for a new breeder identification number, including:

- Farmers breeding working dogs for the purpose of working on the land on which they were bred will be exempt from obtaining a breeder identification number whilst they remain on that land.
- Designated rehoming organisations who have custody of seized or surrendered dogs and where one of these dogs is already pregnant or becomes pregnant accidentally, their rehoming organisation number will be accepted in lieu of a breeder identification number.

There are also new laws for rehoming organisations that provide clear directions regarding breeding puppies.

If a designated rehoming organisation intentionally breeds dogs, it must obtain a breeder identification number by 1 December 2025 to comply with the new mandatory identification laws.

The applications for breeder identification number and rehoming organisation number are administered through the NSW Office of Local Government.

## New offences for failing to obtain a breeder identification number:

- For individuals - a maximum of 100 penalty units (\$11,000), or 6 months imprisonment, or both; and for a corporation, a maximum of 500 penalty units (\$55,000)
- Penalty notice offence of \$500 for individuals and \$2,500 for a corporation





# Lifetime breeding limits for dogs

A mandatory lifetime litter cap, setting out the maximum number of pregnancies and types of births, will apply to all adult female dogs. Breeders will also be required to keep records of all births.

From 1 December 2025, a dog can have a maximum of 5 litters, or up to 3 caesarean litters, whichever happens first. If a dog has already had 2 caesareans, a veterinarian must provide written approval before any further pregnancy, confirming it won't seriously risk the dog's health. The overall litter limits still apply.

Written records must be made by breeders within 14 days of delivery and kept for 3 years to show on request. The records must specify:

- date of delivery
- mode of delivery - whether caesarean or other
- a copy of the veterinary certificate if veterinary approval was required
- the details of the veterinarian who performed the caesarean if it was required

## New offences for breaching lifetime litter limits:

- For individuals - a maximum of 1,000 penalty units (\$110,000), or 2 years imprisonment, or both; and for a corporation, a maximum of 5,000 penalty units (\$550,000)
- Penalty notice offence of \$1,000 for individuals and \$5,000 for a corporation

## New offences for breaching record keeping requirements:

- For individuals - a maximum of 100 penalty units (\$11,000) and for a corporation, a maximum of 500 penalty units (\$55,000)
- Penalty notice offence of \$500 for individuals and \$2,500 for a corporation





# Minimum number of staff for dog breeding premises

Mandatory staff to dog ratios for dog breeding premises are being brought in to ensure proper and sufficient care for dogs.

From 1 December 2025, dog premises must have at least one staff member for every 20 dogs. The person who manages or controls the premises must also make sure each dog gets proper care, food and water. Staff do not need to be present 24/7, unless extra care is needed because of illness or veterinary advice.

Staff may include individuals working full-time or part-time, whether as employees, volunteers, owners, managers, or family members of the owner or manager. All staff must be aged 14 years or older.

For the purposes of calculating the staff to dog ratio, a dog over 12 weeks is counted as one dog. A litter of dogs under 12 weeks of age will be counted as one dog, in recognition of the critical role played by the female parent.

The minimum number of staff is to be calculated by dividing the number of dogs at the premises by 20 and rounding up to the nearest whole number. For example, if there are 30 dogs at the premises, dividing 30 by 20 equals 1.5, which must be rounded up to 2 staff members.

There is an exemption for dogs being bred for assistance animal purposes if the owner or manager is a member of either the International Guide Dog Federation or an accredited member of Assistance Dogs International.



## New offences for breaching the staff to animal ratio and proper care requirement:

- For individuals - a maximum of 400 penalty units (\$44,000); and for a corporation, a maximum of 2,000 penalty units (\$220,000)
- Penalty notice offence of \$1,000 for individuals and \$5,000 for a corporation





# Sale or transfer of dogs

Requirements to provide identification numbers for the sale or transfer of dogs will be changing to strengthen transparency and traceability in dog breeding and rehoming across NSW.

From 1 December 2025, all advertisements for selling or rehoming dogs born after that date must include the dog's microchip number and the breeder's ID number. If the breeder is unknown (such as through a rehoming centre), the organisation's ID number must be used instead. If no advertisement is placed, this information must still be given to the buyer before or at the time of sale.

The information required to be disclosed when selling or transferring dogs, from 1 December 2025.

| For dogs born <i>before</i> 1 December 2025                                                                                                                                                                                   | For dogs born <i>from</i> 1 December 2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• dog microchip number or</li><li>• a relevant breeder identification number, or</li><li>• rehoming organisation number allocated under the <i>Companion Animals Act 1998</i></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a microchip number <b>and</b></li><li>• the breeder identification number allocated under the <i>Companion Animals Act 1998</i>, or</li><li>• a rehoming organisation number allocated under the <i>Companion Animals Act 1998</i></li></ul> |

There are some exceptions to these new arrangements:

- If a dog being sold or transferred is 6 months of age or older and the relevant identification and registration information required under the *Companion Animals Act 1998* has been recorded in the NSW Pet Registry, the dog's microchip number is sufficient.
- If a dog being advertised is 8 weeks of age or younger and it is not microchipped, the microchip of the female parent must be displayed and be clearly identified as the female parent. It is important to note that any dog must not be rehomed (sold or transferred) until they are over 8 weeks of age.
- If the dog being sold is a retired greyhound, the greyhound racing industry participant number allocated under the *Greyhound Racing Act 2017* may be used in lieu of a breeder identification number, however requirements for the animal's microchip number still apply.

## New offences for breaching the requirements to provide identification during sale or transfer of dogs:

- For individuals - a maximum of 150 penalty units (\$16,500), or 6 months imprisonment; or both; and for a corporation, a maximum of 750 penalty units (\$82,500)
- Penalty notice offence of \$1,000 for individuals and \$5,000 for a corporation





# Animal Welfare Code of Practice – Breeding Dogs and Cats

It will become mandatory for all dog breeders to comply with the Animal Welfare Code of Practice – Breeding Dogs and Cats (Breeding Code) to ensure improved animal welfare outcomes for dogs in NSW.

From 1 December 2029, all dog breeders must follow the Breeding Code, even if the breeding was unplanned. A person is considered a breeder whether they are an experienced breeder or have a one-off accidental litter. Breeders must also make sure that all staff comply with the Breeding Code, or with the parts of the Breeding Code that apply to individual circumstances.

The government will consult with stakeholders on the Breeding Code and make any necessary amendments prior to being mandated, to ensure it is fit for purpose for all breeders.

It is important to note that the current requirement to comply with the Breeding Code continues to apply for those businesses who breed dogs, or cats, for fee or reward.

Penalties apply for individuals and corporations for non-compliance with the Breeding Code.



© State of New South Wales through DPIRD 2025. The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing October 2025. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the DPIRD or the user's independent adviser.

