

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Updates to the Standards of Care for Outdoor Dogs under the *Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019 (PAWS Act)*

1. What do these updates mean for owners and custodians that have their dogs outdoors? What requirements do I need to meet?

Currently, Ontario Regulation 444/19, the Standards of Care and Administrative Requirements regulation under the *Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act (PAWS Act)*, includes standards of care for dogs that “live primarily outdoors”.

With this amendment, the existing standards of care for dogs that “live primarily outdoors” will be replaced with a new set of standards. The updated standards establish a definition of a dog “kept outdoors” – a dog that is outdoors continuously for 60 or more minutes without being in the physical presence of its owner or custodian – and create associated care requirements. The updated standards will also set out a maximum amount of time that a dog may be tethered outdoors in a 24-hour period before it must receive off-tether time for exercise and enrichment.

The updated requirements create more comprehensive requirements related to:

- **General care** – including access to shade, food and water, grooming and nail care, and health and welfare maintenance.
- **Outdoor dog shelter** – including when an outdoor dog shelter is required (with exceptions for livestock guardian dogs and dogs that have access to a structure housing livestock), as well as design features and size-related specifications for an outdoor dog shelter.
- **Use of tethering** – including when dogs cannot be tethered, the safe usage of tethers, minimum space requirements when a dog is tethered, and maximum time a dog can spend on a tether (with limited exceptions).
- **Use of housing pens** – including the use of housing pens, minimum housing pen size and restrictions on outdoor dogs that can be penned together (with limited exceptions).
- **Tethering and housing pen containment area** – including adequate cleaning and sanitation, as well as features to support the physical comfort and welfare of a dog while they are contained outdoors.

Please review the attached fact sheet or review the amending regulation by visiting [Ontario e-Laws](#).

To assist the public, the Ministry of the Solicitor General (ministry) will develop a guidance document that provides examples of different ways that owners and custodians of outdoor dogs can meet the updated requirements.

2. Is there a deadline for when the public and businesses will need to meet these new requirements?

The updated standards will apply across Ontario as of July 1, 2022. This provides time for the public and businesses that choose to keep and tether their dogs outdoors to meet these updated requirements to help ensure the welfare, health and safety of outdoor dogs in Ontario.

3. Who will be responsible for enforcing these new requirements once they are in effect on July 1, 2022?

The updated standards will be enforced by the province's animal welfare enforcement body, Animal Welfare Services (AWS). AWS is responsible for the enforcement of the PAWS Act and its regulations. Provincial inspectors carry out inspections and investigations and respond to concerns of distress. They also conduct outreach and education on animal care best practices.

4. What are the penalties for someone who breaches these updated standards when they come into effect on July 1, 2022 (for example, fines or jail time)?

The penalties for [contravening the standards of care and administrative requirements for animals under the PAWS Act](#) are:

- In the case of individuals, a fine of up to \$75,000 and/or up to six months imprisonment for a first offence and a fine of up to \$100,000 and/or up to one year imprisonment for a subsequent offence.
- In the case of corporations, a fine of up to \$100,000 for a first offence and a fine of up to \$250,000 for a subsequent offence.

Animal welfare inspectors may apply their discretion to enforce based on the circumstances. Inspectors also engage in providing education and use compliance-related tools to encourage adherence to the PAWS Act (for example, warnings and orders).

5. Where can I report breaches of the new standards, once they are in effect on July 1, 2022?

If you believe the new standards are not being met after they have come into effect on July 1, 2022, or that an animal is in distress, you can call the Ontario Animal Protection Call Centre (OAPCC) at 1-833-9ANIMAL (1-833-926-4625) to report your animal welfare concerns. This call centre is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Reporting to the OAPCC ensures prompt and appropriate triaging. Kindly note, the call centre cannot provide information about what calls have been received or the status of ongoing investigations.

6. Who was consulted to help develop these updated standards?

To help inform the development of updated and new regulations under the PAWS Act, in November 2020, the ministry established a multi-disciplinary [PAWS Advisory Table](#) made up of a group of experts including veterinarians and animal advocates.

Additionally, in March 2021, the ministry formed an Outdoor Dogs Technical Table (Technical Table) to seek further technical expertise. The Technical Table included representation from various dog-related industries (sled and sporting dogs, livestock guardian dogs, kennels and breeders), veterinarians, enforcement entities and other subject matter experts.

Feedback from the PAWS Advisory Table and Technical Table, public and stakeholder submissions received through Ontario's Regulatory Registry and a review of laws and policies in other Canadian and international jurisdictions, academic literature and other reports helped to inform these updated standards.

7. Why not apply the updated standards to all dogs? What protections exist for other dogs?

The PAWS Act and its regulations ensure that all animals covered under the Act are protected and treated in a humane manner.

Ontario Regulation 444/19 (Standards of Care and Administrative Requirements) contains basic standards that apply to all animals covered under the Act. These standards have general requirements to provide adequate and appropriate food, water, medical attention and care, sanitary conditions, and space to enable natural movement and exercise and more. More details on the basic standards of care can be found at: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/animal-welfare>.

Due to the risks faced by outdoor dogs, the ministry has determined that additional specific standards are required for the health and safety of outdoor dogs.

8. Why do the updated standards have an exemption from the requirement for a dog shelter for livestock guardian dogs and dogs that have access to a building that houses livestock?

Livestock guardian dogs that are of a typical breed used for protecting livestock from predation and living with the flock or herd they are protecting do not require a dog shelter as they are likely to receive protection from the elements and shelter from living alongside the livestock (for example, livestock guardian dogs will burrow into the centre of the flock to block out wind). Dogs that have access to a building that is housing livestock, such as a barn, are likely to receive warmth and protection through their access to a barn which is warmed by livestock and do not require a dog shelter.

9. Will the updated standards impact First Nation communities?

Animal Welfare Services endeavours to engage with First Nation leadership as a matter of practice prior to enforcing the PAWS Act in First Nation communities. The ministry also respects that First Nations have the authority to make their own by-laws related to animals.

10. Will the updated standards impact municipalities? How will these updated standards work with municipal by-laws that govern the care of outdoor dogs?

The updated standards will not impose any new requirements on municipal by-law enforcement departments. In the event of a conflict between a municipal by-law and the updated standards, [Section 67 of the PAWS Act](#) continues to apply. Section 67 of the PAWS Act specifies that if there is a conflict between a provision of the PAWS Act or its regulations and a municipal by-law related to the welfare of animals or the prevention of cruelty to animals, the provision that provides the greater protection to animals prevails.