

THE SCOTTISH TERRIER EMERGENCY CARE SCHEME

Registered Charity No's: 275666/SC041298



The Policy for Dogs with Behavioural Problem(s)

1. The need for a policy

- 1.1 The Scottish Terrier has many unique qualities including independence of mind which can, on occasion lead to confrontation with other animals or humans. As with any other animal welfare organisation, there is a need for STECS to have a clearly stated policy and procedures for dealing with dogs (this term includes male and female), that display behavioural problems. This will ensure that all dogs taken into the care of the Scheme receive fair and equal treatment and are given the best possible chance to enjoy a full and active life.

2. The objectives of the policy

- 2.1 In almost every case it is apparent that any behavioural problems will have resulted from a previous living environment or human mismanagement. It is the overriding objective of STECS, to pursue all relevant behaviour modification strategies in every case and to do so, for as long as there is any realistic prospect of improvement. In particular, it is the policy of STECS to avoid the need to end the life of any dog, wherever that can be achieved. To these ends STECS will always seek to ensure the availability of sufficient trained and competent assessors and carers, with professional involvement wherever appropriate, and to use all available resources to make sure the objectives of this policy are fully met.
- 2.2 This policy seeks to develop and enhance the current 'best practices' used by the current Re-Homing Officers and ensure that a formal procedure (appendix 1 page 4), is adopted, by all STECS Re-Homing Officers.

3 Risk management

- 3.1 If any dog assigned into the care of STECS displays any behaviour problems, which in the opinion of the Re-Homing Officer, may endanger themselves or any third party, the Welfare Officer should be contacted for advice. In extreme cases advice from the Welfare Officer should be sought before collection. Dogs should be left with the current owner so that special arrangements can be made to collect the dog.
- 3.2 Once adopted and ownership transferred, STECS is unable to exercise any degree of control over the dog or its new owner and therefore cannot be liable for any injury caused to another animal or human, due to the action of the dog or 'inaction' of the new owner.
- 3.3 Therefore a coherent approach to behavioural problems requires a well defined procedure consistently applied. To ensure, as far as possible, equality of treatment of risk management standards for behavioural assessments will be used in every case. Behavioural problems can include displays of aggression, biting and abnormal psychological behaviour, which can often be changed by training and other methods. This policy refers broadly to three levels of 'behaviour' problems: These are set out in three levels below:-



3.4 Level 1 (Minor) Behavioural Problem(s):

At this level no evidence has been disclosed by any person that the dog has caused any injury or harm to another animal or human. However the dog has 'displayed' acts of aggression or abnormal behaviour, without causing injury. Examples include; a dog attempting to control the actions of a human by biting at shoes or clothing, defensive growling and aggressive actions towards people or other dogs, on or off the lead, the dog trying to control the actions of a person or another dog, without causing harm. Other attention seeking behaviour may also fall into this category; however advice from an Assessor may only be required, in many of these low level cases.

This limited degree of involvement by an Assessor, may also be appropriate to aid the integration of 'kennel bitches' into the domestic home, once rescued. On the whole this level of behavioural difficulty is often corrected with the patience and consistency, provided by the new owner.

3.5 Level 2 (Moderate) Behavioural Problem(s):

At this level, there is clear and confirmed evidence that the dog has caused any injury or harm to another animal or human, beyond the limits provided in the examples shown in the Level 1 category above. This could be a single 'bite' resulting in an injury or repeated acts of domination, such as snapping and 'squaring up', which could then result in a 'bite', causing injury.

3.6 Level 3 (Serious) Behavioural Problem(s):

At this level, there is clear and confirmed evidence that the dog has caused injury or harm to another animal or human, on more than one occasion. This may also include serious acts of aggression that are causing serious concerns to the current owner, re-homer, outside agencies or members of the public. These concerns should be fully documented and confirmed in writing, whenever possible.

4. **Working practices for the assessment of dog with behaviour problem(s):**

4.1 Assessors:

4.1.1 Numbers:

Once trained there will be at least four (4) Assessors to cover England, Scotland and Wales plus the Welfare Officer.

The assessors (as volunteers for the role), will be decided by the Trustees, once the policy and procedure has been approved, subject to experience, location, facilities, availability and the willingness to attending training sessions, now and in the future.

Initially, in order to instigate the policy as soon as possible and in the event of circumstances that demand immediate action, Re-Homing Officers in consultation with the Welfare Officer, may use other Rescue groups, for help and support. Should a dog become particularly aggressive on collection or later, the Welfare Officer in consultation with the Re-Homer, may wish to use local kennelling facilities and suitably trained staff to assess the dog, before it is returned into STECS care, for the application of this policy and procedure.

4.1.2 Training:

Any Assessor acting on behalf of STECS should have a minimum qualification, the same as or equal to, a five day canine behaviour foundation course, covering subjects that include; dog law, breed recognition, genetic and learned behaviour, behaviour problem solving, how dogs learn, behaviour modelling and behavioural advice.



4.1.3 Equipment:

Assessors will be provided with any appropriate equipment that is considered necessary to fulfil the role, including kennelling facilities. The provision of equipment is a priority that should ensure the health and safety of any person or animal that may come into contact with the dog.

- 4.2 If the dog behaviour is assessed under this procedure to be of a level that it is considered safe to re-home the animal to an experienced new owner, a document outlining the concerns and liabilities will be prepared by the Assessor. This document once agreed by the Welfare Officer and Re-Homer is then signed by all parties. The document will be in addition to the Adoption Contract and form part of the adoption conditions and requirements.
- 4.3 Any special conditions, imposed on the new owner, relating to the safety of the Public, the Adopted family or other animals, will be included in this document. The new owner will be required to agree to any special conditions, as part of the adoption contract process.
- 4.5 The new owner will be provided with advice, support and assistance following adoption. Once the dog is adopted by the new owner, they are responsible for its behaviour and any actions that may occur as a result of the animal's behaviour. STECS will always be available to assist with any problems and if for any reason the new owner cannot care for the dog, then STECS will take the dog back into its care and control.
- 4.6 Once re-homed, it is up to the Re-homing Officer to ensure that the family is happy with their new family member and that the dog is happy with its new family. The Re-Homing Officer will work with the family through any 'settling in' period and assist with any issues that may arise. STECS will always be prepared, if needed, to take the dog back into STECS care and consider moving the dog into another home, if the need arises.

5.0 Summary:

- 5.1 The aim of this policy and the use of the agreed procedure, is to ensure that every dog taken into the care of the Scheme, is given the best possible chance, to live a full and peaceful life. It will also serve to further protect the Scheme, against any criminal or civil litigation and support the rescue work of the Re-Homing Officers.
- 5.2 By the positive and practical application of this policy, by all officers, trustees and members of STECS, the aims and objectives of the Scheme will be enhanced. The policy is intended to provide the public, police and other agencies with additional confidence, when dealing with the scheme and the rescue of problem Scottish Terriers.



Appendix 1: The Procedure

At all times a comprehensive document shall be maintained, detailing the assessment processes and the procedure to be followed for the category of behavioural problem determined in each case. The contents of that document shall fully accord with the principles and objectives of this policy and shall be subject to the approval of the Governing Body at all times. The powers and responsibilities set out in this ***Procedure for Dogs with Behavioural Problems*** shall not be exceeded or varied in any case except with the specific authority of the Governing Body.

- 1.1 If any dog assigned into the care of STECS displays any behaviour problems, which in the opinion of the Re-Homing Officer or other STECS member, may endanger themselves or any third party, the Welfare Officer or nominated deputy for this procedure, must be informed as soon as possible for advice, guidance and implementation of the 'procedure'.
- 1.2 In extreme cases advice from the Welfare Officer should be sought before collection. **In these cases dogs should be left with the current owner, as STECS may reserve the 'right' to decline the dog or make special arrangements to collect the dog.**
- 1.3 If a case occurs where a dog has been transferred into the ownership of STECS and its behaviour immediately causes extreme danger to other animals or people upon collection, the Re-homer will immediately seek the advice of the Welfare Officer and a Veterinary Surgeon concerning its immediate future. If the Veterinary Surgeon's opinion is that the dog should be euthanise and this is agreed by all parties involved, further assessment under this procedure will not be required and the process can be authorised. The opinion of the Vet should be recorded in writing and the Chairman will be informed as soon as possible. A full report by the Welfare Officer will be presented to the Trustees at the next meeting.
- 1.4 Dogs once transferred to the ownership of STECS and subject to this procedure, will have all assessments, whenever possible, conducted in a 'normal' home environment. Early Veterinary observation/advice should be obtained regarding the dog's health and behavioural issues, as part of the assessment. The Welfare Officer **must** be kept informed by any appropriate means agreed, at all the stages of this procedure.
- 1.5 If the initial level of behaviour is assessed at Level 1, the Welfare Officer may decide that the current Re-Homing Officer may be able to observe and assess the dog's general behaviour, for a period of not less than 7 days. If this cannot be achieved, the dog's general behaviour will be observed and assessed by a trained Assessor, for a period of not less than seven days, see 1.7 below.
- 1.6 When a dog behaviour is initially assessed at level 2 or 3 the Welfare Officer will make arrangements for the transfer of the dog to an appropriate place of safety for assessment by a suitably qualified Assessor (as defined). The period of assessment will normally be not less than 14 days.
- 1.7 After the first 7/14 days assessment period, the Re-Homing Officer or Assessor (1.5-1.6 refer) should, in consultation with the Welfare Officer, decide whether further observations are required and if so, for how long, and whether the dog should be moved (1.5 refers).
- 1.8 If after the period of assessment is complete and after consultation with all the parties involved, the Welfare Officer considers that behaviour appears irreversible and the dog remains a dangerous threat to persons or another animal, advice from a Veterinary Surgeon will be obtained.
- 1.9 If having considered the advice from a Veterinary Surgeon about the dog's behaviour, the Welfare Officer considers that the behaviour is not curable and that the dog would remain an unacceptable risk, he should discuss the matter with the other members of the Welfare Committee. A collective recommended course of action will then be agreed by the Welfare Committee.
- 1.10 Should the recommendation of the Welfare Committee be to euthanize the dog, the Chairman of STECS will be informed, in order to ratify the recommendation. The Chairman may consult with other STECS Officers, in accordance with the Governing Document.
- 1.11 With the exception of 1.3 above, under no circumstances are any Area Re-homing Officers, the Welfare Officer, Members of the Welfare Committee or Trustees, empowered to authorise the euthanasia of any dog to which this policy would normally apply.

