



Cleaning and Disinfection at Home

We all know that sharing our lives with dogs comes with responsibilities.

Responsible pet ownership involves everything from making sure you provide your dog correct care – water, shade, nutrition, veterinary care and adequate mental and physical stimulation – to ensuring that your dog does not cause a nuisance by straying, barking or posing a threat to public safety.

Part of this is the expectation that you will house your pets in a clean and hygienic manner – not only to keep them healthy, but also for your own health and that of those around you.

The [Code of Practice for the Private Keeping of Dogs](#) lays out the Victorian Community's expected minimum standards for ALL dog owners. It states that '*All housing areas for dogs must be maintained in a safe, clean and hygienic condition at all times.*'

Dogs Victoria also has regulations relating to expected levels of cleanliness and hygiene:

20.1.5.3 Dog sleeping, housing and exercise areas shall be kept clean and at a good standard of hygiene by cleaning any faeces, wasted food, and soiled bedding daily.

Where pens and kennels are cleaned by hosing, material on floors (toys, bedding, food, faeces etc) shall be removed prior.

Hard surfaces in pens and kennels should be disinfected weekly or more often if required.

Veterinary advice shall be sought for managing the cleaning of premises and management of isolation if a contagious illness occurs in dogs;

Regular cleaning and disinfection are important to prevent the build-up of germs and parasites that can lead to disease.

Of course, hygiene is not just about cleaning and disinfection. Your day-to-day routine also needs to consider how and where you dispose of waste, how you store and prepare your dog's food, and how you control pests and vermin around your property, as these can all impact the health and safety of everyone on the property.

Some dog diseases pose a risk to humans!

There are some dog disease pathogens that can also cause disease in humans. These diseases are called 'zoonoses' (pronounced 'zoo-oo-no-seas'). Some of these can cause quite serious health issues in humans, so it is important that everyone takes regular precautions when handling and interacting with dogs regardless of whether the dog is sick or not.

The most important factor in preventing transmission of disease from dogs to humans is **good hand hygiene**.

This means making sure everyone who interacts with dogs regularly cleans their hands thoroughly with soap and water and uses an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

Hand hygiene is particularly important after handling, grooming and playing with dogs, picking up poop, after handling bedding, bowls or any other dog-related item that could be contaminated, and before eating, drinking or smoking.

Note: If your dog is unwell, they should be seen by a veterinarian, who will be able to advise you whether there is increased zoonotic risk.

If you are cleaning up after a sick dog, take extra precautions such as wearing gloves or other protective clothing and carefully disposing of any waste. Hand hygiene is even more critical around sick animals, so make sure that you are vigilant.





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So, what do we mean by cleaning and disinfection?

Cleaning and disinfection are two different processes.

Cleaning refers to the physical removal of pathogens, dirt and organic matter from surfaces being cleaned. Cleaning alone does not kill pathogens, but it can help reduce the risk of spreading disease by reducing the number of germs.

Cleaning involves first removing any visible droppings, discharge, dirt and/or debris, followed by a thorough scrubbing of the area with detergent (any product labelled as detergent will work) and water to break down and remove oils, grease and organic matter from the surface.

Cleaning is required before disinfection to reduce the amount of contamination and prepare the area so that a disinfectant can work properly.

When cleaning, the goal is to prevent spreading germs and dirt, so care must be taken to properly dispose of dirty items, and to ensure that cleaning tools that reusable are disinfected properly before being used again. You should also avoid using high pressure cleaning techniques prior to disinfection as these can create aerosol droplets that can spread germs far and wide.

Disinfection means using chemicals to kill or inactivate pathogens likely to cause disease on surfaces or objects.

There are a wide variety of disinfectant products available and some are more effective than others in regard to specific pathogens. Many pathogens are quite fragile once outside of the body and can be easily killed by just about any type of disinfectant. Others, such as canine parvovirus, are notoriously difficult to kill and require specific types of disinfectant to be destroyed.

Some disinfectants can create fumes or may be toxic to humans or pets if used improperly, so it is important to follow the manufacturer's instructions on the label in relation to dilution or mixing, application and 'contact time' as well as following any safety precautions to ensure the disinfectant works as intended but does not pose a risk to either humans or animals.

Make sure all cleaning and disinfection products are stored safely away from pets and children!

What disinfectant should I be using at home?

In most cases, any supermarket disinfectant labelled as '**hospital grade**' will be sufficient for regular disinfection in the home environment.

One of the cheapest and most readily available 'hospital grade' disinfectants is household bleach. Bleach will only be effective when diluted to the appropriate concentration (stronger is not better!) and you need to remember that diluted bleach solutions lose effectiveness over time and with exposure to sunlight.

There are many other disinfectants available on the market, some specifically for the veterinary market (kennels, clinics etc.) where animal toxicity is a critical factor and the risk of exposure to viruses such as parvovirus are much higher.

Your veterinarian will be able to advise on a suitable disinfectant for your individual circumstances.

Take care in relying on 'natural' or home-made recipes claiming to be disinfectants. Many of these include mixes of lemon juice, vinegar, essential oils (such as tea tree oil or eucalyptus) etc. Whilst it is true that some natural ingredients may have some antimicrobial properties (meaning that they may inhibit the growth of some bacteria or fungi), and many are excellent 'cleaners' – they do not pass the certification requirements of a disinfectant.

To be classed as a hospital grade disinfectant a substance needs to meet the performance standards set out by the [Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration](#) which includes a demonstrated the ability to kill a specific list of pathogens including viruses, spores, yeasts and moulds as well as bacteria.

Do your research carefully and make sure that you are using a product that is scientifically tested and proven to be effective.





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So, what should my cleaning and disinfection routine look like?

Understandably, not all Dogs Victoria members house their dogs the same way – some people have their dogs housed outside in kennels or yards, others may share all (or at least parts) of their house with their pets. Regardless of where your dog spends their time, you still need to keep the areas clean and hygienic.

When cleaning and disinfecting remember to use personal protective equipment and good hand hygiene. This may include rubber gloves, mask, protective clothing/apron or other protective gear such as gumboots, depending on what you are cleaning.

Remove any animals and unnecessary people from the area. Your pets should be kept away until the area is clean and dry, and any fumes have dissipated. You don't want dogs or children running through the area as you try to clean or apply disinfectant!

When disinfecting, apply hospital grade disinfectant to cleaned and dried surfaces, following manufacturer's instructions. Follow all safety precautions on the label. Make sure to dilute the product correctly, allow correct contact time, and rinse if directed.

*Dishwashers run on a cycle at **65 degrees or higher** using an appropriate dishwasher detergent are suitable for disinfection of all dishwasher-safe items (bowls, utensils, some toys).*

*Bedding, Soft Toys, blankets and leads/collars made of fabric can be disinfected by washing in your washing machine on a **hot cycle** using a combination of washing detergent and bleach.*

Remember that tools and equipment used during cleaning also need to be cleaned and disinfected. This may include pooper scoopers, scrubbing brushes, mops, mop buckets, bins etc.

If you have animals that are unwell, are expecting or raising a litter of pups, or have elderly or very young pets you will need to take extra care, and clean and disinfect more often.

At Least **ONCE** Every **DAY**

- » Pick up and dispose of dog droppings, and thoroughly clean areas that have been soiled by urine or droppings. Where cleaning is required, scrub all washable surfaces with detergent and warm water, then dry.
- » Pick up and dispose of uneaten food, damaged bedding or toys.
- » Dispose of any solid waste (such as droppings, chewed bedding/toys or left-over food) by placing it into leak-proof plastic bags ready for disposal in your household waste.

Depending on your Local Council waste disposal system, you may be able to dispose of dog droppings via your FOGO (green lid) bin. If this is the case, you must use biodegradable (green waste) bags.

Visit your Council website for information on what can and can't go into your FOGO bin and how to correctly dispose of dog waste in your area.

- » Clean all food bowls and food utensils after use by washing in hot soapy water and rinsing. Food storage and preparation areas should be cleaned and washed daily, and fridges and freezers must be kept free from old and/or spoiled pet foods.
- » Clean and fill all water bowls.
- » Check bedding for cleanliness and replace if soiled, wet or damaged. Replace, clean or disinfect as required.
- » Check toys and enrichment items for damage and soiling. Replace, clean or disinfect as required.
- » Outdoor runs may require hosing, indoor areas may require vacuuming or mopping.

At least **ONCE** every **WEEK**

- » All food bowls, utensils and water bowls should be disinfected, making sure to rinse thoroughly afterwards to prevent toxicity.
- » Disinfect runs, crates, and other dog housing areas – including areas inside your house.
- » Disinfect bedding, toys, enrichment and training items.
- » Disinfect vehicles, transport crates/cages, grooming equipment and tools.