



CANINE CARE CERTIFIED

Frequently Asked Questions

WHY WERE THESE STANDARDS DEVELOPED/NEEDED?

The Standards of Care were developed in 2013 by recognized academic, animal science and veterinary medicine leaders in canine welfare and led by the Center for Animal Welfare Science at Purdue University. The standards are the foundation for Canine Care Certified which ensures a higher, documented quality of care for dogs and puppies raised by breeders.

The program was developed at the request of a small group of responsible breeders that desired to have uniform voluntary standards that considered physical and behavioral welfare of dogs and puppies raised by breeders. Certifying breeders provides an added measure of assurance to consumers and pet owners that dogs and puppies raised under the program are cared for under stringent standards.

WHO RUNS CANINE CARE CERTIFIED?

Canine Care Certified is wholly administered by the Center for Canine Welfare (CCW). CCW is a newly formed, national non-profit that simply serves as a holding organization to manage the business aspects of Canine Care Certified. It serves an administrative function to provide information to breeders, assist with application support and connect breeders with the program's independent, third-party auditors. CCW is not a membership-based organization and is not affiliated with any animal rights organization. No one from the pet industry, USDA or an animal rights group has a position on the CCW Board.

All questions regarding communication and management of breeder participation in the certification program should be directed to info@caninecarecertified.org.

HOW DO I VIEW THE FULL STANDARDS OF CARE?

Breeders who are interested in becoming Canine Care Certified have the option to view the complete Standards of Care prior to moving forward with the application process for certification. Breeders may choose not to move forward with certification if they so desire and will be refunded the program deposit, less administrative costs.

WHO IS DOING THE AUDITS?

The credibility of the Canine Care Certified program rests in the actionable work of our auditing partner. CCW ensures that the certification program complies with the standards as developed by researchers at Purdue University, but does not conduct audits. Rather, audits must be completed by our designated, independent third-party in order to obtain certification.

For this reason, we have selected a highly reputable independent certification company with a long history of, and expertise in, animal welfare and on-premises auditing, to partner with us. Our auditing partner, Validus, is nationally recognized and is an independent certification company using proprietary assessments and audits based on the Standards of Care developed at Purdue University that are the basis of our certification program. Because they are independent from the registration process, auditors cannot be directly contacted; they are only deployed by the CCW.

HOW WILL THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS WORK?

Interested breeders are asked to create an account on the website to begin the certification process. They will then walk through a 5-step process and submit the required documentation before an independent audit with Validus can be scheduled. Upon completion of the audit, the breeder will either receive certification and supporting materials, or they will be placed on an improvement plan until all standards are met.

HOW OFTEN WILL THE AUDITS OCCUR?

Validus is continually training third-party auditors to assess compliance with our comprehensive standards. Re-audits for participating breeders will occur annually.

HOW DO I SIGN UP TO BE CERTIFIED?

Breeders can create an account at any time on the website to begin the process of certification. Those breeders without access to computers may opt to work with an approved breeder liaison to submit documentation for the application process. (Please note: only participating breeders will receive the full Standards of Care.) Our team is available to help answer any questions along the way. Email us at info@caninecarecertified.org.

HOW MUCH DOES CERTIFICATION COST?

The annual cost for certification is \$1,500, plus \$10 for each adult dog on a premise with more than 50 adult dogs (16 weeks or older). The annual certification fee is made in two payments - through the initial deposit and remaining certification fee due at the time the Breeder Kennel Application is submitted.

HOW SOON CAN I BE AUDITED?

Breeders can create an account through the website and begin walking through the certification process at any time. Following the submission of required documentation and the program fee, Validus will deploy trained auditors based on a number of factors including access, geographic location and other considerations.

It's important to understand that these are rigorous standards, and not every breeder who applies will successfully complete the first audit. Because the goal of the program is to raise the overall standards of care, we will work to help breeders meet the standards for certification. Coaching is available for participating breeders upon request.

HOW WILL YOU DETERMINE OR PRIORITIZE WHAT BREEDERS ARE AUDITED AND WHEN?

Attempts will be made to complete audits in the order in which applications are obtained. However, audits also will be scheduled in a manner that allows for the maximum number of site visits within a local area as to reduce auditor costs. The breeder availability will additionally factor into audit schedules.

CAN I SAY I'M CERTIFIED IF I'M ALREADY DOING WHAT IS REQUIRED?

No. Only breeders who have been audited through the Canine Care Certified program and have successfully demonstrated compliance with all standards may be certified. The program is copyrighted and trademarked and may only be used by participating and audited breeders.

WHAT IF I MEET MOST — BUT NOT ALL — OF THE STANDARDS?

Only breeders who successfully complete the Canine Care Certified audit of our full standards may be certified. The program will support breeders who wish to achieve certification by putting them on an improvement plan until all standards are met. A breeder that has not passed the Canine Care Certified third-party audit may not use the Canine Care Certified emblem.

IF I ALREADY MEET THE STANDARDS IN A SELF-EVALUATION OF MY OPERATIONS, CAN I BE AUTOMATICALLY CERTIFIED?

No. Breeders wishing to be certified under Canine Care Certified must participate in the third-party audit of their operations before they can be certified. Only the independent auditors may certify a breeding operation, and only upon successful completion of an audit will breeders officially become Canine Care Certified. Breeders cannot use the program seal without the corresponding audit participation and signed certificate from Validus.

IF I DO NOT PASS MY AUDIT AND OBTAIN CERTIFICATION, WHAT DO I DO?

At the completion of a successful audit process, Validus will provide a certificate to breeders who have completed a detailed assessment and audit of their practices. A breeder that has not passed the Canine Care Certified third-party audit will be provided with an improvement plan by Validus. Breeders will not receive certification until all standards are met.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THESE STANDARDS AND USDA LICENSING?

There is no formal relationship between the Center for Canine Welfare and USDA. Professional breeders must continue to comply with state or federal licensing.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE FUNDERS FROM THE PET INDUSTRY?

From the initial grant to Purdue University's Center for Animal Welfare Science, to the creation of the Canine Care Certified standards program, pet industry trade associations have had no involvement, direct or indirect, in the development of the standards, audit tools or certification process being performed by Validus.

The pet industry support is rooted in the science-based research conducted by the Center for Animal Welfare Science at Purdue University, which also speaks directly to consumer sentiment and support for more rigorous standards. The pet industry also provided valuable assistance in launching the program and introducing it to breeders. Further, it is hoped that pet industry support will provide additional incentive and encouragement for breeder participation.

WHAT IF CONSUMERS CAN'T FIND A CERTIFIED BREEDER?

We recognize that it will take some time for breeders to become certified and market their status. This will not happen overnight, due to the complexities of the audit process itself.

Consumers can ask their breeder if they are or plan to become certified, and inquire with pet stores on the relationships with certified breeders. Anyone engaging with a professional breeder and considering a dog or puppy should ask questions about the animal's care, housing, behavior and opportunities for exercise.

WHEN WILL THE FULL STANDARDS OF CARE BE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC?

CCW takes its responsibility to the pet industry seriously and values transparency, while recognizing the proprietary nature of the science-based research conducted by the faculty at Purdue University. The research is expecting to be published at a later date.

Breeders who are interested in participating in the Canine Care Certification program have the option to view the complete Standards of Care prior to moving forward with the application process for certification.

WHO PAID FOR THE UNIVERSITY-BASED RESEARCH THAT HAS LED TO THESE STANDARDS?

All funding came from members of the pet industry. To avoid any conflict of interest, funders have no involvement, direct or indirect, in the development of the standards. Further, no public funding of any kind was solicited or used as part of the research or development of the standards.

ARE BREEDERS FORCED TO COMPLY WITH THESE STANDARDS?

Canine Care Certified is a 100 percent voluntary program. However, breeders who choose to become certified must follow the standards in order to obtain and maintain certified status.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF CERTIFICATION?

For consumers, the designation indicates that puppies and dogs that are raised by a Canine Care Certified breeder are raised under an independently audited program that ensures that specific health and welfare standards have been met. The program provides an added measure of assurance that breeders of certified dogs are attending to their dogs' physical, genetic and behavioral health, and are committed to continuously raising the bar on the standard of care and attention they offer to their dogs. For breeders, participation in the program allows them to differentiate themselves from non-certified breeders, which provides an added measure of assurance to customers and consumers that the dogs they purchase from certified breeders are raised using science-based standards of care. It builds trust with customers and improves the overall well-being of their dogs.

To learn more, visit CanineCareCertified.org.

* Survey data sourced from Dr. Nicole Widmar, Courtney Bir and Dr. Candace Croney, Purdue University.