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Assistance dogs - Part 2: Dog lifetime welfare

Táto norma obsahuje anglickú verziu európskej normy.
This standard includes the English version of the European Standard.

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English Version

Assistance dogs - Part 2: Dog lifetime welfare

Chiens d'assistance - Partie 2 : Bien-être des chiens
tout au long de leur vie

Assistenzhunde - Teil 2: Lebenslanges Wohlergehen
von Hunden

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EN 17984-2:2025 (E)**European foreword**

This document (EN 17984-2:2025) has been prepared by Technical Committee CEN/TC 452 "Assistance dogs", the secretariat of which is held by UNMZ.

This European Standard shall be given the status of a national standard, either by publication of an identical text or by endorsement, at the latest by February 2026, and conflicting national standards shall be withdrawn at the latest by February 2026.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. CEN shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

This document is part of a series of standards under the general title *Assistance dogs* which will comprise the following parts:

- Part 1: Vocabulary
- Part 2: Dog lifetime welfare
- Part 3: Competencies for assistance dogs professionals
- Part 4: Pre-training, training and tasks
- Part 5: Client services
- Part 6: Accessibility and universal access

This document will be read in conjunction with EN 17984-1, EN 17984-3¹, EN 17984-4 and EN 17984-6 as the series is technically linked and to be read conjointly.

Any feedback and questions on this document should be directed to the users' national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found on the CEN website.

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¹ Under preparation. Stage at the time of publication: FprEN 17984-3:2025

Introduction

Lifetime encompasses the whole life course of the animal from pre-birth to old age and death. Accommodating the welfare of the dog is not only a legal requirement, but fundamental to the ethical basis of being a responsible custodian. This holds true for the breeder, trainer, owner/handler of a working dog, or of a retired dog and any other person who has temporary or permanent care of the dog.

This document provides an overview of the requirements that should be met in respect to welfare.

Following contemporary scientific thinking, lifetime welfare of assistance dogs should provide each individual at all life stages with a good life. This means that the dog's caretaker should aim to comply fully with best practice recommendations for dog welfare that are well above the minimum standards. The management of the dog should focus both on the minimization of negative experiences and the provision of opportunities for positive experiences.

To achieve this objective, this document uses the Five Domains Model (Mellor, 2016; Mellor, 2016b; 2020, Littlewood and Mellor, 2016).

Detailed guidelines regarding each section will be provided as supplementary material.

In defining, advising about, and assessing welfare, this document relies heavily on the Five Freedoms as proposed by the UK by Brambell (1965) namely: freedom from hunger and thirst; from discomfort; from pain, injury and disease; from fear and distress and the freedom to express normal behaviour. It is still commonly considered that providing for an animal's welfare is simply ensuring that these freedoms are met, that negative states such as pain, fear and distress are minimized, and that the animal has the opportunity to perform normal behaviours, such as general maintenance behaviours of moving, stretching, and grooming. However, this is limited both in understanding of what good welfare is and how it can be assessed (Mellor, 2016, 2020).

While these five freedoms acknowledge that animals are sentient and capable of feeling pain and other negative emotions, simply avoiding such states does not ensure that an animal has a life worth living, let alone a good life (Mellor, 2016). Good welfare and having a life worth living depends on the animal experiencing positive emotions, e.g. pleasure, confidence, interest, and a sense of control over its environment with opportunities to explore, solve problems and gain sufficient physical and mental rest (Mellor and Beausoleil, 2015; Mellor, 2016b, 2020). Age-related changes can impact the animal's ability to experience positive welfare, and this should be taken into consideration in the management of older dogs.

To ensure welfare, caretakers should have current knowledge and competency in welfare, ethology, learning theory and practical dog training. The dog's welfare should be informally monitored continuously by the caretaker. The dog's welfare should be formally assessed on a regular basis by appropriately trained person or persons. This includes assessment of all five domains of welfare (See Table 1).

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Table 1 — Five Provisions and Welfare Aims adapted from Mellor 2020

Domain	Provision	Animal Welfare Aim
1. Nutrition	Provide ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour	<i>Minimize</i> thirst and hunger and <i>enable</i> eating to be a pleasurable experience
2. Physical Environment	Provide shade/shelter or suitable housing, good air quality and comfortable resting areas	<i>Minimize</i> discomfort and exposure and <i>promote</i> thermal, physical, and other comforts
3. Health	Prevent or rapidly diagnose and treat disease and injury, and foster good muscle tone, posture, and cardiorespiratory function	<i>Minimize</i> breathlessness, nausea, pain, and other aversive experiences and <i>promote</i> the pleasures of robustness, vigour, strength and well-coordinated physical activity
4. Behavioural Interactions	Provide stimulating and engaging environment, friendly and playful companions as well as empathic, knowledgeable, and skilful people	<i>Minimize</i> threats and unpleasant restriction on all kinds of behavioural interactions and <i>promote</i> engagement in rewarding activities
5. Mental State/Affects	Provide safe, congenial and species (and breed) appropriate opportunities to have pleasurable experiences	<i>Promote</i> various forms of comfort, pleasure, interest, confidence, and a sense of control

1 Scope

The purpose of this document is to protect the welfare of assistance dogs. For this, it sets out requirements based on the Five Domains Model to ensure the dog's welfare.

The requirements apply:

- throughout the whole life of the dog;
- for all types of assistance dogs, breeding dogs, puppies and retired dogs;
- for all people/caregivers/handlers who are entrusted with a dog at any point during its lifetime.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

EN 17984-1:2024, *Assistance dogs - Part 1: Vocabulary*

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