Animal Care Tech Note

the Center for Food Security & Public Health
Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine

Minimum Space Requirements for Dogs

The Animal Welfare Act (AWA) sets standards of care and treatment for dogs used in research, exhibited to the public, bred for commercial sale, or transported in commerce. These standards include specific requirements for the amount of space primary enclosures must provide. The following information will help AWA licensees and registrants understand the requirements and provide housing for their dogs that meets the law's standards.

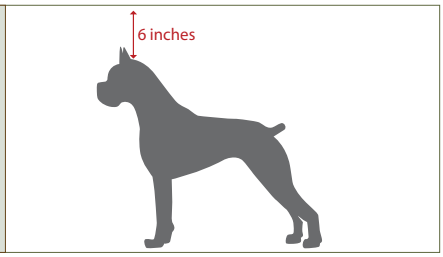
AWA Requirements

In general, all primary enclosures must have adequate space for each adult dog to turn about freely and to stand, sit, and lie down in a comfortable, normal position. Enclosures must also provide adequate space for each adult dog to walk around in a normal manner.[1] In addition, enclosures must meet specific measurements for **interior height** and **floor space**, based on the size and number of dogs housed.

Interior Height

The interior height of the primary enclosure must be at least 6 inches higher than the head of the tallest dog in the enclosure. The measurement is based on when the dog is standing comfortably in a normal position.[2]

There must be at least 6 inches from the top of the dog's head to the top of the cage.



Floor Space

Each dog in a primary enclosure, including weaned puppies, must have a minimum amount of floor space. This measurement is based on calculations specified in the AWA, as explained at right.[3]

If you have multiple dogs in group housing, the total floor space must meet or exceed the sum of each dog's minimum floor space requirement. For example, if you have four dogs that each require 9.51 square feet, you will need four times that number (38.04 square feet—to house the dogs.

[1] 9 CFR 3.6(a)(2)(xi)
[2] 9 CFR 3.6(c)(1)(iii)
[3] 9 CFR 3.6(c)(1)(i)



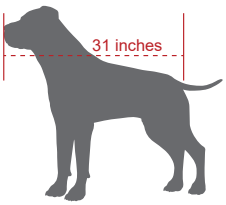
Note: These are minimum requirements only. Providing more than the required space is encouraged and can improve the overall welfare of your dogs.

Calculating Minimum Floor Space

To calculate the minimum space required for a dog, follow the steps below.

Step 1: Measure the length of the dog (in inches) from the tip of its nose to the base of its tail. Add 6 inches to this number.

Measure while the dog is in a normal, standing position or while lying flat on its side. Do not follow the contours of the dog's body.



Example: Scout, a Dalmatian, measures 31 inches from the tip of her nose to the base of her tail.

31 inches + 6 inches = 37 inches

Step 2: Take the total number you got in step 1 and square it (multiply it by itself). This will give you the dog's minimum floor space in square inches. To convert the number to square feet *(optional)*, divide the total number in square inches by 144.

Example: For Scout, the final measurement in Step 1 was 37 inches. Multiply 37 inches by 37 inches (or 37^2) to see that Scout needs 1,369 square inches of floor space (or 9.51 square feet)

37 inches x 37 inches = 1,369 square inches

1,369 square inches ÷ 144 = 9.51 square feet

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Dams With Nursing Puppies

Dams with nursing puppies must have additional floor space.[4] Each puppy requires at least 5 percent of its mother's minimum floor space requirement.

Step 1: Calculate the additional minimum floor space per puppy.

- 1,369 square inches x 0.05 = 68.45 square inches

Step 2: Multiply the additional floor space per puppy by the number of puppies.

- 68.45 square inches x 9 puppies = 616.05 square inches

Step 3: Add Scout's space requirement to the space requirement for the 9 puppies. This will give you the space requirement in square inches for all 10 dogs. To convert the minimum space for all 10 dogs from square inches to square feet (*optional*), divide the total number in square inches by 144.

- 1,369 square inches + 616.05 square inches = 1,985.05 square inches
- 1985.05 square inches ÷ 144 = 13.79 square feet

Now we see that Scout and her puppies need at least 13.79 square feet of floor space.

Exercise Requirements and Floor Space

In addition to sufficient space, the AWA requires licensees and registrants to develop, document, and follow a plan approved by the attending veterinarian to provide dogs with the opportunity for exercise. In some cases, the amount of floor space can satisfy the exercise requirements for dogs. The exercise requirements can also be met with an exercise plan that is separate from floor space. Below is a summary of how these requirements relate.

Room To Exercise for Singly Housed Dogs

To figure out how much space a singly housed dog in your care needs to meet the exercise requirement, multiply the dog's minimum floor space requirement by 2. The exception to this rule is if your approved plan documents the frequency and duration you will provide other opportunities for exercise. This may include (but is not limited to) allowing dogs access to a room, pen, or open area; leash walking; or play with a caretaker. To view the full requirements for exercise for dogs, go to ecfr.gov and search for "9 CFR 3.8."

Exercise for Group-Housed Dogs

If the enclosure or structure meets the floor space requirements for group-housed dogs, then it also meets the floor space requirement for the dogs to exercise.[5]

Note: Exercise requirements do not apply to dams with nursing puppies or to dogs under 12 weeks of age.

[4] 9 CFR 3.6(c)(1)(ii)
[5] 9 CFR 3.8

Quick Reference

The table below shows the minimum floor space needed for a dog based on body length and AWA-required calculations.

Dog Length (in inches)	Square Feet Needed	Dog Length (in inches)	Square Feet Needed
7	1.17	30	9.00
8	1.36	31	9.51
9	1.56	32	10.03
10	1.78	33	10.56
11	2.01	34	11.11
12	2.25	35	11.67
13	2.51	36	12.25
14	2.78	37	12.84
15	3.06	38	13.44
16	3.36	39	14.06
17	3.67	40	14.69
18	4.00	41	15.34
19	4.34	42	16.00
20	4.69	43	16.67
21	5.06	44	17.36
22	5.44	45	18.06
23	5.84	46	18.78
24	6.25	47	19.51
25	6.67	48	20.25
26	7.11	49	21.01
27	7.56	50	21.78
28	8.03	51	22.56
29	8.51	52	23.36

For More Information

To view the full text of the AWA and the Animal Welfare Regulations, refer to the *United States Code*, Title 7, Chapter 54, Sections 2131–2159 and the *Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 9, Chapter 1, Subchapter A, Parts 1–4.

If you have questions, contact the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal Care staff at (970) 494-7478 or animalcare@usda.gov.

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