

Animal Trainer

Overview

These standards apply to those individuals who work directly with animals and provide training to those animals (“Animal Trainer”). This may involve general training or training the animal to undertake defined and specific tasks.

The standards cover the Animal Trainer’s interactions with the animal, their encouragement and reinforcement of desirable behaviours, their development of training plans, and ongoing evaluation of the training and outcomes to ensure that the training plan continues to be appropriate for the individual animal’s needs.

Standards

The Animal Trainer shall:

1. Demonstrate positive examples of human interaction, through appropriate social skills, including verbal and nonverbal communication.
2. Comply with current animal welfare legislation, health and safety guidelines and other applicable legislation at all times.
3. Ensure all interactions with animals are in a manner that reinforces desirable behavioural patterns and avoids creating undesirable behavioural patterns.
4. Assess the needs of the animals under their care and adequately provide for those needs.
5. Interact and apply humane training techniques with the animal in a manner that minimises stress and allows training to be carried out safely.
6. Obtain and interpret relevant background information (where available) on the animal from the appropriate sources, including but not limited to:
 - life history
 - physical capabilities
 - age
 - health
 - diet
 - sexual status
 - training history
 - temperament/characteristics
 - breed and parentage
 - medical history
 - motivational drivers and effects.

7. Devise and implement a training plan for an animal that identifies and sets realistic goals for monitoring of progress and assessment of success.
8. Assess the potential welfare consequences of the training plan for the animal.
9. Monitor and evaluate the ongoing effectiveness of the training plan and revise accordingly if needed.
10. Train an animal to do each exercise appropriate to the level/discipline/duties required of the animal, considering the animal's breed, type and physical capabilities. As part of this, the Animal Trainer shall know and understand:
 - a) The natural behaviour patterns, body language and communication methods of the animal.
 - b) The suitability, application, welfare, and ethical considerations of training techniques for the species' and animals' physical and mental capabilities.
 - c) How training will impact on the animal's welfare and how to analyse whether it is in the best interests of the animal involved.
 - d) How to assess when training might not be appropriate.
 - e) The process of establishing measurable goals and objectives for the training of animals.
 - f) How to formulate training plans based on the objectives agreed between trainer and client and available resources.
 - g) The factors which may affect the progress and success of training.
 - h) Learning theory including operant conditioning, its use, effects, and practical application, including the differences between positive and negative reinforcement and positive and negative punishment.
 - i) The practical effects and consequences of classical conditioning on animal learning and behaviour.
 - j) Schedules of reinforcement and how they can be used to establish and maintain desired behaviour.
 - k) The need to guard against unintentional classical and operant conditioning creating undesirable behaviour.
 - l) How behaviour can be extinguished by the removal of reinforcement and the principle of spontaneous recovery.
 - m) The importance of reviewing and revising a training plan to meet the objectives.
11. Recognise their own limitations and seek qualified professional advice (e.g. Animal Training Instructor, Animal Behaviour Consultant, Veterinarian) as necessary.