

ABTC Standard - Animal Trainer

Overview

This Standard is about planning and managing the training of animals. This may involve training the animal to undertake specific tasks, or more general training.

This Standard covers your interactions with the animal, reinforcing desirable behaviours and ensuring training plans are developed, goals are met and the training is evaluated to ensure its continued appropriateness.

The Veterinary Surgeons Act limits the activities which may be carried out by those who are not registered veterinary surgeons. All activities should be carried out within the constraints of the Veterinary Surgeons Act.

In accordance with the ABTC Code of Professional Conduct, all individual practitioners are required to work within this ABTC Standard and their professional competence. All cases that are or develop beyond the scope of this ABTC Standard should be referred on responsibly (see Code of Professional Conduct section 1.2).

All practitioners should be familiar with the ABTC Standard for their role and that of all other ABTC roles, so that they understand the differences between the roles and refer accordingly.

Performance criteria

You must be able to:

1. Assess how the needs of animals (as defined in current animal welfare legislation) may be provided for whilst under your duty of care.
2. Comply with current animal welfare legislation and professional responsibilities at all times.
3. Approach all interactions with the animals in a manner that reinforces desirable behavioural patterns and avoids creating undesirable behavioural patterns.
4. Communicate effectively with others.
5. Undertake risk assessments in line with current health and safety legislation.
6. Create and implement a training plan with realistic targets for a desired behaviour based upon the principles of learning and the intended outcomes of the training.
7. Evaluate and select appropriate methods and equipment to achieve the desired outcome.
8. Assess the potential welfare consequences of the training method and chosen equipment.
9. Obtain and interpret relevant information from the appropriate sources:

- life history
 - physical capabilities
 - age
 - health
 - diet
 - sexual status
 - training history
 - temperament/characteristics
 - breed and parentage
 - desired appearance
 - medical history
 - motivational drivers and effects
10. Prepare the animal, resources and environment for the training session to aid the achievement of agreed learning outcomes.
 11. Interact and apply humane training techniques, based on sound learning theory, with the animal in a manner that minimises stress and allows training to be carried out safely.
 12. Demonstrate the ability to train an animal to do the exercises appropriate to the animal species, context and desired behaviour, in a number of different ways, taking into account the animal's species, breed, type and physical capabilities.
 13. Assess the progress of the training session against the plan at regular intervals and take action to resolve situations where training activities, methods or resources are found to be inappropriate.
 14. Modify the training plan as needed to take into account the response of the animal (and handler) to the training so far.
 15. Ensure records of the animal's progress are maintained.
 16. Recognise own limitations and seek qualified professional advice as necessary.

Knowledge and understanding - This Standard is at Level 3

You need to know and understand:

Animal Behaviour

1. The natural behaviour patterns, body language and communication methods of the animal.

Animal Health and Welfare

2. How the needs of animals under your duty of care may be assessed and addressed.
3. The suitability, action, welfare and ethical considerations of training equipment and techniques for the species' and animals' physical and mental capabilities.

4. How training will impact on animal welfare and how to analyse whether it is in the best interests of the animal involved.
5. How to assess when training might not be appropriate.

Animal Learning and Training

6. The process of establishing measurable goals and objectives for the training of animals.
7. How to formulate training plans based on the objectives agreed between trainer and owner/handler and available resources.
8. The factors which may affect the progress and success of training.
9. Learning theory including operant conditioning, its use, effects and practical application, including the differences between positive and negative reinforcement and positive and negative punishment.
10. The practical effects and consequences of classical conditioning on animal learning and behaviour.
11. Schedules of reinforcement and how they can be used to establish and maintain desired behaviour.
12. The need to guard against unintentional classical and operant conditioning creating undesirable behaviour.
13. How behaviour can be extinguished by the removal of reinforcement, and the principle of spontaneous recovery.
14. The importance of reviewing and revising a training plan to meet the objectives.

Animal Husbandry, Management and Welfare Legislation

15. Your responsibility and accountability for duty of care of animals under the current animal welfare legislation.
16. Health and safety policy and how to carry out a risk assessment related to the training environment.
17. The importance of establishing and maintaining training records.
18. Employment law, health and safety legislation and the UK-GDPR (United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation); and their implication for the Trainer, their clients and others.