ABTC Standard - Animal Training Instructor

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 and the owner/handler. Teaching owners/handlers how to introduce and reinforce desirable behaviours, how to avoid and/or extinguish undesirable behaviours, ensuring that training progresses at an appropriate rate, goals are met and the training is evaluated to ensure each of the above. This role is teaching the owner/handler to train the animal.

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 level of the class*/discipline of the class/duties, 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 owner/handler to the training so far.

15. Ensure records of the animal's progress are maintained.

16. Teach an owner/handler to train an animal to do the exercises appropriate to the level of the class*/discipline of the class/duties.

17. Recognise own limitations and seek qualified professional advice as necessary.

18. Recognise stress/distress in an owner/handler and know ways of reducing it.

19. Recognise when a class situation is not the best option for an animal, and be able to suggest more appropriate methods for the owner/handler to learn.

20. Identify the information and knowledge people need and why they need it.

21. Identify how people prefer to receive information and knowledge and what media, styles, timing and pace are most appropriate for communicating with them.

22. Check that the information and knowledge you are communicating is current, accurate and complete.

23. Take action to minimise any interference or disruption to your communication.

24. Communicate clearly, concisely, accurately in ways that help people to understand the information and knowledge you are communicating and its relevance to them.

25. Use a variety of techniques to gain and maintain people's attention and interest and to help them retain information and knowledge.

26. Adjust and fine-tune your communication in response to both verbal and non-verbal feedback.

27. State the level of confidence that can be placed on the information and knowledge you are communicating; i.e. whether it is based on rigorously researched evidence, widely accepted facts or personal opinion.

28. Jargon, technical terms or abbreviations should be kept to a minimum, but where they need to be used they should be explained carefully to avoid any confusion as to their meaning.

29. Confirm that people have received and understood the information and knowledge you have communicated.

30. Comply with, and ensure others comply with, legal requirements, industry regulations, organisational policies and professional codes.

* Class – in this context 'class' means a person or persons with the animals they are responsible for. This can take place in any venue (eg home, hall, equestrian centre, outside venue at which such activities are allowed and required or requested).

Knowledge and understanding - This Standard is at Level 4

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 the Animal Training Instructor 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 Animal Training Instructor, their clients and others.

Communication and Instruction

19. What motivates owners/handlers generally and individually.

20. How to adapt exercises to the physical limitations/constraints of the owner/handler.

21. How to identify people's needs for information and knowledge and their motivations for acquiring it.

22. How to establish people's preferred communication media, styles, timing and pace.

23. The importance of checking the currency, accuracy and completeness of the information and knowledge you are communicating, and how to do so.

24. How to take action to minimise any interference or disruption to your communication.

25. The importance of structuring your communication in ways that facilitate people's reception and understanding, and how to do so.

26. Techniques to gain and maintain people's attention and interest and to help them retain information and knowledge, and how to use a variety of relevant techniques.

27. The importance of using verbal and non-verbal feedback to help you fine-tune your communication, and how to do so.

28. The importance of communicating the level of confidence that can be placed on the information and knowledge, i.e. whether it is based on rigorously researched evidence, widely accepted facts or personal opinion.

29. The importance of carefully explaining jargon, technical terms or abbreviations to avoid any confusion as to their meaning.

30. The importance of confirming that people have received and understood the information and knowledge you have communicated, and how to do so.