

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(s); reinforcing desired behaviours, ensuring training plans are developed, goals are met, and that training is evaluated regularly to meet training objectives and the welfare needs of the animal(s) being trained.

The Veterinary Surgeons Act (1966) limits the activities which may be carried out by those who are not registered veterinary surgeons. All activities should be carried out in accordance with current, relevant legislation.

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.

Knowledge and understanding - K&U at Level 3

You need to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of these learning outcomes

Animal Behaviour

1. Describe the natural behaviour patterns, body language and communication methods of the animal(s).

Animal Health and Welfare

2. Explain how the needs of animals under your duty of care may be assessed and addressed.
3. Explain the suitability, action, welfare and ethical considerations of training equipment and techniques for the species' and animals' physical and mental capabilities and for other animals in the vicinity.
4. Explain how training situations and circumstances will impact on animal welfare and how to assess whether training is in the best interests of the animal(s) involved at that time.
5. Explain how to assess when training might be harmful, unsafe or not recommended.

Animal Learning and Training

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

Animal Husbandry, Management and Welfare Legislation

15. Describe your responsibility and accountability for duty of care of animals under the current animal welfare and other applicable legislation.
16. Explain health and safety policy and how to carry out a risk assessment related to the training environment.
17. Explain the importance of establishing and maintaining training records.
18. Summarise Employment law, the Equality Act, health and safety legislation and the UK-GDPR (United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation); and their implications for the Animal Trainer, their clients and others.
19. Demonstrate awareness of disease presentation, risk and mitigation specific to the range of species as well as individual animals.
20. Demonstrate awareness of both intra and inter specific risks (human to human/zoonoses) and how to identify detection of relevant threats; reporting procedures; management of the training environment.
21. Demonstrate awareness of the potential environmental impacts associated with the role, and how they can be minimised.

Communication

22. Outline the benefits of using technology to improve the quality of service offered e.g. to support record keeping and collaboration with colleagues and owner/handler/guardian.
23. Describe a range of effective and inclusive communication techniques when collecting and disseminating information, providing support and resolving issues relating to owner/handler/guardian understanding.
- 24 Describe how to recognise compassion fatigue and emotional burden in self, colleagues and owner/guardian/handler, and when and where to seek support.

Practical Skills

Whilst carrying out this role you must be able to:

Welfare and Legislation

1. Identify, comply with, and take reasonable steps to educate others to comply with, current animal health and welfare legislation, industry regulations, organisational policies, professional codes, and other legislation, relevant to the animals being worked with.
2. Undertake risk assessments in line with current health and safety legislation, first aid, disease control and biosecurity.

Animal Learning and Training

3. Approach all interactions with the animals throughout all life stages in a manner that reinforces desirable behavioural patterns and avoids creating undesirable behavioural patterns.
4. Create and implement a training plan with realistic targets, tailored to the animal, based on e.g. for the life stage and health of the animal, to develop desired behaviour(s) based upon the principles of learning and the intended outcomes of the training.
5. Evaluate and select safe and effective methods e.g. luring, shaping, capturing, and equipment to achieve the desired outcome.
6. Assess the potential welfare consequences of the training method and chosen equipment.
7. Obtain and use information regarding:
 - life history
 - physical capabilities
 - age
 - health
 - diet
 - sexual status
 - training history
 - temperament/characteristics
 - breed and parentage

- desired appearance
 - medical history
 - motivational drivers and effects
8. Prepare the animal, resources and environment for the training session to aid the achievement of agreed learning outcomes.
 9. Interact with the animal, and apply humane training techniques, based on sound learning theory, in a manner that minimises stress and allows training to be carried out safely.
 10. Interact with any other animals in the environment, in a manner that minimises stress and allows training to be carried out safely.
 11. Demonstrate the ability to train an animal towards the desired objectives, in a number of different ways, taking into account the context, species, type, breed, developmental stage and physical capabilities.
 12. 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 harmful or ineffective.
 13. Modify the training plan and adapt the training methods as needed to take into account the response of the animal (and owner/guardian/handler) to the training so far.

Effective Communication

14. Maintain accurate records of the animal's progress.
15. Communicate clearly, concisely and accurately with others involved in the training/welfare/keeping of the animal(s).

Personal Reflection and Development

16. Recognise own limitations, seek qualified professional advice or refer on to a competent practitioner, as necessary.
17. Identify gaps in own knowledge, understanding and skills; and plan, record and evaluate a personal CPD (Continuing Professional Development) programme to address these.