ABTC Standard - Animal Training Instructor

Overview

This standard is about the skills required to instruct and coach owners/handlers/guardians to train animals, and how to manage and plan this. This may involve training the animal to undertake specific tasks, or more general training.

This Standard covers your interactions with the animal(s) and the owner/guardian/handler. Teaching owners/guardians/handlers how to introduce and reinforce desired behaviours, how to avoid and/or extinguish undesired behaviours are included. The need to ensure that 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) is part of this role. The role also involves teaching the owner/guardian/handler to train the animal(s).

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 is at Level 4

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 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 Training Instructor 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 legislation 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 Training Instructor, their clients and others.

19. Demonstrate awareness of disease including 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 an awareness of the potential environmental impacts associated with the role, and how they can be minimised.

Communication and Instruction

22. Demonstrate awareness of what motivates owners/guardians/handlers generally and individually.

23. How to adapt exercises to the specific needs of the owner/guardian/handler.

24. How to identify people's need for information and knowledge and their motivations for acquiring it.

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

26. The need to check that the information and knowledge you are communicating are current, accurate and complete and how to do so.

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

28. How to structure your communication in ways that facilitate people's reception and understanding.

29. How to use a variety of techniques to gain and maintain people's attention and interest and to help them retain information and knowledge.

30. How to use verbal and non-verbal feedback to help you fine-tune your communication.

31. How to communicate 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 personal or anecdotal opinion.

32. The need to minimise the use of jargon, technical terms or abbreviations and to carefully explain meaning, to avoid any confusion, to owners/guardians/handlers.

33. That people have received the information and knowledge you have communicated.

34. 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/guardian/handler

35. Describe a range of effective and inclusive communication techniques when collecting and disseminating information, providing support and when assessing and resolving issues relating to owner/guardian/handler understanding.

36. 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, 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 e.g. for the life stage or health of the animal, to develop a 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:

   o life history
   o physical capabilities
   o age
   o health
   o diet
   o sexual status
   o training history
   o temperament/characteristics
   o breed and parentage
   o desired appearance
   o medical history
   o 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 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. Identify and respond to stress or distress in owners/guardians/handers by applying and/or explaining techniques to alleviate it.

14. 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

15. Maintain accurate records of the animal's progress.

16. Teach an owner/guardian/handler to train an animal towards the desired objectives, in a number of different ways, taking into account the species, type, breed, developmental stage and physical capabilities

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

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

19. Identify how people prefer to receive information and knowledge including media, styles, timing and pace.

20. Communicate clearly, concisely and accurately in ways that help people to understand the information and knowledge you are communicating and its relevance to them, in accordance with the principles of diversity, equity and inclusivity.

21. Engage and maintain people's attention using a variety of techniques that promote information retention. Adjust your communication according to feedback and address any disruptions or interference swiftly.

22. Communicate current, accurate and complete information stating the level of confidence that can be placed on it i.e. whether it is based on rigorously researched evidence, widely accepted facts or personal opinion.

23. Keep the use of jargon, technical terms or abbreviations to a minimum, but where needed they should be defined and explained carefully to avoid any confusion as to their meaning.

24. Demonstrate the ability to address misunderstandings or confusion by providing opportunities for people to ask questions and give feed-back.

Personal reflection and development

25. Recognise own limitations and seek qualified professional advice or refer on to another competent practitioner, as necessary.

26. Identify gaps in own knowledge, understanding and skills; and plan, record and evaluate a personal CPD (Continuing Professional Development) programme to address these.