

Overview

This standard covers planning and implementing training programmes for dogs and handlers. The emphasis is on training the handler to train the dog rather than training the dog directly and requires experience with both dog training and the training of people.

The standard includes designing and developing training programmes for people and dogs by setting objectives and targets. It also includes evaluating how the training programme is implemented and monitoring the progress of the handler and the dog.

Users of this standard will need to confirm that training practices reflect up-to-date information, relevant training techniques, policies and procedures. They will work within the limits of their authority, accreditation, qualification and expertise of training, and have a developed knowledge and experience of training dogs, supported by suitable canine-specific studies, which are humane and evidence-based. They should also have experience of communicating with and training people.

The dog-training instructor may be working within a group environment and as such will require skills to include managing groups of people along with dogs. They will be an experienced dog trainer and will have an in-depth understanding of people-training skills, learning theories and a wide range of communication skills.

Meeting the relevant legal responsibilities for providing a duty of care under the current animal health and welfare and health and safety legislation is of paramount importance.

This standard is suitable for appropriately trained and experienced instructors with responsibility for planning and implementing training programmes for dogs and handlers

Performance criteria

You must be able to:

1. implement training in accordance with the relevant health and safety legislation, risk assessment requirements, associated codes of practice and any policies and procedures relevant to the training or location
2. comply with the relevant animal health and welfare and animal related legislation, local policies and codes of practice relating to dogs, at all times
3. agree and confirm the purpose and intended outcomes of the training with all parties concerned and manage the expectations for the dog and the handler
4. assess the suitability of the dog concerned to undertake the training, based on information from a range of relevant sources
5. assess the handler and their capability to undertake and maintain the training, taking into account the dog's physical condition and emotional state
6. assess the dog's physical condition and emotional state, with consideration to the life stage of the dog (i.e. puppy, juvenile, adult, senior), before and during training, recognise signs of stress, anxiety, fears, phobias, aversions, aggression, pain, conflict and avoidance, and respond appropriately
7. assess the training needs of the dog and handler and plan a structured programme of training that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Targeted (SMART)
8. select the required training methods and resources, for the dog you are working with, handler and the desired training outcome, taking into consideration current scientific evidence, previous experience, humane practices and relevant legislation
9. discuss the training programme with the handler and gain their understanding and agreement to fulfil their obligation to adhere to a structured training programme
10. choose a suitable location to carry out the training, and carry out a risk assessment to maintain the safety and welfare of the dog and all those involved in or affected by your work
11. handle and interact with the dog in a way that allows training to be carried out safely and effectively and avoids creating behaviour that may give rise to welfare concerns
12. confirm that resources are used safely and effectively to achieve training goals and safeguard the welfare of the dog

13. recognise the particular learning style of the dog and modify training accordingly, taking into account breed specific traits and motivational drives
14. give handlers guidance and feedback on their performance throughout the training
15. recognise, understand and act upon indications of stress in the handler, including the relevance of non-verbal communication
16. demonstrate training techniques with dogs belonging to yourself or others
17. manage delivery and communicate with an individual and individuals within groups of various sizes and where necessary work with individuals outside the group to confirm that performance is maintained within the group
18. monitor the effect of the training on the dog's health and welfare and recognise if the training programme or a particular task is likely to be detrimental in the short or long term
19. monitor the dog and handler's progress towards achievement of the training programme, and adjust training methods or desired outcomes where required
20. demonstrate to the handler how to provide suitable feedback to the dog to develop an effective relationship and continually monitor the interaction between dog and handler
21. recognise when the training outcome is not achievable for the dog or the handler and take appropriate action
22. recognise your own limitations and refer to an appropriate professional when necessary e.g. senior trainer, canine behaviourist or veterinary surgeon
23. confirm that records are maintained and stored in accordance with relevant legislation and organisational policy
24. maintain professional and ethical conduct and work within the limits of your own authority, expertise, training, competence, experience and the relevant legislation
25. maintain professional competence by undertaking regular Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and work within the requirements of the relevant professional organisation

Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

1. your responsibilities under the relevant animal health and welfare and dog-specific legislation, local policies and associated codes of practice, and the legal limitations of the Veterinary Surgeons Act with regard to diagnosis and treatment of disease or injury
2. how the welfare needs of dogs you engage with may be assessed and addressed prior to and during training
3. the purpose for which the dog is being trained and the desired outcome of the training
4. how to obtain and interpret information about the dog and handler and any factors that may affect the design of a training programme
5. the importance of assessing the suitability of the dog and handler to undertake the training including
6. the importance of observing and assessing canine behaviour and condition before and during training activities and taking appropriate action as necessary
7. the functional anatomy and physiology of dogs and how to assess the potential short- and long-term effects of the training on the health and welfare of the dog, both physiologically and psychologically
8. how dogs learn and the physical, psychological and environmental factors that affect learning, including the dog's lifestyle with the handler within their normal environment
9. how people learn and the physical, psychological and environmental factors that affect learning
10. the principles, techniques and methods used in the training of dogs and handlers, and what to consider when selecting the relevant technique and method of training for a particular dog or a desired training outcome
11. the correct use and potential misuse of available training equipment, the physiological and psychological effect on the dog and its health and welfare and the importance of educating the handler in good practice
12. the implications of not training in a suitable manner, and the consequences of allowing a dog to be out of control
13. the use of positive and negative reinforcement and the effects of these approaches on dog behaviour, health and welfare

14. your responsibilities under the relevant health and safety legislation, associated codes of practice and any policies or procedures relevant to the training or location
15. how to implement health and safety measures to ensure a safe training system is in place and followed during training, including the measures required to prevent injury to those involved in or affected by the training session
16. how to recognise, evaluate and address behaviours in the dog throughout the training including stress, anxiety, fears, phobias, aversions, aggression, pain, conflict and avoidance
17. how to manage and care for a group of handlers with dogs within a training environment
18. how to ensure that the welfare of the dog is maintained throughout and that your behaviour or the behavior of those involved in or affected by your work does not cause adverse reactions, fear or distress in the dog
19. the non-verbal communication and the indicators of stress in handler and the action to take
20. the factors that may affect the progress and success of training and the importance of monitoring and evaluating its progress and reviewing and revising the training programme where necessary
21. how to recognise when training outcomes may indicate that the handler and/or the dog is not suited for the activity for which they are being trained or not best suited to work together
22. the importance of maintaining communication with all those involved in the training programme
23. the importance of seeking advice and guidance from more experienced professionals, where to obtain professional advice and guidance and when a dog should be referred to a veterinary surgeon or other professional
24. the importance and relevance of maintaining training records in accordance with relevant data protection legislation and organisational policy
25. the importance of appropriate insurance cover, including professional indemnity
26. the importance of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to maintain professional competence and the role of professional bodies and associations

Scope/range

Information about the dog to be considered when designing a training programme:

- life history
- physical condition and capabilities
- age and development stage
- health and medical history
- diet
- reproductive status
- hormonal stage
- current level of training
- temperament/characteristics/traits
- breed and parentage
- motivational drivers and effects
- environment – living, working, training or learning
- legislation

Capabilities and potential of the handler:

- physical needs of the handler
- learning needs of the handler
- psychological needs of the handler
- environment (including presence of other animals or other people)
- resources

Resources:

- personnel
- training aids/equipment
- handling aids/equipment
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Behaviours

- reflect on your own performance within the training session
- reflect on past experiences with training
- be approachable and make time for dog and handlers even when under pressure
- be prepared to make difficult decisions and have the confidence to see them through
- show reliability and resilience within difficult situations
- remain calm and confident, respond logically and decisively in difficult situations
- think clearly, manage conflict and deal with hostility and provocation in a calm and restrained manner
- respond to challenges rationally, avoiding inappropriate emotion
- maintain professional ethics when confronted with pressure from others
- manage ambiguity and deal with uncertainty and frustration when working with the dog and the handler
- stand firmly by a decision when it is right to do so
- find new ways of problem solving
- resist pressure to make quick decisions where full consideration is needed
- remain focused and in control of all situations during training
- seek client feedback and act accordingly

Glossary

Dogs - All domesticated dogs including working dogs

Handler – the person who is training the dog during the session and may or may not be the owner of the dog

Sources of information could include:

- the client
- a third party (e.g. veterinary surgeon)
- observation
- records

SMART objectives:

- Specific - Is the objective well defined and clear? Does it state exactly what is to be achieved?
- Measurable - How will I know when the objective has been achieved? What will success look like?

- Achievable - Is the objective attainable considering the capabilities of the dog and handler?
- Realistic - Can the outcome be achieved with the resources, knowledge and time available?
- Targeted - Does the objective target a specific area for improvement?

Dynamic risk assessment - the continuous process of identifying hazards, assessing risk, taking action to eliminate or reduce risk, monitoring and reviewing.

Refer – could include formal or informal referral to a professional body, individual or organisation

Functional anatomy and physiology to include:

- skeletal
- vertebral
- nervous and endocrine systems

Links to other NOS

LANCTB1 - Observe, assess and respond to the behaviour of dogs

LANCTB2 - Handle and control dogs

LANCTB3 - Plan and implement training programmes for dogs

LANCTB5 - Plan and implement programmes to address undesirable behaviour in dogs

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