
Overview

This standard is about designing, implementing and evaluating a plan to address undesirable behaviour in animals.

This standard involves understanding how to prevent or address undesirable behaviour in individual animals through the development of suitable environments and management regimes. You need to be aware of your own limitations and that you meet the relevant legal responsibilities for providing your duty of care under current animal health and welfare legislation. Users of the standard will need to be suitably trained and confirm that their practice upholds humane standards and policies, and that they work within the limits of their authority, expertise, training, competence and experience. This standard is suitable for those with responsibility for the design, implementation and evaluation of a plan to address undesirable behaviour in animals.

Performance criteria

You must be able to:

1. work professionally and ethically and within the limits of your authority, expertise, training, competence and experience
2. comply with the relevant animal health and welfare and animal-related legislation and associated codes of practice
3. confirm that the relevant environmental and health and safety policies and risk assessment requirements are put into practice across your area of responsibility
4. assess how to provide for the welfare needs of the animals you engage with
5. handle and interact with the animal in a manner that does not compromise animal welfare, avoids behaviour giving rise to welfare concern, to allow observation and assessment to be carried out
6. gather information about the animal's behaviour issues using a range of methods
7. interpret information about the animal from relevant sources to help determine the animal's suitability for intervention
8. assess the impact of external factors on the subsequent development of undesirable behaviour
9. assess husbandry/management practices in relation to the causation and development of the undesirable behaviour
10. identify and liaise with veterinary surgeons and other animal professionals and organisations involved in the care of the animal to provide a consistent and suitable approach to rectifying the undesirable behaviour
11. design a plan to address the undesirable behaviour
12. select and use suitable training aids/equipment to assist in achieving the plan in line with current animal welfare legislation
13. discuss and agree the plan with the owner or keeper where required and obtain informed consent
14. explain and demonstrate the use of training aids/equipment to owners or keepers and produce guidelines, where necessary, to confirm they are used as required, and the welfare of the animal is protected
15. confirm that the owner or keeper understands the importance of their role in achieving and maintaining the desired behaviour once it is reached
16. teach the owner or keeper the required skills and knowledge associated with good practice, where necessary, taking into account their physical and psychological abilities
17. implement and monitor the plan keeping veterinary professionals and other animal professionals informed, where necessary
18. record progress against the plan including the animal's health and welfare
19. apply the principles of animal learning theory to training methods to

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- achieve agreed goals
 - 20. evaluate the suitability of the plan and revise accordingly
 - 21. seek professional advice when necessary and refer cases on when required
 - 22. plan, record, evaluate and reflect upon your Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and work within the requirements of the relevant professional organisation
 - 23. confirm that records are maintained and stored as required by the relevant legislation and organisational policy

Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

1. your professional responsibilities when designing, implementing and evaluating a plan to address undesirable animal behaviour, and the limits of your authority, expertise, training, competence and experience as well as the relevant legislation
2. your responsibilities under the relevant animal health and welfare, animal-related legislation and associated codes of practice, and the legal limitations of the current Veterinary Surgeons Act
3. your responsibilities under the relevant environmental and health and safety legislation, associated codes of practice and organisational policies
4. the importance of insurance cover, including professional indemnity
5. how the welfare needs of the animals you engage with may be assessed and addressed
6. how to check that the animal's welfare is maintained throughout and that your behaviour, or that of those involved in your work, does not cause adverse reactions, fear or distress
7. how to recognise and relate behavioural problems in animals
8. how behavioural problems can arise from the provision (or lack of provision) of resources, exercise regimes, mental stimulus or enrichment factors specific to the behavioural needs of the animal
9. the antecedents, triggers, indicators and anxiety/stress cycle of the animal that you are working with
10. the antecedents, triggers and indicators of the cycle of anxiety/stress in humans
11. the effects and implications of using aversive techniques to the success of the training and the owner/animal relationship and how these might contravene current animal welfare legislation
12. the potential impact of physiological and pathological factors on behaviour
13. the limitations and legal position when analysing behaviour and developing plans to address undesirable behaviour
14. the principles of animal learning theory as applied to designing a plan to address undesirable behaviour, and the effects of these approaches on animal behaviour
15. the range of training aids/equipment available to assist in animal training, including their action and potential for misuse
16. how to teach, motivate and support owners/keepers and handlers to develop the skills and knowledge associated with good practice and the maintenance of desirable behaviour
17. the importance of discussing assessments and treatment with the owner or keeper, and obtaining informed consent to continue
18. the legal responsibilities of owners or keepers and the judicial consequences of the relevant legislation designed to protect the environment, other animals and people from harm by animals

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19. the relevance and importance of identifying and liaising with veterinary professionals and other animal professionals involved in the care of the animals that you are working with
 20. the range of other treatments and therapies that owners or keepers may use, in accordance with the current Veterinary Surgeons Act
 21. the records that need to be kept in relation to dealing with undesirable behaviour in animals and the importance of completing these in accordance with the relevant legislation and organisational policy
 22. your professional responsibilities and the importance of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to maintain professional competence
 23. where to obtain professional advice and guidance and the role of professional bodies and associations

Scope/range

Methods of gathering information about the animal's behaviour issues could include:

1. discussion with owner or keeper and others involved with the animal
2. assessment by veterinary surgeon
3. case history
4. medical history
5. observation

Relevant information about the animal could include:

1. species, breed and parentage
2. age and development stage
3. life history
4. physical condition
5. health and medical history
6. hormonal status
7. training history
8. temperament/characteristics
9. medical history
10. motivation

Recognise and relate behavioural problems to:

1. species-typical behaviour and ethology
2. breed and breed traits, including hybrids
3. parentage
4. development stage
5. reproductive status
6. hormonal stage, if entire
7. motivational drivers and effects
8. environment
9. socialisation
10. habituation
11. social referencing
12. training
13. behavioural needs
14. medical conditions
15. effects of medication
16. other external or internal factors or antecedents
17. External factors could include:
18. environment
19. ethological requirements
20. previous experiences

Husbandry/management practices could include:

1. environmental enrichment
2. social interaction

3. physical activity
4. human interaction
5. diet
6. physical environment (space, temperature, provision of bedding materials, etc)
7. other animals
8. ability to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
9. timing of onset of behaviours
10. Factors to take into account when designing a plan to address

Undesirable behaviour in animals:

1. available resources
2. ability of the animal
3. circumstances and ability of owner or keeper
4. time constraints
5. likelihood of compliance

Principles of animal learning theory:

1. associative and non-associative learning
2. issues of stimulus control
3. the influence of different schedules of reinforcement
4. the effects of removal of reinforcement and the extinction of response,
5. the concepts and use of extinction, systemic de-sensitisation and counter-conditioning

Glossary

Current legislation relating to animals:

- Veterinary Surgeons Act
- England and Wales, Animal Welfare Act
- Scotland, Animal Health and Welfare Act
- Northern Ireland, Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland)

Developed by	Lantra
Version Number	1
Date Approved	30 Mar 2020
Indicative Review Date	30 Mar 2025
Validity	Current
Status	Original
Originating Organisation	Lantra
Original URN	LANAnC56
Relevant Occupations	Animal Training and Behaviour, Dog Training and Behaviour, Veterinary Para-Professional Activities
Suite	Animal Care and Welfare, Veterinary paraprofessional activities
Keywords	training; animal; behaviour; remedial; re-habilitation