
Overview

This standard is about assessing animal behavioural issues during animal behaviour consultations.

The standard involves understanding the normal and abnormal behaviour of the animal species that you are working with and assessing how other factors, including human interaction with the animal, may affect its behaviour.

You may be assessing the animal's behaviour for training purposes, research or academic studies or when caring for the animal. All activities should be carried out in accordance with the relevant legislation.

Users of the standard will need to be trained and confirm that their practice applies scientifically robust information, human 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 observation, assessment and understanding of animal behaviour.

Performance criteria

You must be able to:

1. work professionally and ethically and within the limits of your own authority, expertise, training, competence and experience
2. carry out your work in accordance with the relevant environmental and health and safety legislation, risk assessment requirements, associated codes of practice and organisational policies
3. comply with the relevant animal health and welfare and animal-related legislation, associated codes of practice and organisational policies
4. recognise, assess and record any behavioural issues of the animal during the animal behaviour consultation
5. evaluate and take into account the factors which can affect the behaviour of the animal
6. interact with the animal during the behaviour consultation in a way that avoids creating behaviour that gives rise to any welfare concerns and allows observation and assessment to be carried out safely
7. maintain the animal's welfare and adapt your own behaviour, and that of those involved in or affected by your work, if necessary, to avoid creating undesirable behaviour in the animal
8. identify and record changes in the health and behaviour of the animal during the behaviour consultation, which may indicate welfare or other problems and make recommendations where necessary
9. communicate with all those involved in or affected by your work and seek professional advice when necessary and refer cases on when required
10. 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 and ethical responsibilities and the limits of your own authority, expertise, training, competence, experience and the relevant legislation
2. your responsibilities under the relevant environmental and health and safety legislation, associated codes of practice and organisational policies
3. your responsibilities under the relevant animal health and welfare and animal-related legislation, associated codes of practice and organisational policies
4. how the behavioural issues of the animals you engage with can be assessed, recorded and addressed and the importance of doing so
5. the importance of evolutionary history, the changes associated with domestication, species-typical behaviour, breed, parentage, temperament, physiology and pathology on the behaviour of individual animals
6. how previous experiences influence animals' behaviour
7. the behavioural, emotional and physical development stages of the animal and the importance of sensitive periods for learning and their relationship with social development
8. the patterns of abnormal behaviour, such as stereotypical and repetitive behaviour
9. how your actions, or the actions of those involved in the animal behaviour consultation, may affected the behaviour and welfare of the animal
10. the natural behavioural patterns of the animal, including communication methods and patterns, motivational needs and social organisation and behaviour
11. the effects of reproductive status and sexual stimuli on animal behaviour
12. the differences in animal and human perception, caused by differences in the senses of sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch
13. how to recognise the behavioural and emotional states of animals

including fear, frustration, aggression, appeasement, anxiety, play and relaxation

14. the early signs of change in behaviour associated with ill health, and indicators of injury or pain, discomfort, disease and distress
15. the difference in natural survival behaviour between predator and prey animals and the relevance of this to animal behaviour patterns
16. where behavioural patterns may be influenced by changes in an animal's immediate environment, such as changes in weather conditions, behaviour of a bystander, husbandry, a nearby animal or enclosure, and understand how to take account of such factors
17. the importance of habituation to environmental stimuli or an animal's ability or limitations for coping with the features of a captive environment
18. when an animal should be referred to a veterinary surgeon or other professional
19. the records that need to be kept in relation to assessing animal behavioural issues during behaviour consultations and the importance of completing these in accordance with the relevant legislation and organisational policy

Scope/range

During the animal behaviour consultation, assess the following factors that may affect the behaviour of the animal:

1. evolution and domestication history
2. species-typical behaviour
3. breed traits, including hybrids
4. parentage
5. temperament
6. development stage (including old age, reproductive status)
7. motivational needs (including hunger, thirst, threat avoidance, and need for social contact)
8. communication patterns
9. emotional and mental states
10. perceptual abilities
11. social organisation and social behaviour
12. previous experiences of the animal and responses learnt from them
13. fear, frustration, aggression, stress, pain
14. ill health, injury, discomfort, disease and distress
15. environment and external stimuli experienced
16. human interaction
17. husbandry and management patterns

Glossary

Current animal welfare legislation:

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

Sensitive learning period:

The sensitive period in a window of time normally between 3 weeks and 3 months of age, where animals learn about their environment.

Habituation:

A form of non-associative learning where a response to stimulus decreases after repeated presentation of that stimulus.

Developed by	Lantra
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Suite	Animal Care and Welfare, Veterinary paraprofessional activities
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