

Overview

This standard is about observing and recognising the behaviour of the animals that you are working with.

This standard involves observing animals as part of your work or studies with them in order to promote their welfare and minimise risks to yourself, the animal and those involved in, or affected by your work. You will develop an awareness of how the behaviour of animals is influenced, including your own interactions with the animal.

Users of the standard will need to confirm that practice reflects up-to-date information and organisational policies, and that they work within the limits of their authority, expertise, training, competence and experience.

This standard is suitable for anyone who works with animals.

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. comply with the relevant animal health and welfare and animal-related legislation and associated codes of practice
3. carry out all work in accordance with the relevant environmental and health and safety legislation, risk assessment requirements, associated codes of practice and organisational policies
4. obtain information on the animal, where possible, from relevant sources (e.g. owner, records, observations), to help determine the nature of the animal's behaviour
5. observe and recognise the behaviour of the animals you are working with and record this following organisational procedures
6. recognise a range of factors affecting the behaviour of animals and take these into account when interacting with the animal
7. identify changes in animal behaviour and take relevant action
8. interact with the animal in a way that avoids behaviour causing welfare concerns and allows observation to be carried out safely
9. promote the animal's welfare and adapt your own behaviour, or the behaviour of those involved in, or affected by your work, to avoid creating animal behaviour which causes welfare concerns
10. identify animal behaviours that may indicate welfare concerns or other problems and report these to the relevant person
11. recognise when the behaviour of animals may indicate that you should not continue with an activity, and, where required, take action to rectify this problem
12. maintain communication with colleagues and all those involved in, or affected by, your work
13. complete records as required by 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 and experience
2. your responsibilities under the relevant animal health and welfare and animal-related legislation, associated codes of practice and organisational policies
3. your responsibilities under the relevant environmental and health and safety legislation, associated codes of practice and organisational policies
4. how to observe and recognise animal behaviour as part of your interaction with the animal
5. the way the animal uses its senses and how this affects its behaviour
6. how to recognise the behavioural and emotional states of animals
7. the patterns of normal and abnormal behaviour e.g. stereotypical, repetitive behaviours
8. the indications of suffering in animals
9. how your actions, or the actions of those involved in, or affected by your work, may affect the behaviour and welfare of the animal
10. the effects of the animal's environment on its behaviour
11. when to report observed behaviours to the relevant person
12. the importance of recognising behaviour that indicate that it would not be advisable to continue with the activity
13. how to recognise when an animal has become less responsive to environmental stimuli and the ability or limitations of animals to cope with the features of a captive environment
14. the importance of maintaining communication with those involved in, or affected by, your work and how this should be done
15. the records that need to be kept and the importance of completing them in accordance with relevant legislation and organisational policy

Scope/range

Observe and recognise the following factors affecting the behaviour of animals:

1. species-typical behaviour
2. breed traits
3. temperament
4. developmental stage (including old age)
5. gender
6. reproductive status
7. motivational needs (including hunger, thirst, threat avoidance, and need for social contact (if appropriate))
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 these
13. fear, frustration, aggression, stress, pain
14. ill health, injury, discomfort, disease and distress
15. environment and external stimuli experienced
16. interaction with humans and other species
17. husbandry and management patterns
18. periods of activity e.g. nocturnal behaviour

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)

Behavioural and emotional state of animal

- fear,
- frustration,
- aggression,
- appeasement,
- anxiety,
- play,
- relaxation.

Observe and recognise the behaviour of animals

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