



## Animal Behaviour Consultant

### Overview

These standards apply to those individuals with responsibility for planning and managing humane approaches to addressing inappropriate behaviour of animals, and those who have an extensive understanding of applied animal behaviour and the related scientific literature (“Animal Behaviour Consultant”).

The standards cover the Animal Behaviour Consultant’s application of the science of animal behaviour, and the modification of the behaviour of animals that are demonstrating all types of undesirable, inappropriate, problematic or dangerous behaviour, including those with a potential link to pathologies that require diagnosis in collaboration with a veterinarian.

Animal Behaviour Consultants must understand how to evaluate, prevent or address undesirable behaviours within animals, through the development of suitable environments and individual management plans, based on best practice and scientific evidence. These may be for training, rehabilitation or prevention purposes, when caring for the animal or when assisting and advising another person or organisation on undesirable behaviour in their animal(s).

### Standards

#### **The Animal Behaviour Consultant shall:**

1. Demonstrate positive examples of human interaction, through appropriate social skills, including verbal and nonverbal communication.
2. Comply with current animal welfare legislation, health and safety guidelines and other applicable legislation at all times.
3. Ensure all interactions with animals are in a manner that reinforces desirable behavioural patterns and avoids creating undesirable behavioural patterns.
4. Assess the needs of the animals under their care and adequately provide for those needs.
5. Gather evidence regarding the behaviour of the animal and the problem(s) for which advice is being sought from all sources identified as likely to provide relevant information. This could include (but is not limited to): direct observation, discussion with client, assessments supplied by veterinarians, and case history.
6. Identify and liaise with other professionals (e.g. animal trainers, veterinarians) and organisations involved in the care of the animals for which advice is being sought, to

7. ensure a consistent and appropriate approach to resolution of the problem that both promotes animal welfare and is legally compliant.
8. Assess the effect of physical factors on the animal's behaviour (including species, breed, parentage, sex, age, medical conditions, physiological status, and developmental history). Identify those physical factors most relevant to the problem(s) and areas of concern identified, and for those for which help is being sought.
9. Assess the impact of external factors on the behaviour of the animal, the problem(s) and areas of concern and those for which help is being sought. This could include (but is not limited to):
  - immediate surroundings
  - wider environment
  - environmental pressures
  - ethological requirements
  - previous experiences
  - presence/absence of environmental enrichment
  - social contact
  - physical activity
  - diet
  - interactions and relationship with client, other humans and animals.
10. Demonstrate skill and competency in the selection and use of a wide range of behavioural modification techniques to address undesirable and problematic behaviours. Be able to teach others how to continue to use these techniques effectively and appropriately, in the absence of the consultant, to ensure clients protect the welfare of the animal.
11. Apply the principles of animal learning theory to humane training methods to achieve agreed goals.
12. Devise and implement a structured behaviour modification programme for an animal that identifies and sets realistic goals for monitoring of progress and assessment of success.
13. Explain to the client, through written guidelines or another appropriate system of feedback, the areas of concern that have been identified regarding their animal, the possible causes, and the rationale behind the behavioural modification programme selected to remedy the concerns, and also any other associated issues that have been identified.
14. Ensure the client understands their role in the delivery of an effective behavioural modification programme and the importance of maintaining the desired change to behaviour once it is achieved.
15. Monitor and evaluate the ongoing effectiveness of the behavioural modification programme and revise accordingly if needed.
16. Recognise their own limitations and seek qualified professional advice (e.g. Veterinarian, Animal Trainer) as necessary.

**The Animal Behaviour Consultant shall know and understand:**

- a) The interaction between health and behaviour.
- b) The signs of ill-health and common conditions influencing behaviour.
- c) Developmental periods with particular attention to sensitive periods and the importance and timing of socialisation.
- d) How to recognise, evaluate and report on the key behavioural states of animals (including fear, nervousness, aggression, ill-health, threat-reduction, play and relaxation).
- e) The physiological and behavioural indicators of welfare in animals, their limitations and how to use these indicators to practically assess welfare.
- f) Welfare considerations in the management and training of animals.
- g) The theory of animal learning (including habituation, sensitization, classical conditioning, operant conditioning, insight and social learning).
- h) The interaction between ontogeny, phylogeny and the environment in which an animal is kept, and their roles in the development and maintenance of undesirable behaviours.
- i) How to identify contributing factors to common behavioural disorders (including phobias, aggression, stereotypies, and anxiety-related behaviours).
- j) The principles and rationale behind the use of the range of behavioural modification techniques (including systematic desensitization, counter-conditioning and the use of bridges e.g. clickers).
- k) The techniques most appropriate for the modification of a range of common undesirable behaviours, the rationale for their use/application, and the strengths and weaknesses of each.
- l) The legal position of the Animal Behaviour Consultant, Veterinarian and others regarding the diagnosis, provision of advice, and prescription and use of drugs.