



Guidelines for the Welfare of Performing Animals



Disclaimer

These Guidelines contain general information only. They are not a statement of the law and nothing in the Guidelines constitutes legal advice. It is your responsibility to ensure compliance with all laws relevant to your circumstances; you should consult a suitably qualified lawyer on any specific legal problem or issue.

The RSPCA makes no warranties, representations or undertakings about any of the content of the Guidelines (including without limitation any as to the quality, accuracy or fitness for any particular purpose of such content).

To the extent permitted by law, the RSPCA does not accept liability for any loss arising out of or in connection with the use of these Guidelines.

Copyright notice

The content of these pages is protected by copyright: © RSPCA 2012. You may download and copy the Guidelines to use in relation to animal use in a production but you must not sell or republish them. You may quote a single paragraph of text from a page of the Guidelines without asking, provided that you acknowledge the source and copyright status of the material. For any other publication of extracts from these Guidelines, please seek our permission.

RSPCA trademark information

'RSPCA' is registered in the UK under trademark numbers 2172832 and 1318570.

All applications for use of the RSPCA's trademark should be directed to: legal_services@rspca.org.uk

RSPCA Policies

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the document '[RSPCA policies on animal welfare](#)', in particular, note should be taken of section 5.3 (performing animals, page 22) and policy 5.3.2 "The RSPCA is opposed to exhibitions or presentations of all animals, of whatever species, in circuses and travelling menageries".

These guidelines cannot be used to imply in any way RSPCA approval of using animals in travelling menageries or circuses.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With thanks to:

Dr Ros Clubb

Dr Nicola Rooney

RSPCA Inspector Jody Gordon

and all others who contributed to the production of these Guidelines.

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham

West Sussex RH13 9RS

The RSPCA helps animals in England and Wales.

Registered charity no. 219099.

The RSPCA only exists because of public donations



Contents

ABOUT THESE GUIDELINES	4		
DEFINITIONS	5		
A INTRODUCTION	7		
1 The RSPCA	7		
2 Purpose of these Guidelines	7		
3 Legal implications of using animals	7		
4 We don't intend these Guidelines to affect the artistic content of a production	7		
5 Types of production covered by these Guidelines	8		
6 How practical are these standards?	8		
7 Who to call if anyone is worried about animals in a production	9		
8 Other help available from the RSPCA	9		
B IS IT NECESSARY TO USE LIVE ANIMALS?	9		
9 Using animals in a production	9		
10 Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) and animatronics	9		
C GETTING READY BEFORE PRODUCTION BEGINS	9		
11 Choosing the right animal trainer or handler	9		
12 Communication with the trainer, handler and Independent Animal Welfare Adviser	10		
13 Production scheduling	10		
14 Keeping records	10		
15 Safety meetings	10		
16 Emergency plan	10		
D IDENTIFYING WHO WILL LOOK AFTER THE ANIMALS	11		
17 Roles and responsibilities	11		
E GETTING EXPERT ADVICE	12		
18 The need for expert advice	12		
19 Using an Independent Animal Welfare Adviser	12		
20 Using a vet	12		
21 Using an animal behaviour expert	12		
F SOURCING ANIMALS	13		
22 Choosing the right animal	13		
23 Using wild (non-domesticated) animals	13		
24 Using domesticated animals	13		
25 Using hand-reared animals	13		
26 Animal identification	14		
27 Minimising disease risks	14		
G USING ANIMALS ON-SET DURING PRODUCTION AND REHEARSALS	14		
28 Setting up	14		
29 Duration of sessions	14		
30 Keeping animals on-set during production breaks	14		
31 Provisions for animals on-set	14		
32 Problems during production	14		
33 Health and safety considerations for animals	15		
34 Levels of light, heat and noise	15		
35 Methods to create specific behaviours	15		
36 Equipment, props and costumes	16		
37 Weather conditions	16		
38 Special effects	16		
39 Using animals together	17		
40 Killing animals for a production	17		
41 Injuring animals for a production	17		
42 Births, and pregnant and/or nursing animals	17		
43 Stunts	17		
44 Animals in water	17		
45 Fire	18		
46 Explosives and similar substances	18		
47 Dealing with animals after a production	18		
H HOUSING ANIMALS ON AND OFF THE PRODUCTION SITE	18		
48 Animal housing	18		
49 Tethering animals	19		
50 Mixing animals	19		
51 Diet	19		
52 Access to water	20		
53 Exercise	20		
54 Condition checks on- and off-site	20		
55 Fitness to work	20		
On-site only	20		
56 Rest areas	20		
57 Bringing non-performing animals on-site	21		
58 Condition checks	21		
59 Stray and feral animals	21		
I TRANSPORTING ANIMALS	21		
60 Transporting animals to the production site	21		
61 Importing animals from abroad	21		
62 Paperwork, permits and licences for transporting animals	22		
63 Transport vehicles	22		
64 Transporting animals in groups	22		
65 Transporting pregnant animals	22		
66 Using sedatives, etc. to help transport animals	22		
J TRAINING AND PREPARING ANIMALS FOR PERFORMANCE	22		
67 Methods of training animals	22		
68 Using food and water to train animals	23		
69 Electric shock devices	23		
70 Hobbles	23		
71 Mutilating animals	23		
72 Length of time to train animals properly	23		

ABOUT THESE GUIDELINES

THE RSPCA'S POSITION

The RSPCA has been working to safeguard animal welfare in many different forums (e.g. farm, laboratory, and zoos) for nearly two centuries. The Society's policies are driven by science but designed to be effective in the real world.

The RSPCA recognised that in England and Wales the welfare of an animal used in a [production](#) (see Definitions) was largely unregulated, with few opportunities for [the Production](#) (see Definitions) to consult with a welfare-focused group. We set up the RSPCA Performing Animals Consultancy to address this gap.

DUTY OF CARE

The Production should take animal welfare seriously and prioritise this issue during planning and operation. In 2006 England and Wales introduced new legislation to protect the welfare of animals. Included was the requirement that a person responsible for an animal has a "duty of care" (see paragraph 3.2) to provide for that [animal's needs](#). In some circumstances the Production (which commissions the use of an animal) may share this duty of care, and failure to provide for an animal's needs could result in an offence being committed.

THE AIM OF THESE GUIDELINES

The Guidelines are designed to give practical guidance on how to provide for the needs of an animal, as required by good practice, in a production environment. The Guidelines do not tell the Production precisely how to prepare and care for animals but rather summarises key aspects the Production should consider.

These Guidelines were produced by the RSPCA's Performing Animals Consultancy (PAC), which can provide additional advice and support for the Production, including how to apply these Guidelines.

To get in touch, call the PAC hotline on 0300 123 8787 or go to <http://performinganimals.rspca.org.uk>

EFFECT ON PRODUCTIONS

We don't intend these Guidelines to affect the artistic content of a production, and they don't cover the ethics of animal portrayal. They are intended solely to protect the welfare of the animals used. In most circumstances, increased awareness and thorough planning should allow animals to be used without causing injury or distress and with minimal or no change to editorial content.

The RSPCA wishes to support the entertainment industry by helping it reduce risk to animal welfare.

WHO ARE THESE GUIDELINES FOR?

These Guidelines are aimed at anyone who intends to use animals in any type of production. They are relevant to any animal [suppliers](#), [trainers](#), transporters, [handlers](#) or production staff who will have influence on animal use.

HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES

We advise anyone who works with live animals in the entertainment industry (irrespective of role) to read these Guidelines in their entirety.

The Guidelines are organised into discrete sections that cover all aspects of using animals in a production, from identifying the correct animal for the job to use of explosives around animals, and beyond.

Some sections will be more relevant than others depending on the reader's role. However, by reading all sections the reader will have a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in ensuring animal welfare standards.

Scattered throughout the document are words and phrases in green. These indicate links in the PDF either to other parts of the Guidelines or to web pages. If you have printed out this document, please be aware that many of the highlighted words link to the Definitions section.

DEFINITIONS

ANIMAL is used here as defined in section 1(1) of the [Animal Welfare Act 2006](#): “Vertebrate animals (animals with a backbone such as mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish) other than man, plus any invertebrates that may be added”. However, the RSPCA believes all animals should be treated with kindness and these [Guidelines](#) could equally be applied to invertebrates (e.g. insects, crustaceans, spiders, etc).

ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR EXPERTS refers to qualified specialists in the field of animal behaviour who are able to give advice on issues such as the behavioural needs of animals; the ability of certain species or individual animals to perform specific behaviours; [training](#) issues; behaviour problems; appropriate types of environment and handling; and factors that could be harmful to animals. Although they are familiar with the basic principles of animal behaviour, animal behaviour experts usually specialise in specific species.

ANIMAL HANDLERS relates to anyone who has responsibility, on either a temporary or permanent basis, for feeding, watering, cleaning, exercising, manipulating, loading, crating, moving, transporting, immobilising, restraining, treating, [training](#) or working any animal. This includes animal [trainers](#), owners, [on-site vets](#), and production staff assigned these duties.

ANIMAL INFORMATION SHEET refers to a poster and leaflet showing details of any animals used in [a production](#), including their arrival and departure times and contact details for the [handlers](#), [vet](#), [Independent Animal Welfare Adviser](#), and any other experts involved with animal use, as well as the RSPCA's confidential hotline number. Templates can be found on the RSPCA Performing Animals Guidelines website: <http://performinganimals.rspca.org.uk>

ANIMAL TRAINERS are people who train animals. Animal trainers are included in the wider definition of [‘animal handlers’](#).

ANIMAL SUPPLIERS are people or companies who supply animals for [a production](#). This may be the animal's owner or someone acting as an agent for the owner.

ANIMAL WELFARE ACT 2006 (AWA) is a piece of legislation covering England and Wales. Section 4 of the Act makes it an offence to cause an animal unnecessary suffering. This includes “failing to take action thereby causing an animal unnecessary suffering” and “failing to take steps to prevent another person causing unnecessary suffering to an animal (e.g. failing to supervise a person, where it is appropriate that person should be supervised)”. Section 9 of the Act imposes a legal obligation (“duty of care”) on a person

who is responsible for an animal to “take such steps as are reasonable in all circumstances to meet the needs of that animal, to the extent required by good practice”. See below for a definition of the [‘needs of an animal’](#). It should be noted that Regulations and Codes of Practice under this Act may be different in England and Wales.

ANIMAL WELFARE RISK ASSESSMENT (AWRA) refers to a process created by the RSPCA which defines and assesses risks to animal welfare (categorised into each of the five welfare needs as outlined in the [Animal Welfare Act 2006](#), and suggests measures that would minimise these risks, as well as identifying those responsible for implementing the measures. It is a document that should be used in conjunction with these [Guidelines](#).

AVERSIVE TRAINING METHODS are those that seek to bring about desired behaviour(s) and/or action(s) by means of fear, distress, pain, discomfort or physical injury, no matter how momentary the effects are. They include dominance-based training and shouting at an animal to stop the animal performing an undesirable behaviour or to bring about a desired behaviour (e.g. to stop barking and sit quietly).

CALL SHEET is a document given to the cast and crew of [a production](#) that contains details of the production location, the schedule for the day, the scenes/script pages being shot and useful contact information.

COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) is the law that requires employers to control substances that are hazardous to health. See www.hse.gov.uk/coshh for more information.

DOMESTICATED ANIMALS are those that have gone through a process of selective breeding, usually over no more than a few thousand years, to accentuate desirable characteristics such as their meat or milk, or ability to work or provide companionship. Often such breeding leads to domestic animals being tame. Examples of domesticated animals include dogs, cats, horses, rabbits and guinea pigs.

EMERGENCY PLAN sets out the procedure for evacuating animals in the event of an emergency, such as a fire or flood.

EXPERT refers to any or all of the experts listed in [Section E: Getting expert advice](#), or any other recognised expert in the appropriate field.

GUIDELINES refers to the content of this document. It is intended to be a guide for good practice in the use of animals in productions and is based on RSPCA experience and, where appropriate and available, scientific knowledge.

HABITUATION is a type of learning where repeated exposure to a stimulus (e.g. a noise) leads to a decrease in, or cessation of a response (e.g. startle) from an animal.

HAND-REARING refers to the process where young are removed from their mothers while still nutritionally dependent, to be fed and reared by people.

INDEPENDENT ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISER (IAWA) refers to someone who operates independently of [the Production](#) and the owner/handler to advise on animal welfare. This person could be a [vet](#) or an [animal behaviour expert](#). They should have a good understanding of all relevant animal welfare legislation and animal welfare, including the species-specific needs of animals being used in [a production](#) (see 'Needs of an animal' definition) and they should be able to recognise when these needs are not being met. This service can be provided by the RSPCA's Performing Animals Consultancy. See our website: <http://performinganimals.rspca.org.uk> for more information or call 0300 123 8787.

NEEDS OF AN ANIMAL refers to an animal's needs as defined in Section 9(2) of the [Animal Welfare Act 2006](#), which include (a) its need for a suitable environment; (b) its need for a suitable diet; (c) its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns; (d) any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals; and (e) its need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

ON-SET is used to describe the area where animals perform, in the widest sense of the word (e.g. where they are filmed, photographed or displayed).

ON-SITE or ON THE PRODUCTION SITE is the area where animals are housed temporarily on or by the production site, away from the [on-set](#) area (e.g. during breaks and before and after use on-set).

OFF-SITE or OFF THE PRODUCTION SITE is the animals' permanent home, if this is near enough to the production site, or their overnight or long-stay accommodation on or near the production site.

PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR ANIMALS refers to a person responsible for, or in charge of, an animal either on a permanent or temporary basis. The animal owner will always be regarded as a person responsible, although in the case of an owner aged under 16, the person in care and control of that child will also be responsible. Corporate bodies may also be held to account, or their senior staff (e.g. production manager or producer, event organiser or person with an equivalent role), where offences are committed with their consent or involvement, or caused by their neglect. Anyone responsible for animals must make sure they comply with all relevant legislation.

PRODUCTION ('a production') refers to all kinds of performance, event or show involving animals (see [Section 5](#) for further details of the types of production covered and not covered by these [Guidelines](#)).

PRODUCTION ('the Production') refers to the corporate body, which encompasses the production staff and the performance itself.

TAME animals are those that have become tractable – partly as a result of losing their natural fear of humans – and can include [wild \(non-domesticated\) animals](#).

TRAINING is the process used by [animal trainers](#) to get animals to either perform or refrain from performing specific behaviours.

VET refers to a veterinary surgeon, registered with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) and qualified in the field of animal physical health. They may or may not have knowledge of or qualifications in animal behaviour. Some vets can act as [Independent Animal Welfare Advisers \(IAWAs\)](#). Vets who qualified abroad still need to be registered with the RCVS to practise in the UK.

WILD ANIMALS (NON-DOMESTICATED ANIMALS) refers to species that have not been [domesticated](#) but which may be kept in captivity, tamed and trained.

A Introduction

1. THE RSPCA

- 1.1 The RSPCA is the leading animal welfare organisation in England and Wales. Our mission is to prevent cruelty and promote kindness to, and alleviate the suffering of, all animals. We are a charity and not a governing body. To find out more visit www.rspca.org.uk

2. PURPOSE OF THESE GUIDELINES

- 2.1 These voluntary [Guidelines](#) outline good welfare practice for using animals in performances, events and productions. They can help the Production and those responsible for animals meet their legal obligations and avoid prosecution under animal welfare legislation. More information and advice can be found, if needed, at <http://performinganimals.rspca.org.uk> or by calling the RSPCA Performing Animals Consultancy (PAC) on: 0300 123 8787.
- 2.2 These Guidelines will help make sure that all animals used are suitable for the action needed and that they stay fit and healthy, aren't overworked and don't suffer either physically or psychologically before, during or immediately after a production.
- 2.3 These Guidelines are not a substitute for animal welfare legislation but rather give advice on how to provide for the [needs of animals](#) in, and travelling to and from, a production environment.
- 2.4 To make sure these Guidelines are used as effectively as possible, we suggest that a senior member of staff on a [production](#) has the authority for ensuring the Guidelines are followed.

3. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF USING ANIMALS

- 3.1 These Guidelines contain references to some animal welfare legislation applicable to England and Wales. Please be aware that legislation may differ between England and Wales, and in other countries.
- 3.2 In 2007, the [Animal Welfare Act \(AWA\) 2006](#) came into force in England and Wales and introduced a duty of care for people to provide for the needs of animals they are responsible for, which means people need to be aware of, and follow, good welfare practice. Providing for the needs of an animal includes giving it a suitable environment and diet; allowing it to behave normally; housing it with or apart from other animals (as appropriate); protecting it from pain, injury, suffering and disease; and meeting any other needs it may have.

- 3.3 This responsibility may extend beyond the owner of an animal, meaning that production staff and the production company could be held legally responsible for an animal's welfare. For example, the owner of the animal may have responsibility for giving it food and water, while the production company may be responsible for providing adequate housing on-site.
- 3.4 The penalties for failing to provide for the needs of an animal include a fine (currently a maximum of £5,000 per offence) and/or imprisonment (currently up to six months). The penalties for causing an animal to suffer unnecessarily, and similar offences, include a fine up to a maximum of £20,000 and/or imprisonment (currently, for up to six months per offence). Other penalties include being disqualified for any period up to life from keeping, owning or having any involvement with keeping animals, dealing in animals, or transporting or arranging transport for animals.
- 3.5 The AWA also includes, among other requirements, offences relating to causing unnecessary suffering, mutilations, administration of poisons and animal fighting.
- 3.6 Within England and Wales, there are a number of other laws that may be relevant to the use of animals in productions. These include, but are not limited to, the: Cinematograph Films (Animals) Act 1937; Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925; Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976; The Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006; The Welfare of Animals (Transport) (Wales) Order 2007; The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007; The Welfare of Farmed Animals (Wales) Regulations 2007; Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- 3.7 Any production in the UK that intends to use animals may require a Performing Animals Licence under the requirements of the Performing Animals Act 1925. Applications should be made to the local authority. Further information can be found at www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/pets/cruelty
- 3.8 [The Production](#) may want to refer to an [Independent Animal Welfare Adviser \(IAWA\)](#) who should understand all the legal responsibilities involved in using animals in a production (see [Sections D and E](#)).

4. WE DON'T INTEND THESE GUIDELINES TO AFFECT THE ARTISTIC CONTENT OF A PRODUCTION

- 4.1 We appreciate that using animals in the media can increase affection, respect or concern for them. As long as the Production hasn't caused the animals

any physical or psychological suffering or distress, and their needs have been met as required by good practice, we are not against their use in this way.

4.2 We don't intend these Guidelines to affect the artistic content of a production, and they don't cover the ethics of animal portrayal. They are intended solely to protect the welfare of the animals used.

4.3 However, if animals are portrayed in a demeaning way or in a manner that encourages deliberate cruelty, neglect or inappropriate care, the RSPCA is worried that this could increase the number of people who see them as disposable property, and think it is acceptable to disregard their needs or mimic what is shown. The Production should also be aware that showing animals in a certain light may stimulate demand for them as pets.

5. TYPES OF PRODUCTION COVERED BY THESE GUIDELINES

5.1 When we refer to 'a production' in these Guidelines, we mean every kind of performance, event and show involving animals, with the exception of those below.

5.2 The Guidelines only apply if a production involves animals being taken away from, or disturbed in, their usual environment and/or social group, or **trained**/set up to perform specific desired behaviours for the purpose of public display.

5.3 The Guidelines do *not* cover:

- 'fly on the wall' documentaries where an animal is followed while performing its natural behaviour in its usual environment. Guidelines for these can be found at: www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/page/guidance-natural-world-full
- *bona fide* agricultural shows, sporting events and/or military and police activities
- anything lawfully done under the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

5.4 Some examples of when these Guidelines *should* be used are:

- film or television drama
- advertisements
- television chat shows
- children's television shows
- theatre
- webcasts and multimedia
- live events and displays (e.g. in a zoo, wildlife or falconry park and art installations)

- music videos
- still photography
- corporate training and marketing videos
- the off-set use of animals to attract attention of **on-set** animals.

5.5 The Guidelines should be used even if the use of animals is minimal and straightforward. They can be applied to amateur productions as well as commercial ones (e.g. amateur dramatics, magic shows and displays, or school performances).

6. HOW PRACTICAL ARE THESE STANDARDS?

6.1 We appreciate that commercial pressures might mean a compromise between an animal's needs and the Production's needs. For example, it might not be practical to give animals the same space or opportunities to express normal behaviour (either on-set or in a temporary environment) that they have in their permanent housing, or, if they are a captive **wild** animal, their natural habitat in the wild.

6.2 The standards outlined in these Guidelines are realistic: animals should be given everything they need that it is reasonably possible to provide. If an animal is placed in sub-optimal conditions to meet production needs, it must be for the shortest time possible to get the desired action and the animal must not suffer or have their needs denied for an unreasonable period of time or to an unreasonable degree (consultation with an expert may be required, see **Section E: Getting expert advice**). The less extreme the conditions and the shorter you make the action, the less chance there is that the animal's welfare will be compromised.

Causing unnecessary suffering to an animal is an offence. Use of an animal for the purpose of entertainment or performance will not justify the suffering as 'necessary'. An **Animal Welfare Risk Assessment (AWRA)** will help the Production see where the boundaries are. An IAWA can assist in this process. If an animal suffers despite precautions being taken, immediate steps must be taken to alleviate.

6.3 We understand that it is not always possible to predict how an animal will behave but we hope that these Guidelines will help control situations and avoid problems arising.

7. WHO TO CALL IF ANYONE IS WORRIED ABOUT ANIMALS IN A PRODUCTION

- 7.1 The RSPCA has set up a confidential hotline for anyone worried about the use or treatment of an animal in any production. Call the PAC hotline on 0300 123 8787 to speak to us if anyone is concerned.
- 7.2 Everyone working on a production using animals should be made aware of the PAC hotline number. The Production should ensure it is on all [call sheets](#) and, if possible, conspicuously displayed around the production site. We advise that copies of our [Animal Information Sheet](#) (see templates at <http://performinganimals.rspca.org.uk>) are filled out and displayed in appropriate places around the production site.

8. OTHER HELP AVAILABLE FROM THE RSPCA

- 8.1 If anyone has any comments or questions about how to use these Guidelines, please call the PAC hotline on 0300 123 8787. Or go to <http://performinganimals.rspca.org.uk> for details of where to get further advice and the services the RSPCA provides.
- 8.2 We are currently producing specific species guidelines on various types of animal commonly used in productions.

B Is it necessary to use live animals?

9 USING ANIMALS IN A PRODUCTION

- 9.1 At the planning stage, serious thought should be given as to whether live animals are really needed in a production. Using animals requires planning and has legal and financial implications. Plus, serious consideration of the risks to the individual animals taking part in a production must be given before making a decision.
- 9.2 Animals have a reputation in the industry for being unpredictable and difficult to work with. But actually, most of their behaviour can be predicted by someone who is knowledgeable about that kind of animal. The Production should check with an [expert](#) or [trainer](#) whether the kind of animal (i.e. species) they are considering using is likely to do what is required (see [Section F: Sourcing animals](#)). For example, there is little point paying for a python to be transported to a studio to film it eating, as this animal is very unlikely to eat outside their home environment.
- 9.3 For more advice speak to an expert. For advice on how to choose an [Independent Animal Welfare Adviser \(IAWA\)](#), [vet](#) or [animal behaviour \(or other\) expert](#) see [Section E: Getting expert advice](#).

10. COMPUTER GENERATED IMAGERY (CGI) AND ANIMATRONICS

- 10.1 To achieve the desired effect and reduce the risks to animal welfare it might be necessary to use alternative methods, which include CGI, animatronics and puppets. Alternative methods should be used if the desired action using a live animal cannot be achieved within these [Guidelines](#). Choosing another method may still require the use of an animal but the impact on their welfare may be greatly reduced.

C Getting ready before production begins

11. CHOOSING THE RIGHT ANIMAL TRAINER OR HANDLER

- 11.1 Before engaging an [animal trainer](#) or [handler](#), the [Production](#) should verify their previous work and credentials to make sure the animal trainer/handler has experience of the species the Production wishes to use and can cope with the type and scale of production. A skilled trainer will be able to reduce the length of time the animal needs to be [on the production site](#) and will be able to advise on what the animal can, and cannot, reasonably be expected to do.
- 11.2 Look for trainers and handlers who have qualifications and experience in animal behaviour as well as animal [training](#). For more information on animal training qualifications go to www.skillset.org/standards/standards/AnimalTraining
- 11.3 The Production should choose a trainer and/or handler who does not use [aversive training methods](#). Training should be based on the most progressive humane methods, such as the ones described in these [Guidelines](#) (see [Section J: Training and preparing animals for performance](#)). We suggest that the trainer and/or handler confirms this in writing. For further advice contact RSPCA Performing Animals Consultancy (PAC) on 0300 123 8787 or go to <http://performinganimals.rspca.org.uk>
- 11.4 All trainers/handlers need to have experience of the kinds of animals used – this includes having a good understanding of the needs of those animals, including what is normal and abnormal behaviour. All trainers/handlers should be supervised and it must be made very clear who has responsibility and authority for each animal.
- 11.5 All trainers/handlers working on a production should be familiar with these Guidelines and agree to work within their parameters.

12. COMMUNICATION WITH THE TRAINER, HANDLER AND INDEPENDENT ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISER

- 12.1 In the very early stages, the trainer, handler and/or **Independent Animal Welfare Adviser (IAWA)** should be briefed as fully as possible on what is required from the animal(s) and given details of the production (send them the storyboard and/or script) and the location. It is very important that this communication carries on throughout a production.

The RSPCA can review storyboards/scripts and provide advice as part of its PAC service. To find out more go to <http://performinganimals.rspca.org.uk>

13. PRODUCTION SCHEDULING

- 13.1 An **Animal Welfare Risk Assessment (AWRA)** should be completed before scheduling as this may affect timescales, e.g. the time required to train animals to deliver the desired action will need to be built into the schedule. This will require consultation with the trainer/handler and any **experts** involved, who can advise on what needs to be done to ensure an animal's welfare.
- 13.2 Schedules should be planned so that animals are not waiting to be brought on to the production site, or kept on it, for any longer than is really necessary. Consideration should be given to how long an animal will need to rest after arriving at the production site.
- 13.3 Animals can quickly get bored mentally and/or physically fatigued if they are asked to perform the same action again and again, so rehearsals, performances and takes should be as few and as short as possible.
- 13.4 Changes to the script and schedules that affect how animals will be used or when they'll be needed should be discussed with the animal's trainer/handler and any experts at the earliest opportunity and certainly before being finalised. Last-minute changes that would mean these Guidelines are not followed should not be made. Pressure should not be applied to trainers/handlers to go along with changes they think are unsuitable.

14. KEEPING RECORDS

- 14.1 We strongly advise that detailed records of animal use are kept, including:
- steps taken to ensure their wellbeing and safety
 - how animal action was achieved
 - any accidents involving animals, and the outcome.

The records should clearly state if and when an AWRA was filled out for animal use; it will be invaluable for dealing with any concerns or complaints from members of the public and show that the Production has met its legal obligations. It would also be helpful to identify in these records the person on the production team who is familiar with these Guidelines.

- 14.2 The owner of every animal should give their contact details to the Production so that they can be reached at any time. If this is not possible, the Production needs to obtain their written consent in advance for emergency veterinary treatment and/or euthanasia if necessary. Euthanasia of animals should only ever be carried out humanely and by a trained competent expert.
- 14.3 A production schedule should include the types and numbers of animals involved, how, when and where they will all be used, and where they will be housed **on-site** and **off-site**. This information should be made available to everyone **on-set**. The **Animal Information Sheet** (see our website for templates: <http://performinganimals.rspca.org.uk>) should provide some of this information.

15. SAFETY MEETINGS

- 15.1 The Production will need to plan safety meetings if it is using:
- animals in stunts or hazardous or strenuous actions
 - explosives, aircraft, gunfire, fire or special effects
 - animals licensed under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, or other dangerous/venomous animals (see **Section 62: Paperwork, permits and licences for transporting animals**).
- 15.2 All relevant production staff, including technical experts, animal handlers, trainers and experts, must attend these meetings.

16. EMERGENCY PLAN

- 16.1 Before any of the animals arrive on-site, an **emergency plan** must be written. This should include the recovery and treatment of any escaped animals and evacuation procedures in the event of a fire, flood, etc. It should identify a site nearby where the animals can be kept temporarily if relocation is needed. All production staff should be made aware of the plan and its contents.
- 16.2 When animals are present on a film set, a fire safety risk assessment should include the animals, their housing and their handlers. The safety measures required will vary depending on the location, number of animals and the species, etc. The person or people responsible must decide what protection and prevention measures are needed. It is essential that

all employees associated with animal care are aware of the fire safety procedures to ensure the response is as efficient and safe as possible.

- 16.3 More information on fire safety risk assessments is available at www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety; this has specific guidance for animal premises and stables.

D Identifying who will look after the animals

17. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 17.1 **The Production** will be responsible for animals used at its direction. It can delegate day-to-day responsibility for animal care to staff or contractors with suitable expertise and experience, but will remain responsible for animal use under its instruction.
- 17.2 An owner is always responsible for the care of their animal. An owner can delegate responsibility to another person but it is the owner's responsibility to ensure that, whoever they delegate that responsibility to, that person or people fully understand the requirements to provide for the needs of that animal and protect them from harm.
- 17.3 In addition, the Production must ensure that while animals are used under its instruction, it makes clear who is responsible for each of the animal's needs at all times.
- 17.4 We suggest that the following roles are agreed in writing prior to the start of a **production** and that all staff on a production understand these roles.
- Each animal involved must have one or more persons who are responsible for providing for the **needs of that animal** at all times. This would include:
 - before **on-site** work has begun
 - during transport to and from the production site
 - at the production site
 - during resting periods between performances
 - after a production is complete.
 - An **Independent Animal Welfare Adviser (IAWA)** can be employed to advise on whether these **Guidelines** are being followed and whether the animals' needs are being met. The IAWA can also assist with preparation of **Animal Welfare Risk Assessments (AWRAs)** and other relevant paperwork. The IAWA would *not* be responsible for the animals but can advise on whether others are fulfilling their responsibilities.
- The Production should identify a member of staff who has the final authority to make decisions about these Guidelines and how animals' needs are provided for, and to stop the production if necessary.
- 17.5 Preparing an AWRA can help define these roles. An IAWA should be able to help prepare an AWRA. It is really important that roles and responsibilities are clearly understood and confirmed in writing, and that the people given responsibility have the appropriate ability and authority. Any changes to this agreement must be agreed by all relevant parties – and put in writing.
- 17.6 The animal **handler, trainer** and any **experts** must have the right to voice any concerns over animals they think are becoming distressed, fatigued, anxious, fearful, uncontrollable, or are behaving abnormally or are at risk of harm. They should know that a production can be halted immediately as a result. Work should not start again until everyone involved agrees that the animal has recovered.
- 17.7 There should be enough money allocated in the budget to allow these Guidelines to be followed. The Production will need to find out about certain costs from the animal trainer/handler, who may be responsible for housing, food, transport, etc.
- 17.8 Anyone with a current conviction or disqualification for a relevant offence should not be employed to work with animals. This cannot be directly checked by production staff but we recommend that the Production asks employees to confirm this in writing at the time of employment.
- 17.9 At the beginning of every day's work, a **call sheet** should provide information to everyone on-site about which animals will be used, any relevant precautions that should be taken, and the location and contact details of the nearest available **vet**. It should also have contact details for all experts, if required, as well as the RSPCA's Performing Animals Consultancy (PAC) hotline number: 0300 123 8787, which can be used to express concerns about an animal's state or treatment. An **Animal Information Sheet** can be a useful way to provide this information. See <http://performinganimals.rspca.org.uk> for templates.
- 17.10 Everyone on the production site (including audience, actors and production crew) must be informed about what kinds of animals will be used, how to behave around them (including sudden/loud noises such as applause), or movements that might frighten the animals and/or make them panic or react aggressively, especially if they've strayed from the control of

their handler. Everyone on the production site should also be briefed on how to minimise the risks of diseases that can be transmitted between humans and animals.

- 17.11** All animal trainers and handlers should be familiar with these Guidelines before they take part in a production. Anyone who provides and handles animals should be familiar with current, relevant good practice, as well as relevant animal welfare legislation.

E Getting expert advice

18. THE NEED FOR EXPERT ADVICE

- 18.1** An **Animal Welfare Risk Assessment (AWRA)** will help determine whether an expert should be present. If help is needed deciding which experts to involve, the RSPCA Performing Animals Consultancy (PAC) can provide this service: see <http://performinganimals.rspca.org.uk> for further information or call us on 0300 123 8787.

- 18.2** Some bodies (e.g. Clearcast) may require the presence of a **vet** or an RSPCA representative on-set.

19. USING AN INDEPENDENT ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISER

- 19.1** An **Independent Animal Welfare Adviser (IAWA)** (see Definitions) should be able to identify risks to animal welfare and suggest measures that can be put in place to lessen those risks and so help **the Production** comply with animal welfare legislation. An IAWA can also advise on which experts are required on-set and measures needed to comply with relevant legislation. They may also be able to provide an **on-set** presence during the performance. An IAWA's role is to work independently of a production and the animal trainer, handler or provider to give impartial advice about providing for the needs of animals and protecting them from harm.

This service can be provided by RSPCA PAC. Call 0300 123 8787 or visit <http://performinganimals.rspca.org.uk> to find out more.

20. USING A VET

- 20.1** Whether a vet is required to be present during animal use will depend on the:
- nature of the action required (i.e. is it unusual or does it present a risk to the animal?)
 - number of animals being used
 - type of animals being used
 - danger posed by these animals.

It is also very important to talk to the animal handler/**trainer** and IAWA, if one is used, to get their opinion on whether a vet should be present.

- 20.2** We strongly recommend that, if at all possible, you find a vet who specialises in the type of animal you will be using, and who has additional appropriate qualifications in animal behaviour, particularly if an **animal behaviour expert** is not being used. The vet should also have experience of working in a production environment.
- 20.3** The vet must be skilled in the emergency treatment and immobilisation of the species involved, as well as humane euthanasia techniques, and carry all the required equipment with them.
- 20.4** The Production should choose a vet who is local to the production site, if at all possible. If not, the chosen vet may be able to make arrangements with a local surgery to use their facilities if necessary.
- 20.5** If a vet isn't required to be on-set when animals are actually being worked, the Production should contact an appropriate vet to let them know about the planned use and production schedule. That way the vet knows they could be called out if required during **a production**. The chosen vet should be able to reach the animals in less than half-an-hour.
- 20.6** Whether a vet is needed on-set or not, their number should be clearly written on the **call sheet** and conspicuously displayed around the areas where the animals are kept and worked, so that it is easy to find if necessary, see **Roles and responsibilities (17.9)**.
- 20.7** A list of qualified vets is available on the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons website: www.rcvs.org.uk, and includes details of specialisations in particular types of animals. A list of vets who are members of ACTA (the Animal Consultants and Trainers Association) and experienced in working with performing animals can be found at www.acta4animals.com/vetmembers.html
- ### 21. USING AN ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR EXPERT
- 21.1** Qualified experts in animal behaviour can help protect animal welfare while enabling a production to run smoothly. Broadly speaking, a vet's primary area of expertise is the physical wellbeing of animals, although many specialise in animal behaviour. An animal behaviour expert's focus, however, is on maintaining and improving an animal's psychological health and advising on good husbandry and housing (all of which can affect physical health). For this reason, it can be important for a behaviour expert to be involved in a production.

- 21.2 Behaviour experts experienced in the species being used and the production environment can help the Production organise housing and enclosure design and appropriate grouping of animals and transport to minimise stress, etc. They should also be able to recommend the most progressive humane training methods and advise on the effects that the performance environment might have on animal behaviour and welfare.
- 21.3 There are many self-proclaimed behaviour experts. The Production should only consider those with recognised qualifications or accreditations. The following organisations run accreditation schemes.
- The Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour (ASAB), see <http://asab.nottingham.ac.uk>
 - The European College of Veterinary Behavioural Medicine (ECVBM), see www.ecvbm.org
- In addition, the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (APBC) represents accredited behaviourists, so you may find its website useful: www.apbc.org.uk
- 21.4 If it is not possible to find a suitably qualified behaviour expert, as described above, an expert with appropriate advanced qualifications (relating to each species used) should be employed.

F Sourcing animals

22. CHOOSING THE RIGHT ANIMAL

- 22.1 A knowledgeable expert will be able to explain which type of animal is suitable to deliver the desired performance.
- 22.2 Animals all behave differently, so not all of them are suitable for use in a production. As a rule, they need to be comfortable in varied circumstances and respond well to **training**. It is important to talk to the **trainer/handler** about exactly what will be required from the animal and the type of environment they will be placed in (including noise, lighting, special effects, etc).
- 22.3 The trainer/handler will need to know whether other animals or people will be present and, if so, what they'll be doing and where they'll be located. **The Production** needs to make sure it lets the trainer/handler know well in advance so that there is enough time to prepare and train the animal. Last-minute changes should be avoided.
- 22.4 We would suggest that the Production doesn't use ordinary pets (either from their owners or through 'animal agents') unless the owner has experience of handling animals in a production environment and

knows their pet is suitable for the type of work involved and is not likely to suffer as a result.

- 22.5 We recommend using animal 'doubles' where possible to reduce the impact on animals used, particularly when long hours or difficult tasks are involved.

23. USING WILD (NON-DOMESTICATED) ANIMALS (see Definitions)

- 23.1 Animals should not be taken from the wild for use in a production; in some cases this would be illegal. If this is being considered, the Production should seek further advice by speaking to an **Independent Animal Welfare Adviser (IAWA)** or contacting the RSPCA's Performing Animals Consultancy (PAC) on 0300 123 8787.
- 23.2 A wild animal's needs are essentially the same whether they have grown up and lived in the wild or in captivity. Animals have evolved and adapted to their natural environment over millions of years and so a good starting point for finding out what they need is to look at the species in the wild. Then look at the individual animal to address their particular circumstances and **needs**.
- 23.3 Usually, the bigger the difference between captivity and the species' natural environment, the greater the risk of animals becoming stressed or developing behaviour problems.
- 23.4 For advice about an animal's behavioural and physical needs, and how to meet them, contact RSPCA PAC on 0300 123 8787.

24. USING DOMESTICATED ANIMALS (see Definitions)

- 24.1 Through the process of domestication, most domesticated animals have become more trusting of and dependent on people. Despite this, their needs must be met.
- 24.2 Domestic animals can very quickly revert to wild behaviour if they are given the opportunity, and they share many of the same needs as their wild ancestors. The fact that an animal is domesticated or has spent their life in captivity doesn't alter or remove their fundamental needs.
- 24.3 For further advice and questions about an animal's physical and psychological needs and how to meet them, contact RSPCA PAC on 0300 123 8787.

25. USING HAND-REARED ANIMALS (see Definitions)

- 25.1 Hand-rearing of an animal should never be done for the purpose of helping it bond with humans or

making it tamer around people. This can result in behaviour problems when the animal is older and make it harder to provide for the animal's needs.

- 25.2 If a hand-reared animal is going to be used, an **expert** needs to be consulted about the impact on the animal's welfare.

26. ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION

- 26.1 Where possible, the **animal supplier** should be able to produce documentation to show that all animals can be individually identified. This should be appropriate for the animal e.g. dogs, cats and horses should be microchipped.

27. MINIMISING DISEASE RISKS

- 27.1 The Production should check that every animal has had all up-to-date vaccinations required and that those vaccinations have had time to be effective (a vet will be able to help with this) before being brought to the production site. We would also recommend that animal suppliers provide the Production with a copy of vaccination documents for each animal and the Production keeps hold of these for at least six months after a production has ended, in case of unexpected events such as disease breakouts.
- 27.2 The Production should ensure that health checks are completed before animals from different locations are brought together. Check with an expert whether there is specific legislation controlling the movement of some animals (e.g. farm animals). Be aware that some species can carry diseases that don't affect them but which can harm others (including people). A **vet** should be able to provide advice.
- 27.3 Housing design should minimise the risk of disease transmission. This includes keeping unfamiliar animals sufficiently far apart from each other. The design should also avoid excrement and other waste products passing between enclosures, which should be designed in such a way as to avoid the pooling of liquid. See [Section H: Housing animals on and off the production site](#), for more details.

G Using animals on-set during production and rehearsals

28. SETTING UP

- 28.1 Animals should be acclimatised to the set and any crew and/or actors they will interact with. This should be planned through consultation with the **handler** in advance of the animal arriving **on-site** to ensure that

there is sufficient time for the animal to familiarise themselves and be comfortable.

- 28.2 Animals must not be brought **on-set** unnecessarily. For example, consideration should be given to using dummies and/or models during sound and lighting checks and/or adjustments.

29. DURATION OF SESSIONS

- 29.1 The length of rehearsal and performance sessions should not cause an animal fatigue or stress.
- 29.2 Regular breaks for each animal should be scheduled beforehand to avoid fatigue, stress and overworking. The timing and duration of breaks should be agreed by the animal's handler, with the input of the **Independent Animal Welfare Adviser (IAWA)**. However, there should be enough flexibility for the breaks to be adjusted, depending on the animal's requirements at the time.
- 29.3 It is important to take into account the surrounding environment and the demands of the performance, as well as condition and age of each animal.
- 29.4 Using doubles reduces the time any one animal stays on-set, and so is recommended whenever possible.

30. KEEPING ANIMALS ON-SET DURING PRODUCTION BREAKS

- 30.1 Animals should not stay on-set during breaks in production, whether these are scheduled breaks (such as sound and lighting checks or adjustments) or unscheduled delays. The only exceptions are if the type of animal being used should not be moved too frequently and/or if the break will be brief.
- 30.2 During breaks animals should either be returned to their rest area or housing to rest or be given exercise, whatever is most appropriate as determined by the handler.

31. PROVISIONS FOR ANIMALS ON-SET

- 31.1 Clean drinking water should be available to the animals at all times. If the animal needs a drink during filming or rehearsal they should be allowed to break from performing and drink.
- 31.2 Food and access to water for bathing/swimming should not be withheld for longer than is appropriate for the species.

32. PROBLEMS DURING PRODUCTION

- 32.1 Before animals are brought onto set, plans should be in place to deal with emergencies that directly or indirectly affect the animals, and all persons on-set should be aware of these plans.

32.2 During animal use, the person or people responsible, the **experts** and the person with authority (see **Section D: Identifying who will look after the animals**) should all be able to watch the animals (e.g. directly or on a monitor) at all times. These people should be in constant contact, either directly or using communication devices, with the most senior production staff member on-set who has the power to stop a production if necessary. They should have the confidence to voice concerns – and these concerns should be taken seriously by **the Production** and the appropriate action taken.

A production should be halted if these people have any welfare concerns, including if:

- an animal is at risk of harm
- an animal ceases to be calm, controllable or responsive
- an animal shows signs of fatigue, anxiety, distress, pain or discomfort.

32.3 Animal use should only start again when the danger has passed or the animal has been rested and/or treated and has recovered, as determined by all relevant parties. No animal should be forced to do anything they don't want to.

32.4 If it is necessary (to avoid the animal becoming stressed or injured) and possible, the animal's **trainer** or handler should be able to stand in for a human actor.

32.5 Always remember to call the RSPCA's Performing Animals Consultancy (PAC) hotline on 0300 123 8787 if anyone is worried about an animal or would like to discuss how an animal is going to be used on-set, or any equipment or special effect that will affect an animal.

33. HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS FOR ANIMALS

33.1 Many of the usual health and safety precautions that are relevant to production staff also apply to animals. For example, floors should not be slippery or should have non-skid mats, and fire extinguishers must always be available.

33.2 It is important that the site is secure and escape-proof, especially for animals that can fly or climb, and this should be regularly checked by the animal handler. Potential hazards need to be removed (e.g. low-hanging branches, machinery, obstacles on river beds) or made safe (e.g. electrical cables that could be chewed). Platforms should be strong enough to take the animal's weight and flooring should be suitable for the animal and its speed of movement (e.g. using shock-absorbent material rather than tarmac for cantering or galloping horses).

33.3 If hazardous or toxic substances are involved in the production, washing facilities and emergency treatments for animals should be provided close to the site and COSHH data sheets need to be completed and circulated as required.

These must be given to the attending **vet** in the event of an accident that results in an animal touching, breathing in or eating such a substance.

33.4 The handler should stay with animals at all times while on-site. Actors and other production staff should not be allowed to play with or feed an animal without the approval of the handler, who should supervise such interactions.

33.5 Production staff working close to animals should be aware that some species are highly sensitive to certain chemicals (e.g. rodents are very sensitive to strong odours). For more information, speak to an expert.

34. LEVELS OF LIGHT, HEAT AND NOISE

34.1 Animals should not be restrained or confined (including in holding boxes) without access to shade or water while kept under studio/stage lights.

34.2 It is important to minimise glare and heat as much as possible by using appropriate scheduling and camera techniques.

34.3 Noise levels should be kept to a minimum around animals. Production staff should not make or encourage loud/sudden noises (e.g. heavy machinery, applause and clap sticks). It may be possible to gradually **habituate** animals to loud noises given sufficient time but it is important animals do not show signs of anxiety, fear or distress. If signs of anxiety, fear or distress are shown, either the source of noise or the animal (whichever is appropriate) should be removed immediately.

35. METHODS TO CREATE SPECIFIC BEHAVIOURS

Please follow all the guidance in **Section J: Training and preparing animals**.

35.1 Only the most progressive humane training methods should be used – see **Section 67: Methods of training animals**. **Aversive training techniques**, such as punishment, should not be used.

35.2 Electric shock devices must never be used for any purpose.

35.3 Hobbles are devices put around an animal's legs to interfere with but not prevent movement, or to cause the animal to limp. They must not be used for the purposes of a production.

- 35.4** No animal should be mutilated for the purpose of a production. The Production should ensure that animals with dangerous body parts (e.g. teeth or claws) have not been interfered with exclusively for the purpose of a production – see [Section 71: Mutilating animals](#).
- 35.5** Sedatives, tranquillisers, behaviour-altering substances, laxatives or general anaesthetics must not be used on any animal.
- 35.6** Actors, members of the public or other animals must not be placed in a confined area with an animal to create anxiety, fear and/or stress in an animal.
- 35.7** Startle responses should be instant and not prolonged. If it is necessary to startle an animal, only sight or sound cues should be used and the stimuli used must not cause pain, distress or excessive fear. Consideration should be given to the effect of noise and light levels on all animals on- and off-set.

36. EQUIPMENT, PROPS AND COSTUMES

- 36.1** If devices are used to change an animal's natural movement or position of their tail or other body part, they must not cause the animal discomfort or pain.
- 36.2** If an animal is required to pull, lift or push something, the weight shouldn't make the animal strain or be difficult for the animal to start moving; whenever possible, mechanical assistance should be provided. Special care should be taken when loading to make sure weight distribution is even. No animal should be overworked (e.g. to fit schedules).
- 36.3** All props and equipment (e.g. rigging and hitching rails) should be inspected and tested for safety before and after every rehearsal/performance.
- 36.4** Animals in costumes, hitches, harnesses or similar equipment must never be left unattended, and the equipment should be removed as soon as possible.
- 36.5** If costumes, collars or saddles (or similar equipment) are used, the animals should be examined in areas prone to rubbing (e.g. girth) before, during and after use. If the skin is damaged, it must be treated and the props either adjusted to stop this from happening again or not used in future.
- 36.6** Consideration should be given to the effect costumes and props will have on an animal's ability to control body temperature, and the additional effort required to carry/wear the costume/props.
- 36.7** Props, animal costumes and make-up should not pose a risk to the animal. For example:
- costumes should be non-flammable and comfortable, and should not restrict breathing or movement;

any fastenings should be quick-release in nature to prevent injury in the event of emergencies

- dyes, adhesives and paints must be non-permanent, non-toxic, non-caustic, non-flammable and non-carcinogenic
- tempered glass should not be used; sugar glass should be used as a safe alternative
- spears, swords, barbed wire fences and top rails of horse jumps should be made of materials that won't cause injury (e.g. rubber, balsa wood or polystyrene)
- plants that are poisonous or could cause injury to animals should not be used, and care should be taken to ensure the animals do not come into contact with them (e.g. raisins are highly toxic to dogs and ragwort is poisonous to horses). For further advice see the following websites:
www.rspca.org.uk/poisoning
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/wildlife-management/weeds-act-1959/>
www.bva-awf.org.uk/resources/leaflets/pets_poisons_leaflet_2008_FINAL1.pdf

37. WEATHER CONDITIONS

- 37.1** If animals are going to encounter inter-changeable weather, either simulated or real (e.g. dust, rain, snow, blizzards, intense heat or cold), they must be properly prepared and/or trained to cope with these conditions beforehand.
- 37.2** Animals need to be protected against injury pain, distress or discomfort (e.g. by providing ear and eye protection or sunscreen and/or by limiting the length of time the animal is exposed). Speak to an expert for information on methods and equipment appropriate to the species used.

38. SPECIAL EFFECTS

- 38.1** Ideally, smoke and photographic dust should not be used around animals. If their use is considered essential, appropriate safety precautions need to be devised and implemented beforehand for each animal involved.
- 38.2** Carbon dioxide (used to produce dry ice) and artificial smoke can be harmful to and is disliked by many species. Their use should be avoided if possible when animals are present and they should never be used around birds. If their use is considered essential (for use around species other than birds), appropriate safety precautions need to be devised and implemented beforehand. For further advice speak to an expert.

38.3 Trip wires or similar devices and pitfalls should not be used for or around animals.

39. USING ANIMALS TOGETHER

39.1 Animals should only work together if they are used to each other and none of the animals show signs of aggression, fear, distress or a desire to hunt. This is particularly important for when predator and prey species are used together.

39.2 Animals from different social groups should not be mixed during performance or while waiting to go on-set. Any introductions should be conducted by those responsible for the animals, with prior consent from all parties.

39.3 Where possible, camera techniques such as super imposition and mega-zoom should be considered as an alternative to mixing unfamiliar animals.

39.4 Animals must not be used to goad others in order to achieve an effect. Remember, it is illegal to stage fights between animals, or between an animal and a person. All fighting and baiting scenes must be simulated.

39.5 Males should not be worked with females of the same species when those females are in season/oestrus.

40. KILLING ANIMALS FOR A PRODUCTION

40.1 Animals should not be killed solely for the purposes of a production.

40.2 If an animal needs to be killed, an expert trained in the correct humane method of euthanasia for the species must undertake the killing humanely and in accordance with the law.

40.3 Dead animals or animal parts should only be used if the animals were humanely killed by the source during the normal course of their operations (e.g. the animals were not killed specifically for use in a production).

41. INJURING ANIMALS FOR A PRODUCTION

41.1 Animals must not be injured for the purpose of a production.

41.2 No fish should be hooked and no animal shot or hunted.

41.3 Fighting and baiting animals is illegal.

42. BIRTHS AND PREGNANT AND/OR NURSING ANIMALS

42.1 Expert advice (see [Section E: Getting expert advice](#)) must be sought before using animals that are pregnant, birthing, nursing or otherwise dependent on their mother in a production.

42.2 Performances using such animals should not involve any startling stimuli (including bright and/or flashing lights and loud, sudden noises), extensive running or other exercise or any pulling or lifting of equipment.

42.3 For information on transporting pregnant animals, see [Section 65: Transporting pregnant animals](#).

42.4 Nursing mothers should not be removed from their usual home environment.

42.5 Newborn, nursing and/or dependent animals should not be removed from their mother as this can cause many issues, such as distress to both the mother and the young animal.

43. STUNTS

43.1 Only animals trained to do them should perform stunts and, even then, only when there is minimal risk to the animal. No stunt should be performed without the consent of the owner and the person responsible for the animal.

43.2 Only essential staff should be present during stunts.

43.3 If any required action puts the animal at risk, adequate safety measures must be taken to minimise the risk of injury and distress and to avoid death.

43.4 The effectiveness of these measures should be tested first using suitable dummies.

43.5 Emergency rescue plans should be drawn up beforehand, and all the people needed to implement them effectively should be present during animal use.

43.6 People trained in animal rescue techniques should attend any sequence that could be potentially dangerous for the animals involved.

43.7 Any plans to perform a stunt that puts an animal at risk should include a plan to have a vet present – see [Section 20: Using a vet](#).

43.8 If an animal shows any signs of distress, anxiety, fear or confusion, or refuses to perform the desired action, the stunt should be halted and appropriate measures taken to ensure the animal's welfare.

44. ANIMALS IN WATER

44.1 Water (e.g. pools and rivers) should be clean and safe. Fresh or salt water (at correct salinity) should be used as appropriate. Rivers and ponds should be free from hazards and obstacles. Equipment and costumes should, where possible, be quick-release and props should not endanger animals.

44.2 If non-aquatic animals are used in water, they must be proficiently trained and able to cope. In cold water, exposure needs to be limited so the animal doesn't

suffer cold stress. Animals should be washed, rinsed, dried and warmed, as necessary, immediately afterwards.

- 44.3 Animals in swift-moving water should be attached to cables and/or manned safety boats should be waiting downstream with people trained in animal water rescue techniques.

45. FIRE

- 45.1 Only animals that are completely habituated to working with fire should be used around it. They need to be adequately fireproofed (including any costume/equipment they are wearing/have attached to them) and kept at a distance, where there is no risk of flames or flying sparks reaching them.
- 45.2 A sufficient number of people trained in animal fire rescue techniques should be on hand at all times, and sufficient fire extinguishers should be available (suitable for the type of fire involved).

46. EXPLOSIVES AND SIMILAR SUBSTANCES

- 46.1 Fire bombs and naphthalene bombs must not be used around animals.
- 46.2 Explosives, gunfire and squibs should only be used if the animals are habituated to these sounds and not frightened by them.
- 46.3 Only minimum amounts of explosives should be used around animals. Animals must be protected from direct injury and shock blasts.
- 46.4 Animals should be given ear protection wherever possible. As a rule animals should not be exposed without ear protection to:
- impulsive noise (short bursts of noise) levels greater than 97dB(A)
 - continuous noise levels greater than 95dB(A).
- 46.5 Different species are sensitive to different volumes and frequencies. Ask an expert for information about noise and frequency levels and the best precautions to take.

47 DEALING WITH ANIMALS AFTER A PRODUCTION

- 47.1 The Production should plan from the outset what will happen to the animals used or born during a production once it is completed. Adequate provisions should be made for all animals post-production to ensure all their needs are met.
- 47.2 It is illegal to release certain animals into the wild (this includes allowing them to escape).
- 47.3 Animals that are not likely to be used again in a production should go to suitable homes that will provide for their needs.

H Housing animals on and off the production site

48. ANIMAL HOUSING

- 48.1 All animals must be provided with a suitable environment that meets their physical and psychological needs. This should be in place before the animal arrives at the production site.
- 48.2 Every animal that will be working on a production for longer than 72 hours should be housed off-site when not in use. All animals involved (for any length of time) should be provided with on-site housing and/or rest areas.
- 48.3 The type of housing and rest area required will depend on the kind of animal being used. There should be enough separate rooms or securely partitioned areas to avoid unfamiliar animals being mixed together. Wherever possible, the animal's normal housing should be used (e.g. a hamster or reptile in their own cage) and meet the standards listed below. Additional information is available from RSPCA Performing Animals Consultancy (PAC) at <http://performinganimals.rspca.org.uk>
- 48.4 Animals should be kept in purpose-built accommodation.
- 48.5 All housing should be:
- secure (predator proof, escape proof and preferably lockable)
 - clean and free from parasites (and vermin)
 - free from hazards (e.g. sharp projections and edges)
 - ventilated (or oxygenated for aquatic species)
 - sheltered from extremes of weather
 - at a temperature, humidity and light level suitable to the species of animal
 - sheltered from all noises to which the animal is sensitive so that they can rest undisturbed (some animals are able to hear ultrasound, while others are sensitive to infrasound – for more information, speak to an expert)
 - capable of providing a darkened sleeping period, where needed.
- 48.6 All housing should have:
- a comfortable resting area that all animals housed together can use at the same time
 - a suitable amount of clean bedding material of a type suitable for the species and individual animals.

- 48.7** All housing should allow an animal to:
- lie fully stretched out (with the exception of certain species such as long snakes that need a three-dimensional environment)
 - turn around without touching either the walls or the ceiling
 - stand in their natural posture
 - move in their natural manner (e.g. walk, run, climb, swing)
 - rest comfortably
 - hide from human view or other animals in the enclosure.
- 48.8** Animals should be allowed to express natural behaviours. This may require the provision of environmental enrichment such as objects and substrates (e.g. bedding) or designing the housing to provide certain physical (e.g. perches) or environmental (e.g. humidity level) requirements.
- 48.9** Animals may become stressed by unfamiliar environments. Consult an **expert** if anyone has any questions or concerns about whether this is the case and the steps that can be taken to reduce the impact on the animals involved.

49. TETHERING ANIMALS

- 49.1** Animals should only be tethered to secure them temporarily for their own or human safety, or for veterinary treatment – and only when they are used to it.
- 49.2** The tether/chain needs to be long enough to let the animal move naturally but not so long that it allows the animal to stray into danger or get suspended by/tangled up in the tether.
- 49.3** Animals should not be tethered or chained if it puts them at risk of being attacked by other animals or harmed by people.
- 49.4** Animals must have continuous access to shelter and clean drinking water.
- 49.5** Tethered animals should be continuously monitored by the handler and should not be left unsupervised.
- 49.6** For further advice please speak to an expert.

50. MIXING ANIMALS

- 50.1** Keeping animals alone when they are naturally social (i.e. if the species lives in groups in the **wild**) increases the risk of stress and behaviour problems; likewise, if naturally solitary animals are kept in groups. Therefore, if animals are social they should be housed with compatible individuals of their own kind, or, if that is not possible, other suitable companions. If they need

to be separated from their companions for veterinary and/or welfare reasons or on the advice of an expert, they should be housed where they can see, hear and smell their companions.

- 50.2** Animals from different social groups should be housed separately. They should not be able to see, hear or smell one another.
- 50.3** Animals should not be housed together or near one another if any are frightened of each other, or if there has been persistent aggression between them. In these cases, they should not be able to see, hear or smell one another.
- 50.4** Predator and prey animals should not be kept close enough to be aware of one another, i.e. they should not be able to see, hear or smell each other (remember that animals sense prey/predators in different ways and this should affect how they are kept in relation to each other).
- 50.5** If it is necessary to mix unfamiliar animals together, expert advice should be sought on the appropriate methods for introduction. Any introduction should be closely supervised by competent and trained staff and animals should be provided with enough 'get-away' space to let animals escape from each other. If any of the animals get aggressive or scared, they should be removed from the group straightaway and not mixed again.
- 50.6** Any introduction of unfamiliar animals must not be done without the prior permission of the person or people responsible for each animal.
- 50.7** Animals should be managed appropriately to avoid fights, accidents, stings, bites and kicks, both among themselves and with humans. If these incidents occur between animals, a **vet** should examine each animal involved and treat any injuries as soon as possible; the animals involved should not be kept or used together again.

51. DIET

- 51.1** Animals should be given the same diet and feeding schedule as in their home environment unless they are being more active than normal, in which case they may need more food and water.
- 51.2** Animals should be fed the right type and amount of food. This depends on the kind of animal as well as their condition, health status, age and activity level or lifestyle.
- 51.3** Animals should not be made overweight or underweight for the purpose of a **production**.
- 51.4** The timing and method of feeding should be familiar to the animal and appropriate for the species. Feeding

should be as similar as possible to the natural eating pattern of the type of animal (e.g. use scatter feeding for foraging animals).

- 51.5 Animals should not be fed live vertebrate prey.
- 51.6 An animal's feeding, defecating and urinating habits should be regularly monitored by the **handler** and any irregularities reported to a vet for advice.

52. ACCESS TO WATER

- 52.1 All animals need to have ready and frequent access to clean drinking water. How this is provided depends on the type of animal and their condition; however, in most circumstances animals should have constant access.
- 52.2 Water should be provided in a manner with which the animal is familiar.
- 52.3 Water consumption should be regularly monitored by the handler and any abnormalities reported to a vet. Consideration must be given to temperature, humidity and exercise during the animal's time on a production.
- 52.4 Access to water for bathing or swimming should not be withheld for longer than is normal for the species.

53. EXERCISE

- 53.1 If animals can't move fully in their enclosure (i.e. use their natural full range of movements, such as running and flying), they should be given the chance to do so at least once each day. Performance is not a substitute for exercise.
- 53.2 It is important to remember that animals need to exercise their minds as well as their bodies. They should be given enough appropriate items to occupy them during the day (e.g. rodents should be given gnawing blocks; grazing animals should have food available for the greater part of the day and night). Please speak to an expert for further advice.

54. CONDITION CHECKS ON- AND OFF-SITE

- 54.1 When an animal first arrives, the handler should check them at least every hour until they are settled into their new housing. The temperature, ventilation, light levels and humidity should be carefully monitored and adjusted as necessary, with minimal disturbance to the animal.
- 54.2 Once settled, each animal should be thoroughly checked for signs of injury, illness, stress or fear at least twice a day – in the morning and evening. If anyone is concerned about any animal (e.g. if they appear injured, distressed or in physical discomfort),

they should inform the person responsible immediately, who should get prompt veterinary advice. An expert should be consulted if an animal displays persistent fear or distress.

- 54.3 If the handler and/or expert advises that an animal is not fit for use in a production, the animal must not be used and should be removed from the production site as soon as possible.
- 54.4 See also [Section 58: Condition checks \(on-site only\)](#).

55. FITNESS TO WORK

- 55.1 Every animal should be inspected by the person responsible for signs of injury, illness, distress or fear just before and after each rehearsal and performance.
- 55.2 Sick, injured, or lame animals or those in discomfort and/or distress should not be used. Medication should never be given simply to allow an animal's use by masking clinical signs – instead the vet should be called straightaway.
- 55.3 If a vet decides that an animal is unfit to work, that animal must be treated, rested and, if necessary, isolated. It is important that the animal is not used again until the vet has given approval.
- 55.4 If an animal is thought to have developed fears, phobias or behavioural problems during use, the animal should be assessed and treated by a qualified behaviour expert – see [Section 21: Using an animal behaviour expert](#).

On-site only

56. REST AREAS

- 56.1 Accommodation should be provided on the production site to allow animals to rest after travelling to the site and during breaks between rehearsal/performance sessions. The production environment can be very noisy so accommodation should consist of a quiet area a suitable distance away, or sound insulated to completely minimise disturbance from ambient noise. This area should be designed to avoid prolonged, high volume or high frequency sound to which the animals may be sensitive.
- 56.2 If explosives are being used, the rest area should be at least 100 metres from detonation sites, and sometimes further, depending on the animal and explosives used.
- 56.3 It is important to try to minimise the number of people who visit these areas; the only visitors allowed while animals are present should be handlers, **trainers**, and experts. Any visits/interactions must be with the permission of the person responsible for the animal(s).

56.4 Always speak to the handler(s) prior to the animals arriving on-site about the individual requirements of each animal.

57. BRINGING NON-PERFORMING ANIMALS ON-SITE

57.1 Animals generally should not stay in on-site housing unless they are being used in the production. An exception might be if companions are housed with the animal being used to avoid separation stress. If this happens, the housing and care of these animals should also meet the standards in these [Guidelines](#).

57.2 Animal companions should not be separated from each other for longer than necessary and should stay together overnight.

58. CONDITION CHECKS

58.1 If costumes, collars or saddles (or similar equipment) are used, the animals should be examined in areas prone to rubbing (e.g. girth) before and after use. If the skin is damaged, it must be treated and the props either adjusted to stop it from happening again or not used in the future – see [Section 36: Equipment, props and costumes](#).

59. STRAY AND FERAL ANIMALS

59.1 The Production should speak to an Independent Animal Welfare Adviser (IAWA) if stray or feral animals appear on the production site and/or are at risk of harm.

60.3 All legal requirements that apply to the transport of animals between their usual home and production sites must be met and statutory codes of practice followed. Those people transporting animals should obtain transport authorisations where necessary and keep records up-to-date.

60.4 There are specific requirements that apply to moving animals for commercial use, which includes films and other productions.

60.5 An expert can advise of all relevant health checks and disease control measures that need to be undertaken before animals from different locations are brought together. Sufficient time should be given to allow the required measures to take effect.

60.6 Every animal needs to be checked for signs of injury, illness, distress or fear immediately before and after transportation and should receive prompt treatment and/or rest as required. An animal should not be transported if they are showing any signs of injury, illness, distress or fear.

60.7 There should be regular scheduled breaks to give the animals drinking water and, depending on the type of animal, food, exercise and the opportunity to go to the toilet.

60.8 Transporters/drivers should be competent in the transportation and handling and/or movement of the type of animal they are transporting. Only people skilled in loading and unloading the type of animals being transported should do this job.

60.9 Animals should be loaded and unloaded calmly and left to make their own way in and out of the vehicle (within confined channels or secure areas). If possible, animals transported in containers should be unloaded in these too.

60.10 Electric shock devices or other [aversive methods](#) must not be used to move, load, unload or control animals.

61. IMPORTING ANIMALS FROM ABROAD

61.1 Animals should only be imported if suitable animals cannot be found in the country where they are to be used.

61.2 All legislation relating to the import of animals must be followed. For more information on this, please refer to the websites of the Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) : www.defra.gov.uk and/or the Welsh Government: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside> relevant paperwork.

I Transporting animals

60. TRANSPORTING ANIMALS TO THE PRODUCTION SITE

60.1 Transport is known to be stressful for a wide range of animals, even those transported many times, and especially for animals that are particularly sensitive to it. It is essential to optimise conditions and keep transport to a minimum, both in terms of duration and frequency. Animals should be sourced locally, if at all possible, or consideration given to moving a production as close to the animal's home as possible.

60.2 Journeys of more than eight hours should be avoided; if animals are transported over greater distances, rest days should be built into the route plan and schedule. Animals should also be given sufficient time to recuperate in an appropriate environment before being transported again.

62. PAPERWORK, PERMITS AND LICENCES FOR TRANSPORTING ANIMALS

62.1 Anyone transporting animals for commercial purpose, including the Production, must carry documentation (the journey plan) in the vehicle which states:

- the animals' origin and ownership
- the date and time of departure
- the intended place of destination
- the expected duration of the intended journey.

Journey times begin from the time the first animal starts being loaded.

62.2 When animals are being brought to a production site, all relevant paperwork, including journey plans, need to be completed and copies should be supplied prior to or on arrival by the transporter, or animal supplier if this is different.

62.3 Certain species considered to be dangerous require a licence to be kept under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976. Licences are provided by relevant local authorities. The list of species that need a licence can be found at: www.archive.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/wildlife/protect/documents/dwa-animallist.pdf

63. TRANSPORT VEHICLES

63.1 Vehicles need to provide a clean, comfortable, sheltered environment, maintained at the correct temperature, humidity and lighting levels for the species concerned. They need to be sufficiently ventilated, through air conditioning or air vents, to allow the animals to breathe normally. If permanent air vents are present, heating might be necessary to maintain the correct temperature.

63.2 The vehicle should be equipped so that temperature, humidity and light levels can be maintained in emergencies for several hours without the engine running.

63.3 Animals should be adequately secured in vehicles. Where vehicles are not designed specifically for transporting animals, crates and/or specialist safety restraints should be used. Animals should be comfortable and able to adjust to the vehicle turning and braking. To be kept secure, aquatic animals may need to be transported in special containers. Containers must be clean, comfortable and safe. The air and water/ice inside these containers must be maintained at the correct temperature and, where appropriate, oxygenation and water quality must be maintained at suitable levels.

64. TRANSPORTING ANIMALS IN GROUPS

64.1 When transporting animals in groups they should be transported with the companion animal or animals they usually live with. The Production should make sure unfamiliar animals are separated using secure partitions. Prey and predator species or animals that are aggressive or fearful of each other should not be transported together if they can see, hear or smell one another.

65. TRANSPORTING PREGNANT ANIMALS

65.1 Animals in their final third of pregnancy should not be moved except in exceptional circumstances and only with the approval of a [vet](#).

65.2 It is an offence to move pregnant animals that are within one week of the estimated birth date or beyond 90 percent of the expected gestation period, whichever is longer, or for at least one week after giving birth, unless required to in an emergency.

65.3 For information on using pregnant animals see [Section 42: Births, and pregnant and/or nursing animals](#).

66. USING SEDATIVES, etc, TO HELP TRANSPORT ANIMALS

66.1 Sedatives, tranquillisers and behaviour-altering drugs should not be used during transportation unless a vet deems it absolutely necessary. If it is necessary then these should only be administered under veterinary supervision.

J Training and preparing animals for performance

67. METHODS OF TRAINING ANIMALS

67.1 Training, performance and human company can provide for some of an [animal's needs](#) but it is important to remember that they are never complete substitutes for natural behaviour.

67.2 [Training](#) should be based on the principles of positive reinforcement (i.e. reward desired behaviour and ignore unwanted behaviour).

67.3 [Trainers](#) need to be aware of the most progressive and humane positive-training methods. They should seek advice from an [expert](#) if they don't have this knowledge.

67.4 Using [aversive methods](#) to train animals, for example using negative consequences that the animal wants to avoid, should not be used if a positive reinforcement method can produce the same behaviour, even if the positive method takes longer.

67.5 Training should never cause pain or use the threat of pain, distress, anxiety or fear. Aversive training techniques, such as punishment, shouting or physical restraint, should not be used. Animals should never be punished as a training method (e.g. the use of choke chains can sometimes cause suffering and distress in dogs). Instruments such as batons and boards should only be used to guide animals, never to hit or threaten them. To most animals, being thrown, dropped or swung is frightening and should not be done.

67.6 Methods that may cause mild, short-term discomfort, such as using a mild irritant to make a cat sneeze, should only be used if there is no better method and only with the approval of an expert.

68. USING FOOD AND WATER TO TRAIN ANIMALS

68.1 Food or water deprivation or restriction should never be used in training.

68.2 Food can be used as a reward, but remember to control the use of treats otherwise the animal could become overweight or ill.

68.3 Ideally any treats should form part of the animal's daily food ration to ensure they do not get more food than they need. Therefore, the animal's usual daily food intake can be staggered as part of a training programme, but only as long as the animal doesn't show any hunger stress and still receives all their nutritional requirements.

68.4 Any changes to an animal's diet or feeding regime should be introduced gradually to avoid illness and stress.

68.5 The animal's access to drinking water should never be controlled for the purpose of training.

69. ELECTRIC SHOCK DEVICES

69.1 Electric shock devices must never be used for any purpose.

70. HOBBLER

70.1 Hobbles are devices put around an animal's legs to interfere with but not prevent movement, or to cause them to limp. They must not be used for the purposes of a production.

71. MUTILATING ANIMALS

71.1 No animal should be mutilated for the purpose of a production. This includes:

- branding
- teeth removal

- teeth capping
- claw removal
- in snakes, fang removal and suturing (stitching the mouth closed)
- in birds, beak trimming/de-beaking and pinioning.

71.2 The Production should ensure that an animal's dangerous body parts (e.g. teeth or claws) have not been interfered with to the detriment of their welfare. Advice should be sought from an expert to ensure health and safety issues are covered and an animal's needs are still being met.

72. LENGTH OF TIME TO TRAIN ANIMALS PROPERLY

72.1 Ideally, an animal should be trained to perform all the behaviours needed *before* they are taken to the production site, as this will minimise the amount of time they spend *on-site*.

72.2 The Production should make sure enough time is left in the schedule to train the animals using the most progressive and humane positive-training methods.

72.3 It is important that the Production talks to the trainer very early on so that there is enough time to properly prepare and correctly train the animal. The Production needs to tell the trainer exactly what each animal will need to do and the type of environment they will be placed in (including noise, lighting, special effects, etc). The Production also needs to let the trainer know whether other animals or people will be present and, if so, what they will be doing.

72.4 Training sessions should be short and often. If an animal seems tired or distressed, the session should be stopped and the animal allowed to rest and recover before starting again.

72.5 Animals need to be introduced gradually to costumes, props and other animals they will be working with, through supervised positive exposure. They should be familiarised early on with any stimulus or combination of stimuli they are likely to experience, such as audiences, crowds and stage lighting (including strobes and flashlights, if they are to be used).

72.6 Animals should be tested for noise phobias before being chosen for work involving any noises they may not be familiar with, especially explosives and fireworks.

Guidelines published by RSPCA Performing Animals Consultancy.