# Animal Training

Risk Assessment

## CONTACT DETAILS

### IN AN EMERGENCY CALL:

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|---|---|
| **Lead:** | **Primary Contact:** |
| **Participants:** | |

## SERVICE/ACTIVITY DETAILS

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|---|---|
| **Purpose:** | **Date:** |

**Benefit:** Encourages responsible pet ownership by teaching proper handling techniques. | Enhances safety by reducing aggressive and unpredictable behaviors. | Improves animal behavior through structured training and reinforcement techniques. | Provides mental stimulation and enrichment, reducing anxiety and boredom. | Strengthens the human-animal bond through trust-building and communication. | Supports service animal development for therapy, assistance, and rescue roles.

## HAZARDS

| HAZARD | RISK | RISK BENEFIT | MEASURE | RISK TO | RISK LEVEL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aggression between animals | Bites, scratches, injuries to handlers or other animals | Enables socialization opportunities that are crucial for behavioral development and well-being. | Conduct thorough behavioral assessments of animals before introducing them into group training sessions. Supervise all interactions closely and be prepared to intervene at the first sign of aggression. Develop and implement protocols for safely separating animals if conflicts arise. **(ALL)** | Handlers, animals | Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Low** |

| HAZARD | RISK | RISK BENEFIT | MEASURE | RISK TO | RISK LEVEL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Allergic reactions | Skin irritation, respiratory issues, anaphylaxis | Enables individuals with mild allergies to participate in training activities, increasing staffing flexibility and inclusivity. | Identify handlers with known allergies to specific animals. Provide appropriate PPE, such as gloves and masks, to minimize allergen exposure. Ensure proper ventilation in training areas to reduce airborne allergens. Develop emergency protocols to address severe allergic reactions promptly. **(ALL)** | Handlers | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Animal bites | Puncture wounds, infections, nerve damage | Enhances handler confidence and effectiveness, leading to improved training outcomes and stronger human-animal bonds. | Provide handlers with extensive training on animal behavior and proper handling techniques. Utilize protective equipment such as gloves and arm guards when necessary. Establish protocols for recognizing and responding to signs of aggression or discomfort in animals to prevent bites during training sessions. **(ALL)** | Handlers | Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Low** |
| Animal stress or anxiety | Pacing, vocalization, aggression, shutdown behavior | Allows animals to adapt to new behaviors and environments, enhancing their well-being and success in training programs. | Monitor animals closely for signs of stress or anxiety, such as pacing, vocalizations, or withdrawal. Utilize positive reinforcement training methods to create a supportive learning environment. Schedule regular breaks during training sessions and provide enrichment activities to alleviate stress. **(ALL)** | Animals | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Chemical exposure (cleaning agents, pesticides) | Poisoning, skin irritation, respiratory distress | Maintains a clean and hygienic environment essential for health and safety during training. | Use only animal-safe cleaning products and pesticides in areas where animals are trained or housed. Store all chemicals securely in designated areas away from animals. Ensure proper ventilation during and after the application of chemicals to prevent inhalation exposure. **(ALL)** | Handlers, animals | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |

| HAZARD | RISK | RISK BENEFIT | MEASURE | RISK TO | RISK LEVEL |
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| Environmental hazards (e.g., slippery floors) | Slips, trips, falls, broken bones | Creates a safe training environment that allows for a variety of activities and exercises. | Maintain training areas by promptly cleaning spills and debris to prevent slips and falls. Use non-slip flooring materials or mats in areas prone to moisture. Conduct regular safety audits to identify and address potential environmental hazards. **(ALL)** | Handlers, animals | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Escape during training | Lost animals, injuries, traffic accidents | Provides animals with opportunities for off-leash training, improving obedience and responsiveness. | Conduct training sessions in secure, enclosed areas with appropriate barriers to prevent escapes. Regularly inspect and maintain enclosures and equipment to ensure they are in good condition. Train animals on recall commands and establish emergency response plans in case of an escape. **(ALL)** | Animals, handlers | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Exposure to toxic plants or substances | Poisoning, illness, severe allergic reactions | Allows animals to explore natural training environments safely, enriching their experiences. | Inspect training areas for the presence of toxic plants or hazardous materials. Remove or restrict access to potential toxins. Educate handlers on plant identification and signs of poisoning. Keep emergency contact details for veterinary services readily available. **(ALL)** | Animals | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Food aggression | Growling, snapping, biting, guarding behavior | Allows the use of food rewards to motivate and reinforce desired behaviors effectively. | Implement desensitization protocols to reduce food-related aggression, such as hand-feeding and gradual exposure to food-related triggers. Feed animals separately to prevent competition and aggression. Use positive reinforcement to encourage calm behavior around food. **(ALL)** | Handlers, animals | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |

| HAZARD | RISK | RISK BENEFIT | MEASURE | RISK TO | RISK LEVEL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Handler distraction or inattention | Missed warning signs, inconsistent training results, increased risk of accidents | Ensures handlers remain engaged and responsive, creating a more effective and safe training experience. | Implement focused training protocols where handlers limit the use of mobile devices and unnecessary conversation during sessions. Encourage mindfulness techniques to maintain full attention on the animal's behavior and responses. Rotate responsibilities to prevent fatigue-related lapses. **(ALL)** | Handlers, animals | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Handler fatigue or injury | Muscle strain, repetitive stress injuries, reduced focus | Ensures handlers can engage in extended training sessions, promoting consistency and progress in animal training. | Implement ergonomic training practices to reduce physical strain on handlers. Encourage regular breaks and rotation of duties to prevent fatigue. Provide training on safe handling and lifting techniques to minimize the risk of musculoskeletal injuries. **(ALL)** | Handlers | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Heat stress or hypothermia | Dehydration, heat stroke, frostbite, lethargy | Allows for year-round training, ensuring continuity and progress regardless of external weather conditions. | Monitor environmental conditions closely, including temperature and humidity levels. Provide climate-controlled training areas or schedule sessions during times of day when temperatures are moderate. Ensure animals have access to water and shade during outdoor training to prevent temperature-related issues. **(ALL)** | Animals | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Inadequate emergency response planning | Delayed treatment of injuries, ineffective containment of escaped animals | Provides a structured approach to handling emergencies, ensuring a swift response that minimizes harm to animals and handlers. | Develop and rehearse emergency response protocols for incidents such as injuries, escapes, or medical emergencies. Ensure first-aid kits are accessible, and handlers are trained in basic first aid for animals. Maintain up-to-date contact details for veterinary services. **(ALL)** | Handlers, animals | Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Low** |

| HAZARD | RISK | RISK BENEFIT | MEASURE | RISK TO | RISK LEVEL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inadequate socialization | Fearful behavior, increased aggression, difficulty adapting to new environments | Develops well-adjusted animals capable of coping with diverse situations, enhancing their quality of life. | Conduct controlled exposure exercises where animals gradually interact with various people, environments, and other animals under supervision. Use positive reinforcement to encourage confidence. Monitor interactions closely and intervene when necessary to prevent negative experiences. **(ALL)** | Handlers, animals | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Inappropriate use of training tools | Physical injury, stress, fear-based behaviors | Enhances communication between handler and animal, leading to more effective training outcomes. | Provide comprehensive education to handlers on the correct and ethical use of training tools such as leashes, clickers, and harnesses. Conduct practical demonstrations and enforce guidelines that prioritize the animal's well-being. Regularly assess tool effectiveness and condition. **(ALL)** | Handlers, animals | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Incorrect reinforcement timing | Confusion, inconsistent behavior responses, slower learning | Strengthens behavior retention by providing clear and timely feedback, enhancing the learning process. | Train handlers in timing and precision of reinforcement, ensuring rewards or corrections occur immediately after the desired behavior. Use clicker training or marker words to bridge timing gaps. Regularly assess reinforcement consistency to maintain effectiveness. **(ALL)** | Handlers, animals | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Ineffective communication between handlers | Misinterpreted commands, inconsistent training, safety incidents | Improves coordination among handlers, leading to more effective training sessions and enhanced safety. | Implement standardized training procedures and ensure all handlers use consistent commands and cues. Hold regular briefings before training sessions to align on goals and safety measures. Use hand signals or radios for clear communication in large training areas. **(ALL)** | Handlers | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |

| HAZARD | RISK | RISK BENEFIT | MEASURE | RISK TO | RISK LEVEL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Injury from training equipment | Bruises, cuts, entanglement, choking | Utilizes specialized equipment to facilitate effective training techniques and communication with the animal. | Regularly inspect all training equipment for wear and tear, and repair or replace as needed. Provide handlers with comprehensive instruction on the correct use of each piece of equipment. Select equipment that is appropriate for the size, species, and temperament of the animal to prevent injuries. **(ALL)** | Animals, handlers | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Lack of positive reinforcement alternatives | Decreased engagement, reliance on specific rewards, frustration | Enhances the effectiveness of training by tailoring motivation strategies to each animal's unique preferences. | Diversify reinforcement methods to include non-food rewards such as praise, toys, and playtime. Observe individual animals to determine their most effective motivators. Ensure reinforcement is meaningful and contextually relevant to maintain engagement. **(ALL)** | Animals | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Noise-induced stress | Startle responses, training disruption, increased anxiety | Prepares animals for real-world environments where noise is unavoidable, enhancing their adaptability. | Minimize exposure to loud or sudden noises during training by controlling the environment. Use soundproofing materials in training areas to reduce external noise. Gradually acclimate animals to necessary sounds through desensitization techniques to prevent stress responses. **(ALL)** | Animals | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Over-reliance on treats | Obesity, dependency on food rewards, reduced training effectiveness | Encourages intrinsic motivation in animals, reducing dependence on food-based rewards over time. | Establish balanced reward systems incorporating verbal praise, physical affection, and play alongside food treats. Monitor treat usage to prevent overfeeding and ensure dietary balance. Gradually phase out treats for behaviors once they are well-established. **(ALL)** | Animals | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |

| HAZARD | RISK | RISK BENEFIT | MEASURE | RISK TO | RISK LEVEL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overexertion | Fatigue, overheating, potential collapse, increased risk of injury | Promotes physical fitness and endurance, contributing to the overall health of the animal. | Monitor animals for signs of fatigue, overheating, or excessive panting during training. Structure training sessions to include rest breaks and hydration. Adjust activity levels based on the animal's fitness, age, and breed to prevent overexertion-related injuries or health issues. **(ALL)** | Animals | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Scratches from claws or nails | Lacerations, infections, minor bleeding | Allows for close interaction necessary for effective training, fostering trust between animal and handler. | Regularly trim animals' nails to appropriate lengths to minimize the risk of scratches. Equip handlers with protective clothing, such as long sleeves and pants. Educate handlers on safe interaction practices, including proper approaches and restraint techniques, to reduce the likelihood of scratches. **(ALL)** | Handlers | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Training animals beyond their capacity | Frustration, confusion, refusal to participate | Allows animals to build skills at a comfortable pace, increasing retention and enthusiasm for training. | Assess each animal's individual learning pace and capabilities before setting training goals. Modify training plans based on the animal's progress and response. Avoid excessive repetition that may lead to frustration, confusion, or burnout. **(ALL)** | Animals | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Training in unfamiliar or distracting environments | Anxiety, loss of focus, training regression | Builds confidence and adaptability, allowing animals to perform trained behaviors in diverse real-world settings. | Gradually introduce animals to new training locations, starting with low-distraction areas and progressing to busier environments. Use positive reinforcement to reward focus. Ensure training sessions remain controlled to prevent anxiety or overstimulation. **(ALL)** | Animals | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |

| HAZARD | RISK | RISK BENEFIT | MEASURE | RISK TO | RISK LEVEL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Training-related stress in handlers | Mental fatigue, frustration, reduced training effectiveness | Ensures handlers remain calm and effective, fostering a positive training atmosphere that benefits both human and animal. | Implement stress management training for handlers, including strategies for maintaining patience and emotional control. Encourage regular breaks and peer support systems. Provide mental health resources to help handlers manage challenging training situations. **(ALL)** | Handlers | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |
| Unpredictable animal reactions | Bites, scratches, escape attempts, stress responses | Helps animals develop resilience and adaptability, preparing them for diverse environments and situations. | Educate handlers on animal body language and warning signs of distress or aggression. Ensure handlers use calm, controlled movements to reduce unpredictability. Establish safety protocols, including escape routes and de-escalation techniques for unexpected situations. **(ALL)** | Handlers, animals | Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Low** |
| Unsupervised access to training areas | Unintended interactions between animals, risk of injury or escape | Maintains controlled environments where animals can focus on learning without unnecessary distractions or risks. | Restrict access to training spaces when not in use through secure fencing, gates, or locked enclosures. Implement clear signage to indicate restricted areas. Assign designated personnel to supervise training areas during active sessions. **(ALL)** | Animals, handlers | Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Low** |
| Zoonotic disease transmission | Bacterial, viral, fungal, or parasitic infections | Facilitates essential human-animal interactions that promote learning and socialization for the animal. | Ensure animals are up-to-date on vaccinations and receive regular veterinary health check-ups. Implement strict hygiene practices, including thorough handwashing before and after contact with animals. Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves and masks when dealing with animals that may carry zoonotic diseases. **(ALL)** | Handlers | Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low** |

| HAZARD | RISK | RISK BENEFIT | MEASURE | RISK TO | RISK LEVEL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unpredicted risks | Illness, injury, death | | Continuous risk monitoring conducted by all staff. Any unforeseen hazards must be reported promptly to supervisors or management, with immediate corrective action taken as necessary. **(ALL)** | All | **N/A** |

## NOTES

**Extra notes & activity evaluation:**

| Completed by | Reviewed/Approved by | Risk Assessment Date | Review Required Date |
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