RISK ASSESSMENT WIZARD

Therapy Animal Visits

Risk Assessment

CONTACT DETAILS

IN AN EMERGENCY CALL:

Lead:	**Primary Contact:**
Participants:	

SERVICE/ACTIVITY DETAILS

Purpose:	**Date:**

Benefit: Boosts morale and creates a calming environment for individuals in stressful situations. | Encourages physical activity in rehabilitation patients through animal-assisted therapy. | Encourages social interaction and communication skills, especially in therapeutic settings. | Enhances social engagement and communication in therapeutic settings. | Facilitates positive behavioral changes and engagement in therapy sessions. | Improves mood and emotional resilience through positive animal interactions. | Promotes emotional well-being by reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. | Provides comfort and companionship to those in hospitals, care homes, or schools. | Provides emotional support to individuals in hospitals, schools, and care facilities. | Reduces stress and anxiety through comforting interactions with therapy animals. | Supports cognitive stimulation and memory recall in elderly or special needs individuals. | Supports mental health programs by promoting relaxation and companionship.

HAZARDS

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Aggressive behavior from participants	Injury, distress, animal fear	Teaches respect, empathy, and proper behavior around animals, improving social and emotional skills.	Educate participants on appropriate behavior around animals. Supervise all interactions closely, and remove individuals who display aggressive or unsafe behavior toward the animal. **(ALL)**	Animals, participants, handlers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Allergic reactions	Allergic response, respiratory issues, skin irritation	Allows inclusive participation, promoting empathy and understanding among diverse groups.	Identify individuals with known allergies prior to visits. Ensure animals are groomed and bathed regularly to minimize dander. Provide allergy medications or alternatives for sensitive individuals. **(ALL)**	Participants	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Animal bites	Injury, infection, distress	Facilitates therapeutic interactions that can improve emotional well-being and social engagement.	Ensure all therapy animals undergo thorough temperament assessments and receive proper training to remain calm in various situations. Handlers should monitor interactions closely and intervene if signs of agitation appear. **(ALL)**	Participants, handlers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Children pulling tails or ears	Animal distress, injury, bites	Helps children develop empathy and awareness of how their actions affect others, including animals.	Provide clear instructions on gentle handling before interactions begin. Ensure handlers intervene quickly if a child behaves inappropriately. Select tolerant therapy animals that are comfortable with gentle handling. **(ALL)**	Animals, children	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Environmental hazards	Injury, contamination, exposure to toxins	Provides a safe environment, reducing the risk of injury to both animals and participants.	Inspect all areas for potential dangers such as toxic plants, sharp objects, or slippery surfaces. Remove or mitigate hazards before sessions. **(ALL)**	Participants, animals, handlers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Inadequate handler training	Poor animal management, safety risks, mis communication	Equips handlers to manage sessions effectively, ensuring safety and maximizing therapeutic outcomes.	Ensure handlers receive comprehensive training in animal behavior, first aid, and emergency procedures. Regularly update training to incorporate best practices. **(ALL)**	Handlers, participants	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Inappropriate animal behavior	Aggression, unpredictability, injury	Maintains the professionalism and effectiveness of therapy sessions.	Implement ongoing training programs to reinforce desired behaviors. Handlers should be prepared to redirect or remove animals displaying inappropriate actions. **(ALL)**	Participants, handlers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Participant injuries from large animals	Bruises, falls, broken bones	Allows individuals to experience the calming presence of large animals, which can be particularly effective in therapy settings.	Use therapy animals of appropriate size and temperament for each setting. Train animals to remain calm in confined spaces. Ensure handlers monitor participant positioning and interactions closely. **(ALL)**	Participants	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Slips, trips, and falls due to animals	Falls, injury, bruises	Provides participants with interactive movement-based therapy, improving mobility and confidence.	Keep animals on a short leash in crowded areas. Ensure animals are trained to walk calmly and avoid sudden movements. Inform participants to move cautiously around animals to prevent tripping. **(ALL)**	Participants, handlers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Unsupervised interactions	Injury, distress, unpredictable behavior	Maintains controlled environments, ensuring safety and maximizing therapeutic benefits.	Ensure a qualified handler is present during all interactions. Establish clear guidelines prohibiting unsupervised contact between participants and animals. **(ALL)**	Participants	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Zoonotic disease transmission	Infection, illness, contamination	Promotes health education and awareness about zoonotic diseases and prevention.	Maintain up-to-date vaccinations and regular veterinary check-ups for therapy animals. Implement strict hygiene protocols, including handwashing before and after interactions. **(ALL)**	Participants, handlers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Animal anxiety in unfamiliar environments	Stress, agitation, withdrawal	Allows therapy animals to engage in diverse settings, reaching more individuals who benefit from their presence.	Gradually expose therapy animals to different settings before visits. Provide a familiar item, such as a blanket or toy, to help them feel secure. Ensure handlers are trained to recognize and manage signs of anxiety. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Animal escape	Lost animal, injury, disruption	Prevents disruptions and potential hazards, ensuring smooth therapy sessions.	Use appropriate leashes, harnesses, or carriers during transport and sessions. Secure all areas to prevent accidental escapes and conduct regular equipment checks. **(ALL)**	Participants, handlers, public	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Animal fatigue	Exhaustion, stress, reduced effectiveness	Ensures animal welfare, allowing them to provide consistent therapeutic benefits.	Schedule regular rest periods for animals. Monitor for signs of tiredness and adjust session lengths accordingly. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Animal overexcitement	Overstimulation, injury, distress	Ensures sustainable therapy sessions, maintaining animal welfare and participant safety.	Limit session durations and provide regular breaks for animals. Train animals to remain calm and recognize signs of overstimulation, allowing handlers to intervene promptly. **(ALL)**	Participants, handlers	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Animal stress	Agitation, withdrawal, reduced effectiveness	Enhances animal welfare, leading to more effective and positive therapy sessions.	Recognize and monitor signs of stress in animals, such as panting, pacing, or withdrawal. Provide access to quiet areas and limit exposure to stressful stimuli. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Animal-induced phobias	Fear, anxiety, distress	Provides opportunities to overcome fears in a controlled environment, enhancing personal growth.	Inform participants in advance about the presence of therapy animals. Offer opt-out options and provide support for those with animal-related fears. Gradual exposure can be considered for desensitization. **(ALL)**	Participants	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Cultural sensitivities	Discomfort, exclusion, ethical concerns	Fosters an inclusive environment, respecting diverse backgrounds and beliefs.	Be aware of and respect cultural differences regarding animals. Provide alternative activities for participants who may be uncomfortable with animal interactions. **(ALL)**	Participants	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Food-related aggression	Aggression, bites, injury	Maintains positive interactions, reducing the risk of aggressive incidents.	Avoid feeding animals during sessions. If treats are used, ensure they are given by handlers in a controlled manner to prevent possessive behaviors. **(ALL)**	Participants, handlers	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Inappropriate feeding by participants	Choking, allergic reactions, food aggression	Reinforces responsibility and structured interaction, making visits more meaningful and educational.	Clearly communicate that feeding the animals is not allowed unless supervised by a handler. If treats are permitted, use pre-approved ones and ensure they are given by handlers in a controlled manner. **(ALL)**	Participants, animals	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Noise sensitivity	Stress, anxiety, agitation	Enhances the animal's adaptability, allowing them to function effectively in diverse settings.	Acclimate animals to various sounds gradually. Provide quiet spaces for animals to retreat if they become overwhelmed by noise. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Overcrowding around animals	Stress, agitation, increased injury risk	Provides structured opportunities for group engagement and social interaction.	Limit the number of participants interacting with an animal at one time. Establish a rotation system to allow all individuals to participate while maintaining a calm and safe environment. **(ALL)**	Participants, animals	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Participant rough handling	Injury, distress, fear response	Promotes respectful and compassionate behavior towards animals, enhancing the therapeutic experience.	Educate participants on gentle handling techniques. Monitor interactions closely and intervene if inappropriate behavior occurs. **(ALL)**	Animals, participants	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Property damage	Broken items, financial loss, environmental disruption	Preserves the integrity of therapy environments, fostering trust with hosting facilities.	Assess venues for potential hazards and remove valuable or fragile items. Train animals to navigate various environments calmly and safely. **(ALL)**	Facility owners, participants	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Risk of sudden loud noises startling animals	Panic, unpredictable movement, distress	Helps participants experience the calming effects of therapy animals even in active environments.	Acclimate therapy animals to common loud noises they may encounter. Provide them with a quiet space to retreat if startled. Ensure handlers are trained to quickly reassure and calm the animal. **(ALL)**	Animals, participants	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Scratches from animals	Scratches, injury, infection	Encourages tactile engagement, which can be soothing and beneficial for sensory development.	Regularly trim and maintain the animal's nails to reduce the risk of scratches. Educate participants on appropriate ways to approach and touch animals to prevent accidental injuries. **(ALL)**	Participants	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Transmission of parasites	Infestation, illness, discomfort	Protects the health of both animals and participants, ensuring a safe interaction environment.	Administer regular parasite prevention treatments as recommended by veterinarians. Conduct routine health screenings to detect and address infestations promptly. **(ALL)**	Participants, animals	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Transportation-related stress for animals	Anxiety, agitation, motion sickness	Enables therapy animals to be brought to diverse locations, expanding their reach to individuals in need.	Use secure and comfortable carriers or harnesses. Acclimate animals to transportation environments in advance. Plan for breaks and ensure animals have access to water. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Unexpected reactions to assistive devices	Fear, startled behavior, unpredictable movement	Makes therapy visits accessible to individuals with mobility challenges, fostering inclusivity.	Expose therapy animals to mobility aids like wheelchairs, walkers, and canes before visits. Train them to remain calm and confident around these devices. Supervise all interactions closely. **(ALL)**	Participants, animals	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
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