

# Working with animals in entertainment

## HSE information sheet

### Entertainment Information Sheet No 4 (Revision 1)

#### Introduction

In this information sheet, '**must**' denotes a legal obligation. Words such as 'do', 'should' etc are used to give advice on good practice.

This information sheet is one of a series prepared by the Joint Advisory Committee for Entertainment (JACE). It gives specific advice for production activities involving animals in entertainment and education, eg stage or studio locations, with or without an audience.

The work may involve placing animals in strange situations, getting them to do things for the purposes of the production, or simply recording what they do in nature. The presence of animals must also be considered where they may naturally be present though not part of the script, eg location work in sewers.

This information is primarily concerned with the health and safety of those who work with animals, though consideration should always be given to the welfare of the animals involved.

#### Legislation

The main legal requirements covering working with animals in entertainment are contained in the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (The Management Regulations) and The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH).

It should be noted that The Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 as amended (enforced by the Local Authority) requires persons keeping specified animals to hold a licence, and there are other legal requirements affecting work with animals. Expert advice should be sought during the planning stage of any production in which the use of animals is envisaged.

#### Hazards

Animals can cause ill health or injury by bites, scratches, secretions, stings, kicking or crushing; by infection or infestation from micro-organisms or carried parasites; or in some cases, by allergic reaction.

Some people have phobias about particular kinds of animals (snakes, spiders etc) which may cause them to react in extreme ways.

Two apparently similar animals can present very different hazards – venomous and non-venomous snakes for example, or domestic and feral cats.

Veterinary products can be hazardous to human health and these should be handled and used only by those competent to do so. Hazards may also arise from hay or straw used in connection with an animal, eg fire, soiled materials, dust, allergies etc.

#### Risk assessment

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 as amended, require that a risk assessment is carried out for work activities to identify the significant risks. This assessment must identify the measures to be taken to eliminate or control those risks identified.

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 as amended (COSHH) states that work likely to expose persons to substances hazardous to health should not be carried out unless an assessment has been made of the risks to health from that work, and controls identified and implemented. These substances may include, but are not confined to saliva, urine and fecal material. Veterinary products may have a Workplace Exposure Limit (WEL) under these Regulations.

A competent person should carry out these assessments using available sources of information. Such persons may include the animal handler, trainer, veterinary surgeons, suitably qualified and experienced people from zoos or university departments.

The main points to consider in the risk assessment are:

- Why the animal is present and what is planned for it to do?
- Where will the animal be kept between appearances?
- What hazards does the animal present, ie what harm could it cause?
- What and how much contact will there be with the animal? (Consider both the risk of physical injury and any health risks, eg occupational zoonoses.)
- By what routes can any micro-organisms be transmitted to humans, eg hand to mouth contact, bites, scratches, secretions, airborne?
- All animals, whether alive or dead, should be regarded as likely sources of infection or infestation.
- Certain breeds of animals can cause infections that may threaten pregnancy.
- How may you influence the animal's behaviour? For example, filming quietly from a hidden position is less dangerous than arranging a stunt.
- Consider who is to be exposed, eg crew, actors, audience etc.
- What other animals may be present?
- Consider all reasonably foreseeable behaviour, eg reaction to special effects.
- Consider untreated hay or straw used for animals within your fire risk assessment as certain fire proofing materials can be toxic to animals.
- Keep the length of time animals are required on set to a minimum.
- Animals should be handled no more than necessary and always with personal hygiene in mind.
- Appropriate personal protective clothing should be provided, should be worn and adequate welfare facilities must be available.
- Appropriate first aid should be provided – consideration should be given to the need for specific antidotes, such as anti venom, as required.

## **Control measures**

Risks from animals should, so far as is reasonably practicable, be eliminated or minimised. In most cases, expert advice will be needed about specific control measures in relation to the production, but there are some basic points to consider:

- People should always be told in advance if animals are to be present in the workplace to allow them to take any necessary personal precautions.
- Care should be taken to make sure that performing animals are obtained only from competent providers.
- Everyone involved with, or working close to, performing animals should be properly briefed on risks, control measures and emergency procedures.
- An appropriate number of competent people should be present to manage the animal.
- Animal behaviour can be influenced by adverse conditions and sudden unexpected stimuli such as lights or noise from special effects. Advice should be sought about this in the early stages of planning and the animal's handler should be kept fully informed.

## Further reading

*Control of substances hazardous to health (Fifth edition). The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (as amended). Approved Code of Practice and guidance L5 (Fifth edition)* HSE Books 2005 ISBN 978 0 7176 2981 7 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l5.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l5.htm)

*Management of health and safety at work. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L21 (Second edition)* HSE Books 2000 ISBN 978 0 7176 2488 1 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l21.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l21.htm)

*Common zoonoses in agriculture* Agriculture Information Sheet AIS2(rev2) HSE Books 2000 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/agindex.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/agindex.htm)

*Animal Welfare Act 2006 (c.45)* The Stationery Office 2006

*Performing Animals (Regulations) Act 1925 (c.38)* The Stationery Office 1925

*Managing health and safety in zoos* Web15 HSE 2006 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/web15.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/web15.pdf)

## Further information

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit [www.hse.gov.uk/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/). You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

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**This document contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.**

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