

Handling Animals Safely

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A wide range of businesses handle animals, including boarding kennels, catteries, dog grooming salons, pet shops, colleges, farms and stables. Proper precautions, together with trained and competent staff, can help to ensure the safety of both staff and animals.



Handling Animals Safely



Introduction

Handling animals always involves a risk of injury or ill health. As such, the following regulations apply:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002, as amended

These require that the risks arising from work activities are subject to an assessment and controlled.



Assessing the Risks

Several factors should be considered when handling animals, including, the:

- Person – their mental and physical abilities, training, and experience, and whether more than one person is required for the task
- Equipment – such as cages, kennels, pens, poles, and leads
- Animal – how familiar it is with being handled, its health and the likelihood of the species or breed to react badly

The Person

Everyone handling animals should be:

- Confident using the equipment provided
- Aware of the dangers
- Properly trained in work methods, and supervised until they are fully competent
- Able to work calmly and confidently with animals
- In good health

The Equipment

Proper facilities for the types of animals handled should be provided and well maintained. Makeshift solutions are insufficient and will only reduce the efficiency of handling as well as increasing the risk of injury. Where appropriate, the use of protective clothing and restraining devices or cages can assist in reducing the risk of injury. Animals should be adequately restrained before staff start work.

The Animal

Many animals being handled will be familiar with the process. If they are not, they should be allowed to become accustomed to the noises, activity and personnel involved before commencing. If an animal is habitually aggressive or difficult to handle, review whether the procedure is necessary and consider alternative methods.

Occupational Health Risks

Infection and Disease

There are a number of occupational diseases and infections that can be transmitted to persons coming into contact with animals. Zoonotic diseases can be spread from animals – often mammals, birds, and reptiles – to humans. The animal may itself be sick, or simply a carrier of the disease. Although zoonotic diseases are rare, individuals working with animals should be aware of the risks and take necessary measures to prevent or reduce them.

Staff should never ignore symptoms such as:

- Flu-like fevers, chills, and sweats
- Fatigue and depression
- Unexplained weight loss
- Gastrointestinal symptoms, including diarrhoea, nausea, and sickness
- Muscle aches, stiffness, and spasms
- Hydrophobia
- Jaundice
- Conjunctivitis
- Fits
- Septic lesions
- Skin rashes
- Respiratory problems

Anyone working with animals should be required to obtain a tetanus injection, with boosters at appropriate intervals. Pregnant workers should consult their GP about the nature of their work, as they may be required to reduce or cease contact with animals during the course of their pregnancy.

Other Hazards and Considerations

There can be other hazards involved with working with animals, but simple precautions can reduce the risks:

- Lifting and handling heavy items – Staff training must include the principles of lifting and carrying heavy objects such as bags of feed to avoid musculoskeletal injuries. Mechanical hoists or lifts may be necessary to move large animals
- Chemical substances – Cleaning agents and veterinary drugs should be the subject of a specific recorded assessment, detailing the nature of the hazards present and the precautions necessary
- Good husbandry and housekeeping – Sick animals should be isolated and treated with caution
- Personal hygiene – A high standard of hygiene should be maintained at all times. All exposed parts of the body should be thoroughly washed before eating, drinking, or smoking. Any cuts or abrasions should be kept clean and dry, and covered by a suitable waterproof dressing. If possible, clothing should be changed before and after work
- Protective clothing – Protective clothing should be worn, and thoroughly washed and disinfected after use
- Infected material – Arrangements should be made for the safe disposal of infected material

Checklist

We've provided a generic Handling Animals Safely Checklist in Appendix 1 which you can tailor to your own organisation.

Specialist Partner Solutions

Aviva Risk Management Solutions can offer access to a wide range of risk management products and services at preferential rates via our network of Specialist Partners.

For more information please visit:

[Aviva Risk Management Solutions – Specialist Partners](#)

Sources and Useful Links

- [Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992](#) - Health and Safety Executive
- [Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002](#) - Health and Safety Executive
- [Guidance on Livestock](#) – Health and Safety Executive
- [Guidance on Zoonoses](#) – Health and Safety Executive

Additional Information

Relevant Loss Prevention Standards include:

- Lone Working
- Claims Defensibility

To find out more, please visit [Aviva Risk Management Solutions](#) or speak to one of our advisors.

Email us at riskadvice@aviva.com or call 0345 366 6666*

*Calls may be recorded and/or monitored for our joint protection.

Appendix 1 – Handling Animals Safely Checklist



Location	
Date	
Completed by (name and signature)	

	Handling Animals Safely Checklist	Y/N	Comments
1.	Have you carried out adequate risk assessments and developed safe systems of work?		
2.	Have you provided appropriate training to your staff as determined by your risk assessments?		
3.	Have you established appropriate health surveillance procedures for staff and provided information on actions to be followed in the event of infection or ill health?		
4.	Have you provided suitable animal handling equipment and enclosures as determined by your risk assessment?		
5.	Have you established standards, written procedures, equipment, and facilities to ensure good personal hygiene can be maintained?		
6.	Have you ensured that staff working with animals have tetanus injections with boosters at the appropriate intervals?		
7.	Have you provided personal protective equipment (PPE) and clothing to staff and kept a record of any issue?		

8.	Any additional comments:		
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