

## Overview

This standard covers planning and implementing programmes to address undesirable behaviour in dogs. The emphasis of the canine behaviourist is one of facilitating behavioural change within the canine/human relationship in the dogs' normal environment and advising and instructing the owner/handler in behaviour modification techniques and canine communication and psychology.

Users of this standard will need to ensure that the training practices they recommended reflect up-to-date information, relevant training techniques, policies and procedures. They will work within the limits of their authority, accreditation, qualification and expertise of training, and have a developed knowledge and experience of rehabilitating dogs with behavioural problems, supported by suitable canine-specific studies, which are humane and evidence based. They should have extensive experience in dog training and dog handling, encompassing various breeds and types within all age ranges. They should also have experience of communicating with and training people.

Canine behaviourists will need to be aware of their own limitations and ensure that they meet the legal responsibilities for duty of care under relevant animal health and welfare legislation.

This standard is suitable for appropriately trained and/or accredited and qualified canine behaviourists, who have the relevant practical experience in dealing with canine species supported by training and education in canine-related behaviours and practical dog-training techniques.

## Performance criteria

You must be able to:

1. comply with relevant animal health and welfare legislation, national legislation, local policies and codes of practice relating to dogs at all times
2. continually assess and make provision for the health and welfare needs of the dog
3. manage and control a suitable location for the consultation and behaviour change and training programme and undertake dynamic risk assessment throughout to maintain the safety and welfare of dog and all persons present at all times and be continually aware of any factors outside of your control
4. obtain and interpret relevant **information** about the dog and possible causes of the behaviour using a range of appropriate **sources**
5. continually assess and evaluate the relationship between the dog and owner/handler within the normal environment, including household or environmental dynamics, for suitability to undertake behaviour modification (e.g. presence of other animals, other people)
6. assess the dog's physical condition and emotional state, with consideration to the life stages of the dog (i.e. puppy, juvenile, adult, senior), before and during the consultation process, recognising signs of stress, anxiety, fears, phobias, aversions, aggression, pain, conflict and avoidance, and respond appropriately
7. handle and interact with the dog humanely and safely and in a manner that allows assessment, temperament testing and behaviour modification to be carried out safely and effectively, and avoids creating behaviour that may give rise to welfare concerns
8. plan a structured programme of behaviour change and training that is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and targeted (**SMART**), applying the principles of learning theory to dogs and humans
9. select the most appropriate behaviour change and training methods and **resources**, for the particular dog, owner/handler and the desired outcome, with due consideration of current scientific evidence, previous experience, humane practices and legislation
10. discuss and agree the programme with the owner/handler and obtain informed consent prior to commencing the behaviour change and training programme, ensuring the owner/handler understands the importance of their role in achieving and maintaining the desired behaviour once it is reached
11. implement behaviour change and training programme in accordance with relevant health and safety legislation, risk assessment requirements, codes of practice and any other policies or procedures relevant to the programme or location

12. demonstrate to the owner/handler how to implement the programme of behaviour change and training, including the safe use of specific equipment where appropriate, to ensure the health, welfare and safety of the dog is maintained
13. recognise different learning styles of the dog and modify the programme accordingly, having due regard for breed specific traits and motivational drives
14. encourage, motivate and support the owner/handler to achieve and maintain the desired outcome
15. recognise, understand and act upon indications of stress in the owner/handler, including the relevance of non-verbal communication
16. monitor the effect of the behaviour change and training programme on the dog's health and welfare and recognise any detrimental effects
17. encourage the owner/handler to provide support and feedback to the dog to develop an effective relationship and continually monitor the interaction between dog and handler
18. monitor the dog and owner/handler's progress towards achievement of the behaviour change and training programme and adjust as necessary
19. recognise when the desired outcome of the behaviour change and training programme is not achievable and take appropriate action
20. recognise your own limitations and **refer** to an appropriate professional when necessary e.g. alternative canine behaviourist, veterinary surgeon
21. communicate effectively both verbally and in writing with others involved in the behaviour change and training programme and produce **reports** where required
22. ensure appropriate records are maintained and stored as required
23. maintain professional and ethical conduct and work within the limits of your own authority, expertise, training, competence, experience and the relevant legislation
24. maintain professional competence by undertaking regular Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and work within the requirements of the relevant professional organisation

## Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

1. your responsibilities under relevant animal health and welfare legislation, and other dog-specific legislation, local policies and codes of practice, and the legal limitations of the **Veterinary Surgeons Act (1966)** with regard to diagnosis and treatment of disease or injury
2. how the welfare needs of the **dogs** you engage with may be assessed and addressed prior to and during behaviour modification
3. how to obtain and interpret information about the dog and assess any factors that may affect behaviour including possible medical causes for the undesirable behaviour and the importance of seeking a veterinary diagnosis
4. how to recognise behavioural issues in dogs and the cause and effect training can have on the health and welfare or behaviour of the dog
5. what to consider when assessing the suitability of the dog to undertake a programme of behaviour change and training to address undesirable behaviour
6. the importance of assessing the **capabilities and potential** of the owner/handler to achieve and maintain the desired behaviour
7. psychopharmacology theories and mode of interaction of the major classes of drugs used in clinical animal behaviour that may have been administered to the dog, e.g. by a veterinary surgeon or other professional
8. the role of nutrition and pheromones on dog behaviour
9. how dogs learn and the physical, psychological and environmental factors that affect learning, including the dog's lifestyle with the owner/handler within their normal environment
10. the principles and techniques used in behaviour change and training and the skills relevant to the achievement of the desired outcome
11. how to plan and implement a structured programme of behaviour change and training to achieve objectives which are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and targeted (SMART)
12. the different methods used to train dogs and what to consider when selecting the most appropriate method of training for a particular dog, behaviour or desired outcome e.g. current scientific evidence, previous experience, humane practices, legislation
13. the importance of discussing the behaviour change and training programme with the owner/handler and gaining their understanding and agreement to fulfil their obligation to adhere to the programme
14. the correct use and potential misuse of available training equipment, the physiological and psychological effect on the dog and its health and welfare

- and the importance of educating the owner/handler in good practice
15. the legal, welfare and ethical considerations of the form of training used, the implications of not training in an appropriate manner and the consequences of allowing a dog to be out of control
  16. the use of positive and negative reinforcement and positive and negative punishment and the effects of these approaches on dog behaviour, health and welfare
  17. your responsibilities under relevant health and safety legislation, codes of practice and any other policies or procedures relevant to the programme or location and the importance of carrying out risk assessments prior to and during behaviour modification
  18. the antecedents, triggers and indicators of the cycle of anxiety and stress in dogs
  19. how to ensure that the welfare of the dog is maintained throughout and that your behaviour or that of others does not cause adverse reactions, fear or distress
  20. how to recognise, evaluate and address behavioural responses throughout behaviour change and training
  21. the importance of continually evaluating all available information prior to and during behaviour modification, or when a dog displays unexpected behaviour
  22. the anatomy and physiology of a dog and how training, equipment and the handling of a dog can affect the dog's behavioural responses
  23. human psychology and its relevance to designing and achieving the behaviour modification
  24. how to teach, motivate and support the owner/handler to achieve and maintain the desired outcome and the effect that the interactions between owner or handler and dog may have on the maintenance of the undesirable behaviour
  25. the reasons why the dog or owner/handler may not be progressing to achieve the desired outcome and how the behaviour change and training programme can be modified to improve its outcomes
  26. the importance of monitoring and evaluating progress and reviewing and revising the behaviour change and training programme
  27. how to recognise when behaviour modification methods may not be appropriate for the dog, owner/handler and the purpose or role of the dog
  28. non-verbal communication and the indicators of stress in people and how to respond appropriately
  29. when to and when not to intervene while the owner or handler is practicing instruction

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30. how and when to use **test dogs** in behaviour modification and the value of monitoring and interpreting the reaction of the test dog while maintaining their health, safety and welfare
  31. the importance of seeking advice and guidance from more experienced professionals, where to obtain professional advice and guidance and when a dog should be referred to a veterinary surgeon or other professional
  32. the importance of maintaining communication with others involved in the behaviour change and training programme
  33. how to produce reports suitable for the intended recipient
  34. the importance and relevance of maintaining accurate records, the safe handling and storage of data and the importance of confidentiality and requirements of current data protection legislation
  35. the importance of appropriate insurance cover including professional indemnity
  36. your professional responsibilities and the importance of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to maintain professional competence and the role of professional bodies and associations

## Scope/range

**Information** to be considered when carrying out an assessment of the dog:

- nature and seriousness of the reported behaviour
- life history
- physical condition and capabilities
- age and development stage
- health and medical history, including past and current medication
- diet
- reproductive status
- hormonal stage
- current level of training and any prior behaviour modification undertaken
- temperament/characteristics/traits
- breed and parentage
- motivational drivers and effects
- environment – living, working, training or learning
- legislation

**Capabilities and potential** of the handler:

- physical needs of the owner/handler
- learning needs of the owner/handler
- psychological needs of the owner/handler
- environment (including presence of other animals or other people)
- resources

**Resources:**

- personnel
- training aids/equipment
- handling aids/equipment
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

**Reports** may be for:

- owner/handler
- veterinary surgeon
- legal or local authority
- courts
- insurance companies

## Behaviours

- be prepared to make difficult decisions and have the confidence to see them through.
- show reliability and resilience in difficult situations
- remain calm and confident, respond logically and decisively in difficult situations
- respond to challenges rationally, with consideration to the emotions of the dog and owner/handler
- manage ambiguity and deal with uncertainty and frustration when working with the dog and owner/handler
- manage conflicting pressure and tension during consultation and training of the owner/handler and dog
- resist pressure to make quick decisions where full consideration is needed
- remain focused and in control of all situations during the consultation and training
- stand firmly by a decision when it is right to do so
- demonstrate sound interpersonal skills
- seek client feedback and act accordingly

## Glossary

**Dogs** - All domesticated dogs including working dogs

**Sources** of information could include:

- the client
- a third party (e.g. veterinary surgeon)
- observation
- records

**SMART** objectives:

- Specific - Is the objective well defined and clear? Does it state exactly what is to be achieved?
- Measurable - How will I know when the objective has been achieved? What will success look like?
- Achievable - Is the objective attainable considering the capability of the dog?
- Realistic - Can the outcome be achieved with the resources, knowledge and time available?
- Targeted - Does the objective target a specific area for improvement?

**Refer** – includes formal or informal referral to professional body, individual or organisation

**Test Dogs:**

- aid and assist addressing undesirable behaviour in other dogs



- provocateur - to identify the trigger threshold (there should be limited use of this)
- specially trained, selected, behaviourally stable dogs

**Veterinary Surgeons Act (1966):**

All forms of complementary therapy that involve acts or the practise of veterinary surgery must be undertaken by a veterinary surgeon, subject to any exemption in the Act. At the same time, it is incumbent on veterinary surgeons offering any complementary therapy to ensure that they are adequately trained in its application.

Behavioural treatment of animals is not restricted under the Veterinary Surgeons Act (1966) unless it constitutes the practice of veterinary surgery.

There is no specific exemption order for animal behaviourism and therefore there is no formal jurisdiction to insist upon the involvement of a veterinary surgeon before animal behaviour work is carried out. In many cases, however, animal behaviourists will work on referrals from veterinary surgeons to ensure they are not accused of making a diagnosis of disease or injury (which is restricted to veterinary surgeons).

**Links to other NOS**

LANCTB1 - Observe, assess and respond to the behaviour of dogs  
LANCTB2 - Handle and control dogs

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