



Skills England

Standard Draft Preview

Contents

1. Key information
2. Occupational summary
3. Typical job titles
4. Core occupation duties
5. Option occupation duties
6. Animal welfare assistant duties
7. Dog handler duties
8. Knowledge
9. Skills
10. Behaviours
11. Qualifications
12. Consultation
13. Progression routes
14. Supporting uploads
15. Involved employers

Standard in development

L2: Animal care and welfare assistant

Version 2.0

Title of occupation

Animal care and welfare assistant

UOS reference number

ST0397

Core and options

Yes

Standard options

All ▼

Option titles

Animal welfare assistant

Dog handler

Level of occupation

Level 2

Occupational maps data

Route: Agriculture, environmental and animal care

Pathway: Animal Care and Management

Cluster: Animal care and welfare assistant

Typical duration of apprenticeship

12 months

Resubmission

No

Would your proposed apprenticeship standard replace an existing framework?

No

Does professional recognition exist for the occupation?

No

Regulated occupation

Is this a statutory regulated occupation?

No

Occupational summary

This occupation involves working in different places where animals are cared for. These places can include animal welfare charities, sanctuaries and rehoming centres, boarding and day care facilities, pet retail, wildlife rescue centres, zoos, farm parks, the armed forces, horse stables, research labs, and animal quarantine centres.

People in this role may work for small local businesses or large national organisations and could specialise in one or more species. They might care for one or more different types of animals, such as dogs, cats, small mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, horses, or larger animals. They work with animals every day.

The role includes feeding animals, checking their health, helping with treatments, keeping their environments clean and safe, and making sure the animals are mentally and socially stimulated.

The main purpose of this role is to improve the animals' lives through meeting their welfare needs, while supporting the goals of the organisation. Their responsibilities include daily animal care tasks, under a supervisor's direction. They must follow safety rules and help use resources sustainably.

Animal care assistants are responsible for providing nutrition, monitoring an animal's health and responding appropriately when concerns are identified, providing appropriate accommodation and ensuring cleanliness and hygiene as well as updating necessary records. They work with others such as vets, other animal care staff, volunteers, and members of the public to share information and support animal welfare. Animal care workers often work unusual hours.

Dog handlers are responsible for the training and operational performance of dogs. Dog handlers may also work closely with other handlers, instructors, veterinary staff, law enforcement or military personnel and regulatory authorities.

Typical job titles

Animal day care assistant

Animal handler

Animal health officer

Animal technician

Animal welfare assistant

Equine centre team member

Farm park assistant

Kennel/cattery assistant

Pet retail assistant

Reptile care and sales assistant

Search and rescue dog handler

Security dog handler

Services dog handler

Stablehand

Wildlife rehabilitation assistant

Are there any statutory / regulatory or other typical entry requirements?

No

Core occupation duties

DUTY	KSBS
Duty 1 Follow care plans to provide daily care, ensuring animals receive correct food, water, exercise opportunities and appropriate environments.	K1 K2 K3 K4 K5 S1 S2 S3 S4 S5 B1
Duty 2 Monitor health and behaviour through regular checks including detecting signs of illness or distress in animals.	K6 K7 K8 K9 K10 S6 S7 S8 B1
Duty 3 Safely handle and move animals during routine care, examinations, treatments or transportation.	K11 S9 B1
Duty 4 Provide enrichment opportunities for animals to engage in natural behaviours and provide mental stimulation.	K12 S10 B1
Duty 5 Provide and monitor appropriate social interactions.	K13 S11 B1
Duty 6 Maintain accurate records of animal health, welfare, behaviour, and treatments.	K14 S12
Duty 7 Clean and maintain biosecurity of facilities, animal accommodation and equipment, and carry out maintenance checks.	K15 S13
Duty 8 Assist and support colleagues in the delivery of animal care, preventative health care or treatments.	K16 S14 B5

Duty 9 Respond to animal emergencies, ill health or unexpected situations involving animals.	K17 B1
Duty 10 Ensure safe and effective performance in line with current legislation and workplace policies.	K18 K19 K20 S15 S16 S17 B3 B4
Duty 11 Work independently and as part of a team to complete assigned tasks.	K21 K22 S18 B2 B4 B5 B6

Option occupation duties

Animal welfare assistant duties

DUTY	KSBS
Duty 12 Provide information to stakeholders to inform and improve animal welfare.	K23 K24 K25 S19 S20 S21

Dog handler duties

DUTY	KSBS
Duty 13 Assist in the training and operate the dog in accordance with regulations, legislation and organisational policies and procedures to meet operational performance.	K26 K27 K28 S22 S23 S24 B4

KSBS

Knowledge

K1: The role and importance of individual care plans for animals, and how they are shaped by species, age, life stage, seasonality, health, the five animal welfare needs and current scientific evidence.

- K2:** Species specific and individual nutritional requirements and how these influence on diet selection and feeding processes.
- K3:** How species and individual requirements influence the temporary or permanent accommodation.
- K4:** How species and individual requirements influence exercise opportunities offered.
- K5:** Sustainable approaches to feed, accommodation and waste management.
- K6:** Ways in which animals learn and how these techniques can be used to ethically shape animal behaviour.
- K7:** The physical and behavioural characteristics of individuals, species and breeds and their normal and abnormal behaviours including indicators of distress.
- K8:** Methods to identify individual animals.
- K9:** Signs of good health, pain, injury and disease in animals and the actions that should be taken if welfare is compromised.
- K10:** Processes for working with infectious animals, including those with zoonotic or anthroponotic disease.
- K11:** Methods used for safe approach, interaction, handling, moving and transporting animals
- K12:** Species-specific animal enrichment opportunities and methods.
- K13:** The social needs of animals and how these can be met through appropriate interactions with humans and or animals.
- K14:** Types of records and the information to be recorded in relation to animal health, welfare, behaviour, and treatments, including how to use appropriate anatomical terminology.
- K15:** The importance of biosecurity and procedures for cleaning, disinfecting, cleaning and disposal of waste and maintenance checks.
- K16:** Types of species-specific preventative healthcare and their application methods, for example vaccinations, grooming and skin care, parasite treatment, beak, teeth, foot and nail care.
- K17:** Types of animal health emergency situations, including ill health and unexpected situations involving animals, and the actions to be taken.
- K18:** Animal related legislation, policies and procedures and how they influence ethical working practices.
- K19:** Health and safety related legislation, policies and procedures, and how they influence working practices, including use of risk assessments.
- K20:** The scope of personal and professional responsibility and how to escalate concerns.

- K21:** Communication methods and how to apply them to different situations and purposes.
- K22:** Benefits of teamwork and how to ensure effective teamwork.
- K23:** How to use technical and non-technical language appropriate to the stakeholder.
- K24:** Appropriate levels of advice, feedback or information to give to stakeholders in line with legal and professional limits and how to be clear, concise and accurate.
- K25:** How to positively communicate with stakeholders to inform and improve animal welfare, ensuring professionalism and confidentiality.
- K26:** How a dog's physical and sensory characteristics, and stress and emotional responses can affect the dog when training for a specific role.
- K27:** How to conduct refresher or maintenance training of a dog to meet minimum operational standards.
- K28:** How factors can affect operational performance when operating the dog, for example presence of the public and level of handler's stress.

Skills

- S1:** Follow complete individual care plans to meet an animal's specific welfare needs.
- S2:** Select, prepare and provide food, for example a meal, reward-based training or food-based enrichment, to animals in a way that meets their dietary needs.
- S3:** Select, prepare and maintain accommodation, fixtures and fittings to animals in a way that meets their individual needs.
- S4:** Select, prepare and provide exercise to animals in a way that meets their individual needs.
- S5:** Work in ways which minimise environmental impact and promote sustainability.
- S6:** Observe animal behaviour to identify factors that would influence approach and handling techniques, and which indicates the animal's welfare may be compromised.
- S7:** Use appropriate methods to identify individual animals.
- S8:** Assess and report animal health using methods suitable for the individual animal and situation, escalating health and welfare concerns where appropriate.
- S9:** Use and adapt techniques to move and handle animals for routine care using the least invasive, minimally aversive methods for the situation and individuals.
- S10:** Select, prepare and provide enrichment to animals in a way that meets their individual needs.
- S11:** Provide animal socialisation opportunities appropriate to the individual animal's needs.
- S12:** Maintain clear and accurate records.

S13: Maintain biosecurity by cleaning, disinfecting, disposing of waste and conducting maintenance checks in line with organisation procedures and legislation.

S14: Assist with the delivery of preventative healthcare in accordance with the animal's individual care plan.

S15: Care for animals to meet their welfare needs by following workplace policies, legal, ethical and regulatory requirements.

S16: Work safely within personal and professional limitations, seeking support or escalating concerns as appropriate.

S17: Work in a way which maintains the health and safety of animals and people in accordance with workplace policies, regulations and risk assessments.

S18: Communicate within the organisation using methods appropriate to the situation and purpose.

S19: Use technical and non-technical language appropriate to the stakeholder.

S20: Deliver appropriate levels of advice, feedback or information to stakeholders in line with legal and professional limits and be clear, concise and accurate.

S21: Positively communicate with stakeholders to inform and improve animal welfare, ensuring professionalism and confidentiality.

S22: Assist with refresher or maintenance training, at an appropriate frequency, to maintain minimum operational standards.

S23: Operate, as a dog team, to the minimum standard of operational performance as determined by national standards or the employers' policies and procedures.

S24: Respond to factors affecting performance when operating the dog, for example presence of the public, levels of handler's stress, environmental conditions.

Behaviours

B1: Animal welfare-focused, showing respect and empathy for animals in their care.

B2: Takes ownership of work and reflects on own performance.

B3: Puts safety first for self and others.

B4: Has a strong work ethic and conducts themselves in a professional manner.

B5: Team-focused and works effectively with stakeholders.

B6: Respectful of others by embracing equity, diversity and inclusion.

Qualifications

English and maths

English and maths qualifications must be completed in line with the apprenticeship funding rules.

Does the apprenticeship need to include any mandated qualifications in addition to the above-mentioned English and maths qualifications?

No

Consultation

The draft standard was sent to a variety of employers, training providers and end point assessment organisations for review in June 2025 for approximately 2 weeks.

The feedback was largely positive. The feedback was reviewed and actioned where appropriate.

Some examples of feedback are:

- Updated the occupational profile to ensure the description of the professionalism required for Animal Welfare Assistant and Dog Handler were on par.
- Reduced the Animal Welfare Assistant and Dog Handler duties and KSBs to ensure clarity and focus.
- Updated K6 to clarify what is meant by animal learning.

Overall, the feedback showed support for the revised subject content and the reduction of pathway options to two.

Progression routes

ST1359 Animal care and welfare manager-1.0 L3

On completion of the apprenticeship learners may progress onto the level 3 animal welfare manager apprenticeship or may move back into full time education to complete a level 3 programme. Alternatively they may stay in industry, progressing up the career ladder to job roles including taking on supervisor responsibilities within their chosen job role.

Supporting uploads

Mandatory qualification uploads

Mandated degree evidence uploads

Professional body confirmation uploads

Subject sector area

3.3 Animal care and veterinary science