

Name: _____

Approach

Animals should be approached in a calm and confident manner, avoiding exaggerated or sudden movements, such as waving of the hands and arms. Using soft tones and a quiet voice when talking to animals may help alert them to a non-threatening approach and reinforce a caring attitude in the handler.

Handling method

Choice of an appropriate method to pick up, carry and/or restrain an animal is perhaps the most crucial aspect of handling. The method needs to be suited to the particular species. Any strain or individual differences also need to be taken into account.



Restraint

Correct positioning of both the handler and animal is necessary to achieve quick and secure restraint.

Animals need to feel secure and to be completely immobile to avoid struggling, which would promote anxiety and could result in injury to the animal or handler.

During restraint, the animal should be gripped with just sufficient force to hold it firmly and securely, but not so tightly that it causes discomfort, compromises the animal's breathing or causes bruising.



Observing the animal's response

It is important to observe the animal's behaviour during handling and restraint as this allows immediate adjustment to keep the animal secure and safe.

Anxious animals will often flee from the handler on release and try to evade recapture or, less obviously, they may attempt to hide quietly to avoid attention.

By contrast, animals with a positive response to handling are generally curious and will voluntarily approach the handler to investigate and interact. To check the effectiveness of your own handling procedures, try standing motionless for a short period after handling to assess whether animals approach and seek contact.

Training and experience: handlers and animals

Acquiring good handling skills needs training in appropriate methods and much practice to be able to handle quickly and effectively regardless of the specific presentation of the animal, its behaviour and context.

Skill should be sufficient to capture animals quickly, confidently and securely on first approach without any chasing.

Failed attempts to catch an animal can increase its anxiety and lead to further evasive response, resulting in frustration and sometimes impatience in the handler.

Non-aversive handling from a young age during routine husbandry is a fast and effective way to tame animals.

The use of non-aversive methods promotes rapid habituation, which is particularly relevant when time is constrained.

Reward training

Where possible, the handler should try to gain voluntary cooperation from animals to minimise any negative response to handling.

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Name: _____

1. How should animals be approached?

2. Why is correct positioning of the handler and animal necessary?

3. What do animals need to feel to avoid struggling?

4. How do animals who are anxious with handling react?

5. How do animals with positive handling experiences react?

6. How would you check the effectiveness of your own handling procedure?

7. What can failed attempts at catching an animal cause?

8. What does the use of non-aversive methods promote?

9. Why should a handler try to gain voluntary cooperation from animals?