

Working with animals

This chapter provides guidance in relation to working with animals on a production. This chapter is primarily based on guidance issued by the Technician's Guild of New Zealand, the American Humane Association (AHA) and the Ontario Ministry of Labour.





Section 5

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Who needs to read this?

Anyone involved in the use of animals or who interacts with animals and their trainers on a production, as well as those responsible for engaging animals and animal trainers on a production.

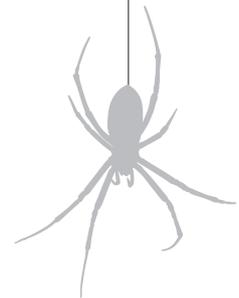
Definitions

This chapter provides guidance on working with animals. This is defined as any instance when an animal is required to be present on the set of a production.

An “**animal**” is defined as any animal provided for theatrical purposes in any film, video or moving image production.

A “**trainer**” means a person who handles and trains any animal. This includes a wrangler.

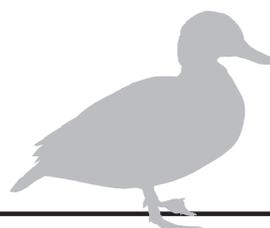
Detailed guidance around the engagement of animals on a production is provided by the American Humane Association (AHA). These are mentioned only for reference, as they are not in force in New Zealand, but are generally accepted in the absence of a local detailed equivalent. Some offshore productions, such as those by major motion picture studios, may be bound by agreements with the AHA, which must be adhered to.



Minimum responsibilities

Everyone involved in a screen production who undertakes tasks relating to working with animals, or who is working in an environment where animals and their trainers may be working or resting, should read and understand this section.

Beyond trainers or assigned performers authorised by a trainer, workers on a production should never engage, touch or interact with working animals. Animals on a production are working and should be treated as such and should not be distracted.





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Planning and guidance considerations and responsibilities

Everyone who has responsibilities, or influence over, an activity or task in relation to working with animals should read and understand this section, as well as the minimum responsibilities for everybody.

The producer and production manager should consider the resources needed to engage animals on a production safely during pre-production; this includes:

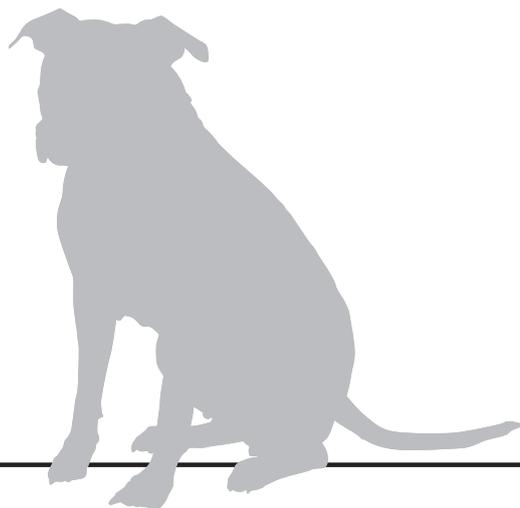
- ensuring all animals required for a production (including action and dressing animals) are engaged through an established and reputable company with qualified trainers to coordinate action for camera
- hiring competent people with an appropriate level of training, experience and/or qualifications for handling and training the animals and the requirements of those animals for the production;
- ensuring the number of people hired in relation to the size of the project and number of animals required is sufficient; and
- ensuring sufficient resources and facilities, including budget, are allocated to enable appropriate and safe practices for keeping and working with the animals on the production.

Hazards and associated risks

The following potential hazards in relation to working with animals should be considered, and the level of risk assessed. Refer to appendix 2: health and safety risk assessment process for more information on identifying hazards and assessing risk.

The most common expected hazards and risks associated with working with animals may include:

- bites, kicks and scratches
- crushes and bumps
- falls
- unexpected movement and noise
- compromised wellbeing of animals as a result of fatigue.





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General safety guidance

The trainer, producer and any other persons deemed responsible for the animals should consult with the owner on the safe handling and transport of the animals. They should also ensure that adequate time is given to familiarise themselves, and the animals, to the routine and working environment for any given shot or sequence.

Call sheets / closed set and notification of personnel

The producer or person with delegated responsibility and the trainer should communicate to all personnel that animals are on location. Appropriate information on safety matters specific to the species should be included, particularly during pre-production for any planning considerations to be taken into account.

Notice should be given on the call sheet prior to shooting and a reminder of instructions for workers during briefing at the beginning and/or prior to the animals being brought onto the set of a production.

Safety guidance specific to the species of animals being used should be attached to the call sheet. An opportunity should be given to the trainer and stunt coordinator to address the cast, crew and parents or chaperones of any children on the set about the safety precautions while animals are on set.

It is recommended that a “closed set” notice be displayed on all stages or locations where animals are working. Every effort should be made to maintain a closed set where animals are working. Based on trainer’s discretion, all non-essential personnel should be cleared from a set when an animal is working.

Handling and transportation of animals

The trainer is responsible for the handling and transportation of the animal. Assistant directors must ensure all animals are cleared from the set (at lunch, break or wrap) before others are cleared. Horses should always be given a clear path to their holding area.

Provision of animal facilities

The trainer in consultation with the producer or person with delegated responsibility should provide facilities for:

- an easily accessible area available for loading and unloading animals; and
- a stress-free area.

Trainer to animal ratio

The trainer and the producer should determine the ratio of trainers or assistants to animals to ensure the safe control of the animals.

As a general guide, a recommended ratio would be one trainer to three action horses and two trainers for each undomesticated animal.



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Interaction with animals

Be aware that animals can be easily distracted. No member of cast or crew is permitted to pet, fondle, play with or feed animals on set or on standby if the trainer believes it is not in the animals' best interests or believes it is unsafe. Permission to approach, handle or pet animals on or around a set should be obtained from the trainer or person in charge of the animal. If you do not have permission to do so, refrain from any contact with the animal.

Motion, noise or smells, such as food, perfume or alcohol, should be avoided when around animals. It is recommended that any unit catering be moved away from where animals are kept or working.

Moving and setting up equipment

If animals are on set, the trainer must be alerted **before** any equipment is moved or adjustments are made. Special care should be taken when moving or setting up any equipment near animals. Equipment such as ladders or lighting stands that can easily tip over and make a noise that may startle animals should be secured.

Set construction

The set should be constructed, or the location layout arranged, to meet the requirements of the animals and action in the scene.

Supervision

All animal action should be carried out under the supervision of the trainer or person in charge of the animal. The trainer shall ensure that all animals required to work on the set of a production are well prepared and trained to be acclimatised to the conditions. The trainer should be satisfied that the animals will perform in a way that is safe for the cast, crew and general public.

Performers and animals

If an animal and a performer are required to perform together in a scene that is deemed a stunt or a dangerous situation, ample time should be given for the trainer, stunt coordinator, performer(s) and animals to be familiar with the routine and each other.

Use of firearms and ammunition

The armourer and animal trainer should consult on the handling of animals and firearms, and the level of blank ammunition loads should be determined in consultation with the animal trainer/wrangler and the armourer. Live ammunition should not be used, only blank ammunition. All trainers should be given prior notice to shots being fired or the detonation of explosions around performing animals.



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Veterinary provisions

The trainer or person supplying the animal shall be responsible for ensuring that all necessary vaccinations, inoculations, applicable licenses and medical safeguards are current and that documentation is available.

Sedation of animals

The trainer should consult with the producer or person with delegated responsibility on the need for sedation and the safety precautions to be taken. Where there is a potentially dangerous animal action, sedation equipment should be available with a qualified veterinarian present. Sedation should not be used for the purpose of 'calming' a performing animal. Sedated animals are unpredictable.

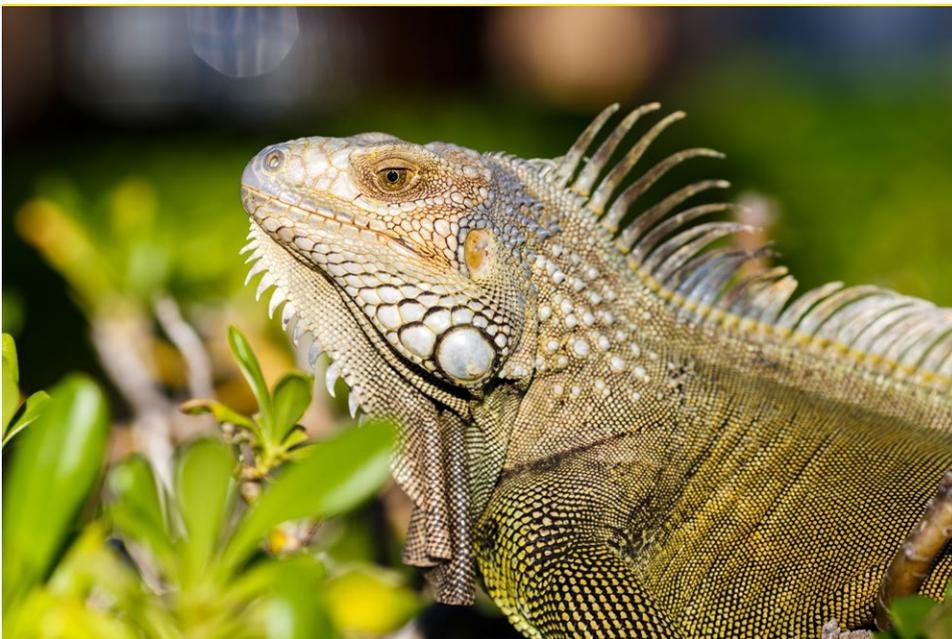
Special Effects

All animals should be trained and prepared for work around special effects such as explosions, ammunition, artillery, pyrotechnics or the use of chemicals.

For further detailed recommendations on the use of special effects around animals, see Chapter 6 (pg 43) of the American Humane Association's guidelines.

First aid and emergency medical transport

There should always be a qualified first aid provider present on set. Based on the types of animals used and the location, consideration should be given to providing onsite emergency medical transportation with qualified medical personnel, up to and including life support if deemed necessary. If the location is particularly remote, access to telecommunications and the necessary modes of transportation should be considered.





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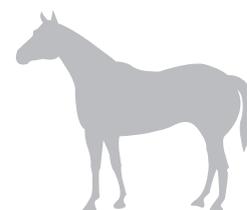
Animal specific recommendations

The following section includes safety guidance specific to a species of animal that might be required to work on a production.

Horses – specific guidance

The following guidance should be followed when working with horses.

- They are appropriately shod for the working surface.
- Under no circumstances horse falls be accomplished by tripping or pitfalls.
- No one rides a horse off-camera except for those designated by the trainer.
- Under no circumstances are spurs to be worn by any performer without the prior approval of the stunt coordinator and/or the trainer.
- All hitching posts or rails are fastened in the ground so that the tugging of a frightened horse cannot pull it loose; on a stage, hitching posts or rails should be bolted or fastened in a rigid manner.



Livestock and large numbers of animals

Where large numbers of animals are required (such as battle scenes, or historical re-enactments), a chain of responsibility should be established to coordinate the work during the production. Appointed by the producer, the person in charge of each unit should be directly responsible for the conduct of the people and the care of the horse/livestock under his or her care. The ratio of trainers to animals should still be observed.



Exotic animals

The trainer should provide the producer with information instructing the cast and crew on how to behave in the presence of exotic animals. This information should be attached to the call sheet and conveyed to all persons working with or near these animals.

- Children should only be near potentially dangerous exotic animals when monitored by a trainer and in a controlled environment when rehearsing or filming.
- For smaller exotic animals, a separate temperature controlled room should be provided when necessary.
- Larger exotic animals should be provided a separate sheltered area where cast and crew are prohibited from visiting.
- A plan to prevent the escape of any wild or exotic animals should be in place. In the event an escape does take place, a plan to safely recapture them, without any harm to the animal, should be in place.



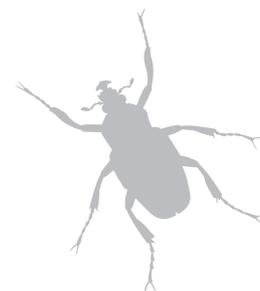


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Insects and arachnids

The following guidance is specific to the use of insects and arachnids.

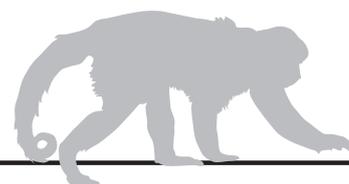
- Nothing should be done to an insect that would cause it permanent harm or alter its physical characteristics or behaviour.
- A trainer knowledgeable of the particular insect(s) should be on set when in use.
- All insects used should be collected after completion of a scene and none should be allowed to remain on the set or location.
- Care should be taken when using an insect species not indigenous to an area and any appropriate permissions should be sought.
- Precautions should be taken to prevent or at least minimise the number of insects that fly into the lights.



Apes and monkeys

The following guidance is specific to the use of apes and monkeys.

- Stages, sets and locations should be checked by the Trainer for escape routes or other possible hazards.
- Any products containing harmful chemicals or sharp items should be removed from the area. Apes and monkeys are fast climbers and are capable of opening or closing doors and drawers.
- Props being used on the set should be checked and approved by the trainer.
- Only personnel necessary for filming should have contact with apes and monkeys.
- Anyone with a cold or other contagious virus should keep a distance from apes or monkeys.
- Care should be taken to ensure rest when a significant amount of work is needed, trainers should be able to advise on each animal's capabilities.
- For apes working for long periods on a production, such as more than a few consecutive days, a play area, empty room or private park where the animal(s) can relax and exercise should be made available.
- Apes should only work after sundown if the trainer has conditioned them to do so. It is recommended to avoid this where possible.
- If clothing is to be used on apes, they should be easy to remove and loose. Clothing should not restrict the ability of the animal to walk, hear or see.
- Apes should be introduced to anything that may be frightening or otherwise unnatural, including any moving objects. They should be familiarized with any animatronic objects, people in costumes and props.
- Sets and locations should be kept cool around apes.
- Apes should not be on set for any reason other than when filming, rehearsal or preparation or familiarisation with objects or people in the scene.
- Do not use apes as stand-ins for lighting adjustments.





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Wildlife

The following guidance relates to a working environment that may result in wildlife being encountered on set.

- The producer is responsible for assuring the safety of any animals that are naturally present in the surrounding area where a production is present.
- The producer should consult the relevant agencies or contact persons responsible for removing or relocating wildlife from location sets. Any native animals that remain on the set are subject to the applicable animal safety guidelines and procedures.
- If native animals are not to remain on set, they should be carefully removed, relocated, properly housed and cared for before being safely returned after filming.
- The production company should never intentionally harm nests, dens, caves or caverns and precautions should be taken to protect them. Care should be taken to ensure that any non-indigenous animals are removed from the area after production is complete.

Uncontrolled animals

All personnel should be aware of the unpredictability of uncontrolled animals on and around a location (e.g. farm animals, wandering dogs, horses or other livestock in paddocks etc.) as well as the effect that events such as bright lights or sudden noise may have on them.





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Water Safety

An animal trainer should be adequately instructed in safety precautions to be taken when working on, in or at the water's edge. It is recommended that the trainer be familiar with the hazards and procedures for working safely around water and that any animals working on, in or at the water's edge are comfortable doing so prior to the production.

Qualified life-saving personnel and equipment (such as safety boats) should be present for the duration of the production activity. Water temperature and length of exposure should also be considered.

Air safety

Animals must be adequately conditioned to work in and around aircraft prior to filming. If animals become stressed, they must be removed from the aircraft or filming area immediately.

The animal handler, and the pilot or aerial coordinator must work together to ensure the safety of the animals.

Training

Trainers should have the appropriate minimum level of training and experience required to perform their duties on the production. This should be provided to and verified by the production company prior to the trainer being hired.





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Roles and Responsibilities

Funders

Funders should:

- be assured, through the provision of the production's health and safety plan, that the funding provided is adequate for the proposed length of the production process; and
- incorporate health and safety clause/s in the funding agreement.

Production company

In pre-production, production companies (likely to have primary responsibility over health and safety on the production) should ensure:

- experience and qualifications are verified for specialist personnel such as trainers and a record kept of this;
- that all workers are briefed about safe working practices whenever animals are present;
- all Workers are made aware of the guidelines and their minimum responsibilities if animals are to be engaged on the production.

Producer / production manager

As producers and production managers have oversight across the production, they should:

- request evidence of, and verify experience of trainers, or proof of the appropriate certification.
- consult and coordinate during pre-production with the relevant parties to ensure the budgeting, scheduling and resources allocated to the animals department is sufficient enough to ensure the safety and comfort of animals working on the production.
- ensure workers are briefed on safety procedures for working around animals during their induction, pre-production and on the day when animals are present.

Line producer

Line producers also have oversight of the production process and should create a production schedule that provides adequate time for work involving animals to be undertaken safely. Consideration should be given to the additional time required for trainers and their animal performers to do their work safely and allowances in scheduling should be made for this.





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Director / heads of department

Directors and heads of department should:

- be mindful of the delays working with animals on a production can cause;
- always defer to the trainer's advice and judgment on when an animal is tired and allow for appropriate rest time; and
- never pressure the trainer or animals to work beyond the amount of time a trainer recommends.

Assistant director/s

The assistant director/s should ensure potential hazards and risks are discussed with all cast and crew during health and safety inductions and / or as required any time that circumstances on the set change. Assistant directors should also create a production schedule that provides adequate time for work to be undertaken safely.

Health and safety officer

The health and safety officer should:

- work with the producer, production manager and heads of department to help them identify the potential for hazards and risks relating to the engagement of animals on a production; and
- ensure the potential of hazards and risks involving animals is discussed with all cast and crew during health and safety inductions and / or as required if circumstances on the set change.

References

NZ Technician's Guild Safety Code of Practice (SCOP) section on Working with Animals: [http://screensafe.co.nz/pdf/Technical Guidelines for ScreenSafe from SCOP FINAL.pdf](http://screensafe.co.nz/pdf/Technical%20Guidelines%20for%20ScreenSafe%20from%20SCOP%20FINAL.pdf)

Ontario Ministry of Labour, Safety Guidelines for the Screen Industry: https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/filmguide/gl_40.php

American Humane Association (AHA) Guidelines for the Safe Use of Animals in Filmed Media
<https://www.americanhumane.org/app/uploads/2016/08/Guidelines2015-WEB-Revised-110315-1.pdf>





VISIT [ScreenSafe.co.nz](https://www.screensafe.co.nz)

