

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR PRACTITIONERS OF ANIMAL TRAINING AND BEHAVIOUR THERAPY

Declaration on professional registration

Rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. For this reason, on registration with the ABTC, and in exchange for the right to practise in the name of ABTC, every registered practitioner of animal training and behaviour therapy makes a declaration

" I PROMISE AND SOLEMNLY DECLARE that I will pursue the work of my profession with integrity and accept my responsibilities to the public, my clients and the profession and that, ABOVE ALL, my constant endeavour will be to ensure the welfare of animals committed to my care."

Purpose

This code forms the basis for ABTC practitioner member organisations' code of conduct. These are minimum standards that are required. An organisations' code of conduct may have additional requirements.

It provides protection to the general public and safeguards animal welfare.

It sets out the key principles and standards which practitioners of animal training and behaviour therapy must follow and uphold.

The Code is essential for practitioners in their professional lives and for regulation of the profession.

Scope and Objectives

Individuals have professional obligations to their clients, the animals they are helping, the animals that help them, their employers (where relevant), to one another, to students, the animal requiring the service, to colleagues in other disciplines (e.g. Veterinary Surgeon) and to society.

In order that they may discharge their obligations to their clients they must be able to meet the expense of the professional provisions which are necessary for safeguarding and promoting the rights of both the client and the animal. The primary objective of this code is to express the values and principles which are essential to those working with animal behaviour and training.

Principles of practice

Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners seek to ensure welfare of animals committed to their care and to fulfil their professional responsibilities, by maintaining five principles of practice:

- Professional competence
- Honesty and integrity
- Independence and impartiality
- Client confidentiality and trust
- Professional accountability

These standards should be considered in the context of the five principles of practice.

Professional responsibilities

Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners have professional responsibilities in regard to animals; clients; the profession and the public. These responsibilities are considered further below.

On occasion, the professional responsibilities may conflict with each other and Animal Trainers and Behaviour Practitioners may be presented with a dilemma. In such situations, they should balance the professional responsibilities having regard first to animal welfare.

1. Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners and animals

1.1 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must make animal welfare their first consideration when attending to animals.

1.2 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must keep within their own area of competence and refer cases responsibly.

1.3 Members and Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must not in any way endorse "correction" based training devices as these use positive punishment with the aim to cause pain and/or fear/anxiety (for example, but [not limited to](#), prong collars, check [choke] 'chains', electronic training devices [generally known as 'shock collars' and 'anti-bark collars'], pressure harnesses and halters, spurs, harsh bits, whips, tight nosebands).

1.4 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must use science-led, compassionate and non-punitive methods. Training and behaviour programmes must adhere to Least Inhibitive and Functionally Effective approaches, as per [the LIFE Model \(Fernandez, 2024\)](#). This includes using a synthesis of information about the animal's ethology, health, affective (emotional) state, situation and circumstances to produce accurate behavioural diagnoses and appropriate training and behaviour modification plans.

2. Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners and clients

2.1 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must be open and honest with clients and respect their needs and requirements.

2.2 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must provide independent and impartial advice and inform a client of any conflict of interest.

2.3 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must provide appropriate information to clients about the practice, including the costs of services.

2.4 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must communicate effectively, including in written and spoken English, with clients and ensure informed consent is obtained before any training or behaviour protocols are carried out.

2.5 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must keep clear, accurate and detailed client records. These should be kept securely and any no longer considered necessary must be deleted (in line with GDPR).

2.6 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must not disclose information about a client or the client's animals to a third party, unless the client gives permission or animal welfare or the public interest may be compromised.

2.7 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must respond promptly, fully and courteously to clients' complaints and criticism.

3. Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners and the profession

3.1 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must take reasonable steps to address adverse physical or mental health or performance that could impair fitness to practise; or, that results in harm, or a risk of harm, to animal welfare, public health or the public interest.

3.2 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners who are concerned about a professional colleague's fitness to practise must take steps to ensure that animals are not put at risk and that the interests of the public are protected.

3.3 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must maintain and develop the knowledge and skills relevant to their professional practice and competence and comply with ABTC requirements for continuing professional development (CPD).

3.4 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must ensure that all their professional activities are covered by professional indemnity and public liability insurance or equivalent arrangements.

3.5 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must not represent themselves or others as having expertise they cannot substantiate or, credit others as Animal Training or Animal Behaviour Practitioners unless appropriately registered with the ABTC.

4. Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners and the Veterinary Team

4.1 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must work together and with others in the veterinary team and business, when necessary, to co-ordinate the care of animals and the delivery of services.

4.2 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must communicate effectively, including in written and spoken English, with the veterinary team and other veterinary professionals in the UK.

5. Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners and the ABTC

5.1 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must be entered in the appropriate ABTC Register.

5.2 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must provide the ABTC with their CPD records when requested to do so.

5.3 ABTC Training and Behaviour Practitioner Organisation members must disclose to the ABTC any caution or conviction, including conditional discharges which may affect registration, whether in the UK or overseas (except for spent convictions and minor offences excluded from disclosure by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act).

5.4 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must comply with reasonable requests from the ABTC as part of the regulation of the profession, and comply with any undertakings they give to the ABTC.

6. Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners and the public

6.1 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must seek to ensure the protection of public health and animal welfare, and must consider the impact of their actions on the environment.

6.2 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must report facts and opinions honestly and with due care.

6.3 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners promoting and advertising products and services must do so in a professional manner.

6.4 Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must comply with legislation relevant to the provision of their services.

Animal Training and Behaviour Practitioners must not engage in any activity or behaviour that would be likely to bring the profession into disrepute or under-mine public confidence in the profession.