



Professional Standard 10 – Animal Training, Husbandry and Welfare (Summary)

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1. Purpose

This Professional Standard sets out the mandatory training, welfare, and husbandry standards required of all WAFA members who engage with working animals. It defines the ethical, humane, and professional practices necessary to ensure the health, safety, and effectiveness of working animals, and the dignity and independence of their handlers.

2. Scope

These standards apply to all WAFA individuals and organisations responsible for the training, placement, husbandry, assessment, retirement, or oversight of working animals. This includes professional trainers, volunteers, foster carers, breeders, and handlers. They apply across all working animal species recognised under WAFA.

3. Standard Statement

WAFA members must uphold exemplary standards of animal care, training, and wellbeing. Training must be delivered by qualified personnel using humane, evidence-based methods. Animals must be raised, socialised, trained and worked in environments that promote resilience, confidence, and public safety. Members must ensure animals perform specific tasks and pass robust readiness and reassessment procedures. Ongoing welfare, handler training, and retirement planning are required to ensure ethical and sustainable practices.

4. Definitions

- **FAS:** Fear, Anxiety, or Stress.
- **Cue Responsiveness:** The animal's ability to respond promptly, deliberately, and consistently to trained cues.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Board:** Responsible for governance, setting strategic direction, risk management, financial oversight, and compliance with WAFA standards.
- **Senior Leadership:** Implements board policies and manages day-to-day operations.
- **Staff and Volunteers:** Support organisational objectives under leadership direction and adhere to governance policies.

6. Animal Training and Assessment Requirements

Animals must:

- Perform at least one task dependent upon their chosen role. For example, assistance animals must perform at least one task to mitigate the handler's disability.
- Demonstrate core obedience skills prior to training in public spaces, in line with the WAFA Holistic Public Access Tests. This includes, but is not limited to, sit, stand, down, focus, tuck, place, stay, controlled entry, toileting on cue, recall, emergency stop/drop, release.

- Tolerate both muzzle and crate handling.
- Work using flat collars or harnesses that allow natural gait (exceptions must be evidence-based and documented).
- Visibly wear WAFA occupational identification and logo.

Specialist Criteria:

- Guide animals must train with blindfolded instructors and navigate complex environments.
- Hearing support animals must respond to trained cues within 12 seconds.

Assessment Phases:

- Preliminary assessment before public access training.
- Qualifying assessment prior to certification.
- Reassessment after 12 months.
- Biennial reassessments and health/welfare reviews.

7. Socialisation and Habituation

Animals must be exposed to a range of people, environments, and situations, including at minimum those listed in the WAFA Guideline on Animal Socialisation and Habituation Minimum Requirements.

8. Foster and Volunteer Care

WAFA members must:

- Assume responsibility for veterinary costs, including emergencies
- Authorise volunteers to access emergency care without delay
- Train and supervise volunteers in welfare, first aid, and handling
- Provide 24/7 on-call support

9. Prohibited Behaviours

Working animals must not:

- Display aggression, predation, or excessive startle (over 3 seconds)
- Show resource or person guarding
- Display excessive boisterousness or over-arousal
- Engage in disruptive, reactive, or fearful behaviours which include hackles raised, growling, lunging, showing teeth and biting
- Eliminate inappropriately

- Participate in other disruptive behaviours (whining, barking)
- Pull, lunge, scavenge, jump, or beg
- Fear or startle response lasting more than 3 seconds
- Be handled using physical force or punishment
- Solicit attention
- Repeatedly pull or push past the handler
- General non-compliance or refusal to work

10. Handler Responsibilities

Handlers must be able to:

- Perform a full physical health check of their animal
- Identify signs of illness, injury or other abnormalities
- Implement an appropriate health prevention regime
- Recognise triggers for seeking veterinary care
- Demonstrate appropriate hygiene and care routines for the animal and equipment
- Fit and use equipment appropriately
- Recognise signs of fatigue, fear, anxiety and stress in their animal
- Recognise rest break and downtime requirements
- Maintain hygiene, grooming, and appropriate handling
- Complete initial and ongoing training
- Understand animal behaviour, legal obligations, emergency response, and welfare needs

11. Cue Responsiveness

Animals must reliably, rapidly, deliberately and with focus respond to all cues in public and private environments.

12. Humane Training Standards

Training must:

- Use evidence-based, reward-based methods that promote learning without fear, force, pain, intimidation, or coercion

- Support clear, consistent, and respectful communication between handler and animal, using marker-based training, shaping, luring, or capturing as appropriate
- Ensure animals have adequate choice, agency, rest breaks, and opportunities to disengage without consequence
- Ensure training occurs in developmentally appropriate, safe, and progressively challenging environments, matched to the animal's stage, temperament, and history\
- Include socialisation and habituation experiences that are safe, gradual, and non-traumatising
- Encourage emotional regulation and problem-solving skills in the animal through confidence-building and resilience-based exercises
- Integrate individualised behaviour modification plans where required
- Be monitored regularly to assess welfare, learning progress, handler technique, and the animal's consent and engagement
- Avoid overtraining or excessive repetition; sessions should be short, engaging, and adapted to the individual dog
- Ensure that any use of food or toys as reinforcement does not cause frustration, stress, or competition, and is matched to the dog's dietary needs and preferences
- Build a trusting, secure bond between the dog and its handler that prioritises mutual respect and safety

13. Training Documentation

13.1 Individualised Training Plans

Each working or assistance animal must have a clearly documented training plan that is:

- Tailored to the individual animal's age, breed, developmental stage, temperament, and previous experience
- Linked to the intended role or tasks the animal is being trained to perform
- Based on positive reinforcement principles
- Updated regularly in response to the animal's progress, challenges, health status, or changes in handler circumstances
- Developed collaboratively with the handler (where relevant) and include goals, milestones, and timeframes

13.2 Training Progress Reports (Minimum Every Six Months)

- Must record progress toward training goals, including both task work and public access behaviour
- Include observations on temperament, emotional wellbeing, socialisation, habituation, and resilience
- Document exposure to training environments, including complexity, novelty, and distractions
- Identify areas needing additional support, skill development, or behavioural modification

- Note any regressions, incidents, or welfare concerns and outline responsive actions taken
- Be reviewed and signed by the trainer and (if applicable) the handler or guardian

13.3 Welfare and Behavioural Documentation

- Include regular health check records and updates on preventative care (e.g., vaccinations, parasite control, vet visits)
- Record any injury, illness, fatigue, or significant stress and how these were managed in training or downtime
- Document behavioural observations, including indicators of stress, fear, reactivity, avoidance, or disengagement
- Track use of behaviour modification protocols, including antecedent control, desensitisation, counter-conditioning, and reinforcement strategies
- Must demonstrate that the dog is coping well with the demands of training, travel, and exposure
- Note any professional consultations (e.g., with a vet) and outcomes

13.4 Equipment and Environment Logs

- Track how and when training equipment is introduced, fitted, and phased out or replaced
- Include locations, durations, and contexts of training sessions (e.g., urban, rural, transport, indoor spaces)
- Document progress in adapting to role-specific environments (e.g., schools, courtrooms, medical settings)

13.5 Recordkeeping Standards

- All documentation must be dated, legible, and stored securely
- Electronic or hardcopy formats are acceptable if they meet WAFA audit and privacy standards
- Records must be made available to WAFA assessors upon request for credentialing, investigation, or renewal purposes

14. Behavioural and Temperament Records

14.1 Public Access Evaluations

- Must assess the dog's behaviour in a wide range of public environments relevant to its intended working role
- Include observation of calm behaviour in the presence of common distractions (e.g., food, noise, other animals, unfamiliar people)
- Document the dog's ability to remain focused, settle when required, and follow cues without distress or excessive prompting
- Evaluations should be repeated at regular intervals (at least annually) and after major life events (e.g., illness, injury, relocation, trauma)

- Results must be documented with clear pass/fail or meets/needs development outcomes, with assessor notes

14.2 Temperament Assessments

- Must assess the dog's natural disposition, stress thresholds, recovery time, social behaviours, and coping strategies
- Should be conducted using recognised behavioural tools or structured observation by a qualified assessor
- Include indicators such as sociability, sound/environmental sensitivity, startle recovery, food motivation, arousal regulation, and problem-solving
- Temperament should be assessed at key developmental stages (e.g., puppy, adolescent, adult) and when any major concerns arise
- Outcomes must demonstrate that the dog is suitable for its intended role and is not experiencing distress from its duties

14.3 Partnership Suitability Evaluations

- Assess the relationship between dog and handler (or handler-in-training), including trust, communication, responsiveness, and emotional compatibility
- Observe team function in public access, task work, daily life routines, and periods of stress or unpredictability
- Evaluations should identify whether the dog is enhancing the handler's independence and safety without compromising the dog's welfare
- Assess the handler's ability to read the dog's cues, implement training and management strategies, and maintain appropriate boundaries
- Include documented decisions regarding whether a partnership should continue, be adjusted, or undergo further support

14.4 Documentation Standards

- All assessments must be recorded using standardised forms approved by WAFA or aligned with recognised industry practice
- Records should include assessor name, date, setting, duration, and detailed behavioural notes
- Any concerns or recommended follow-ups must be clearly noted and acted upon
- Records must be reviewed at least annually as part of ongoing suitability and welfare checks

14.5 Triggered Reassessments

A new behavioural or temperament assessment must be conducted:

- Following any aggression, fear-based response, or significant behavioural incident
- If there are reports of stress, decline in public access behaviour, or reluctance to work
- When the dog's role or handler changes significantly

- In preparation for recertification, complaint resolution, or advanced task work credentialing

15. Breeding Records and Ethics

Where applicable, WAFA members involved in breeding animals intended for working, support, or assistance roles must maintain rigorous records and uphold ethical practices. All breeding activity must occur in accordance with WAFA Professional Standards and any current WAFA-endorsed guidance materials, including those relating to animal welfare, ethics, suitability, and documentation.

15.1 Species and Breed Suitability

- Members must document the rationale for selecting a specific species or breed for assistance, support, or working purposes
- Considerations must include physical soundness, typical temperament, cognitive ability, and common health predispositions
- Breed selection must align with the intended working role (e.g., low arousal for psychiatric assistance, stamina for mobility tasks, calmness for educational roles)
- Exotic or non-canine species used must have a documented risk assessment and welfare management plan

15.2 Health, Temperament, and Aptitude of Breeding Animals

- Breeding stock must undergo formal health screening appropriate to the breed and species, including but not limited to:
 - Hip/elbow scoring
 - Eye and cardiac examinations
 - DNA testing for inheritable diseases
- Temperament testing must be conducted using validated methods, demonstrating suitability for working environments
- Both dam and sire must exhibit behaviour consistent with the values of calmness, resilience, trainability, and human sociability
- Records must demonstrate that selected animals show aptitude for work and do not pass on traits that compromise welfare or working ability

15.3 Offspring Assessment and Disposition

- All litters bred for working purposes must have a documented assessment process from birth through adolescence.
- Puppies must be temperament-tested before placement, and detailed notes recorded for matching with suitable environments or tasks
- Animals not suitable for working roles must be ethically rehomed as companions or placed in safe, welfare-assured environments

- No animal should be placed in a working role if it demonstrates excessive anxiety, aggression, environmental hypersensitivity, or structural deficits

15.4 Ethical Breeding Practices

- Members must follow a welfare-first breeding philosophy — prioritising health, longevity, and quality of life over cosmetic or performance traits
- No breeding may occur where it places unreasonable physical or psychological stress on the animal
- Members must avoid overbreeding, limit the number of litters per dam, and ensure rest periods between breeding cycles
- Financial considerations must never override the welfare needs of breeding animals or offspring

15.5 Cost and Responsibility Management

- Where breeding is part of a member's program, cost transparency and long-term responsibility for dogs placed in working roles must be documented
- Members must maintain clear agreements with puppy raisers, trainers, handlers, and placement homes outlining who holds responsibility for health, behavioural support, and retirement
- Contingency plans must be in place in the event a working animal must be retired, rehomed, or returned

15.6 Recordkeeping

- All breeding, health, temperament, and placement records must be securely stored and accessible for audit or review by WAFA
- Records must include:
 - Pedigree or lineage documentation
 - Copies of all health and genetic test results
 - Behavioural notes across development
 - Placement outcome for each offspring
 - Breeder declarations confirming ethical compliance

16. Legal Compliance and Species Restrictions

WAFA members must comply with all applicable Commonwealth, State/Territory, and international laws governing the keeping, training, use, breeding, and movement of animals. This includes, but is not limited to, animal welfare legislation, wildlife protection laws, import/export restrictions, and companion animal regulations.

16.1 Prohibited Species and Breeds

- Members must not train or work with any species or breed that is prohibited or restricted under State or Territory law, including:
 - Ferrets in the Australian Capital Territory
 - Rabbits in Queensland

- Dingoes and dingo hybrids in multiple jurisdictions (e.g., New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland)
- Nationally prohibited or restricted dog breeds must not be used for training or certification. These include, but are not limited to:
 - American Pit Bull Terrier
 - Japanese Tosa
 - Dogo Argentino
 - Fila Brasileiro (Brazilian Mastiff)
 - Presa Canario (Canary Mastiff)
 - Wolfhound hybrids, including but not limited to the Czechoslovakian Wolfhound and Saarloos Wolfhound
 - Any crossbreed of the aforementioned breeds
- Where a dog is suspected to be a Pit Bull Terrier or crossbreed, the animal is not eligible to fulfill any working animal role with WAFA certification unless DNA can conclusively rule out any such ancestry. Relevant state or territory law must be followed in any such case.
- Dogs declared dangerous or menacing under any state or territory legislation are not eligible for use in assistance, support, or working animal roles and will not be certified by WAFA under any circumstances. If a declaration is formally rescinded, WAFA may consider the animal on a case-by-case basis in exceptional or extenuating circumstances only, with full supporting documentation and independent behavioural and veterinary assessment.
- Greyhounds should hold a current Greenhound certification (or equivalent) before entering training for a working animal role.
- Members must not train, or work animals classified as invasive or native in any circumstances.

16.2 Federal Laws and Import Restrictions

- Members must comply with Commonwealth Biosecurity and Import laws, including:
 - The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)* and associated Live Import List
 - Examples include:
 - Bengal cats must be no less than 5th generation removed from any wild ancestry
 - Savannah cats, wolfhound hybrids, and other exotic crosses may be entirely prohibited or require high-level exemption
- Members are responsible for confirming the legal status of any imported animal or hybrid prior to involvement in any working, training, or public access program.

16.3 International Compliance

- Where relevant, members must ensure full compliance with international conventions, including:
 - *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)*
 - Relevant quarantine and wildlife trade regulations
- Breeding, trading, or transporting any CITES-listed species without the appropriate approvals is strictly prohibited.

16.4 Provenance and Documentation

- Members must:
 - Verify and document the legal provenance of all animals in their care. Where provenance cannot be confirmed—such as animals acquired without microchips (e.g., stray cats or dogs)—members must obtain legal ownership through the appropriate local council or relevant authority before registering the animal with WAFA.
 - Maintain species identification records, breeder declarations, health screening, and registration papers
 - Understand that WAFA reserves the right to refuse certification, partnership approval, or public access recognition where species origin or legal compliance is unclear

16.5 Preferred Species

- WAFA strongly supports the use of domestic dogs as working animals due to their established history, trainability, welfare predictability, and legal clarity.
- WAFA recognises the role of certain non-canine species in key working roles, such as miniature horses for mobility assistance and rats for explosive detection. Prior to selection, members must carefully consider factors such as the animal's life history and background (including prior training and experiences), natural social hierarchy and species-specific social needs, temperament and behavioural stability, physical health and genetic predispositions, adaptability to the working environment, ability to cope with sensory stimuli typical of public spaces, compatibility with handler needs, welfare and ethical implications, and the animal's expected lifespan and long-term suitability for the role and public reaction. For example, it is unlikely that a dingo would meet the requirements for use in a working animal role.
- WAFA strongly supports the inclusion of animals from rescue shelters, foster care, and rehoming programs in working roles wherever appropriate. We recognise the value of giving suitable rescue animals a second chance to thrive and contribute meaningfully. All animals considered for working roles must undergo thorough behavioural, health, and suitability assessments to ensure they meet WAFA's rigorous standards for welfare, safety, and effectiveness. Our approach promotes ethical practices and maximises

opportunities for animals in need while maintaining the highest standards of care and professionalism.

17. Animal Retirement and Rehoming

Members must implement and uphold comprehensive retirement policies that prioritise the welfare, dignity, and quality of life of animals transitioning out of working roles. These policies should include provisions for ongoing enrichment, appropriate veterinary care, and monitoring of the animal's physical and emotional well-being throughout retirement.

Key requirements include:

- Developing clear and transparent retirement procedures that outline the decision-making process, criteria for retirement, and timelines.
- Ensuring animals receive suitable living environments post-retirement, whether through rehoming, sanctuary placement, or continued care by the handler or organisation.
- Providing documentation that details the retirement plan, care arrangements, and any relevant medical history or behavioural considerations.
- Facilitating rehoming efforts responsibly, prioritising the animal's best interests and ensuring new environments are safe, supportive, and meet their specific needs.
- Maintaining communication with new caregivers or facilities to support the animal's continued well-being where possible.
- Committing to lifelong responsibility for the animal's welfare, recognising that retirement is a critical phase requiring dedicated resources and attention.

18. Health and Veterinary Care

Animals must receive comprehensive, ongoing health care to maintain their well-being and fitness for their roles. This includes:

- Regular veterinary check-ups and preventative care such as vaccinations, parasite control (internal and external), dental hygiene, and nutritional assessments tailored to the species and individual needs.
- Immediate veterinary attention and appropriate treatment when signs of illness, injury, or distress are observed.
- Secure and up-to-date health records, including vaccination history, treatments, medication, and any relevant medical events or conditions, maintained by the member and accessible for review.
- Appropriate rest periods and withdrawal from work duties when the animal is unwell, injured, or otherwise unable to perform safely or comfortably.
- Monitoring for signs of fatigue, stress, or declining health, with adjustments to workload or duties made accordingly.
- A proactive approach to health management, including education for handlers on recognising early signs of health issues and understanding veterinary care protocols.

19. Transparency and Reporting

Members must maintain transparency and accountability in all aspects of animal training, care, and welfare. This includes:

- Submitting regular, comprehensive reports documenting training progress, behavioural observations, health status, and welfare assessments to WAFA or designated regulatory bodies as required.
- Ensuring reports are accurate, timely, and reflective of the animal's current condition and capabilities.
- Immediately reporting any incidents, injuries, illnesses, behavioural concerns, or welfare issues that could impact the animal's safety, well-being, or working performance.
- Providing full disclosure of any modifications to training plans, working conditions, or health interventions that may affect the animal or its role.
- Cooperating fully with audits, reviews, or investigations initiated by WAFA or relevant authorities regarding animal welfare or training standards.
- Keeping clear, accessible records that support transparency and enable continuous monitoring and improvement of animal welfare and training outcomes.

20. Compliance

Compliance with all provisions outlined in this Standard is mandatory for all WAFA members. To ensure adherence:

- WAFA reserves the right to conduct periodic audits, inspections, and reviews of member activities, facilities, training records, and animal welfare practices.
- Members must provide access to requested documentation, animals, and premises to authorized WAFA representatives during audits or investigations.
- WAFA may request additional reports or evidence to verify ongoing compliance with standards.
- Any concerns, complaints, or alleged breaches of this Schedule will be promptly investigated by WAFA.
- Failure to comply with the Standard, including inadequate welfare standards, improper training practices, or failure to report incidents, may lead to corrective actions such as warnings, mandatory retraining, or supervised monitoring.
- Serious or repeated non-compliance may result in suspension or permanent revocation of WAFA certification and membership, with notification to relevant authorities as required.
- Members are encouraged to proactively address any compliance issues and seek guidance from WAFA to maintain high standards.

21. Training and Communication

WAFA members are responsible for delivering comprehensive induction and ongoing training programs to handlers, trainers, volunteers, and relevant stakeholders. This training must:

- Clearly outline roles, responsibilities, and expected standards for animal care, welfare, and training.

- Include up-to-date information on legal obligations related to assistance animals, public access rights, and animal welfare legislation.
- Provide practical guidance on ethical training methods, emergency procedures, and effective communication strategies within the team and with the public.
- Promote awareness of animal behaviour, stress signals, and appropriate intervention techniques to ensure safety and welfare.
- Foster collaborative communication between all team members, encouraging feedback and continuous improvement.
- Ensure accessibility of training materials and sessions, accommodating diverse learning needs and cultural backgrounds.
- Require regular refresher training and updates to reflect advances in best practice, legal changes, and emerging welfare research.
- Document all training sessions and participant attendance to support accountability and compliance monitoring.

22. References

- Animal Welfare Acts (state and territory-based)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- WAFA Public Access Test Standards
- National Standards for Volunteer Involvement
- RSPCA Australia Policy on Animal Training
- International Association of Animal Behaviour Consultants (IAABC) Standards
- Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS) guidelines
- Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) Position Statements
- Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Dogs (Primary Industries Standing Committee)
- World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Terrestrial Animal Health Code
- Australian Standards for the Welfare of Animals - Land Transport of Dogs
- Australian Standard AS ISO 2631 for Animal Welfare
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
- *Biosecurity Act 2015 (Cth)*
- Relevant State/Territory Public Health Acts (for zoonotic disease control)

23. Review, Revision and Approvals

This policy will be reviewed annually by the steering committee to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Any revisions will require approval from the steering committee.

24. Implementation

WAFA members must integrate these standards into governance frameworks, operational policies, financial management, human resources, and client service delivery to maintain high standards of accountability and organisational integrity.

25. Enforcement

WAFA enforces these standards through its accreditation and audit processes. Non-compliance will lead to remedial actions and may impact ongoing WAFA membership and certification status.

26. Contact Information

For further information or assistance related to this standard, please contact the steering committee at the following email address: admin@workinganimals.com.au

Document Control

Version	Date	Author	Change Description	Approved By
V1.0	17/05/2025	V. Solomon	Initial	C.Williams