



TVT

Tierärztliche Vereinigung für Tierschutz e.V.
(Veterinary Association for Animal Welfare)

Animals used in social services

- **Recommendations to ensure animal welfare**

Fact Sheet Nr. 131
(General Principles)

Tierärztliche Vereinigung für Tierschutz e.V. (TVT), Bodelschwingweg 6, 49191 Belm

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Fact Sheet Nr. 131 Animals in social use – Recommendations to ensure animal welfareTVT working group „*Tiere im sozialen Einsatz*“ („Animals Used in Social Services“)

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**Animals used in social services
Recommendations to ensure animal welfare****The aim of this fact sheet and the species-specific fact sheets: *Animals in social service***

These fact sheets are intended to help minimise the stress on animals used in social services and to prevent them from being stressed. They also indicate that profound knowledge of the relevant animal species is indispensable, including the training of the animals for this purpose in particular, as well as the normal behaviour of the animals. The fact sheets demand that the needs of the animals take precedence over all other considerations in animal-assisted interventions.

The fact sheets are therefore primarily aimed at the following target groups:

- Interested animal owners, providers, operators, and users of animal-assisted interventions
- Veterinarians and veterinary authorities who supervise, consult and monitor such animal operations
- Committees or individuals responsible for approving private or public funding to assess the quality and eligibility of relevant human-animal projects.
- Providers of further training; as a guideline for an appropriate emphasis on animal welfare in the curricula. Graduates of further training courses should be able to fulfil the requirements of a certificate of competence according to § 11 of the German Animal Welfare Act (the German abbreviation is: TierSchG).

Introduction to the topic

Various scientific disciplines have studied the relationship between humans and animals intensively. The knowledge and experience gained from these studies prove that a qualified initiation of human-animal interactions can be suitable for triggering positive effects in human patients.

These basically consist of an increase in the well-being and emotional experience of the patients treated. However, animals can also be used to trigger a targeted influence, for example on educational or therapeutic problems.

Both the scope and the variation of animal-assisted interventions are continuously increasing. Reports in the media have considerably increased the level of awareness, acceptance and demand for animal-assisted social programmes.

Types of services and areas of application

Animal-assisted intervention (AAI): An animal-assisted intervention is a targeted and structured intervention that deliberately involves and integrates animals in the areas of health care, education and social services (e.g. social work) in order to achieve therapeutic improvements or increases in people's well-being or quality of life.

The use of animals takes place either as an outpatient service (e.g. animal visiting service), as an inpatient service within institutions (e.g. preschools, schools, geriatric, therapeutic and educational institutions) or animal farms are visited by people interested in AAI services (e.g. adventure farms, "meeting" farms).

AAI ranges from pure observation of the animals in their habitat to close contacts (feeding, handling stray animals) and joint activities to specifically designed educational and therapeutic settings.

Animal-assisted intervention (AAI)¹ is formally divided into different categories with different objectives. However, there are smooth transitions between the individual categories.

Animal-assisted therapy (AAT):

AAT is a goal-oriented, planned, and structured therapeutic intervention that is guided or carried out by professionals trained in health, education, or social work (for example psychologists or social workers). AAT aims to improve physical, cognitive behavioural and/or socio-emotional functions in patients in either an individual or a group setting.

Animal Assisted Pedagogy (AAP):

AAP is a purposeful, planned, and structured intervention provided by professional educators or equally qualified persons and is carried out in an individual or a group setting. The focus of the activities is on pro-social skills and cognitive functions.

Animal-assisted activities (AAA):

AAAs are planned and goal-oriented informal interactions/visits conducted by human-animal teams with motivational, educational or recreational objectives.

The person conducting AAA must have adequate knowledge of the behaviour, needs, health and indicators of stress of the animals involved.

The animals used must be trained and prepared for the demands placed on them.

Animal-assisted coaching (AAC)

Animal-assisted coaching (or animal-assisted counselling) is a goal-oriented, planned, and structured animal-assisted intervention carried out and/or guided by trained coaches or counsellors. AAC aims to enhance the clients' personal, social and/or socio-emotional functioning and provides support to improve group-building processes.

¹ Definitions AAI, AAT, AAP, AAA, AAC according to IAHAIO White Paper 2014 - 2018

Overview of forms of provisions and objectives in the Animal Assisted Intervention (AAI):

Form of AAI	Clients/target persons	Objective
Animal Assisted Therapy Anamnesis Therapy plan Therapy goal.	Patients of all age groups with specific therapeutical needs in the psychological and/or physical area	Targeted improvement of the health status and life-shaping skills and general competence
Animal Assisted Pedagogy Concept Curriculum Learning Goal	Children, adolescents, and young adults with and without problems regarding emotional, social, or motor skills	Achieving specific learning progress on the basis of concrete, client-oriented objectives
Animal Assisted Activities e.g. voluntary visiting services, animal observations, animal walks, Children's birthday parties Animal-assisted support measures	People of all age groups People (of all ages) with special support needs, e.g. in rehabilitation (after stroke, withdrawal, prison sentence, dementia)	Enhancement of well-being, recreational activities Achieving general developmental progress, promoting or maintaining socio-communicative skills
Animal-assisted coaching e.g. exercises with horses, donkeys, llamas or dogs to carry out certain requirements	People in leadership positions to experience / promote communication competence	Raising awareness of the effect of body language Practising mindfulness in relation to the other person

Assistance dogs represent a special form in the social use of animals. They live permanently with their impaired owners.

Selected animals undergo training specifically geared to the assistance required.

After acquiring these special skills, they can help to improve the inclusion, participation and quality of life of their owners.

The demands placed on assistance dogs are often associated with high stress and restrictions for the animals. Therefore special attention must be paid to the welfare of assistance dogs.

(Specific fact sheets in preparation)

Animal selection

The multitude of application modalities is reflected by an equally large variety of animal species, which, with their species-specific and "personal" characteristics, are suitable for different areas and objectives.

The selection is made according to the requirements needed and is based on the general species-specific and individual characteristics and abilities of the animal chosen for the intended use and the target group.

The animal's socialisation, health, physical constitution, character, and training must be in line with its task and training so that physical and/or psychological harm to humans and/or the animals is avoided.

In principle, only domesticated animal species that are adapted to living with humans and have social interactions with them may be used in the AAI.

The use of dogs and horses is probably known best. However, other pets and companion animals, as well as the socially organised farm animal species in particular are also suitable. And so, apart from cats and guinea pigs, we often see New World camelids, donkeys, sheep, and goats in social settings, as well as chickens, cattle, and pigs. However, species-specific eligibility as well as certain restrictions must be considered (see the specific animal species fact sheets 131.1, 131.2, 131.3....131.14) .

An animal-assisted intervention with non-domesticated animal species (e.g. tortoises, fish, reptiles, non-domestic birds), including captive-bred wild animals has to be restricted to the observation of these individuals in their species-appropriate environment. That way the animals have the freedom to determine the distance to humans. Close contact or even touching the animals must not be the primary goal of the AAI.

Individual human-animal interactions, e.g. in zoo education, may require a special approach. See the guidelines and requirements of the relevant associations/societies with the highest priority for animal welfare (e.g. European Association of Zoos and Aquaria - EAZA "Standards for the Accommodation and Care of Animals in Zoos and Aquaria") have to be observed.

"Health and safety at the workplace" for the animal

In most cases it should be possible to design animal interventions in such a way that not only the target groups of the clients, but also the animals benefit, for example through increased attention or mental and physical occupation. In AAI, it must always be ensured that the animals cooperate voluntarily .

To protect the welfare and health of animals used in social services, special attention is paid to the needs of the different animal species in the fact sheets 131.1 - 131.14.

These fact sheets put the focus on the species-specific characteristics, their appropriate husbandry, sensitive handling, comprehensive health management, reliable recognition of stress and mental overload situations, as well as the balance between working, resting, and relaxation phases.

The guidelines can only be general indications. For a concrete assessment, a case-by-case decision is always necessary.

Legal requirements:

According to §2 of the German Animal Welfare Act, anyone who keeps, looks after or must look after an animal must possess the knowledge and skills necessary for providing the animal with adequate food, care and housing in accordance with its behavioural requirements.

→ Not only the owner, but also every person who takes care of the animal during an intervention is therefore jointly responsible for compliance with the Animal Welfare Act and must have the basic expertise required for the respective animal species.

According to § 3 of the Animal Welfare Act, it is prohibited (...) to demand services or a performance from an animal (except in emergencies), which it has neither the strength nor capacity to perform. (§3 No. 1. TierSchG)

→ This means that the use of the animal for social purposes without complying with animal welfare law is also prohibited. The animal must be **prepared and suitable for its task** which is described by law as "performance" to avoid harm to the animal.

Persons who train animals may not use methods that can cause considerable pain, suffering or damage to the animal (cf. §3 No. 5 TierSchG).

Persons who wish to use animals in social services "*in a planned, continuous and commercial manner*" may require a permit in accordance with §11 TierSchG for this activity. (Cf. §11 (1) No. 8a and 8d of the Animal Welfare Act, as well as the definition of the term "commercial" according to the General Administrative Regulation on Animal Welfare (AVV)).

→ The legal opinion in the Federal States is (still) inconsistent regarding the obligation to obtain a permit for animal-assisted interventions under animal welfare law. In addition, the processing by the local veterinary authorities is also heterogeneous within the federal states. The TVT welcomes a permit and supports the authorities in issuing a permit. The AAI provider should consult his/her competent veterinary authority in this regard.

→ The procedure for the granting of a permit includes a test expertise (more detailed theoretical knowledge and practical skills than the generally required expertise according to §2 TierSchG) and the reliability of the person responsible for the activity, as well as a control of the conditions of the animals in AAI-use.

For some animal species, there are still specific regulations on keeping, training, transport, hazard prevention, identification, documentation of veterinary treatments, obligation to report or notify, etc., which are discussed in the animal species fact sheets no. 131.1-131.14.

The person responsible for the animal during AAI activities must be able to assess the stress level of his/her animal at all times. Signs of stress in the expressive behaviour of the animal must be understood to prevent inappropriate strain on the animal. In this case the intervention should be stopped immediately. The animal must be given a break or a compensatory activity.

Animal Keeper knowledge and expertise

In principle, only healthy animals that are kept in a species-appropriate manner and used in an animal-friendly way are suitable for social work. In order to be able to judge the suitability, stress limits and the behaviour of the animals used, extensive expertise is required, especially in regard to the needs and characteristics of the respective animal species and individual animal.

This expertise must always encompass each of the animal species used and is not only necessary for animal welfare, but also for quality assurance and protection against possible liability claims.

It usually includes knowledge

- of the normal behaviour and biology of the specific animal species
- appropriate nutrition and husbandry
- criteria for the use with regard to physical or psychological stress on the animal
- the legal background for the keeping/training/transport/identification and use of the animal.
- typical diseases, especially zoonoses, and how to recognize and avoid them
- hygiene measures to keep the animal healthy and protect the clients involved

The expertise also includes practical skills

- planning the use of the animal according to animal welfare requirements
- recognizing workload parameters such as signs of stress, as well as reacting adequately to these.
- to safely lead or accommodate the animal species at the place of use
- in the education or training of behaviour required for the AAI.

Under certain circumstances, an official permit according to § 11 of the German Animal Welfare Act (TierSchG) may be required before the animal-assisted activity can be carried out. Information on whether a permit is required can be obtained from the local veterinary office.

Evidence of specialist training and extensive professional experience in dealing with the species concerned may include proof of the expert knowledge required in this context in accordance with the permit according to §11 TierSchG. The required expertise is usually assessed in interviews by the veterinary authorities.

Proof of theoretical expertise for the use of dogs in the AAI can now also be obtained from the responsible veterinary authorities by means of the special online test procedure
TVT-Test Animal Assisted Intervention Dog

For the examination of practical skills, veterinarians with special expertise for the behaviour of the species as well as in the use of animals in social services may be involved.

The animal husbandry conditions, competence and empathy of the animal keeper in dealing with the respective species have to be checked in this process as well as, the situation of the animal at the place of intervention, if possible. Re-enacting a typical intervention situation may be required.

To acquire the necessary special knowledge, which serves as proof of expertise, in addition to the relevant literature, reference should be made to the contents of the specific animal species fact sheets (131.1 - 131.14).

The qualified expertise of the person practising the AAI is the most important prerequisite to ensure animal welfare in AAI.

The TVT working group: *Animals Used in Social Services*, is therefore of the opinion that expertise, whenever legally justifiable, must be proven to a competent authority.

Legal aspects

Apart from observing the general legal provisions for any kind of animal husbandry such as the Animal Welfare Act and the laws and regulations concerning husbandry, transport, hazard prevention, labelling, documentation, compulsory reporting, and identification, in some cases very specific legal regulations must be observed for the individual animal species used in animal-assisted intervention. The most important of these regulations are referred to in the animal species fact sheets (131.1 - 131.14).

It is strongly recommended to procure an animal owner's liability insurance or a public liability insurance contract that also covers the professional use of animals.

Overview on the species-specific fact sheets 131.1 bis 131.14

131.1 Donkeys	131.9 Horses
131.2 *	131.10 *
131.3 Chicken	131.11 Sheep
131.4 Dogs	131.12 Pigs
131.5 Rabbits	131.13 Goats
131.6 Cats	131.14 Mice
131.7 Guinea Pigs	
131.8 New World Camelids	

* fact sheets in preparation

Further literature and sources of information:

<http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/tierschg/index.html> Tierschutzgesetz (zuletzt geändert 18.Juni 2021)

Allgemeine Verwaltungsvorschrift (AVV) zur Durchführung des Tierschutzgesetzes vom 9. Februar 2000

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Wohlfahrt, R., Olbrich, E.: Qualitätsentwicklung und Qualitätssicherung in der Praxis Tiergestützter Interventionen, Wien, Zürich, ESAAT und ISAAT, 2014

<https://www.tierschutz-tvt.de/alle-merkblaetter-und-stellungnahmen/> (Infos zum Tierschutz bei vielen Tierarten)

https://iahaio.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/iahaio-white-paper_2018_german_final.pdf IAHAIO-Leitlinie TGI

<https://www.tiergestuetzte-therapie.de/> (Informationsportal)

<https://www.tiergestuetzte.org/> (Seite des Bundesverbandes Tiergestützte Intervention e.V.)

www.i-tis.de ITIS Initiative tiermedizinische Schmerztherapie

www.gesetze-im-internet.de/tierschg/

<https://www.praxis-agrar.de/tier/tierhaltung/> (Infos Nutztierhaltung)

<https://www.bmel.de/DE/themen/tiere/tiergesundheit/tierseuchen/anzeigepflichtige-tierseuchen.html>

<https://www.bmel.de/DE/themen/tiere/tiergesundheit/tierseuchen/meldepflichtige-tierkrankheiten.html>

<https://ble-medienservice.de/landwirtschaft/nutztiere/?p=2> () (Informationsbroschüren zur Nutztierhaltung)

https://iahaio.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/iahaio-white-paper_2018_german_final.pdf

*The Veterinary Association for Animal Welfare
(Tierärztliche Vereinigung für Tierschutz – TVT e.V.)
was founded in 1985 in order to accommodate
the need for the protection of animals in all areas and matters.
The veterinarian in particular, with his or her special expertise and
relation to animals, is called upon when it comes to performing
animal welfare tasks competently. This is done through the
working groups of the TVT, which comment on specific issues.*

*Each veterinarian as well as any registered student of
veterinary medicine (in Germany) can become a member.*

*Our motto is: "in dubio pro animale"
(when in doubt, decide in favor of the animal)*

Further information:

www.tierschutz-tvt.de

Geschäftsstelle der TVT e. V.
Bodelschwinghweg 6
D - 49191 Belm
Germany / Deutschland
Tel.: +49 5406 6720872