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## Overview

This standard covers observing, assessing and responding to the behaviour of dogs.

The standard involves understanding the normal behaviour of the type of dog that you are working with and observing its current behaviour. You will need to be aware of how other factors, including your own interaction with the dog, may affect its behaviour and know how to respond to observed behaviours. All activities should be carried out in accordance with relevant legislation.

Users of this standard will need to be appropriately trained and ensure that they work within the limits of their authority, accreditation, qualification, expertise and experience supported by suitable canine-specific studies, which are humane and evidence-based.

This standard is suitable for those who work professionally with dogs.

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## Performance criteria

You must be able to:

1. comply with relevant animal health and welfare legislation, national legislation, local policies and codes of practice relating to dogs, at all times
2. maintain the safety and welfare of **dogs** and all persons present at all times
3. continually observe the behaviour of the dog you are working with, taking into account the range of **factors** that may effect behaviour
4. handle and interact with the animal humanely and safely, in a manner that avoids creating behaviour that may give rise to welfare concerns and that allows observation and assessment to be carried out
5. promote the animal's welfare at all times and adapt your own behaviour, and that of others, if necessary, to avoid creating undesirable behaviour
6. understand and respond appropriately to observed behaviours
7. identify and record changes in the physical condition or behaviour of the dog, which may indicate health and welfare or other problems and make recommendations where necessary
8. recognise your own limitations and **refer** to an appropriate professional when necessary e.g. canine behaviourist, veterinary surgeon
9. communicate clearly verbally and in writing with others involved
10. ensure appropriate records are maintained and stored as required
11. maintain professional and ethical conduct and work within the limits of your own authority, expertise, training, competence, experience and the relevant legislation
12. maintain professional competence by undertaking regular Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and work within the requirements of the relevant professional organisation

## Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

1. your responsibilities under relevant animal health and welfare legislation, and other dog specific legislation, local policies and codes of practice, and the legal limitations of the **Veterinary Surgeons Act (1966)** with regard to diagnosis and treatment of disease or injury
2. how the welfare needs of the dogs you engage with may be assessed and addressed
3. how to systematically observe, assess and respond to the behaviour of the dogs you work with and the importance of doing so
4. the **functional anatomy and physiology** of dogs and the relationship between these and behaviour
5. the importance of maintaining an understanding of current research into evolutionary history and changes associated with the role and purpose of dogs in society
6. the natural and normal behaviour patterns of dogs, including social behaviour and how dogs communicate with humans, other dogs and other species
7. the different forms of aggression displayed by dogs and how to recognise these and respond to them
8. the behavioural, emotional and physical development stages of dogs and the importance of critical periods of learning
9. the effect of previous experiences on dog behaviour, the cause and effect of latent learned behaviour, i.e. the effects of nature versus nurture
10. breed-specific behaviours and traits and their potential effect on behaviours that could be presented
11. the effects of reproductive status and sexual stimuli on dog behaviour
12. the importance of care, management and husbandry of dogs in their normal environment and the effect this can have on behaviour
13. how to recognise behavioural and emotional states of dogs including stress, anxiety, fears, phobias, aversions, frustration, aggression, pain, conflict, avoidance, appeasement, play and relaxation
14. how your actions, or those of others, may affect the behaviour of the dog
15. how behaviour may be influenced by the dog's immediate environment or husbandry and understand how to take account of such factors
16. the early signs of change in behaviour associated with ill health, and indicators of injury or pain, discomfort, disease and distress
17. the importance of seeking advice and guidance from more experienced professionals, where to obtain professional advice and guidance and when

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- an dog should be referred to a veterinary surgeon or other professional
18. the importance and relevance of maintaining accurate records, the safe handling and storage of data, the importance of confidentiality and the requirements of current data protection legislation
  19. the importance of appropriate insurance cover including professional indemnity
  20. your professional responsibilities, the importance of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to maintain professional competence and the role of professional bodies and associations

**Scope/range related  
to performance  
criteria**

**Factors** that may affect the behaviour of the dog:

- evolution and domestication history
- breed-typical behaviour
- parentage
- temperament
- development stage (puppy, juvenile, adult, senior)
- reproductive status
- hormonal status
- motivational needs (including hunger, thirst, threat avoidance, and need for social contact)
- communication patterns
- emotional and mental states
- perceptual abilities
- social organisation and social behaviour
- previous experiences and responses learnt from these
- fear, frustration, aggression, stress, pain
- ill health, injury, discomfort, disease and distress
- environment and external stimuli experienced
- human interaction
- husbandry and management patterns

## Glossary

**Dogs** – All domesticated dogs including working dogs

**Refer** – includes formal or informal referral to a professional body, individual or organisation

**Functional anatomy and physiology** to include:

- Skeletal
- Vertebral
- Nervous and endocrine systems

**Veterinary Surgeons Act (1966):**

All forms of complementary therapy that involve acts or the practise of veterinary surgery must be undertaken by a veterinary surgeon, subject to any exemption in the Act. At the same time, it is incumbent on veterinary surgeons offering any complementary therapy to ensure that they are adequately trained in its application.

Behavioural treatment of animals is not restricted under the Veterinary Surgeons Act (1966) unless it constitutes the practice of veterinary surgery.

There is no specific exemption order for animal behaviourism and therefore there is no formal jurisdiction to insist upon the involvement of a veterinary surgeon before animal behaviour work is carried out. In many cases, however, animal behaviourists will work on referrals from veterinary surgeons to ensure they are not accused of making a diagnosis of disease or injury (which is restricted to veterinary surgeons).

## Links to other NOS

LANCTB2 - Handle and control dogs

LANCTB3 - Plan and implement training programmes for dogs

LANCTB4 - Plan and implement training programmes for dogs and handlers

LANCTB5 - Plan and implement programmes to address undesirable behaviour in dogs

LANCTB1

Observe, assess and respond to the behaviour of dogs



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**Relevant Occupations** Veterinary paraprofessional; Dog Grooming; Dog Training and Behaviour; Animal Care; Animal Care Manager; Animal Care Services; Animal Therapies; Microchipping Animals

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**Suite** Veterinary paraprofessional activities; Animal Care and Welfare

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**Keywords** dog; canine; behaviour; observe; assess

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