



Australian Government

ACMVET511A Apply principles of animal behaviour

Release 1

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Modification History

Release	TP Version	Comments
1	ACM10v3	Initial release. Based on Victorian accredited course unit VU20205

Unit Descriptor

This Unit of Competency describes the skills and knowledge necessary to assess and respond to animal behaviour in general veterinary practice. The Unit covers the fundamentals of behavioural medicine, which includes the promotion of behavioural health and appropriate intervention strategies for behaviour problems. It requires a holistic application of veterinary nursing, distinguishing normal and abnormal behaviours, acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, current behavioural therapies, animal legislation and effective client communication.

Application of the Unit

This Unit is intended for veterinary nurses with extensive vocational expertise who conduct client education programs and provide support for veterinarians in general practice. It is assumed that such nurses will have a leadership role in their practice and provide behavioural advice to clients in accordance with clinic policies and procedures.

In addition to legal and ethical responsibilities, all Units of Competency in the ACM10 Animal Care and Management Training Package have the requirement for animals to be handled gently and calmly. The individual is required to exhibit appropriate care for animals so that stress and discomfort is minimised.

Licensing/Regulatory Information

Licensing, legislative, regulatory or certification requirements may apply to this Unit. Therefore, it will be necessary to check with the relevant state or territory regulators for current licensing, legislative or regulatory requirements before undertaking this Unit

Pre-Requisites

Nil

Employability Skills Information

This Unit contains employability skills

Elements and Performance Criteria Pre-Content

Elements describe the essential outcomes of a Unit of Competency.

Performance criteria describe the performance needed to demonstrate achievement of the element. Where bold italicised text is used, further information is detailed in the required skills and knowledge section and the range statement. Assessment of performance is to be consistent with the evidence guide.

Elements and Performance Criteria

ELEMENT	PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
1. Promote responsible pet ownership	1.1 Basic animal needs are identified and related to behavioural patterns. 1.2 Clients are advised on the benefits of early socialisation and humane training methods. 1.3 A client education program for the benefit of pets, their owners and the wider community is developed and delivered in accordance with legislative requirements and clinic policies and procedures. 1.4 Client education program is reviewed in order to demonstrate learner engagement and continuous improvement. 1.5 Client advice on behavioural issues and legal responsibilities of pet ownership is provided in accordance with clinic policies and procedures.
2. Interpret animal behaviour	2.1 Patient histories are collected and a range of normal and abnormal behaviours in different species are identified. 2.2 A range of acceptable and unacceptable animal behaviours in different species are determined. 2.3 The physical and social environment of the patient is assessed. 2.4 Risks or hazards to patient, other animals, self, owner, staff and general public is assessed. 2.5 Identified behavioural issues are communicated to the veterinarian.
3. Facilitate behavioural consults	3.1 Appropriate action/s are co-ordinated to reduce risk in accordance with workplace health and safety requirements, clinic policies and procedures or as directed by veterinarian. 3.2 Nursing support for behavioural consultations is provided. 3.3 Appropriate behavioural advice is provided to clients as directed by veterinarian and in accordance with clinic policies and procedures. 3.4 Behavioural medications are prepared in accordance with legislative requirements, clinic policies and procedures, as prescribed and/or as directed by the veterinarian.
4. Provide after care for behavioural cases	4.1 Instructions for a range of animal behaviours are developed and delivered. 4.2 Grieving clients are supported and offered referral for counselling if required. 4.3 Appropriate follow-up procedures are co-ordinated in order to encourage client compliance and monitor patient progress.

Required Skills and Knowledge

This section describes the skills and knowledge required for this unit.

Required skills Include:

Ability to:

- apply oral communication skills/language competence to fulfil the job role as specified by the clinic, including communication with clients, public speaking, negotiating and questioning techniques, active listening, asking for clarification from a veterinarian, acknowledging and responding to a range of views
- apply problem solving skills to use available resources and anticipate veterinarians' requirements
- conduct client education program/s
- demonstrate empathy with animals and clients
- employ interpersonal skills to relate to people from a range of social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds and with a range of physical and mental abilities
- employ safe and environmentally responsible organisational systems and procedures when working with and handling animals
- implement written and verbal instructions
- record medications according to prescribed legislative requirements
- use literacy skills to read, select and implement policies and procedures, including workplace health and safety and infection control; implement sequenced written and oral instructions; and record patient details accurately and legibly
- work closely with the supervising veterinarian and as part of the clinic team.

Required knowledge includes:

Knowledge of:

- abnormal behaviour and the potential role of physical illness in behavioural problems
- an understanding of the grieving process and where and how to access grief counselling
- animal anatomy and physiology relating to the stress response
- animal learning theory
- animal nutrition and husbandry
- common behavioural problems in companion animals
- current techniques in behavioural therapy
- fundamentals of animal behaviour
- legal responsibilities of pet ownership
- normal animal behaviour, development and communication
- medications commonly used to manage behavioural disorders
- principles of animal welfare and ethics
- relevant state or territory legislation and regulations relating to the practice of veterinary science, workplace health and safety and animal welfare
- relevant state or territory legislation covering the use of therapeutic and controlled substances.

Evidence Guide

The evidence guide provides advice on assessment and must be read in conjunction with the performance criteria, required skills and knowledge, range statement and the Assessment Guidelines for the Training Package.

Overview of assessment	
Critical aspects for assessment and evidence required to demonstrate competency in this unit	The evidence required to demonstrate competence in this Unit must be relevant to workplace operations and satisfy all of the requirements of the performance criteria, required skills and knowledge and the range statement of this Unit. Assessors should ensure that candidates can: • develop and deliver an animal behaviour education program that benefits pets, pet owners or community groups • review an animal behaviour education program • apply relevant legislations and workplace health and safety requirements • collect patient histories and identify a range of normal and abnormal animal behaviours in at least 3 different species or at least 3 different breeds in a single species practice • determine a range of acceptable and unacceptable animal behaviours in at least 3 different species or at least 3 different breeds in a single species practice • respond to common behaviour problems in companion animals in accordance with clinic policies and procedures • provide nursing support for behavioural consultations • co-ordinate nursing care of behavioural cases • co-ordinate follow up procedures. The skills and knowledge required to apply the principles of animal behaviour must be transferable to a range of work environments and contexts and include the ability to deal with unplanned events. It is highly recommended that learners perform work placement in another approved veterinary practice or training workplace in order to gather further evidence of competence and demonstrate the transferability of skills and knowledge outcomes.
Context of and specific resources for	Assessment of this Unit is to be practical in nature and

assessment	must be assessed in a veterinary practice in order to gain exposure to sufficient caseload. There must be access to a veterinary clinic or animal hospital, a range of companion animals as well as the appropriate equipment, resources and documentation to enable one to demonstrate competence.
Method of assessment	To ensure consistency of performance, competency should be demonstrated, to industry defined standards, on more than two occasions over an extended period of time, by conducting early socialisation programs; assessing patients, assisting veterinarians, and co-ordinating follow-up of behavioural cases on a regular basis. The assessment strategy must include practical skills assessment. Suggested strategies for this Unit are: • written and/or oral assessment of candidate's required knowledge • observed, documented and first-hand testimonial evidence of candidate's application of practical tasks • simulation exercises that reproduce normal work conditions • case study analysis • role plays • third-party evidence • workplace documentation • portfolio. This Unit may be assessed in a holistic way with other Units of Competency relevant to the industry sector, workplace and job role.
Guidance information for assessment	Assessment methods should reflect workplace demands (e.g. literacy and numeracy demands) and the needs of particular target groups (e.g. people with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women, people with a language background other than English, youth and people from low socioeconomic backgrounds).

Range Statement

The range statement relates to the Unit of Competency as a whole. It allows for different work environments and situations that may affect performance. Bold italicised wording, if used in the performance criteria, is detailed below. Essential operating conditions that may be present with training and assessment (depending on the work situation, needs of the candidate, accessibility of the item, and local industry and regional contexts) may also be included.

<i>Basic animal needs</i>	Basic animal needs include: • food and water • space • shelter • adequate mental and physical stimulation • companionship.
<i>Early socialisation</i>	Early socialisation means: • interaction between animals of the same species during the formative stage of their behavioural development • usually 6-18 weeks of age in puppies and kittens.
<i>Client education programs</i>	Client education programs may include: • animal training • choosing the right family pet • kitten kinder • providing for behavioural needs • puppy school • safety around animals.
<i>Behavioural issues</i>	Behavioural issues may include but are not limited to: • aggression • antisocial behaviour • anxiety • compulsive disorders • coprophagia • destructive behaviour • escaping and roaming • excessive vocalisation • fear • inappropriate urination/defaecation.
<i>Legal responsibilities</i>	Legal responsibilities of pet ownership include: • registration • microchipping

	• de-sexing • containment • owner control • animal welfare • breed specific legislation • noise control.
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<i>Physical environment</i>	Physical environment may include: • back yard • cage • house • kennel • lawn • property • paddock • run.
<i>Social environment</i>	Social environment means: • daily routines • other people and pets • social experiences.
<i>Risks and hazards</i>	Risks and hazards may include: • animal conflict • bites • intimidation of other pets or people that may result in physical or psychological injury • scratches.
<i>Appropriate actions</i>	Appropriate actions may include: • client control of animal • client instruction • hazard management • use of animal restraint devices.
<i>Nursing support</i>	Nursing support means: • directing clients • collecting history • restraining animals • performing a physical examination • producing reports • supplying medications • organising revisits and other follow-up procedures • coordinating referrals when required.
<i>Behavioural medications</i>	Behavioural medications include: • anti anxiety medications • sedatives • behavioural modifiers • anti-histamines

	• analgesics • other drugs as prescribed by a veterinarian.
<i>Instructions</i>	Instructions may include: • training • avoiding triggers for unwanted behavioural responses • environmental enrichment • social exposure • desensitisation • counter conditioning • other forms of behavioural modification.
<i>Support grieving clients</i>	Support grieving clients means: • providing appropriate sympathy for clients whose pets must be euthanased or re-homed due to behavioural problems, or whose pets may continue in the home but have on-going limitations • referral to a qualified councillor as required.
<i>Follow-up procedures</i>	Follow-up procedures may include: • sending reminders • making telephone calls • scheduling revisits • conducting nurse clinics.

Unit Sector(s)

Veterinary nursing