

## **FILMING WITH ANIMALS**

Animals of all species, breed, size and colour may feature in many types of production including fly-on-the-wall documentaries, entertainment TV, feature films and commercials and all come with many challenges, whether it be the animal's welfare or keeping crew and audiences safe. In this guide I'll try to explain the basic requirements when considering animals in your production, and try to point you to those who can provide the most appropriate support. The RSPCA has produced guidelines for those using animals in exhibition and entertainment and we would suggest someone on the production staff is familiar with these guidelines.

## **THE LEGISLATION**

There are numerous pieces of legislation in the UK that may relate to using animals in production from licences for dangerous wild animals to the Rabies Act of 1974. In the UK, if you are responsible for an animal, whether on a temporary or permanent basis (this may include productions and their staff), you have a legal duty to ensure you provide for an animal's needs as well as protect it from suffering. There are lots of different licences that may be required and they will vary depending on which part of the UK you are working, what animal you are using and where the animal is being sourced from. Someone involved in the production should be familiar with the relevant legislation.

## **INDEPENDENT EXPERT ADVICE**

We recommend you speak to suitably experienced and competent animal welfare adviser at the earliest opportunity, preferably in pre-production. The adviser should be familiar with all relevant legislation and guidelines. They should be able to assist in planning and preparing appropriate paperwork. On-set they should help protect animal welfare and can facilitate communication between trainers/providers, production crew and members of the public. In post production they can assist with communication regarding welfare concerns raised. The Animal Welfare Consultancy (The AWC) can provide this service. Details can be found on the website [www.theanimalwelfareconsultancy.co.uk](http://www.theanimalwelfareconsultancy.co.uk) or email us at [hello@theawc.co.uk](mailto:hello@theawc.co.uk)

You're not legally required to have a vet on set, but it is advisable for higher risk productions, such as those involving multiple animals or stunt work. The vet should be familiar with the species used and carry suitable equipment to deal with minor emergency care. Whether a vet is present or not a local veterinary surgery should be informed and be on standby in case of an emergency.

## **ANIMAL TRAINERS/PROVIDERS**

Trainers/suppliers should be experienced and competent with the animals they are supplying. They should have a full understanding of relevant guidelines and legislation and how the production environment can affect their animal's welfare.

In most cases in the UK animal trainers/suppliers will require a licence issued by their local authority, a copy of which should be available to show on the set of the production. You should ensure the licence includes all the animals being provided.

Productions must provide trainers/suppliers with as much information as possible at the earliest opportunity to allow them sufficient time to train and prepare the animals. This should include what other animals and people may be present during the production.

## **PROVIDING FOR THE NEEDS**

As mentioned above there is a legal duty to provide for the needs of animals which includes;

- The need for a suitable diet including water
- The need for a suitable environment
- The need to express normal behaviour
- The need to be with or without other animals (including humans)
- The need to be free from pain, injury, suffering or disease

Failure to provide for these needs may cause unnecessary stress and may lead to distress and suffering. When engaging an animal trainer/provider it should be made clear who will provide the facilities to ensure the above needs are met. An Animal Welfare Impact Assessment can help to recognise who is responsible and what actions can be taken to reduce the risk to welfare and it may be required to comply with licencing regulations. TheAWC can assist you in completing these documents.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Depending on the species, animals have the ability to bite, scratch, squash, trample or poison as a consequence of a fight or flight response to poor handling, restraint and/or environmental conditions. Without the right health and safety precautions in place those exposed may include you, the crew, the trainer/provider or members of the public who may be present (audiences) or near by (outside broadcasts) or all of the above. Proper planning, involving the trainer/provider, TheAWC, your health and safety advisor and the production crew, should be carried out at the earliest opportunity and constantly reviewed to reduce the risk of accidents and injury. Correct training of animals and staff prior to production will reduce risk.

## **TRAINING AND TRANSPORT**

Whilst your production may not have direct responsibility for either training or transport correct procedures for both can reduce time and risk.

All training should be based on rewarding desired behaviour and ignoring unwanted behaviour. Trainers should be competent in the species and familiar with the most progressive and humane training methods. Prior to filming animals should be habituated to the stimuli and environment they will be exposed to.

Animals must be fit to travel before and during transport and this may require veterinary sign off prior to travel. Depending on the species, distance and time involved paperwork maybe required by the transporter, copies of which should be shown to production. Most animals find transportation stressful and therefore it should be kept to a minimum.

## **FINALLY...**

**The best way to succeed when working with animals is good planning, good preparation and good communication**