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Australian Code of Conduct for the Animal-Assisted Services Sector

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The ATL Australian Code of Conduct for the Animal-Assisted Services Sector (herein referred to as "The Code") was ratified by the Board of Animal Therapies Ltd (ATL) at the regular meeting of 27 July 2026.

The Code will be subject to annual review. Any amendments will be communicated to ATL members through updates on the ATL website. All members must ensure that they are up-to-date on the most recent version of The Code. The current Code is available at www.animaltherapies.org.au.

The Code should be cited in text as "Animal Therapies Ltd (2026)" and referenced as Animal Therapies Ltd. (2026). *Australian Code of Conduct for the Animal-Assisted Services Sector.* Brisbane, Queensland.

Any persons seeking clarification or further information regarding The Code should contact:

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Foreword

Animal Therapies Ltd (ATL) aims to advance the understanding, acceptance, and accessibility of animal-assisted services for those in need. Our vision is to become Australia's leading institution in promoting the prevention and management of mental illness, disease, disability, and human suffering through animal-assisted services.

The ATL *Australian Code of Conduct for the Animal-Assisted Services Sector* details best-practice requirements for all persons engaged in the sector. The conduct standards have been designed to promote safe and ethical practice, and to provide the foundation for optimal protection of participating professionals, handlers, volunteers, clients, and animals.

Section A of The Code refers to animal-assisted services inclusive of animal-assisted therapies, animal-assisted learning (education and coaching), and animal-assisted activities (collectively known as animal-assisted interventions). ATL acknowledges that the term animal-assisted "interventions" has negative connotations within some populations and have elected instead to use the term "services."

Section B of The Code contains conduct standards applicable only to assistance animal services.

ATL believes in promoting optimal wellbeing for all animals, however, the current Code pertains predominantly to horses, cats, dogs, and other small species, for whom scientific literature is available. Future iterations may address other species-specific issues as additional evidence arises.

Terminology

Animal: Refers to nonhuman animals.

Assistance animals: The *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, Section 9, provides the legal definition of an assistance animal as a dog or other animal that is:
(a) Accredited under a State or Territory law to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effects of the disability; or
(b) Accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed in the regulations; or
(c) Trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability and meets standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.

Assistant/trainee handler: A minor or adult who works under the direct, at-elbow supervision of a handler. Responsibility for ensuring that assistants or trainees comply with the Code lies with the primary handler.

Client: May be interchanged with "patient" or "participant."

Domesticated species: Animal species that have been selectively bred over many generations for specific traits, affecting biological, behavioural, and genetic processes, resulting in animals who are considered better-suited for living alongside humans. Examples include dogs, cats, and horses.

Equidae: Includes horses, donkeys and mules.

Facilitator: A designated person within an organisation who assists the personnel of an animal-assisted service to successfully conduct the program within the organisational setting.

Facility animal: An animal who predominantly resides within a community facility, such as an aged care setting, who interacts with multiple residents but whose welfare is the responsibility of a single, clearly designated person (usually the owner or handler).

Handler: The person supervising the work of, and in direct control of, the animal.

Non-domesticated species: Also known as "wild species."

Program Provider: May refer to the Manager of an animal-assisted services program within an organisation or may refer to the handler in the case of a sole operator.

Wild-caught domesticated species: Some domesticated species may be captured directly from the natural environment. They may become tolerant of humans, but their welfare could suffer if placed into captivity. Examples include brumbies/wild horses and wild/feral dogs and cats.

Wild species: Animal species that have never been domesticated. Even when bred in captivity, they retain the traits and needs of their wild-born counterparts. Examples include monkeys, snakes, and lizards.

Disclaimer

Animal Therapies Ltd does not warrant, guarantee, or ensure that compliance with these standards will prevent any or all injury, loss, or litigation that may be caused by or associated with any person's engagement in animal-assisted services. Nor is any responsibility or liability assumed for any such injury or loss.

This document does not detail the requirements of local and state laws pertaining to animal welfare, animal management, animal-assisted services, assistance animals, or environmental impact management. It is the responsibility of persons delivering and utilizing these services to ensure compliance with all of these legal obligations.

Acknowledgments

The information contained within is a modification of the *University of Queensland's Minimum Standards for the Conduct of Animal-Assisted Interventions* (2019).

SECTION A: CONDUCT STANDARDS FOR ANIMAL-ASSISTED SERVICES

Animal-Assisted Therapy, Animal-Assisted Learning (Education and Coaching), Animal-Assisted Activities

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

A1.0	Program providers must engage in sound business, employment, insurance, and administrative practices (including risk management).
A1.1	Programs providing services to individuals or groups on the program's business premises must ensure that their policies and procedures are compliant with federal and state/territory requirements to prevent, identify, detect, and respond to risks to the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults.
A1.2	Program providers must ensure compliance with human participation and engagement processes (such as informed client induction, informed consent, confidentiality, goal setting, review, and closure), as required by federal and state/territory legislation and codes.
A1.3	Program providers must ensure that adequate and appropriate information is provided to the handler, prior to commencement of the animal-assisted service, regarding the clients' functional capabilities and needs.
A1.4	Program providers should ensure that any partnering organisations provide adequate support to co-clients during participation in animal-assisted services.
A1.5	Animal-assisted services should be designed, coordinated, and managed by a dedicated team comprised of animal-assisted service professionals, volunteers, handlers, facilitators, and administrative staff (as relevant to the program).
A1.6	Animal welfare (as described in Mellor's Five Domains model: https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/10/10/1870) should be the concern of all persons associated with an animal-assisted service. However, formal oversight of the animal's health and wellbeing must be designated to a single person (most often, the handler or owner). For facility animals, clear assignment of this role is imperative.
A1.7	Program providers must be mindful of any potential conflicts of interest that may arise from the inclusion of animals in their practice. For instance, animal-assisted services may lead to financial gains for a business and care must be taken to ensure that such conflicts do not diminish the wellbeing of their animals and clients.
A1.8	Program providers must comply with records management obligations relevant to their organisation. Case notes should be kept concerning client engagement, interaction, and progress, in accordance with organisational confidentiality and privacy policies. Full and accurate records should be maintained regarding the care, training, and condition of the animals, as well as the specifics of any animal-assisted service sessions undertaken. This includes the reporting and regular review of any adverse or near-miss events from welfare, health, and safety perspectives for both humans and animals.
A1.9	Animal-assisted services should be adequately resourced for sustainability. Plans must be put in place ahead of program termination, in order to minimize impacts upon the wellbeing of clients and animals. This includes plans for the natural (e.g., due to ageing), unexpected/abrupt, or forced retirement (e.g., due to handler unavailability) of any animals engaged in animal-assisted services.

A1.10	To promote evidence-based practice in animal-assisted services, program providers should engage in regular program evaluations and are encouraged to consider how the outcomes of the program can be communicated.
A1.11	Program providers must refrain from representing their services as being “scientifically proven,” unless such information has been determined through peer-reviewed and published academic research.
A1.12	Programs that are engaged in research activities with humans and/or animals must comply with the current codes, statements, guidelines, and other directives of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the Australian Research Council (ARC), and/or Universities Australia.
A1.13	Programs must utilise environmental resources responsibly and with minimal impact.

TRAINING & ASSESSMENT

A2.0	The handler-animal team should complete specialized training and assessment (preferably nationally accredited) suitable for engagement in animal-assisted services. Equine handlers must hold a recognized and relevant qualification.
A2.1	The handler-animal team assessment must include a practical component that is conducted by a suitable examiner who is not overly familiar with the handler-animal team, in a setting similar to or simulating that of the team’s usual or predicted work environment.
A2.2	Assessment protocols must include a detailed set of competency criteria.
A2.3	The overall purpose of assessment is to determine the handler-animal team’s suitability for engagement in animal-assisted services, specifying any possible limitations (e.g., indoor/outdoor sessions, young vs. aged clients, session duration, tasks to be avoided, etc.). The needs and capabilities of the animal should be matched with the handler’s level of proficiency.
A2.4	Training and assessment must consider that animals engaged in animal-assisted services should be comfortable with unknown individuals, as well as group settings, crowds, and the presence of other animals, as relevant to their anticipated role. They should display the ability to remain calm when asked and when in confronting situations that may provoke stress.
A2.5	Training and assessment of basic skills, manners, and house training are essential for animals engaged in animal-assisted services, as appropriate to the species. Examples include responding to “Sit;” “Stay;” “Down;” “Come;” “Leave It;” walking politely on a loose leash; standing quietly at the halt for grooming, tacking, harnessing, mounting, dismounting, and; any other activities required for sessions.
A2.6	Species-specific assessments should ensure that the animal possesses: - A robust temperament (a balanced, easy-going nature, sociability with humans and other animals, sensitive to human states but resilient in the face of human distress), and - Adaptability (to novel environments; sounds, sights, and smells; persons; movements; tactile stimulation, such as petting and hugging; and other stimuli), and - A high threshold for showing agnostic behaviour towards humans and other animals (will display a large variety of stress/discomfort signals before elevating to more hostile indicators of distress; high frustration tolerance; and low impulsivity). For some species and/or AAS roles, it may be necessary to ensure the animal has additional skills, such as the ability to maintain an even, steady gait or the ability to manoeuvre around medical equipment, if needed. Handler suitability and the relationship between handler and animal should also be examined.

A2.7	Formal assessment of the handler-animal team must be recurring, at an interval no less than every 18 months. Reassessment must be sought at an earlier point should any significant changes occur within the handler-animal team (e.g., changes in role or setting, adverse or subtle stress behaviours, injury, illness, or ageing).
A2.8	The following equipment is not allowed to be used with animals: Canine – training collars that utilize prongs, spikes, choke, pinch, slip, electric shock, spray, aversive sound/smell stimuli; leads containing metal (excluding connection clip); retractable, bungee, or chain leads; leads longer than 2 metres in length; hands-free leads; muzzles. Equine – harsh bits including anti-rearing bits and chains; stud chains; restrictive nosebands; ill-fitting bridles or saddles; twitches. Hobbles should not be worn in the presence of clients. This list is not exhaustive and may include other items if potentially detrimental to the welfare of the animal.
A2.9	Training methods (and working practices) for animals engaged in animal-assisted services must not rely on force, aversion, dominance, fear, intimidation, or physical punishment. Training methods should be based on natural instincts and positive reinforcement, using current scientifically-validated methods. For equines specifically, it is acknowledged that the use of negative reinforcement (e.g., pressure and release) is routinely encountered in training and, therefore, may be appropriate if judiciously applied. For other species, the use of clickers should be phased out of training before commencing work in animal-assisted services.
A2.10	It may be necessary for animals to engage in continuous or refresher training to ensure optimal health and wellbeing (e.g., ongoing suppleness, strength, and fitness training in equines).

A3.0	Handlers must be at least 18 years of age.
A3.1	Handlers must have resided/interacted with their animals for no less than 6 months prior to engaging in services.
A3.2	Handler-animal teams should seek registration with a national or international animal-assisted services organisation. Furthermore, handlers must be covered under appropriate insurance policies as relevant to their practice.
A3.3	Handlers have a legal duty of care to ensure that their actions, or omission of actions, do not adversely affect the health and safety of others in their workplace, including clients, other staff, and members of the public. Handlers must comply with the Workplace Health and Safety codes relevant to their practice. Handlers should also ensure that all clients interacting with horses wear suitable personal protective equipment (PPE).
A3.4	The human-animal team includes a primary handler and/or an alternative handler (who must abide by the same code of conduct standards as the primary handler). An assistant handler may be included alongside of the primary or alternative handler. Handlers must not allow other persons to work with their animal in their absence.
A3.5	Handlers must not allow their animals to engage in unsupervised animal-assisted services.
A3.6	Handlers must always practice animal-assisted services within the scope of their professional identity and within the limits of their education, training, qualifications, and experience.
A3.7	Handlers are encouraged to have and apply foundational knowledge in the areas of: Human-Animal Interactions, Animal-Assisted Services; Children and other vulnerable populations (e.g. those impacted by trauma); Communication; Animal welfare and ethics; Human health and wellbeing; Infection control and zoonosis.
A3.8	For the purpose of addressing emergencies, handlers must complete training and maintain currency in human first aid. Handlers must also have a basic knowledge of animal first aid. In addition, communication technology should be available in the animal-assisted services setting at all times. If mobile phone connectivity is not available, alternative options should be arranged.

A3.9	Handlers must have specific knowledge of their animals': species, breed, and individual character traits; body language; communication strategies; cognitive and sensory capacities including responses to tactile stimulation; positive welfare states; signs of stress, discomfort, fear, illness, injury, and ageing; and responsiveness, reactivity, and flexibility to a variety of situations, allowing handlers to make appropriate decisions concerning their animals' initial and ongoing suitability for participation in animal-assisted services.
A3.10	Handlers should commit to the provision of evidence-based practice and to continuing education in their area(s) of animal-assisted service.
A3.11	Handlers must demonstrate responsible, humane, and respectful animal ownership at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, the provision of adequate: housing, nutrition, transportation, preventative and responsive veterinary care, exercise, environmental enrichment, rest and recreation, and companionship (both animal and human where relevant). These requirements are in line with Mellor's Five Domains model of animal welfare and extend beyond those represented by the Five Freedoms. Refer to Section A4. Animal Welfare & Wellbeing for further details.
A3.12	Handlers should advocate for the health and wellbeing of animals engaged in animal-assisted services. The animals must not be viewed as merely tools of the service who can be exploited for human gain, but should be considered as living, sentient beings whose wellbeing, including the right to flourish, is of paramount concern.
A3.13	Handlers must not expose themselves, their clients, or their animals to physical harm, emotional harm, or undue stress. Particular consideration should be given to the demands of the work environment, including precautions and contraindications related to client type. It is advised that the handler should visit the setting, prior to commencement of the program, in order to conduct formal risk assessments, followed by an additional visit to the premises with their animals for the purpose of familiarization. Informal assessment of risk should also occur at the beginning of every animal-assisted service session and constant monitoring should occur throughout the session. It may be necessary to modify an activity or cease engagement completely until it is considered safe to resume.
A3.14	Handlers must be capable of educating others, including those with no/minimal experience, on animal interaction skills, equipment usage, and appropriate positive handling techniques as appropriate to the specific activity.
A3.15	Handlers must not engage in or permit any rough or abusive handling of their animals, including, but not limited to, during the training process and prior to, during, and post animal-assisted service sessions. Animals should be inspected for any signs of injury or stress following every session. The suitability of clients with a known history of aggression towards or abuse of animals should be carefully evaluated prior to participation in AAS.
A3.16	Handlers must maintain control of their animals at all times, as well as support and calm the animals, through humane voice and/or non-vocal cues. Humane handling techniques do not include yelling at or raising your voice at an animal, and physical corrections, among other examples.
A3.17	Handlers must be aware of informed client consent and induction processes that are compliant with federal/state/territory legislation and codes. They should consider that not all persons will want to, or be able to, interact with animals (based on ethnicity, cultural or religious beliefs, health issues, phobias, experiences of animal-related trauma, and/or personal preference) and the right to voluntary participation must always be respected. In order to give consent of an informed nature, clients must be provided with adequate information regarding the nature, risks, and chances of benefit associated with the service, and it should be confirmed that the provided information has been understood.
A3.18	Handler-animal teams' contact with clients must be conducted in accordance with the procedures and protocols of the host institution (e.g., privacy and confidentiality, occupational health and safety). Handlers must also ensure that they have the necessary clearances for working with children and other vulnerable populations.
A3.19	Handlers must be clean, well groomed, and in good health when engaged in animal-assisted service sessions. Handlers must not have any symptoms of communicable disease.

A3.20	Handlers must not be under the influence of drugs (including prescription medications) or alcohol that could impair safety or judgement.
A3.21	Handlers should remain alert to their own care and recognise the potential for compassion fatigue, secondary trauma, and burnout.

ANIMAL WELFARE & WELLBEING

A4.0	The animal must be appropriately registered with local council authorities, if required by local laws.
A4.1	Wild species, wild-caught domesticated species, and non-domesticated species are not appropriate for inclusion in animal-assisted services: Only domesticated animals that have adapted to human interaction may be included, with the exception of services that focus on animal rehabilitation. Note: Should brumbies be engaged in therapeutic services, it is recommended that a particularly careful, case-by-case suitability assessment is performed, as per Section A2, and that handlers should work closely with experienced trainers who have a demonstrated track record in successfully transitioning this breed from the wild into therapeutic settings.
A4.2	Off-the-track (OTT) horses should be carefully assessed, on a case-by-case basis, for suitability to engage in animal-assisted services, as per Section A2. In particular, the presence of stereotypic behaviours (sometimes called ‘vice’ behaviours) should be formally assessed, and the ability to perform these behaviours must never be suppressed by handlers/owners as this will worsen the underlying welfare problem. Handlers should work closely with trainers and other professionals with expertise in transitioning these horses from the racing industry into therapeutic settings.
A4.3	Animals should not be mixed with other, unfamiliar animals in the animal-assisted service setting. Careful consideration must be applied if more than one animal is present, and a period of familiarization may be necessary prior to the start of the session (depending on species). Predator and prey species should not usually be mixed during service delivery.
A4.4	In selecting an animal for inclusion in animal-assisted services, consideration must be given to the needs and restrictions of the setting, the goals of the client population, the type of desired interaction, and the overall safety of the environment and activity. The use of formal measures (such as task analyses, baseline performance objectives, behavioural screening checklists, suitability assessment matrices, and capability assessments), as available, are strongly recommended to assist in animal selection.
A4.5	Acceptability for inclusion in animal-assisted services should be confirmed by a veterinarian regarding general health and by a professional with expert knowledge regarding animal behaviour of the relevant species.
A4.6	Animals must receive regular veterinary consultations and all vaccinations recommended by the veterinarian to be considered healthy for involvement in animal-assisted services. The frequency of appointments and types of vaccination should be in accordance with the veterinarian’s advice and relevant to the animal’s needs and work role.
A4.7	Minimum ages for inclusion in animal-assisted services: Canines – no less than 1 year of age; Felines – no less than 2 years of age; Small species (e.g., rabbits) – no less than 6 months of age; Equines – no less than 5 years of age but will differ in line with activity type (e.g., vaulting, driving, riding). Special consideration should be given to ageing issues for any animal greater than 8 years of age, although horses are likely to be suitable up until an advanced age.
A4.8	Equine sex for inclusion in animal-assisted services: Temperament is the main consideration. Geldings and mares (if they behave appropriately during oestrus) are suitable. Stallions, colts, and rigs are not preferred.

A4.9	Animals are not suitable for inclusion in animal-assisted services if they display, among other traits: aggression towards humans or other animals, signs of excessive fearfulness or shyness, lack of manners and house-training, motion sickness (if needing regular transportation), or medical issues (e.g., current symptoms of physical and/or emotional illness; current antibiotic, antifungal, or immunosuppressive treatment; or, for 1 week following treatment/symptom resolution). A history of protection work (guarding role) or previous injuries to humans/other animals are also likely to prohibit participation. Furthermore, display of uncontrollable behaviours or signs associated with hyperactivity, neurosis, or stress may preclude suitability for all animal-assisted services or for specific activities and contexts. Examples include, but are not limited to: barking, growling, hissing, vocalizing, jumping, pawing, kicking, striking, barging, scratching, mouthing, biting, tail chasing, tense muscle tone, crouching or cowering posture, freezing, staring, pupil dilation, repetitive head movements, constant fatigue, excessive sweating, increased heart or respiratory rate, yawning (in canines), lip licking/smacking (in canines), excessive grooming, inappropriate toileting.
A4.10	If human-animal contact is required in service delivery, animals selected for participation in animal-assisted services should be self-motivated to interact with people and be willing to engage in tactile interactions rather than being simply tolerant of interaction. However, due to species traits, equines and small animals (e.g., rabbits) are likely to be suitable without demonstrating signs of self-motivation. Animals involved in AAS should display implied consent for participation and must never be induced to engage if unwilling. The use of food during interactions should be carefully managed to avoid conflicting motivations if an animal does not wish to engage. Food should not be used to coerce participation.
A4.11	The presence of disabilities in an otherwise healthy animal should not automatically eliminate him/her from participation in animal-assisted services, provided that the disability: is not aggravated by his/her involvement; does not eliminate/reduce his/her ability to express fear or stress, and; does not impede the safety and outcomes of the animal-assisted service.
A4.12	The length of animal-assisted service sessions should be time limited to ensure optimal health and wellbeing of the animals. Where canines and felines are actively engaged within a session (as opposed to mere presence), a maximum of 2 hours work per day is recommended. Total visitation or active work should be limited to 7 hours per week. At least 1 hour of rest should be given before taking part in the next session of the day. At least 24 hours of rest should follow a full working day. For visitation animals, session length should be limited to 30-45 minutes duration if actively engaged. For equines, the workday should be limited to 6 hours with individual sessions no longer than 3 hours continuous duration. For compliance with PATH Intl, this equates to no more than 6 x 1-hour sessions per day, with no more than 3 x 1-hour sessions back-to-back. Alternative limits may be appropriate for specific activities (e.g., vaulting, lunging).
A4.13	Dedicated rest time and space, toileting breaks, as well as access to food (when needed) and water should always be provided for animals engaged in animal-assisted services. Rest time should not include transportation. Rest time should not include restraint, as the animal must be permitted to move if desired. Ideally, rest time should allow withdrawal from the setting (away from excessive auditory and visual stimulation).
A4.14	Transportation can cause distress in some animals and should be considered in factors affecting suitability for animal-assisted services. All animals must be suitably restrained during transportation to ensure their safety, in accordance with local laws and regulations. If enclosures are required, these should be large enough to permit the animal to turn around (excepting equines) and/or to avoid trauma, and offer adequate light and ventilation. Animals must be protected from temperature extremes during transportation. Adequate water must be provided during periods of long-distance travel.

A4.15	Premises utilized for animal-assisted services should maintain temperatures and humidity levels that minimise stress to the animal, as appropriate to the species and breed. In general, room temperatures should not exceed 30°C nor fall below 15°C. Care should be taken when removing animals from controlled to uncontrolled environments, particularly when the open air exceeds 33°C. For equidaes, handlers must be mindful of potential heat stress which may occur in conditions from 30°C upwards and at moderate humidity levels. Guinea pigs require a temperature of approximately 21°C. If working outside in hot weather, access to shade is necessary. Animal and human response to weather conditions should be carefully monitored.

A4.16	Premises utilized for animal-assisted services should provide adequate ventilation. Air should be clean and fresh, where possible, and without noxious odours. Further, exposure to unfamiliar or disliked odours should be minimized in order to prevent stress in the animal.
A4.17	Premises utilized for animal-assisted services should be located away from sources of excessive noise and/or pollution, where possible.
A4.18	Premises utilized for animal-assisted services should provide lighting similar to natural conditions in terms of duration and intensity, where possible.
A4.19	Premises utilized for animal-assisted services must consider the flooring of the workspace and ensure that it is safe, comfortable, familiar, and hygienic for the animal, in order to prevent injuries, inflammations, and stress issues.
A4.20	When not engaged in animal-assisted services, animals must be housed in a manner appropriate to the individual and considering species, breed, age, physiological status, social needs, and location in relation to other animals. Sufficient space must be provided to allow the animal to stand, move around, stretch, and rest comfortably. For equidae species, pasture should be accessible. The permanent enclosure of animals in cages/stables that restrict their ability to engage in normal behaviours and exercise (outside of working hours) is not permitted. Flooring made of wire or mesh should be avoided. All housing must: be designed to be secure, to prevent theft or escape of the animal; offer a place for rest and refuge from the weather, and; minimize the risk of injury, illness, and stress. All housing, toileting facilities, and bedding must be maintained in good order, with regular cleaning and disinfecting.
A4.21	Animals in oestrus should not be included in animal-assisted service sessions. For pregnant canines, maternity leave must be provided for at least 30 days prior to the due date and 60 days following birth. For pregnant mares, participation should be discontinued completely and should not recommence until 180 days (post weaning at 5-6 months) following a normal, uncomplicated birth. In general, new mothers should not return to work until in full health, fitness, and soundness, nor if bonding with infants is likely to be disrupted.
A4.22	Animals engaged in animal-assisted services must be well groomed at all times (either by the handler or as part of a client activity). Such includes: clean, healthy coats that are free from tangles, matting, and lesions; smoothly clipped nails; clean eyes/ears/noses/teeth; and, free from odour. For equines engaged in animal-assisted services, hooves should be trimmed (ideally, by a farrier every 4-6 weeks) and shod if required. Each equine should be provided with their own, individual set of tack. Equines who are not directly participating in a service should be relieved of all unnecessary tack and should be cooled down as appropriate to the environment.
A4.23	While it is important to keep animals clean, they must not be wiped with or bathed in chemical disinfectants, alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, or any other products not approved for animal use. Nor should face coverings/masks be placed on animals.
A4.24	Animals in animal-assisted services must be free of communicable diseases, infectious zoonoses, as well as external and internal parasites, and treated as per veterinarian advice. Regular flea, tick, and internal parasite prevention must be provided as per the veterinarian's recommended schedule. Topical preventative flea and tick treatments should be applied no later than three days prior to animal-assisted service sessions or in accordance with the manufacturer's withholding period. Preventative collars should not been worn during sessions.

A4.25	Animals in animal-assisted services must receive appropriate, uncontaminated, and nutritionally adequate food to maintain good health and growth, in accordance with current recommendations for the species, breed, age, and activity level. Handlers should use appropriate frequency of feeding to align with the animals' natural feeding behaviours (e.g. rationed meals and meal-like feeding is discouraged for donkeys). Fresh water must be available in sufficient quantity and for sufficient time.
A4.26	Raw diets (containing meat and/or eggs) are not recommended for animals within 90 days prior to animal-assisted services in hospitals, hospices, and any other settings where clientele may be immuno-compromised; or within 72 hours of contact with clients of normal immune status.

A4.27	Animals in animal-assisted services should not be encouraged to lick clients, medical equipment, or staff. Contact with patients with exposed medical equipment (such as catheters, ostomy tubes, drips, wound drains, etc.), open wounds or surgical incisions, or other breaches of skin should be minimized.
A4.28	Animals engaged in animal-assisted services should display identifying information, which signifies the role of the animal, such as coat patches, bandanas, and other labelling, if appropriate for the species.

SECTION B: CONDUCT STANDARDS FOR ANIMAL-ASSISTED SERVICES

Assistance Animals

TRAINER, TRAINING ORGANISATION, BREEDER, & FOSTER CARER RESPONSIBILITIES

B1.0	Trainers, training organisations, breeders, and foster carers must abide by all federal and state/territory legislation pertaining to assistance animals, animal welfare, and animal management.
B1.1	Trainers and training organisations must be familiar and compliant with the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992.* Support and advocacy should be provided for any client who experiences discrimination, which may entail registering a complaint with the relevant state/territory agency or the Australian Human Rights Commission.
B1.2	By definition, an "approved trainer" must satisfy extensive criteria as specified by state/territory legislation. In the absence of legislative requirements, a trainer is expected to: - Possess recognized qualifications/experience in animal training, disability studies, and mental health first aid; - Agree to regular oversight (e.g., via membership of an assistance animal industry body or by holding a government-issued approval); - Hold the necessary clearances for working with vulnerable populations; - Have not been convicted or found guilty of an offence in the last 2 years under the *Domestic Animals Act 2000*, *Animal Welfare Act 1992*, or equivalent state/territory laws; - Use clear and comprehensive procedures for client screening and application, only placing animals with clients who can provide for the animal's welfare needs; - Screen animals for good health, working ability, and physical and emotional maturity; - Select animals that are able to meet the individual needs, abilities, and lifestyle of the client; - Train reliable animals that are able to perform identifiable tasks and behaviours for the benefit of the client; - Train animals that are safe and effective in public places, public passenger vehicles, or places of accommodation; - Provide clients with individualized education regarding all aspects of the assistance animal partnership; - Provide regular and life-long support to the handler-animal team.
B1.3	Trainers, training organisations, breeders, and foster carers must have knowledge of animal welfare; animal first aid; infection control and zoonosis; and, acceptable training techniques. Trainers and training organisations must have specific knowledge of the disabilities associated with their client population and have skills in communicating with these populations. They must also have knowledge of children and other vulnerable populations (e.g. those impacted by trauma).
B1.4	Training organisations (or trainers in the case of sole operators) must ensure that their facilities are accessible to the population served.

B1.5	Trainers, training organisations, breeders, and foster carers must demonstrate responsible, humane, and respectful animal handling at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, the provision of adequate: housing, nutrition, transportation, preventative and responsive veterinary care, exercise, environmental enrichment, rest and recreation, and companionship. The animals must not be viewed as merely tools who can be exploited for human gain, but should be considered as living, sentient beings whose wellbeing, including the right to flourish, is of paramount concern. Refer to Conduct Standards B2.11 – B2.16, for detailed requirements of animal care.
B1.6	Trainers must not train, certify, or place animals with aggressive behaviours. Nor may assistance animals be trained for guard/protection duty. Assistance animals should not be concurrently employed as therapy or visitation animals, due to their differing roles.
B1.7	Trainers may only certify canines that are vaccinated and desexed unless exempt following veterinarian guidance, not a restricted breed, and have not been declared dangerous under any government legislation or bylaws.
B1.8	Training methods for assistance animals must not rely on force, aversion, dominance, fear, intimidation, or physical punishment. Training should be based on natural instincts and positive reinforcement, using current scientifically-validated methods. The use of clickers should be phased out of training before commencing work as an assistance animal.
B1.9	The following equipment is not allowed to be used with assistance animals: training collars that utilize prongs, spikes, choke, pinch, slip, electric shock, spray, aversive sound/smell stimuli; leads containing metal (excluding connection clip); retractable, bungee, or chain leads; leads longer than 2 metres in length; hands-free leads; and muzzles. This list is not exhaustive and may include other items if potentially detrimental to the welfare of the animal.
B1.10	Training organisations (or trainers in the case of sole operators) must conduct client follow-ups within 6 months following placement, within 12 months following placement, and annually thereafter.
B1.11	Upon request, training organisations (or trainers in the case of sole operators) should provide clients with information or assistance related to: additional training of their animals due to changes in the client's needs or abilities, animal health or behavioural issues, or legal issues pertaining to access and discrimination.
B1.12	Training organisations (or trainers in the case of sole operators) must have policies and procedures in place that protect the wellbeing of clients and assistance animals in the event of termination of the client-animal partnership.
B1.13	Trainers and training organisations should engage in ongoing professional development via formal education, independent study, attendance at industry events and conferences, and/or other methods.
B1.14	Training organisations (or trainers in the case of sole operators) must demonstrate: sound business practices; operational stability; financial transparency; appropriate insurances, policies and procedures for safety, emergencies, and pandemics; regular audits and program reviews; risk management plans; adherence to confidentiality and privacy legislation; and, a robust complaint mechanism. Strict record keeping practices are also required in relation to: client screening, breeding and foster care programs, animal selection, animal training, public access test outcomes, animal health care, adverse events and near-misses, and placement outcomes.
B1.15	Trainers and foster carers must carry an identity card if required by state/territory legislation.
B1.16	Trainers, training organisations, breeders, and foster carers must utilise environmental resources responsibly and with minimal impact.

HANDLER RESPONSIBILITIES

B2.0	The human-animal team includes the assistance animal, the primary handler (either an adult who requires an assistance animal or the caregiver of a minor who requires an assistance animal), and in some cases an alternative handler (e.g., other caregiver or support person).
B2.1	Handlers must abide by all federal and state/territory legislation pertaining to assistance animals and animal welfare.
B2.2	Handlers must seek certification by completing training (by an approved trainer only, if required under state/territory legislation) and passing a public access test to ensure safety and effectiveness in public places, public passenger vehicles, and places of accommodation.
B2.3	Handlers must carry an identity card if required by state/territory legislation.
B2.4	Handlers must register their animals with local council authorities, if required by local laws.
B2.5	Handlers must have general knowledge of: animal welfare; animal first aid; infection control and zoonosis; positive training techniques; local access laws; and, appropriate public behaviour.
B2.6	Handlers must demonstrate responsible, humane, and respectful animal ownership at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, the provision of adequate: housing, nutrition, transportation, preventative and responsive veterinary care, exercise, environmental enrichment, rest and recreation, and companionship. The animals must not be viewed as merely tools who can be exploited for human gain, but should be considered as living, sentient beings whose wellbeing, including the right to flourish, is of paramount concern.
B2.7	Assistance animals must receive regular veterinary consultations and all recommended vaccinations to be considered healthy for their role. The frequency of appointments and types of vaccination should be in accordance with the veterinarian's advice.
B2.8	Handlers must not expose their animals to physical harm, emotional harm, or undue stress. They must not engage in or permit any rough or abusive handling of their animals, including during the training process.
B2.9	Handlers should engage their animals in regular practice of required tasks and general manners.
B2.10	Handlers must monitor their animals for signs of stress, discomfort, fear, illness, injury, and ageing.
B2.11	Assistance animals must be suitably restrained during transportation to ensure their safety, in accordance with local laws and regulations. If enclosures are required, these must be large enough to permit the animal to turn around and/or to avoid trauma, and offer adequate light and ventilation. Animals must be protected from temperature extremes during transportation. Adequate water must be provided during periods of long-distance travel.
B2.12	Assistance animals must be housed in a manner appropriate to the individual and considering species, breed, age, physiological status, social needs, and location in relation to other animals. Sufficient space must be provided to allow the animal to stand, move around, stretch, and rest comfortably. The permanent enclosure of animals in cages that restrict their ability to engage in normal behaviours and exercise is not permitted. All housing must: be designed to be secure, to prevent theft or escape of the animal; offer a place for rest and refuge from the weather; and, minimize the risk of injury, illness, and stress. All housing, toileting facilities, and bedding must be maintained in good order, with regular cleaning and disinfecting.
B2.13	Assistance animals must be well groomed at all times. Such includes: clean, healthy coats that are free from tangles, matting, and lesions; smoothly clipped nails; clean eyes/ears/noses/teeth; and, free from odour.

B2.14	While it is important to keep animals clean, they must not be wiped with or bathed in chemical disinfectants, alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, or any other products not approved for animal use. Nor should face coverings/masks be placed on animals.
B2.15	Assistance animals must be free of external and internal parasites, and treated as per veterinarian advice. Regular parasite prevention should be provided as per the veterinarian's advice.
B2.16	Assistance animals must receive appropriate, uncontaminated, and nutritionally adequate food to maintain good health and growth, in accordance with current recommendations for the species, breed, age, and activity level. Fresh water must be available in sufficient quantity and for sufficient time.
B2.17	Handler-animal teams must undertake ongoing review of their trained skills and behaviours, to ensure that they remain safe and effective in public spaces. Handlers must notify their trainers of any changes in their ability to maintain the standards of the public access test.
B2.18	Assistance animals should display identifying information, which signifies the role of the animal, such as coat patches or other labelling.
B2.19	Handlers must utilise environmental resources responsibly and with minimal impact.