



## **Standards of Proficiency & Code of Conduct for AHPR Registrants**

## **Introduction**

This document sets out the standards of proficiency. These standards set out safe and effective practice. They are the threshold standards we consider necessary to protect animals, their keepers and other involved persons. They set out what a student must know, understand and be able to do by the time they have completed their training, so that they are able to apply to register with us. Once on our Register you must meet those standards of proficiency which relate to the areas in which you work.

We also expect you to keep to any guidelines published as deemed appropriate by the organisation.

The standards of proficiency in this document include both generic elements, which apply to all our registrants, and profession specific elements which are relevant to specific registrants.

We have numbered the standards so that you can refer to them more easily. The standards are not hierarchical and are all equally important for practice.

### **A note about our expectations of you**

You must meet all the standards of proficiency to register with us and meet the standards relevant to your scope of practice to stay registered with us.

It is important that you read and understand this document. If your practice is called into question we will consider these in deciding what action, if any, we need to take.

The standards set out in this document complement information and guidance issued by other organisations, such as your professional body or your employer. We recognise the valuable role played by professional bodies in providing guidance and advice about good practice which can help you to meet the standards in this document.

### **Your scope of practice**

Your scope of practice is the area or areas of your profession in which you have the knowledge, skills and experience to practise lawfully, safely and effectively, in a way that meets our standards and does not pose any danger to animals under your care, the public or to yourself.

We recognise that a registrant's scope of practise will change over time and that the practice of experienced registrants often becomes more focussed and specialised than that of newly registered colleagues. This might be because of specialisation in a certain area or with a particular client group, or a movement into roles in management, education or research. Every time you renew your registration, you will be asked to sign a declaration that you continue to meet the standards of proficiency that apply to your scope of practice.

### **Your particular scope of practise may mean that you are unable to continue to demonstrate that you meet all of the standards that apply for the whole of your profession.**

As long as you make sure that you are practising safely and effectively within your given scope of practice and do not practise in the areas where you are not proficient to do so, this will not be a problem. If you want to move outside of your scope of practice, you should be

certain that you are capable of working lawfully, safely and effectively. This means that you need to exercise personal judgement by undertaking any necessary training and experience, before moving into a new area of practise.

### **Meeting the standards**

It is important that you meet our standards and are able to practise lawfully, safely and effectively. However, we do not dictate how you should meet our standards. There is normally more than one way in which each standard can be met and the way in which you meet our standards might change over time because of improvements in technology or changes in your practice.

We often receive questions from registrant who are concerned that something they have been asked to do, a policy, or the way in which they work might mean they cannot meet our standards. They are often worried that this might have an effect on their registration.

As an autonomous professional working under veterinary referral, you need to make informed, reasoned decisions about your practice to ensure that you meet the standards that apply to you. This includes seeking advice and support from education providers, employers, colleagues, professional bodies, and others to ensure that the wellbeing of the animal(s) is safeguarded at all times. So long as you do this and can justify your decisions if asked to, it is very unlikely that you will not meet our standards.

### **Communication**

We recognise that our registrants work in a range of different settings, which could include direct practice, management, education, research and roles in industry. We also recognise that the use of terminology can be an emotive issue.

Our registrants work with very different people and use different groups of people. . Most of our registrants work directly with clients and other members of the multi-disciplinary team. The terms that you use will depend on how and where you work. We have used terms in these standards which we believe best reflect the groups that you work with.

Registrants also work with a variety of animal species and must recognise their individual behaviour and responses to intervention.

In the standards of proficiency, we use phrase such as 'understand', 'know' and 'be able to'. This is so that the standards remain applicable to current registrants in maintaining their fitness to practise, as well as prospective registrants who have not yet started practising and are applying for registration for the first time.

### **These standards may change in the future**

We have produced these standards after speaking to our stakeholders and holding a formal consultation.

We will continue to listen to our stakeholders and will keep our standards under continual review. Therefore, we may make further changes in the future to take into account changes in practice.

We will always publicise any changes to the standards that we make by, for instance, publishing notice on our website and informing professional bodies.

## **Definitions**

### **Animal Massage Therapy definitions:**

#### **Animal Massage Therapy**

*The documented oldest form of physical therapy for animals. Massage is the evidence based application of 'hands on' manual therapies, by competent, autonomous, professional therapists. With animal welfare as the first consideration, full static and dynamic evaluation assessments are carried out to enable the professional therapist to make informed, clinically reasoned decisions. Environment, animal / handler relationships and psychological factors are analysed and critically evaluated before selecting and applying integrated, documented techniques to establish and promote good physical and psychological wellbeing in their patients. Veterinary massage plays an extremely important role in prophylactic care for animals, assisting in the early detection, treatment and restoration of musculoskeletal imbalances.*

*Animal massage is an evidenced based profession with animal welfare at its core.*

#### **Animal Massage Therapist**

*An Animal Massage Therapist is an animal health care professional with a qualification recognised and approved by the regulatory body who performs all or part of the above functions according to their scope of practice.*

### **Animal / Veterinary Physiotherapy definitions:**

#### **Animal / Veterinary Physiotherapy**

*A profession concerned with ensuring higher standards of animal welfare through promotion of animal function and movement and maximising potential. It uses physical approaches to promote, maintain and restore physical, psychological and social wellbeing, taking account of variations in health status. It is science based, committed to extending, applying, evaluating and reviewing the evidence that underpins and informs its practice and delivery. The exercise of clinical judgment and informed interpretation is at its core.*

#### **Animal / Veterinary Physiotherapist**

*An Animal / Veterinary Physiotherapist is an animal health care professional with a qualification recognised and approved by the regulatory body who performs all or part of the above functions according to their scope of practice.*

#### **Animal / Veterinary Physiotherapy Assistant**

*An Animal / Veterinary Physiotherapy Assistant is a support worker who provides animal care under the direction of a registered and qualified animal health professional through delegation and appropriate supervision.*

## **Animal Chiropractor definitions:**

### **Animal Chiropractic**

*Practitioners of chiropractic and other associated manual methods contribute to the optimisation of an animal's musculoskeletal function, overall wellbeing and physical performance, through the application of a combination of stimulating, mobilising and manipulative techniques.*

*There is often a direct relationship between biomechanical and neurological dysfunction, which can result in a vast array of clinical presentations in the animal patient. Such interventions are designed to facilitate the natural release of joint and soft-tissue dysfunction, and also optimise neurological activity.*

## **Small Animal Hydrotherapy definitions**

### **Small Animal Hydrotherapy**

*Small animal hydrotherapy is an assessment led treatment administered by a qualified therapist using evidence based practice and clinical reasoning in a warm, safe and sanitised aquatic environment. Treatments include controlled therapeutic exercise and movement therapies utilising the therapeutic properties of water to address movement dysfunction which may be a result of musculoskeletal, orthopaedic and neurological functional deficits. Hydrotherapy can also effectively enhance performance in the athletic animal and optimise the individual animal's fitness and health status. The skilled therapist provides a safe and effective modality to achieve a significant impact on the patients' quality of life.*

### **Small Animal Hydrotherapist**

*A Small Animal Hydrotherapist is an animal health care professional with an awarding body (Ofqual) accredited or university validated qualification recognised and approved by the industry associations and the AHPR (Animal Health Professionals Register), who performs all treatments according to their scope of practice.*

### **Small Animal Hydrotherapy Assistant**

*A Small Animal Hydrotherapy Assistant is a support worker who provides animal care under the direction and continual supervision of a Small Animal Hydrotherapist.*

AHPR registrants must:

**1. be able to practise safely and effectively within their scope of practice**

- 1.1 know the limits of their practice and when to seek advice or refer to another professional
- 1.2 recognise the need to manage their own workload and resources effectively and be able to practise accordingly
- 1.3 understand the need for safe and competent animal handling for the animal, themselves, the animal keeper and others in the vicinity, and have a knowledge of current good practice

**2. be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession**

- 2.1 understand the need to act in the best interests of the animal at all times
- 2.2 understand what is required of them by the regulator
- 2.3 understand the need to respect the rights, dignity, values and autonomy of the animal's keeper including their role in the care and therapeutic process in maintaining the animal's health and wellbeing
- 2.4 recognise that relationships with animal keepers should be based on mutual respect and trust, and be able to maintain high standards of animal care even in situations of personal incompatibility
- 2.5 know about current legislation applicable to the work of their profession
- 2.6 understand the importance of and be able to obtain informed consent
- 2.7 be able to exercise a professional duty of care
- 2.8 be aware of and adhere to the UK advertising standards legislation and codes of practise or subsequent legislation
- 2.9 must not hold themselves out as having expertise or position they cannot substantiate

**3. be able to maintain fitness to practise**

- 3.1 understand the need to maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct
- 3.2 understand the importance of maintaining your own health and recognise the limitations that your health may have on your ability to practice
- 3.3 understand both the need to keep skills and knowledge up to date and the importance of career-long learning

**4. be able to practise, under Veterinary referral, as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgement**

- 4.1 be able to assess a professional situation, determine the nature and severity of the problem and call upon the required knowledge and experience to deal with the problem
- 4.2 be able to make reasoned decisions to initiate, continue, modify or cease techniques or procedures, and record the decisions and reasoning appropriately
- 4.3 be able to initiate resolution of problems and be able to exercise personal initiative
- 4.4 recognise that they are personally responsible for and must be able to justify their decisions
- 4.5 be able to make and receive appropriate referrals
- 4.6 understand the importance of participation in training, supervision and mentoring

## **5. be aware of the impact of culture, equality and diversity on practice**

- 5.1 understand the requirement to adapt practice to respect the needs of different groups and individuals who keep animals
- 5.2 be able to recognise the need to identify and take account of the physical, psychological, social and cultural needs of individuals and communities who keep animals

## **6. be able to practise in a non-discriminatory manner with respect to animal welfare**

## **7. understand the importance of and be able to maintain confidentiality**

- 7.1 be aware of the limits of the concept of confidentiality
- 7.2 understand the principals of information governance and be aware of the safe and effective use of health information
- 7.3 be able to recognise and respond appropriately to situations where it is necessary to share information to safeguard service users or the wider public

## **8. be able to communicate effectively**

- 8.1 be able to demonstrate effective and appropriate verbal and non-verbal skills in communicating information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to service users, colleagues and others
- 8.2 be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 of the International English Language Testing System, with no element below 6.5<sup>1</sup>
- 8.3 understand how communication skills affect how the means of communication should be modified to address and take account of factors such as age, capacity, learning ability and physical ability of the animal keeper
- 8.4 be able to select, move between and use appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication with animal keepers and others
- 8.5 be aware of the characteristics and consequences of verbal and non-verbal communication and how this can be affected by factors such as age, culture, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status and spiritual or religious beliefs
- 8.6 understand the need to provide the animal keeper or people acting on their behalf with the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions
- 8.7 understand the need to assist the communication needs of the animal keeper such as through an appropriate interpreter
- 8.8 recognise the need to use interpersonal skills to encourage the active participation of the animal keeper

<sup>1</sup> The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) tests competence in the English language. Applicants who have qualified outside of the UK, whose first language is not English and who are not nationals of a country within the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland, must provide evidence that they have reached the necessary standard.

## **9. be able to work appropriately with others**

- 9.1 be able to work, where appropriate, in partnership with the animal keeper, other professionals, support staff and others

- 9.2 understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team
- 9.3 understand the need to engage the animal keeper in understanding the functional diagnosis and therapeutic interventions to meet the treatment or maintenance goals and the needs of the animal
- 9.4 be able to contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a multi-disciplinary team
- 9.5 understand the need to agree the goals, priorities and methods of physiotherapy intervention in partnership with the animal keeper and multidisciplinary team
- 9.6 able to effectively and appropriately supervise tasks that you have asked other people to do
- 9.7 able to recognise that the health and ability of a colleague may limit their fitness to practice safely and may therefore require appropriate action

**10. be able to maintain records effectively**

- 10.1 be able to keep accurate, comprehensive and comprehensible records in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines
- 10.2 recognise the need to manage records and all other information in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines

**11. be able to reflect on and review practice**

- 11.1 understand the value of reflection on practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection
- 11.2 recognise the value of case conferences and other methods of review

**12. be able to assure the quality of the practice**

- 12.1 be able to engage in evidence-based practice, evaluate practice systematically and participate in audit procedures
- 12.2 be able to gather information, including qualitative and quantitative data, that helps to evaluate the responses of animals to their care
- 12.3 be aware of the role of audit and review in quality management, including quality control, quality assurance and the use of appropriate outcome measures
- 12.4 be able to maintain an effective audit trail and work towards continual improvement
- 12.5 be aware of, and be able to participate in, quality assurance programmes, where appropriate
- 12.6 be able to evaluate intervention plans using recognised outcome measure and revise the plans as necessary in conjunction with the animal keeper
- 12.7 recognise the need to monitor and evaluate the quality of practice and the value of contributing to the generation of data for quality assurance and improvement programmes
- 12.8 be able to evaluate intervention plans to ensure that they meet the health and welfare needs of the animal, informed by changes in circumstances and health status

**13. understand the key concepts of the knowledge base relevant to their profession**

- 13.1 recognise the role of other professionals in animal health and welfare



- 13.2 be aware of the principles and applications of scientific enquiry, including the evaluation of the efficacy of interventions and the research process
- 13.3 understand the concept of leadership and its application to practice and theories of team working
- 13.4 understand the structure and function of the animal's body, together with knowledge of health, disease, disorder and dysfunction, relevant to their profession
- 13.5 understand the theoretical basis of, and the variety of approaches to, assessment and intervention
- 13.6 understand the following aspects of biological science relating to the animal species you are treating:
  - normal animal anatomy and physiology, including the dynamic relationships of animal structure and function as related to the neuromuscular, musculoskeletal, cardio-vascular, lymphatic and respiratory systems
  - patterns of animal growth and development across the lifespan
  - factors influencing individual variations in animal ability and health status
- 13.7 understand the following aspects of physical science:
  - the application of zoometric and ergonomic principles
- 13.8 understand the following aspects of clinical science:
  - the specific contribution that treatment and maintenance modalities can potentially make to enhancing the animal's functional ability, together with the evidence base for this
- 13.9 understand the following aspects of behavioural science relevant to the animal species being treated:
  - Normal behaviour:
    - Including response to environmental and pain stimuli
    - unwanted behaviours
  - Abnormal behaviour:
    - Including pathological and psychological symptoms
    - Response to treatment and maintenance interventions

**14. be able to draw on appropriate knowledge and skills to inform practice**

- 14.1 understand the structure and function of veterinary and relevant animal services in the United Kingdom
- 14.2 be able to deliver and evaluate animal treatment and maintenance programmes
- 14.3 be able to gather appropriate information
- 14.4 be able to select and use appropriate assessment techniques
- 14.5 be able to undertake and record a thorough, sensitive and detailed assessment, using appropriate techniques and equipment
- 14.6 be able to undertake or arrange further assessment as appropriate
- 14.7 be able to analyse and critically evaluate the information collected
- 14.8 be able to form a functional diagnosis on the basis of specific modality<sup>1</sup> assessment
- 14.9 be able to demonstrate a logical and systematic approach to problem solving
- 14.10 be able to use research, reasoning and problem solving skills to determine appropriate actions
- 14.11 be able to formulate specific and appropriate management plans including the setting of timescales
- 14.12 be able to apply problem solving and clinical reasoning to assessment findings to plan and prioritise appropriate treatment or maintenance

<sup>1</sup> Specific Modality as described in subgroup definitions on pages 4 – 5.

- 14.13 recognise the need to discuss, and be able to explain the rationale, the use for treatment or maintenance interventions
- 14.14 be able to set goals and construct specific individual and group treatment or maintenance programmes
- 14.15 be able to conduct appropriate assessment or monitoring procedures, interventions, therapy, or other actions safely and effectively
- 14.16 be able to select, plan, implement and manage treatment or maintenance interventions aimed at the facilitation and restoration of movement and function
- 14.17 know how to position and restrain animals for safe and effective interventions
- 14.18 be able to select and apply safe and effective modality-specific practice skills including manual therapy, exercise and movement, electrotherapeutic modalities and kindred approaches (within scope of practice)
- 14.19 be able to change their practice as needed to take account of new developments or changing contexts
- 14.20 recognise the value of research to the critical evaluation of practice
- 14.21 be aware of a range of research methodologies
- 14.22 be able to evaluate research and other evidence to inform their own practice
- 14.23 be able to use information and communication technologies appropriate to their practice

**15. understand the need to establish and maintain a safe working environment**

- 15.1 understand the need to maintain the safety of both animals and their keepers
- 15.2 know and be able to apply appropriate moving and handling techniques
- 15.3 be aware of applicable health and safety legislation, and any relevant safety policies and procedures in force at the workplace, such as incident reporting and be able to act in accordance with these
- 15.4 be able to work safely, including being able to select appropriate hazard control and risk management, reduction or elimination techniques in a safe manner and in accordance with health and safety legislation
- 15.5 be able to select appropriate personal protective equipment and use it correctly
- 15.6 be able to establish safe environments for practice, which minimise risks to animal keepers, those treating them and others, including the use of hazard control and particularly infection control.

With thanks to The Health & Care Professions Council for use of the document “Standards of Proficiency: Physiotherapists”