## ACMVET5X25 Apply principles of animal behaviour

#### Application

This unit of competency describes the skills and knowledge required to assess and respond to animal behaviour in veterinary practice. It involves identifying normal and abnormal behaviours across species and applying knowledge of animal learning theory, current behavioural therapies, stress physiology, socialisation needs, enrichment requirements and legal responsibilities of animal ownership.

Graduates will support veterinarians in providing informed behavioural advice to clients, developing behaviour modification plans and programs and providing follow-up support for animals and clients.

The unit applies to veterinary nurses who work in a veterinary practice under the supervision of a registered veterinarian.

**Licensing, legislative, regulatory requirements**

Legislative and regulatory requirements apply to the scope of veterinary nursing practice and vary according to state/territory jurisdictions. Users of this unit must confirm current requirements with the relevant regulatory authority before delivery.

#### Pre-requisite unit Nil

#### Unit sector

Veterinary Nursing (VET)

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| **Elements** *Elements describe the essential outcomes.* | **Performance criteria**  *Performance criteria describe the performance needed to demonstrate achievement of the element.* |

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| 1. Promote responsible pet ownership | 1.1 Relate fundamental physical, social and behavioural needs of animals to common behaviour patterns  1.2 Advise clients about the benefits of socialisation, enrichment and humane training methods  1.3 Advise clients on behavioural issues and the legal and ethical responsibilities of pet ownership |

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| 2. **Assess and interpret animal behaviour** | 2.1 Identify anatomy and physiology factors that relate to stress responses and behaviour management in animals  2.2 Review animal learning theory and identify current behavioural management techniques for different species  2.3 Recommend environmental conditions and enrichment strategies that support normal behavioural expression  2.4 Investigate species-specific social, environmental and activity behaviours  2.5 Distinguish acceptable from unacceptable behaviours across species and life stages  2.6 Collect comprehensive patient histories and identify normal, abnormal and potentially clinically significant behaviours  2.7 Assess the animal’s physical and social environment to identify factors contributing to behavioural presentation  2.8 Identify and evaluate risks to the patient, other animals, staff, clients and the public during behavioural interactions  2.9 Report identified behavioural issues to the supervising veterinarian and seek direction where required |
| 3. Support behavioural consults | 3.1 Apply risk mitigation strategies for behavioural consultations according to work health and safety (WHS) requirements and practice policies  3.2 Prepare and maintain an appropriate, low-stress environment for behavioural consultations  3.3 Provide nursing support for behavioural consultations  3.4 Provide appropriate behavioural advice to clients as directed by veterinarian  3.5 Prepare behavioural medications according to legislative requirements and as prescribed or directed by the veterinarian |
| 4. Provide after care for behavioural cases | 4.1 Design behaviour modification plans for patients using current, humane and evidence-based methods that comply with legislative requirements  4.2 Educate clients on behaviour management and implementation of behaviour modification strategies  4.3 Review behaviour modification plans in collaboration with the veterinarian and adjust based on patient progress and outcomes  4.4 Provide support to clients experiencing grief, stress or emotional distress related to their animal’s behavioural condition |

#### Foundation skills

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| **Learning** | **Reading** | **Writing** | **Oral communication** | **Numeracy** |
| 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 |

**Assessment Requirements**

**Performance evidence**

An individual demonstrating competency must satisfy all of the elements and performance criteria in this unit.

There must be evidence that the individual has:

* developed and delivered a minimum of three animal behaviour programs, covering two species, that benefits animals or animal owners, including (for each):

collecting patient histories and identifying normal and abnormal animal behaviours

determining acceptable and unacceptable animal behaviours

providing nursing support for behavioural consultations

designing a behaviour modification program

providing follow-up support for client

* reviewed a minimum of one behaviour education program for an animal who was prescribed a behavioural modification drug.

Performance must be demonstrated in a veterinary practice, or an environment that accurately reflects a veterinary practice with real animals and clients.

**Knowledge evidence**

An individual must be able to demonstrate the knowledge required to perform the tasks outlined in the elements and performance criteria of this unit. This includes knowledge of:

* animal anatomy and physiology relating to stress and behaviour management, including interaction of physiological factors with environmental triggers in animal behaviour
* animal learning theory and current techniques in behavioural management
* early socialisation and physical environment requirements of animals
* animal nutrition and husbandry related to behaviour
* common behavioural problems in pet animals
* abnormal behaviour and the potential role of physical illness in behavioural problems
* fundamentals of animal behaviour
* principles of animal welfare and ethics in behaviour management
* rights of animals
* legal responsibilities of pet ownership
* normal animal behaviour, development and communication
* medications commonly used to manage behavioural disorders
* nursing support for behavioural management, including:

directing clients

collecting history

restraining animals

performing a physical examination

producing reports

supplying veterinarian prescribed medications

organising revisits and other follow-up procedures

coordinating referrals when required

* relevant state or territory legislation and regulations relating to the practice of veterinary science, WHS, drugs and poisons and animal welfare
* risks and hazards related to animal behaviour.

**Assessment conditions**

Skills must be demonstrated in a in a veterinary practice or an environment that accurately reflects a veterinary practice with real animals and clients.

Assessment must ensure access to:

* a range of real animals demonstrating abnormal behaviour
* equipment, instruments and resources, including veterinarian prescribed medications, typically available in a veterinary practice for assessing and implementing animal behaviour modification plans
* organisational policies and procedures, current legislation, regulations and relevant codes of practice
* clients

Assessors of this unit must satisfy the requirements for assessors in applicable vocational education and training legislation, frameworks and/or standards.

#### Unit mapping information

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| **Code and title current version** | **Code and title previous version** | **Equivalence status** | **Comments** |
| ACMVET5X25 Apply principles of animal behaviour | ACMVET511 Apply principles of animal behaviour | Equivalent | Unit re-templated to 2025 template  Changes to wording of Application  Legislative and regulatory statement revised to more accurately reflect requirements.  Wording changes to Elements and Performance Criteria throughout the unit, with little material change.  Remove reference to specific number of hours for demonstration of performance, whilst retaining requirement for performance to be in a workplace with real animals and real clients. |

### Overview information

#### Modification History

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| **Release** | **Comments** |
| 1 | This unit of competency was first released in ACM Animal Care and Management Training Package Release 7.0. |

**Mandatory workplace requirements:**

Mandatory workplace requirements apply to this unit of competency and are specified in the Performance Evidence and Assessment Conditions of the Assessment Requirements.