

Written by the Technical Committee of the film and video industry's joint sector-based working group and produced by the Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail du Québec.



ASSOCIATION DES
PRODUCTEURS DE
FILMS ET DE
TELEVISION DU
QUÉBEC

Animal handling

1. Because of their unexpected reactions, animals can endanger the health and safety of people nearby. Whenever filming or recording requires animals, the producer must hire an animal coordinator and, depending on the case, experienced animal handlers and trainers familiar with handling the species present.
2. The animal coordinator must:
 - be familiar with the animals that he is supervising;
 - assume responsibility for them;
 - inspect all the equipment used;
 - ensure that the people hired to work with animals off and on camera are competent, and give his approval before they are hired;
 - evaluate the skills of the performers who will be in contact with the animals, and if need be, give them the necessary training so that they can work safely.
3. When animals and performers work together in a scene, the animal coordinator and the animal handler or trainer must have sufficient time to prepare the scene with them.
4. When an animal is uncomfortable, whether injured by a prop or made sick by a dye, it could behave dangerously. The animal coordinator must therefore have at least 48 hours before the start of filming or recording to check the accessories and costumes, as well as the equipment used for filming or recording scenes with animals. For example, the following must be used:
 - accessories and costumes that are in good condition and comfortable and that do not hinder movement or respiration;
 - non-toxic dyes or cosmetics;
 - harnesses only on animals used to wearing them;
 - breakaway glass (and not tempered glass) and accessories (spears, barbed wire, fences) of rubber or balsa wood free of nails, splinters and wire.
5. The call sheet must include a note warning the production crew whenever the scene to be filmed or recorded requires the use of animals (e.g., "There will be animals on the set today. Obtain the approval of the animal coordinator before petting or playing with them. Do not run, and stay away from wild and exotic animals, do not feed them, etc.").
6. If the animal coordinator considers it necessary during filming or recording, a "closed set" notice must be posted, meaning that only essential personnel are allowed on the set when animals are present.
7. The animal coordinator and the first assistant director must inform the members of the production crew as well as the parents or guardians of children participating in the filming or recording, if applicable, about the precautions to be taken in the presence of the animals.
8. A first aid attendant must be on the set when the animals involved in the scene present certain risks. Stunts or scenes that could be dangerous and that involve animals must be filmed or recorded under the supervision of the animal coordinator and prepared with his collaboration. A veterinarian who can care for the species used for filming or recording must be near the work site and available in case of emergency.
9. The animal coordinator is responsible for obtaining all necessary inoculations, permits, licenses and transport permits, etc. Any sick, injured or disabled animal must be isolated from the others and cared for immediately. It cannot be returned to the set until a veterinarian has supplied a certificate indicating that the animal is healthy. The animal coordinator must give a copy of all the above-mentioned documents to the safety coordinator.
10. To prevent injuries and accidents in scenes involving fire, the fire must be controlled and the animals must be properly prepared. If necessary, the animals' fur, tails or coats must be treated with a fire-resistant or inflammable solution or sprayed with water (pay particular attention to sheep).
11. If the animals must swim, their endurance must be taken into consideration. The animal coordinator and the safety coordinator must determine the best way to ensure the safety of the members of the production crew and the animals. For example, they may decide to attach the animals to a cable if the current is strong. (See guideline 24 on Work on or near water.)
12. Hobbles, steel cables or trenches must never be used to cause an animal, such as a horse, to fall. The rider or other members of the production crew could be injured.

13. When a large number of animals have to be moved, particular vigilance is necessary to avoid panic movements or stampeding animals.
14. A sufficient quantity of cable mats must be available to cover the electrical wires in areas where animals will pass.
15. At least two people must be ready to take action to control large animals such as cats and other carnivores the size of a mountain lion or larger.

Use of pyrotechnics and firearms

16. Before firearms are fired or explosives used, the animal coordinator and the armourer (see guideline 17) or blaster (see guideline 16) must consult together, because animals can react unexpectedly and cause accidents. The safety coordinator must also be kept informed about the planned activities.
17. Quarter-load ammunition should preferably be used near animals. Cotton or cotton batting must be available to put in the animals' ears when gunfire, explosions or other violent noises are planned.
18. Only pyrotechnics containing a minimum quantity of powder must be used; they must not be placed too close to the animals in order to avoid frightening them and thus causing accidents.
19. The animal coordinator, animal trainer, animal owner and, if need be, the representative from the animal protection organization, must inspect the land on the set for holes, roots, stones and other things that could cause accidents. If necessary, the bottom of streams must be cleared and low branches removed.
20. Hitch rails for animals must be solidly embedded in the ground. Scenery and props must also be solidly secured, with specific attention to ladders, columns, etc., which can easily fall.

Horses

The following rules are to protect the rider as well as his mount and the people nearby.

21. Depending on the scenes to be filmed or recorded, a sufficient number of wranglers must be available to control the horses.
22. Horses must be examined daily for injury or lameness.
23. Only stunt performers specialized in equestrian stunts may perform stunts with horses, and the rider and horse must be chosen according to the type of stunt to be performed. For example, for falls, sliding, riding on slopes, or stirrup drags, a horse trained specially for this purpose must be chosen. As needed, horses must wear protective boots or skip boots.

24. When the rider and his horse must perform a fall, the ground must be broken up or softened by spreading 5 m³ of sand on it. The area for the fall must be at least 5 m by 5 m, and 50 cm deep. It must be filled with sand, and all stones, lumps or roots must be removed. In some cases, turning the soil in the area of the fall is all that is necessary. Falls or jumps into water must be done from a height of not more than 3.5 m.
25. To avoid falls, in particular, horses must wear shoes that are appropriate for their breed and for the land on which they will be working. For example, horses on cement or asphalt must wear shoes with borium studs.
26. Traveling through very deep mud and quicksand should be avoided. The use of wires and steel cables must also be avoided.
27. For fast pursuit or racing scenes, a sufficient number of replacement animals must be available.
28. For chases along railway tracks, the land must be well prepared, particularly by spreading sand or earth along the tracks or between the rails.
29. For scenes with stampeding herds, runaway horses and vehicle disintegration (cars, carriages, etc.), there must be a sufficient number of riders off camera to slow or control the animals. In the case of vehicle disintegration, the animals must be freed before the vehicle breaks up.
30. The tops of obstacles (fences, walls, etc.) over which horses jump must be clear or made of pre-cut balsa wood.
31. When filming or recording is done in a studio, antislip carpets must be installed on the ground or skip boots put on the horses, and a surface must be provided on which the latter can move safely around the set (for example, where horses must pass, cover electric wires with cable mats or secure the wires overhead).
32. Spurs may be used only by equestrian specialists with the approval of the animal coordinator and the trainer.

Snakes

33. To avoid accidents and injuries when snakes and other animals are used in the same scene, the animals must be familiar with one another.

34. Non-venomous snakes should preferably be used. Otherwise, take the following safety precautions:
- Inform the safety coordinator two weeks in advance so that he can inform the hospital nearest the filming or recording site and obtain sufficient antidote for at least three people for the venom of the species used;
 - On the day of filming or recording, the snake must be “milked” so that it contains the least possible amount of venom; write on the call sheet the location of the antidote and indicate that the set will be “closed”. Only the smallest possible crew may be present on a set containing snakes. These individuals must have the appropriate safety equipment: gloves, leggings, etc.;
 - During filming or recording, keep the antidote within reach and make sure that there is a first aid attendant on the set who can give injections; keep a CO₂ extinguisher on the set that can be used to slow the snakes’ metabolism and immobilize them, if necessary;
 - If someone is bitten by a snake, administer the antidote and take the victim immediately to the nearest hospital.

35. Where possible, avoid stitching the mouths of venomous snakes shut. Other stratagems can be used for filming or recording, such as a glass or plastic barrier, fake animals, or using people familiar with handling snakes as stunt doubles. However, if the mouths of snakes must be stitched shut, this operation must be done under local anesthetic by a professional approved by the animal coordinator. When the stitches are removed, topical antibiotics must be applied.

Reference

Guideline 24 on Work on or near water.

Note. – The information contained in this guideline is not exhaustive and does not replace current standards, laws and regulations.

Guideline 15 • Appendix

Care of animals

The better the animals are treated, the less dangerous they are for the people nearby. Here are a few rules to be followed to maintain a good disposition and to avoid unfortunate accidents that could result from improper treatment, fatigue, fear, etc.

1. Animals must not be injured or mistreated, and sedatives must not be used for a scene. Also, a gestating animal must not be used for an action scene.
2. Animals must be transported in well-ventilated vehicles. The safety coordinator must determine, with the animal coordinator, the rest time necessary for the animals after transportation, before they begin working. Animals that have not yet been weaned must be transported with their mothers. Also, an easily accessible zone must be provided for animal loading and unloading.
3. When installing animal holding areas, take into account the climatic conditions of the animals’ place of origin as well as their age. Holding areas must be comfortable. If there are several different species, provide separate holding areas.
4. Every day during filming or recording, provide adequate exercise and rest periods. Make sure that the animals do not become overheated to the point of discomfort. Provide sufficient water and shade, protection from the cold, rain, etc., and make sure that the set is not contaminated, particularly with pesticides.
5. If filming or recording includes a scene with a real or simulated sandstorm, thunderstorm or blizzard, pay particular attention to the animals’ eyes.