



Animal Welfare Policy

- It shouldn't be assumed just because an animal is available that it will enjoy, or be suitable for, an Animal Assisted Interventions programme, with all the types of activities/situations/participants involved
- A thorough assessment and selection process needs to be carried out involving consideration of a variety of behavioural, physical, historical, lifestyle and age factors
- Animals need to be given a choice about whether to interact or not, and be able to choose how they will interact with the participant. Animals should be given enough space to make these choices including escape routes and safe spaces
- We work alongside horses and other animals in Animal Assisted Interactions because their sensitivity means they can be responsive in specific and often helpful ways. And because of this we need to check our animals every day; before, during and after every session, to see how they are doing
- If an animal shows any signs of undue stress, or discomfort of any kind, they should be removed from that session
- When working with participants who are highly emotional, or physically dysregulated, animals should only take part for a short period of time and not every day. The cumulative affect of working in this type of environment can have a detrimental affect on the stress levels of any animal and they should be regularly assessed to ensure they are not being affected
- Each animal needs to have an animal and a human 'buddy'. The human buddy's job is to carefully monitor stress levels after each session and check relaxation levels
- Honest feedback is a really important part of AAI and it is much more likely that this will come from horses and other animals who live a natural herd/flock/pack lifestyle. Animals who are isolated, frequently tied up, contained in small spaces, overworked or over-ridden in riding



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schools, are often shutdown emotionally which is likely to be unhelpful in AAI sessions, possibly leading to false interpretations

- Following sessions with participants animals should be able to return to their 'normal' lifestyle by being turned out to pasture, let off the lead, or returned to their usual environment, with animals of their own kind. Having 'free time', rather than spending undue amounts of time in animal assisted sessions, possibly isolated from other animals is not good for welfare but animals returned to a 'normal' lifestyle will usually quickly recover from any stresses present in sessions
- Animals should be given regular days off every week and regular holiday periods when they can completely relax for a number of days
- There should be agreement on the number of hours each animal is required to work during the week. This may be slightly different for individual animals but a maximum number of working hours per week should be established, along with an acceptable pattern of working
- At Youngs Farm no animal will do more than 2 sessions in a day and sessions will not be any longer than an hour overall. The maximum number of sessions per week will be limited to 5 but more usually will be less than this i.e. 3 or 4 per week
- All animals will have regular daily health checks from suitably skilled staff to assess for pain and discomfort as well as mental or emotional disturbance
- There will be regular input for each animal as needed from; vets, dentist, farrier and osteopath, including massage where appropriate
- Animals will have a varied timetable. For horses this will include hacking out, round-pen or gym/agility work, in-hand work and other activities, to ensure they don't become stale, bored or frustrated.



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Similarly with the dogs and other animals a range of activities, as appropriate

- All practitioners will be required to have some knowledge of equine and animal psychology and although animal specialists will take the lead on this, mental health therapists are expected to develop their expertise in reading equine and animal body language, as well as their ability to respond promptly to the needs of individual animals during therapy sessions

- Each session will be ended by the lead practitioner, the horses and other animals will be included in this process and participants given the opportunity to show their appreciation and gratitude to the horses and other animals for their voluntary and willing participation

- FORAGE, FRIENDS, FREEDOM should be the guiding welfare principles for all animals