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**Code of Practice for Graduates**

## Code of practice for graduates

### General

The primary purpose of a Natural Animal Centre graduate is to offer a scientifically based, practically oriented behavioural service to clients.

With a unique combination of science and practical solutions accessible to animal owners, study for the Behaviour Qualifications [Equine (EBQ), Canine (CBQ) and Feline (FBQ)] bridges the gap between veterinary science and the academic community involved in behavioural research. Registered (see notes on registration below) graduates are thus able to offer both a professional and credible service in the behaviourist market.

Currently, there is no national regulatory body overseeing those giving behavioural advice, with the result that the lines between behavioural and training problems remain blurred both in the eyes of the veterinary fraternity and those offering training.

The Natural Animal Centre ('the NAC') is concerned with this situation and has therefore sought to become one of the first self-regulated bodies to attempt to raise the standard of professional animal behaviour knowledge and care. By encouraging students to study for the behavioural qualifications, it provides clients and vets, with the option to consult graduates who have a level of knowledge that is scientifically up-to-date, yet distilled into a form that is meaningful and helpful.

**These guidelines are for the use of Natural Animal Centre Graduates who are registered with the Natural Animal Centre. Registration is subject to annual renewal.**

Registration with the NAC carries obligations as well as privileges. It requires graduates to:

- Develop and use their professional knowledge and skills for the benefit of those who seek their advice
- Maintain good professional relationships with others (vets, clients and other professionals in the market place)
- Act in a way that promotes confidence and trust in all graduates of the NAC.

The principles of the code are intended to guide and support the work graduates do and the decisions they make. They also inform the general public of the standards of behaviour that can be expected from behaviourists registered with the NAC.

## **Principles of Practice**

The Principles of this code are mandatory. As a registered behaviourist with the NAC, your professional conduct will be judged against the code. Graduates must abide by its principles irrespective of whether they are currently practicing or not. Disreputable behaviour or failure to comply with the principles identified in the code could put your registration at risk. The steering committee (to be appointed from time to time) will take account of the code in cases that come before them but are not limited solely to the matters mentioned in it. The circumstance of each individual case will be considered when deciding whether or not action should be taken.

A graduate will only work with a referral from a veterinary surgeon ('a vet'). The Veterinary Surgeons Act, 1960 clearly states that only vets may treat animals so without a referral, graduates are breaking the law. Accordingly, graduates do not diagnose or treat any medical condition in the animal and are clear about the limits in which they may work as behavioural advisors.

Graduates will agree to work on a case according to the limits laid down by the vet and will report on the animal's progress as requested by the vet.

Graduates will confine themselves to giving behavioural advice only after visiting the animal in person. They will not give advice over the telephone or by e-mail or in any other context where they have not yet seen the animal. Where it is not possible to see the animal in person, the graduate will refer the case to the NAC, which will then attempt to locate another graduate able to take on the case in the local area.

Graduates will refer cases that exceed their competence to the NAC.

Graduates will not advise clients on any problems other than behavioural ones and will avoid giving advice about nutrition, physical problems and so on. The only exceptions to this will be where graduates already hold an appropriate qualification (e.g. Master Saddler) and graduates should notify the NAC of these other qualifications.

Under no circumstances will a graduate recommend euthanasia or re-homing of the animal without referring the case back to the veterinary surgeon and informing the NAC.

Graduates will not make statements that are contrary to the Code of Practice, that imply unique or one-of-a-kind abilities intended to create a false or unjustified expectation of results. They will not make representations through sensationalism, exaggeration or superficiality.

Graduates must agree to abide by Data Protection and Confidentiality laws. It is the responsibility of the individual graduate to ensure they keep up to date with the most current legislation.

Graduates will commit to undertaking continual professional development (CPD) with the NAC annually in order to keep up-to-date with developments in behavioural science.

### **Additional guidelines relating to Principles of Practice**

Wherever possible, a graduate will only work with an animal that has recently been examined by a vet so as to rule out the possibility of ill health as a cause of behavioural problems.

Where necessary, a graduate will work in tandem with a vet, recognising that by law, the vet at all times remains responsible for the health and welfare of the animal.

Graduates will keep the welfare of the animal uppermost in their minds at all times.

Graduates will be considerate of their client's feelings towards their animal, recognising that problems with animals can be very distressing for owners or guardians.

Graduates will be responsible for their own safety at all times and will take steps to ensure that their safety is not compromised. In particular, graduates should not take on cases where the level of aggression shown by the animal is outside their level of competence. These cases should be referred to the NAC.

Graduates will be aware of the safety needs of the animal, the client and members of the public and will make reasonable efforts to ensure the safety of all concerned. Graduates will inform both the client and the vet in writing if, in their opinion, the safety of the animal or its owner or the public is at risk.

Registered graduates may advertise their services as a NAC graduate by using the NAC logo on all printed, or electronic, materials (business cards, adverts, flyers, website etc.) but the NAC logo may not be used in conjunction with any other qualifications unless agreed in writing by the NAC. Graduates who are not registered, or have lapsed their registration, are not entitled to use the NAC logo in association with their services or when describing their credentials.

Graduates will make reasonable efforts to be aware of changes in the law and current best practise regarding the treatment of animals and shall adjust their practice and advise their clients accordingly.

## **Rules for the gaining and maintenance of registration with the NAC.**

Graduation follows successful completion of the behaviour qualification courses (and all the formal assessments) and means that those who have graduated are considered to have sufficient understanding of animal behaviour to be able to advise clients to aid the overall well-being of the animal. There are four stages of the behaviour qualifications. Stage 4 is the highest level of qualification.

Graduates are invited to register with the NAC and to practise as a registered NAC behaviourist once they have successfully completed Stage 1. Registration is, however, conditional upon written confirmation that the prospective graduate agrees to abide by the terms and conditions set out in this Code of Practice.

All graduates are required to work under supervision of the NAC. A mentoring network is available to support new graduates if required.

It is the NAC's responsibility to review complaints and infractions of this Code of Practice and shared efforts and opportunities on behalf of all generally result in correcting misunderstandings. However, if after due process and review, it is found that ethical and proficiency standards in keeping with this Code have not been complied with, suspension of registration will occur.

Retention of registration is conditional upon the graduate attending Continuing Professional Development ('CPD') courses held at the NAC annually. At least one CPD course must be attended per annum in the form of a three-day course where up-to-date research in the field of behavioural research will be made available to graduates.

Registration is reviewed annually and re-issue of registration is conditional upon the foregoing and continued adherence to this Code of Practice. The NAC reserves the right to withhold re-registration if the steering committee consider the principles in this Code of Practice have been breached. The steering committee will consist of Stage 4 graduates who are registered with the NAC and senior representatives from the NAC .

## **Legal considerations**

Being a Graduate of the NAC does not constitute the acquisition of a degree (unless the student has taken the option of undertaking the final project in association with the affiliated University to gain a BSc or MSc), or a license to practise by diagnosing, prescribing or treating any condition falling under the scope of veterinary practice. In conditions requiring veterinary attention, the client must be immediately advised to consult his or her vet.

Whilst this Code of Practice sets out guidelines for your practice and the terms and conditions under which registrations is issued and retained the care and treatment of your clients is your own responsibility. The NAC is a privately

owned educational organisation and none of its officers accept responsibility for the actions or practices of individual graduates.

Graduates will ensure that they are appropriately insured (including professional liability insurance) to offer behavioural consultations.

### **Disclaimer**

The information contained here is provided in good faith but does not constitute legal advice or opinion. No responsibility will be taken by the NAC or any of its officers for any act or omission carried out by a graduate following these guidelines. In line with the Legal section of Code of Practice, graduates are responsible for their own actions at all times.

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