



Worksafe Smartmove Certificate

Veterinary and Animal Care Industry Module Study Guide



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Veterinary and Animal Care Industry

Learning outcomes

In this module you will:

1. Learn about common hazards encountered in the veterinary and animal care industry
2. Understand how to prevent injuries from common workplace hazards
3. Identify existing and potential hazards at a workplace and learn how to report and record them
4. Learn how to eliminate hazards and reduce risks

The veterinary and animal care industry offers great job opportunities and a rewarding career path for young workers. The industry is growing, providing a broad range of jobs including veterinary assistants, animal attendants, animal trainers, dog handlers, pet groomers, and zookeepers.

Young workers can expect to provide care for animals in workplaces such as veterinary clinics, veterinary hospitals, animal shelters/ holding centres, pet shops, pet services, boarding/daycare facilities, zoos, and sanctuaries.

Tasks relating to this industry may include:

- comforting and restraining animals during examinations and care
- feeding, bathing, and exercising animals
- cleaning, sterilising, and maintaining kennels, operating rooms, examination rooms, cages, and surgical equipment
- providing basic first aid to animals
- administering medication to animals
- assisting veterinarians and vet technicians with lab work
- serving and communicating with clients
- clerical duties.

The veterinary and animal care industry presents many hazards that are unique to other industries. Common hazards found in the industry are relating to:

- handling animals
- manual tasks
- hazardous substances
- noise
- Zoonoses
- handling sharps
- radiation
- slips, trips, and falls
- work-related stress

Handling animals

A young worker was bitten on her leg by a Staffordshire bull terrier while taking it for a walk in a dog run behind a veterinary clinic. She was taken to hospital with serious leg injuries.

Animal handling-related injuries are among the most common work-related injuries in the veterinary and animal care industry. Young workers may need to assist in handling animals for medical and surgical procedures, or while providing routine care to animals such as feeding, bathing, exercising, or grooming. These animals could be in pain or distress making them unpredictable, uncooperative, and aggressive. Particularly in veterinary care, ill animals sometimes resist handling, inflicting injuries to their handlers.

Incidents causing injuries

Incidents causing injuries while handling small animals arise mostly from being bitten by a dog or being bitten or scratched by a cat. Bites and scratches can spread bacteria that can lead to an infection such as Q fever, cat scratch fever, and tetanus.

Incidents causing injuries while handling large animals tend to be less frequent but more severe. In Western Australia, significant injuries from handling large animals were found from being hit, kicked, or struck by horses, cows, or sheep. Serious injuries are most likely to occur in a confined space such as cattle yards, pens, and stables.

A kick from a horse to the head can cause serious, even fatal, injury.

What can your employer do to keep you safe?

Your employer has a duty of care to ensure that the workplace is safe for everyone. This includes managing the risks of workers handling animals.

Your employer must:

- have a safe system of work that manages the risks associated with handling an animal including procedures on how to handle injured or distressed animals.
- have control measures to create a safe work environment (e.g. sedating a distressed or aggressive animal before it can be moved or treated, and using restraints such as a muzzle on aggressive dogs or cats to reduce risks).
- provide you with appropriate training and animal handling techniques before you come into contact with an animal.
- arrange for constant supervision until you are competent.
- ensure that tools, equipment, and personal protective equipment are provided, are appropriate for the task, are well-maintained and in good condition.

How can you keep safe when handling animals?

You have a duty of care towards your own health and safety and that of others. You can protect yourself from harm by:

- following the safe system of work established for handling an animal. If you are in doubt, ask your employer or supervisor for instructions.
- being aware of the risks associated with handling an animal.
- having the appropriate level of training and experience for the task.
- being calm and patient with an animal and staying alert at all time.
- wearing appropriate clothing and use the provided PPE (e.g. protective gloves/ gauntlets, and forearm protection).
- speaking up about unsafe practices.

Quiz – Handling animals

1. What can your employer do to reduce the risk of injuries from handling animals?
 - a. Provide a safe system of work to manage the risks.
 - b. Have control measures in place to create a safe work environment.
 - c. Provide you with training on animal handling and give constant supervision until you are competent.
 - d. All of the above

2. Apart from physical injuries, bites and scratches from animals could cause bacterial infections such as Q fever, cat scratch fever, and tetanus.
 - a. True
 - b. False
 3. Incidents causing injuries while handling smaller animals were mostly found from being _____.
 - a. bitten by an animal (dog or cat)
 - b. hit or knocked by an animal
 - c. kisses by an animal
 - d. all of the above
-

Manual tasks

Jane felt a sharp pain in her back and abdomen while helping to lift an overweight Labrador Retriever onto the surgical table at the veterinary hospital she worked. Jane had been assisting the veterinarian to perform similar tasks regularly and usually felt fine. This time she vomited blood and fainted. She was taken to hospital, where she was diagnosed with a hernia and needed surgery.

Manual tasks are any activity or sequence of activities that requires a person to use their body (musculoskeletal system) physically to perform work such as lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, carrying, moving, and holding or restraining a person, animal or things.

Most jobs require several types of manual tasks to be performed. However, not all manual tasks are hazardous. The most common injuries and health issues that can arise from performing hazardous manual tasks are musculoskeletal injuries - which affect the muscles, bones, nerves, and/or joints.

Examples of musculoskeletal injuries are:

- sprains and strains of muscles, ligaments, and tendons (e.g. back strain)
- joint injuries
- disc protrusion or disc herniation of the back
- nerve injury or nerve compression
- muscular and vascular disorders (e.g. carpal tunnel syndrome or repetitive strain injury).

How does performing a manual task result in injury?

Contrary to popular belief, it's not just the weight of an object that creates the risk of musculoskeletal injuries.

Workers in the veterinary and animal care environment are at risk of suffering injuries due to:

- working in improper position (e.g. drug administration, assisting with surgery, dental care, and recovery treatments)
- extended static postures (e.g. laboratory work and wound treatments)
- carrying out repetitive tasks (e.g. bathing animals, brushing animals, and computer work)
- forceful exertions (e.g. lifting heavy animals, and lifting food bags)
- lifting or restraining moving animals.

Back injuries while lifting and moving animals during treatment is the most common musculoskeletal injury risk to workers in the veterinary and animal care industry

Be aware!

Muscles and tendons can be injured when the same task is repeated for a long time or work is done with an awkward posture.

What can your employer do to prevent injuries from performing manual tasks?

Your employer has a responsibility to provide and maintain a safe workplace. If you are unsure on how to perform manual tasks safely, ask your employer or supervisor for assistance.

Your employer should provide you with ***risk management** and ****task specific training** where hazardous manual tasks have been identified at your workplace.

****Risk management** are the steps taken to manage workplace hazards described as **SAMM** – **S**pot the hazard; **A**ssess the risk; **M**ake the changes; **M**onitor and follow-up.*

*****Task specific training** is practicing the actual tasks that will be performed.*

Task- specific training should be provided:

- during induction to a new task
- as part of your refresher training
- when work tasks are about to be changed or new ones introduced.

There is a variety of ways you can be trained to perform hazardous manual tasks. Training methods include a buddy system, demonstrations, observation, staff meetings, toolbox talks, and practice sessions.

After the training, you should be able to:

- recognise the risks and the sources of those risks, and in discussion with your employer or supervisor decide the best way to minimise them
- prepare the workplace layout and surroundings to perform manual tasks safely
- prepare the load for manual handling, where applicable
- organise the task and work flow to minimise the risk of injury
- use relevant mechanical aids and handling devices provided to you
- use tools or equipment provided to you.

Example on how to manage risks from moving and lifting an animal

To reduce the risk of manual task injuries your employer should have control measures such as:

- using two person lifts or team handling
- providing training on safe lifting technique (e.g. keep your back straight and lift with your legs and never bend over to lift an object).
- using adjustable or motorised lift table
- using correct equipment to assist patients, such as stretchers, trolleys, and hoists
- making sure equipment is in good working condition
- making sure the workplace layout allows enough space to move and work safely and comfortably
- eliminating lifting of big and heavy patients by treating them on the floor.

Quiz- Manual task

4. The most common health problems that can arise from hazardous manual tasks are:
 - a. musculoskeletal injuries
 - b. cold and flu
 - c. tooth decay
 - d. food allergies

 5. When should you receive task-specific training to perform manual tasks?
 - a. During induction to the task
 - b. As part of your refresher training
 - c. When work tasks are about to be changed or introduced
 - d. All of the above

 6. How does performing a manual task result in injury? Choose four that apply.
 - a. increased effort (forceful exertions)
 - b. awkward and improper postures
 - c. natural postures
 - d. performing repetitive tasks
 - e. lifting heavy animals or objects
-

Hazardous substances

A hazardous substance can be any substance, liquid, solid, dust or gas that may cause you harm. In the veterinary and animal care environments, hazardous substances may include animal medications, anaesthetics, sterilising chemicals, animal products, cleaning products, and solvents.

These substances can be harmful if you:

- get chemicals on your skin
- eat or drink them by mistake
- breathe in fine dust or chemical fumes from sprays and solutions
- mix substances so they become more harmful or toxic
- mistake one substance for another.

The most common injuries or illness resulting from hazardous substances are:

Chemical burns

A chemical burn happens when skin or eyes come into contact with a corrosive chemical such as an acid or a base. Some common cleaning agents include corrosive chemicals like bleach or ammonia. Other corrosive liquids commonly used are bromine, sulfuric acid, phosphoric acid, aqueous sodium hydroxide solution, hydrogen peroxide, and formaldehyde cleaners. Some corrosive gases are chlorine, ammonia, nitrogen dioxide, and formaldehyde.

Be aware!

- Corrosive chemicals can 'eat through' clothing, metal, and other materials.
- You must be trained and supervised when using corrosive chemicals.
- You must wear protective gear and clothing when using corrosive chemicals.
- First aid should be given for chemical burns as soon as possible.
- Formaldehyde can cause severe injury and corneal damage if splashed into the eye.
- Strong acids and bases react very dangerously when mixed together – these can boil and splash anything nearby.
- Never mix any chemicals unless directed to do so on the label or safety data sheet (SDS).
- When making solutions from a concentrate, always start with the correct quantity of water then add the concentrate. Never add the water to the concentrate because the chemical may splash or react differently.

Toxicity

Toxicity occurs when the level of exposure to a substance is such that it will make you ill and can lead to death. Toxic chemicals such as chlorine for water purification and cyanides that are widely used as refrigerants are highly toxic if not used correctly. Pesticides used in flea dips, shampoos, flea sprays, and spot-on products can be highly toxic.

The toxicity of pesticides is indicated by one of the following three warning statements written in large print:

- **DANGEROUS POISON** – indicating high toxicity
- **POISON** – indicating moderate toxicity
- **CAUTION** – indicating low toxicity

Be aware!

- Some chemicals are not toxic on their own but can react dangerously when mixed with certain chemicals to release very toxic gases. For example, hypochlorite (found in bleach used for cleaning) when mixed with some oils can release toxic chlorine gas.
- Some chemicals can release toxic gas when in contact with liquid or moisture. Common fumigants contain aluminium phosphide, which is used to kill insects (i.e. cockroaches and weevils) and animals (i.e. mice and rats) by releasing toxic phosphine gas. This can be deadly to humans too.
- Exposure to pesticides can cause acute, as well as, chronic effects. Examples of acute effects include stinging eyes, rashes, blisters, blindness, nausea, dizziness, diarrhoea, and death. For chronic effects, pesticides have been linked to cancer, Alzheimer's disease, ADHD, and damage to reproductive systems. Pesticides should only be used in the workplace when appropriate risk controls are in place.

Flammability, fire and explosion

Fumes of flammable liquids when mixed with air in certain proportions can create an invisible hazardous atmosphere that can ignite in the presence of ignition sources.

Common flammable products are gasoline, paint thinner, ether, newspapers, boxes, and cleaning chemicals. Special chemicals such as Ethylene Oxide used for gas sterilization and Formaldehyde are highly flammable

Signal word: **DANGER**

Be aware!

- *Always store flammables properly. Materials like gasoline, paint thinner and ether should be stored in an approved flammable storage cabinet or ensure they are stored and used in an area with good ventilation, free from flames or sparks.*
- *Do not reuse 'empty' containers that used to contain flammable chemicals. Even if they are properly cleaned, residual fumes can remain inside empty containers and create hazardous atmospheres that can explode if a spark is present.*
- *In the case of a flammable substance spill or leak, remove any ignition source if it is safe to do so.*
- *Maintain high housekeeping standards – declutter and avoid build-up of combustible materials like newspapers, cardboard boxes, dry leaves, etc. around any chemical storage.*

Allergies

Veterinary and animal care workers are in frequent contact with a range of animals exposing them to allergens from animals and their products such as hair, fur, dander, saliva, urine, and body wastes. These allergens and animal products could cause respiratory disorders (such as asthma), irritation or allergic reactions.

Be aware!

- *Appropriate PPE should be worn during animal care and clean-up (e.g. protective gloves, eye protection, and face masks).*
- *Gloves should always be worn where your hands could come into contact with potentially infected material (such as animal blood and animal wastes).*
- *Cleaning animal cages and litter trays can expose you to allergies. You should be provided with disposable gloves, and with bags in which to place the contents of soiled litter trays before placing it in bins or skips for collection.*
- *Your hands must be washed with soap and water immediately after glove removal.*
- *Clean-up must be done in a way that will minimise splashing or spreading of droplets.*

Contact dermatitis

Contact dermatitis is an inflammation that occurs when a substance comes into contact with skin. The skin becomes irritated and an abnormal (allergic) reaction happens. The skin may be red, swollen, tender, hot, painful or itchy. If the reaction is severe, the skin may blister or weep and can become cracked or crusty.

Veterinary and animal care workers have a higher risk of contact dermatitis as they wash their hands and clean equipment often. Cleaning fluids and disinfectants like F10 often contain chemicals that may cause irritation.

Effects of contact dermatitis on hands may have a profound impact on workers' ability to perform a job. Severe conditions can affect a worker's ability to perform daily living activities, or even lead to job loss.

Remember

Contact dermatitis is preventable by wearing disposable and non-latex gloves for wet work, drying your hands thoroughly with a disposable towel, and moisturising your hands as often as possible, with fragrance-free moisturiser after wet work.

How can you stay safe around hazardous substance?

- Read the label - look for warning pictograms and signs. Always follow the danger safety warnings.
- Read the SDS (safety data sheet) for more information about a product and how to use it safely. Your employer must provide (or have available) safety information documents for any substances or products that are hazardous.
- Check the hazardous substance register at your workplace. It is a legal requirement that your employer keeps a current register of each hazardous substance that may be used or stored in the workplace.
- Make sure you follow safe work procedures and your training. Speak up if you see anyone else not following procedure.
- Only eat or drink in areas free of toxic and biologically harmful substances.
- Store food and drink well away from sources of possible contamination such as the lab, treatment/bathing tub or refrigerator used to store biological or chemical hazards (e.g. vaccines, drugs, and laboratory samples).
- Wash your hands, face, and other exposed areas with soap and water before and after going to the toilet or eating and drinking.
- Always use the PPE and clothing provided by your employer.
- Know what to do and where to go if a substance affects you. If you don't know, check with your employer.

Quiz – Hazardous substance

7. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) provide essential information about:
 - a. hazardous substances and chemical ingredients
 - b. potential health effects from exposure to hazardous substances
 - c. safe use, handling, first aid, disposal, and storage requirements
 - d. all of the above
8. Select three correct actions you would take to keep yourself and others safe from hazardous substances.
 - a. Read the product label
 - b. Read the product SDS
 - c. Follow safe work procedures
 - d. Smell the substance
9. To reduce the risk of contact dermatitis on your hands, you should:
 - a. dry your hands thoroughly with a disposable paper towel after wet work
 - b. moisturise your hands as often as possible with a fragrance-free moisturiser
 - c. wear disposable and non-latex gloves for wet work
 - d. all of the above

Noise

Excessive noise in veterinary and animal care environments can be hazardous causing permanent hearing loss and tinnitus. Damage can occur gradually over a number of years and remain unnoticed until it is too late. Hearing loss can lead to a loss in quality of life.

The hazard noise poses is dose related, and the higher the dose of noise, the greater the risk to the worker's hearing.

The noise dose is dependent on three factors:

- Intensity/Loudness: measured by a noise level meter and is described in decibels (dB)
- Frequency: the number of sound vibrations in one second and is measured in hertz (Hz)
- Duration: the length of time workers have been exposed to noise.

In Western Australia, the law sets a workplace exposure standard averaged over eight hours to be 85 dB(A) or a peak noise level of 140 dB. Any noise exposure above 140 dB can create almost instant damage to hearing. If you have to raise your voice to be heard, the noise level is likely to be 85 dB(A) or more.

Typical noises in animal care that can damage hearing include:

- loud dog barking 80-90dB
- sound levels in dog kennels 85-100dB
- sound levels in animal shelters 100dB+
- rooster crow 90-130dB
- pig shed at feed time 95-105dB
- Gun shots 140dB.

What can your employer do?

Where the exposure standard is exceeded, your employer must provide solutions to noise hazards such as:

- isolating work areas from noisy areas using distance or insulation (i.e. using hallways to separate kennels and wards).
- Using sound-absorbing materials that are easy to keep clean on the ceiling, wall, and floor to reduce noise in the space.
- Limiting the time workers spend in noisy environments.....
- Providing you with hearing protectors (i.e. earplugs and earmuffs) to use along with all other control measures.
- Placing warning signs that identify loud noise areas on doors and require anyone staying in these areas for extended periods to wear hearing protectors.

What can you do to save your hearing?

To safeguard your hearing, you must wear the hearing protectors that have been given to you. It might seem like there is nothing wrong with your hearing, but damage can be done without you noticing it.

Hearing protectors, like earplugs and earmuffs, should be regularly cleaned, repaired, and stored near noisy areas.

Remember:

The most important factor determining the effectiveness of hearing protection is wearing it.

Quiz – Noise

10. The most important factor in the effectiveness of hearing protection devices is:
 - a. style
 - b. appearance
 - c. colour
 - d. wearing it

 11. To prevent hearing loss at work, the law sets a workplace exposure standard averaged over eight hours to be _____dB(A)
 - a. 85
 - b. 95
 - c. 140
 - d. 200
-

Zoonoses

Zoonoses are diseases carried by animals which can be transmitted to humans via animal bites and scratches, by contacting with contaminated hides, wool, or fur, and digesting contaminated food or water. These are microbial hazards including viral, bacterial, fungal, and parasitic infections acquired from animal contact.

Veterinary and animal care workers are at increased risks of contracting Zoonoses.

The most common Zoonoses are:

- **Leptospirosis** is commonly found in pigs and cattle, but sometimes found in sheep, dogs, and cats. The bacteria passed from animals to humans through contact with the urine of sick or infected stock, native and feral animals, and also by swimming, wading, or using water from contaminated streams, rivers, and dams. The bacteria enter the body through cuts in the skin and through the linings of the eyes, nose, or throat.
- **Q fever** is most commonly found in cattle, dairy cows, sheep, and goats. It can be caught by inhaling vapours from infected farm animals, birth fluids, and dust, contact with contaminated straw, wool, hair or hides, and drinking infected unpasteurised milk.
- **Cat scratch fever disease** (Bartonellosis) is a bacterial infection spreading from infected cats to people from bites, scratches or infected fleas.
- **Canine Brucellosis** is an infectious bacterial infection transmitted when humans come into contact with infected dogs.
- **Ringworm** (Dermatophytosis) is a highly infectious fungus that can spread to humans via touch from cats or dogs. It causes ring shaped rash which often accompanies by itchy, red, scaly skin and crusty skin lesions.

Zoonoses from viral and bacterial infections generate flu-like symptoms. You may have muscle pains, severe headaches, and fever. The treatment for these diseases is antibiotics.

Ringworm is a fungal infection that can be treated by using antifungal treatment on the infected areas.

What can your employer do to keep you safe?

- Your employer should have safe work practices and risk control systems in place so that workers have limited exposure to infectious diseases.
- Provide you with training on how to clean and disinfects objects and surfaces properly.
- Provide you with suitable cleaning and disinfecting products and PPE.

- As fleas and ticks feeding on infected animals can also transmit infections, flea infestations must be treated, to lower the risk of transmission to humans.
- Separate infectious animals to prevent the spread and limit exposure to all workers.

What can you do to be safe?

- Care for any animals with known infectious diseases after the rest of the clinic's patients have been cared for.
 - When working with patients and clients with potentially infectious diseases, you should:
 - wear appropriate PPE such as protective apron, exam gloves, and if appropriate, eye protection
 - at the completion of the treatment, thoroughly wash your hands with a disinfecting agent like chlorhexidine or povidone-iodine scrub
 - any clothing that has been contaminated should be changed immediately.
 - Always follow basic hygiene steps to protect yourself including:
 - washing your hands with soap when dealing with animals, and before eating and drinking
 - clean work surfaces, benches, and floors with detergents or disinfectants
 - treating of abrasions and wounds, which should be covered with waterproof dressings at all times while at work
 - prompt washing of skin and eyes if contaminated by animal urine.
 - If you think you may be infected with either disease, see a doctor quickly and mention that you work with animals.
-

Quiz – Zoonoses

12. Identify the five most common Zoonoses that pass from animals to humans:
- a. Leptospirosis
 - b. Hay fever
 - c. Q fever
 - d. Musculoskeletal
 - e. Bartonellosis
 - f. Canine Brucellosis
 - g. Ringworm
 - h. Saturday night fever
13. Which of the following statements can be used as a risk control system to protect workers from zoonoses? Select three that apply.
- a. Workers should only wash their hands before and after shifts when working with animals to save water.
 - b. Cuts and abrasions on hands and fingers should be covered with waterproof dressings at all times while at work.
 - c. Maintain cleanliness of workspaces by cleaning work surfaces, benches, and floors with detergents or disinfectants.
 - d. When working with animals with potentially infectious diseases, any clothing that has been contaminated should be changed immediately.

14. Canine Brucellosis is a bacterium that causes brucellosis in dogs.
- True
 - False
-

Handling sharps

Mia received a needle stick injury at her right arm while assisting the veterinarian to vaccinate a cat. The cat moved and jerked violently while the vet was attempting the injection, causing the vet's hand to move and puncture Mia's right arm. While the injury from the needle stick was minor, Mia was stressed waiting for the result of her blood testing for an infection.

Sharps include items such as syringes, needles, scalpels, stripping knives, and scissors.

Syringes are used to inject drugs and vaccination, and to take samples of blood from animals for testing.

Scalpels and needles are used in surgical procedures.

Stripping knives and scissors are used for grooming.

Sharps are frequently used in a hostile environment where animals may move abruptly during the time of use. Cold, wet hands make tasks awkward and strenuous increasing the risk of sharps injuries. The most serious harm from sharps is from the puncture or laceration injuries and possible infection from blood borne Zoonoses such as brucellosis, tuberculosis, and other diseases.

Sharps present significant health risks if not handled and disposed of with great care. Needle stick injuries may occur when workers dispose of needles, collect and dispose of materials used during patient care procedures, administer injections, draw blood, or handle trash or dirty linens. They may be contaminated with animal blood and other body fluids, or with unknown substances.

Basic first aid for any needle stick injury

- Wash the wound or skin sites thoroughly with soap and water or use a waterless cleanser or antiseptic if water is unavailable.
- Apply a waterproof dressing as necessary, and apply pressure through the dressing if bleeding is still occurring.
- Do not squeeze or rub the injury site.
- You must report any sharps-related injury to your employer or supervisor immediately.

Let's have a look at how to stay safe

- Your employer should have risk control systems in place so that you are not exposed to the risk of sharps injuries.
- You should be trained on safe handling of sharps and what to do if a needle stick injury occurs. For example:
 - Sharps should only be disposed in an appropriate disposal container using tongs or tweezers, not with the fingers.
 - The container must be clearly labelled, puncture resistant, and leak proof. It must have a lid or top which can be securely closed, and must carry a "biohazard" label. These should be replaced when they are only three-quarters full, to prevent people from forcing used sharps into a near-full container and risking injury.
 - Never throw needles or sharps directly into regular rubbish containers, regardless of whether or not they are capped.
 - Never recap a needle as there is a high chance of needle stick injury.
 - Never open a used sharps container or stick your fingers into one for any reason.
 - Place sharps in bin needle point down every time.

Good to know

Students in work experience programs will not be allowed to handle syringes and needles, although they may be working with or around other types of sharps.

Quiz – Handling sharps

15. A needle stick can place you at risk of possible infection from blood borne Zoonotic diseases which can be harmful.
 - a. True
 - b. False

16. When might needle stick injuries occur?
 - a. Disposing of needles
 - b. Administering injections
 - c. Handling trash or dirty linens
 - d. All of the above

Radiation

The use of x-ray equipment in veterinary practices is essential for diagnosis and treatment of illness and injury in animals. Radiation injures tissues by causing ionisations in the molecules of living cells. Short duration, infrequent exposure to low doses of radiation, such as having radiographs taken of yourself, is acceptable. The human cells are able to repair the damage rapidly. However, at higher doses or long term exposure to low doses of radiation, the cells might not be able to repair the damage causing them to change permanently or die. High dose exposure can cause skin changes, cell damage, gastrointestinal and bone marrow disorders that can be fatal. Long term exposure to low doses of radiation has been linked to cancer, leukaemia, premature aging, and other disorders.

Workers must be safeguarded against potential exposures to radiation. Only qualified persons will be permitted to be involved in x-ray procedures. Unless assistance with an animal is needed, no individual other than the operator should be in the x-ray room during exposures.

If an animal is held in position during radiography, mechanical supporting or restraining devices should be available and used where possible. If the animal is held by an individual, that person must be protected with appropriate shielding devices (protective gloves and apron), and positioned so that no part of their body could be in the path of the x-ray beam.

No one should routinely be asked to hold animals for x-ray. In the majority of cases, animals will be anaesthetised prior to x-ray, so there will be no need for any person other than the operator to be in the room. X-ray rooms should be provided with sufficient radiation shielding and be inspected by authority regularly.

Remember:

High dose exposure and long term exposure to low doses of radiation are dangerous. Students in work experience programs must not be exposed to radiation.

Quiz – radiation

17. Workers are to be involved in x-ray procedures and should routinely help to hold animals for x-ray?
 - a. True, Workers should be ready to help with any tasks when asked
 - b. False, Only qualified persons will be permitted to be involved in x-ray procedures
 18. What types of exposure to radiation become harmful to health? Select two that apply
 - a. Short term exposure to high doses of radiation
 - b. Short term exposure to low doses of radiation
 - c. Long term exposure to low doses of radiation
 - d. Radiation is not harmful to health in both short-term and long-term exposure
-

Slips, trips, and falls

A miniature Schnauzer, Odie, and his owner walked into a grooming salon while a Rottweiler, Thor, waiting for his turn to be groomed. Odie did not like the look of Thor and started attacking Thor. While a young salon assistant, Brendon, was helping Odie's owner to restrain him, he tripped on the electrical cable trailing across the salon. Brendon broke his right wrist trying to break the fall.

Slips, trips, and falls are described as falls on the same level. These types of injuries can result in serious harm and lengthy time off work. The injuries can also affect young workers in their everyday social and school lives and may mean they cannot play sport or engage in physical activities or hobbies.

A slip, trip, and fall may cause injuries, including:

- broken bones when colliding with an object or hitting the ground
- cuts if it occurs near sharp objects
- sprains or strains.

What causes slips, trips and falls?

Common causes include:

- Slippery floors from water or liquid spills.
- Wearing unsuitable shoes.
- Unstable, loose, or uneven surfaces.
- Steps and different floor levels.
- Poor lighting.
- Objects on the floors such as loose cords or equipment left in walkways.
- Loose footing while handling animals.

What can your employer do to prevent slips, trips and falls?

Your employer should:

- Allow safe movement in the workplace, including entries and exits that are free of obstructions.
- Ensure floors and surfaces in the workplace are well-maintained and installed with task appropriate surfaces.
- Provide adequate lighting for safe movement.
- Ensure sufficient space to work.
- Maintain workplaces to keep them in a clean and tidy condition. Floors should be cleaned frequently, disposing of shorn hair, clipped nails, and removing any residues that may make the floor slippery.

- Provide tools and equipment to assist you to work safely.
- Ensure workers wear suitable footwear with appropriate treads that are kept clean.
- Install ramps in areas where the floor level changes and trolley access is required.
- Provide information, instruction, training and supervision so that workers are not exposed to slip and trip hazards.

How can you prevent slips, trips, and falls at work?

- Wear suitable shoes with treads that are kept clean. Incorrect footwear can cause slips and trips.
 - Clean up spillages straight away and dry the floor to ensure the surface is not left wet. Don't leave spills for someone else to clean up.
 - Keep walkways clear of obstacles, especially during busy work times.
 - Carry items only at a height that you can safely see over to avoid trip hazards and bumping into things.
 - Ensure that you have enough light to work safely; this may include portable task lighting.
-

Quiz – Slips, trips, and falls

19. A slip, trip, or fall may cause injuries, including:
- a. broken bones when colliding with an object or hitting the ground
 - b. cuts if it occurs near sharp objects
 - c. sprains or strains
 - d. all of the above
20. What safety precautions can help prevent slips?
- a. Clean up spillage right away
 - b. Locate mobile equipment near the power supply to avoid trailing cables
 - c. Wear appropriate shoes for work
 - d. All of the above
-

Work-related stress

Work-related stress describes the physical, mental, and emotional reactions of workers who feel that their work demands exceed their abilities, or there is a lack of resources and support given to do work. While stress can build up over time it can also occur following specific incidents involving trauma, bullying, conflict, harassment, and violence.

Working in the veterinary and animal care industry can become stressful, you may have:

- to communicate with difficult pet owners
- to work long hours and have less time to spend with family, relationships, and friends
- a heavy workload
- compassion fatigue, due to an emotional depletion from the nature of the work, such as a need to show compassion and empathy towards clients who are emotionally distressed.

How do you recognise your work-related stress?

The effects of work-related stress may include physical and behavioural reactions. For example, warning signs include:

- **Physical** - fast heart rate, headaches, blurred vision, sweating, dizziness, aching neck, and shoulder muscles, clenched jaw, skin rashes
- **Behavioural** – anxious or nervous behaviour, mood swing, drinking too much alcohol, drug abuse, sleeping more or less than usual, short attention span, eating too much.

Let's have a look at how to keep stress under control

Your employer must manage the risk of work-related stress in consultation with workers and health and safety representatives (HSRs). This process is known as SAMM. These are steps taken to identify the stress hazards in the workplace and put in place control measures to minimise your risks of exposure to stress.

The following strategies may assist you to manage your stress:

- Talk to your employer about the source of stress (e.g. workload, staffing, conflicts, bullying).
- Follow the agreed standards of acceptable behaviour in place for workers and clients/ family members.
- Have a clear job description and stick to that work only.
- Report any violence, bullying or intimidation.
- Use any counselling service provided by your employer if you have been exposed to a traumatic or challenging situation.
- Keep fit and relaxed.

Be aware!

Be aware of the warning signs of work-related stress in your workmates. It is important to be empathetic and offering the time and space for them to express themselves.

Quiz – Work-related stress

21. Work-related stress can be started or made worse by:
 - a. work demands exceeding the abilities and resources given to do the work
 - b. bullying, conflict, and harassment
 - c. trauma
 - d. all of the above
22. Stress can produce symptoms that can include physical (e.g. fast heart rate, headaches, clenched jaw) and behavioural reactions (e.g. nervous, angry and moody, and not sleeping properly).
 - a. True
 - b. False

Spot the hazards

Vet Perth Animal Hospital

There are 6 hazards in this area. Try to find them all.



Hazard notebook

Fill in the hazard notebook.

#	Spot the hazard	Assess the risk	Make the change	Monitor and follow-up
1	Undisposed syringes in the common area	Critical	Block off the area and report it to your employer	Check the procedures regarding sharp disposal. Make sure the syringes are disposed correctly.
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				