

How to Prepare to be a Good Animal Handler

Our topics for this week are:

- **The study and observation required of a good animal handler**
- **Constant practice of animal handling to prevent loss of skills**
- **Ten keys to becoming a good animal handler**

Good handling of any type of domestic or tame non-domestic animal involves proper preparation, maintenance of skills, and 10 basic keys.

Preparation for Animal Handling

Proper Preparation to be a good Animal Handler requires reading as much as possible about animal handling from reliable sources, frequent observations of normal animal behavior, guidance from a good animal handler, frequent observations of a good handler working with animals, and finally, practice under a good animal handler's supervision.

Maintenance of Skills

Animal handling skills are like tennis skills. The best animal handler in the world is best only as long as he or she practices those skills. Reactions and timing are soon lost without constant practice.

Ten Keys to Good Animal Handling

1. Frequently, but briefly and gently handle young animals during their critical socialization period to reduce their natural fear of humans while being mindful not to eliminate their inherent respect for humans.
2. Quietly handle healthy adults frequently for short periods to habituate the animals for handling without an association with fearful, painful events to follow.
3. Confine animals in environments as similar to their ancestor's natural habitat as reasonably possible, e.g. crates as dens for dogs, pastures as steppes for horses, and deep substrate as desert sand for hamsters.
4. Provide environmental enrichments that will prevent or reduce boredom and stereotypic behaviors.

5. Confine animals with as much personal space as needed to prevent or minimize stereotypic behaviors.
6. Maintain social like-species support for animals by keeping prey, pack, and flock animals in groups with a size appropriate for the species.
7. Minimally handle elderly, neonatal, or sick animals to prevent their exhaustion or pain.
8. Handle animals with confidence, using smooth rhythmic movements along with a calm low-pitched voice.
9. Be able to recognize abnormal behavior for the species and the individual, including fear or signs of health problems.
10. Use correct timing and type of responses to favorable or unfavorable animal conduct to shape their future behavior to handling.

If you have comments or you're interested in particular animal handling subjects, contact us at CBC@BetterAnimalHandling.com

Now let's recap the key points to remember from today's episode:

- 1. Learning good animal handling begins with study and observation of good examples**
- 2. Constant practice is essential to maintaining animal handling abilities**
- 3. Ten keys to becoming a animal handler facilitates reaching the goal of being a good animal handler**

More information on animal handling can be found in my books, *Animal Handling and Physical Restraint*, *Concise Textbook of Small Animal Handling*, and *Concise Textbook of Large Animal Handling* all published by CRC Press and available on Amazon and from many other fine book supply sources.

Additional information is provided at: www.betteranimalhandling.com . This website has more than 200 past podcasts with notes on handling of dogs, cats, other small mammals, birds, reptiles, horses, cattle, small ruminants, swine, and poultry.

Don't forget, serious injury or death can result from handling and restraining some animals. Safe and effective handling and restraint requires experience and continual practice. Acquisition of the needed skills should be under the supervision of an experienced animal handler.