

Essentials of Proper Animal Restraint

Our topics for this week are

- **Four essentials for proper animal restraint**
- **Attitude of handlers who will restrain animals**
- **Value of release technique for eliminating future fear of restraint**

Guidelines for physical restraint of animals are contained in the American Veterinary Medical Association's position statement on the Physical Restraint of Animals. This states: "Humane and safe physical restraint is the use of manual or mechanical means to limit some or all of an animal's normal voluntary movement for the purposes of examination, collection of samples, drug administration, therapy, or manipulation. The method used should provide the least restraint required to allow the specific procedure(s) to be performed properly, and should protect both the animal and personnel from harm. Every effort should be made to ensure adequate and ongoing training in animal handling and behavior by all parties involved, so that distress and physical restraint are minimized. In some situations, chemical restraint may be the preferred method. Whenever possible, restraint should be planned, formulated, and communicated prior to its application."

To be more concise there are 4 essentials of proper animal restraint which are:

- The least restraint required to allow the procedure(s) to be performed properly
- Protection of both the animal and personnel from harm
- To plan, formulate, and communicate restraint prior to its application
- To use chemical restraint when physical restraint presents excessive risk of injury

Chemical restraint, including sedation, should NOT be used just to save time, for convenience, or to compensate for a lack of proper training in physical restraint of animals. Proper handling makes handling Fear Free. Chemical restraint masks the fear of handling or restraint.

Restraint, Learning, and Behavioral Adjustment of Animals

Proper animal restraint for husbandry, treatment, and safety is quiet, methodical, and should leave the animal easier to handle the next time. In addition to achieving the initial purpose for handling animals, each handling event should have three goals: (1) safety for the animal and the handler, (2) minimum stress for the animal and the handler during animal capture and restraint,

and (3) a calm release of the animal at time of the handler's choosing. Safety is paramount and supercedes minimizing stress or a desirable release, when necessary. Handler safety is of higher priority than animal safety, but all possible effort should be to ensure the safety of both.

An effective animal handler has a proper attitude which includes allotment of sufficient time; use of his or her voice, touch, and body language appropriately; constant guarding against the risk of human or animal injury; adaptation to special circumstances, and proper attire and grooming to reduce the risk of injury.

The traits of superior animal handlers have been found to be emotional stability and being assertive, serious, pragmatic, forthright, self-assured, sensitive, and conscientious. Better handlers are more reserved than outgoing, suspicious than trusting, and controlled than uncontrolled in their responses to animal actions. Lack of empathy is the hallmark of a poor animal handler. Handlers may be empathetic toward one species and effective with that species but dislike other species and be ineffective with them. Use of derogatory terms toward animals such as "dumb", "stupid", "mean", etc. affect handler attitude and actions and should disqualify that person from restraining the animals to whom the terms were directed.

Affection for the Animals

A good animal handler has to like the type of animal that will be restrained. When a handler dislikes a type of animal to be restrained, the handler should excuse himself or herself or the supervisor should remove the handler from the situation whenever possible.

Since the time of Hippocrates, the first rule of medicine has been *primum non nocere* ("first do no harm"). Proper handling techniques should also not cause harm. Some may cause temporary discomfort for distraction reasons such as horse twitches and hog snares, but none should cause physical harm or establish fear of physical restraint. This includes the use of inappropriate enclosures. Enclosures that can cause mental harm, including stereotypical behavior, e.g., self-mutilation or cannibalism, from intense confinement or the lack of minimal mental stimulation, should not be used.

Importance of an Organized Approach and Execution of Restraint

Being organized and having a plan before handling or restraining animals is important for success for each handling event and all future handling events with the animals handled.

Determination is an essential quality of a good handler. A handler must be confident and determined that the plan to handle or restrain an animal will be successful. Allowing the animal to escape the first attempt at handling will make subsequent efforts at least twice as difficult. The release must be as quiet and calm as possible and it must be under control of the handler, not the animal.

Conclusions

Each handling, and especially restraint experience, is a lesson learned by the animal, and their release is most remembered.

Animals resent or fear forced restraint. Excessive restraint can cause increased aggression toward handlers. Regardless of the species being handled, the least restraint possible (without risking animal escape) should be attempted. If restraint will be used, it should be as humane as possible to still ensure reasonable safety to humans and animals

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. Restraint may be necessary to safely handle some animals.**
- 2. Restraint should be the minimum required to safely complete the reason for handling an animal.**
- 3. Chemical restraint, including sedation in some cases, should be used for restraint when necessary for animal or human safety but never for saving time, convenience, generating profits, or other reasons unrelated to safety.**

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 350 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.