

The Welfare of Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (England) Regulations 2012

Additional guidance for veterinary surgeons

Introduction

This note has been written in co-operation with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) to help explain the role for veterinary surgeons under the Welfare of Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (England) Regulations 2012 (“the Regulations”).

Under the Regulations, in order to apply for a licence to operate a travelling circus with wild animals and under the conditions of a subsequent licence, the operator must:

- appoint a veterinary surgeon to lead on the veterinary care for animals covered by a licence (“a Lead Vet”), and
- ensure animals covered by the licence receive regular veterinary visits.

This note provides additional advice for those fulfilling either of the two veterinary roles, that of Lead Vet appointed under the Regulations, and that of clinician (without lead responsibility) visiting the animals licensed under the Regulations.

This note supplements detailed guidance on the Regulations and should be read in conjunction with the guidance. Of particular relevance to vets are the licensing conditions set out in the Schedule of the Regulations and the sections of the detailed guidance on Healthcare (page 11 onwards), Fitness (pages 30 to 31) and Care Plans (pages 67 onwards).

For guidance on other aspects of the Regulations please refer to the detailed guidance.

More information

The Regulations are published at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/2932/contents/made.

The detailed guidance on the Regulations is published on the Defra website at: www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2012/11/23/pb13835-circus-animal-welfare/ .

General enquiries may be directed to circusanimalwelfare@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Supplementary guidance to vets

1. Lead Vets appointed under the Regulations

Competence

See also: pages 11 to 12 of the detailed guidance.

Veterinary surgeons are reminded of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons' (RCVS) requirement that vets keep within their own area of competence. The number and type of licensed animals present in a travelling circus is highly variable. It can range from a few individuals with similarities to familiar domesticated species, to multiple exotic species. It is therefore the individual veterinary surgeon's responsibility to ensure that their level of competence is appropriate after consideration of the stock held by any circus which approaches them. This level of competence must be maintained.

Provision of cover

The Lead Vet must nominate a suitably experienced and fully briefed deputy to cover all the Lead Vet's responsibilities during absences. The Lead Vet must ensure that the circus and other attending veterinary surgeons can contact the deputy with ease.

Care Plans

See also: pages 13 and 67 onwards of the detailed guidance.

Care Plans which have been agreed by the Lead Vet should be signed by both the operator and the Lead Vet, and both parties should keep a copy. With the exception of the daily records, any alterations to the Care Plans must be treated in the same way.

2. Any vet consulted about animals licensed under the Regulations

Competence

See also: page 14 to 15 of the detailed guidance.

Attention is drawn to the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons (www.rcvs.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-surgeons/), particularly with regard to professional competence and cover. RCVS guidance on taking over a colleague's case, mutual clients and 24 hour emergency first aid and pain relief should also be heeded. Where another vet attends to a licensed animal, consultation with the Lead Vet before (except in an emergency situation) and after the visit is required to enable the Lead Vet to maintain the oversight required by the Regulations. The Lead Vet must be readily available for such contact, and provide a suitably experienced deputy for planned absences.

Updating Care Plans

See also: page 13 of the detailed guidance.

The Lead Vet's agreement must be obtained if another veterinary surgeon wishes the Care Plans to be altered. All veterinary visits and their outcomes must be recorded in the individual record for the animal, which travels with the animal. This document facilitates the provision of co-ordinated treatment in a travelling environment and should be read prior to treating the animal (except in an acute emergency) and completed at the conclusion of the visit.

Assessment of fitness

See also: page 16 of the detailed guidance.

The veterinary letter should contain, in addition to the details specified on page 16 of the detailed guidance, a clear statement of how long the letter is valid for and when the animal should be seen again by a veterinary surgeon. The veterinary surgeon should observe the animal under the circumstances of the activity being assessed where ever possible, but must halt the activity immediately if it appears detrimental to the animal's welfare.

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This document is out of date and has been archived