

PRELICENSE INSPECTION	An applicant for an initial license must make his/her animals, premises, facility, equipment, vehicles, and records available for an inspection prior to the issuance of a license to determine compliance with the AWA regulations and standards.
Criteria	<p>An applicant’s facility must meet all applicable regulations and standards to obtain a license.</p> <p>The applicant may have up to 2 additional inspections within 90 days of the first prelicense inspection to get his/her facility into compliance.</p> <p>If the applicant’s facility is not in compliance after 3 inspections or within 90 days of the first prelicense inspection, he/she will forfeit the application fee and must wait 6 months from the date of the last inspection to reapply.</p> <p>No regulated activities may be conducted by the applicant until a USDA license is obtained.</p>
Pre-Inspection Procedure	<p>The Regional Office will send you (the inspector) a notification that the person has submitted an application for licensure (see page 8.12.21).</p> <p>Contact the applicant within 10 days to determine if he/she actually needs a USDA license.</p> <p>NOTE: Animal Care does not give out voluntary licenses, i.e., to allow ownership as a pet or to circumvent a Federal, State or local law. The applicant must be conducting a regulated activity.</p> <p>To determine if the applicant requires a license, ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• what animals he/she intends to use• what activity he/she conducts or intend to conduct to determine if it is a covered activity• if he/she has arrangements to exhibit animals, such as contracts or exhibition dates• if he/she has travel enclosures if intends to be a traveling exhibitor

If the application does not have a phone number listed or the phone number on the application has been disconnected:

1. check telephone information (411) or internet search sites, such as *Anywho.com* or *Freeality.com*, for a phone number
2. if you cannot find a phone number, then either:
 - write to the applicant asking him/her to contact you, or
 - visit the facility

NOTE: If you need directions:

 - do an internet search, such as *mapquest.com*, or
 - ask at the local post office

If the applicant does **not** require a license:

- explain to him/her which activities/animals are regulated
- inform the Regional Office in writing either by a memo or by a notation on the notification letter

If the applicant requires a license:

- set up a time and date for the first inspection
NOTE: Prelicense inspections are the only announced inspections.
- get directions to the facility if necessary
- ask what species of animals he/she will be exhibiting
- discuss any topics that you feel necessary, such as
 - Program of Veterinary Care
 - Exercise Plan for dogs
 - Environmental Enhancement Plan for nonhuman primates
 - dangerous animal handling qualifications letter
 - exhibition plans
 - shelter from the elements
 - feeding and watering
 - proper diet for large felids
 - food and bedding storage
 - public barriers
 - perimeter fences

- inform the applicant that conducting regulated activities without a license is a violation of the AWA
- remind applicant to check State, county or local laws or ordinances and with other applicable Federal agencies
Note: The AWA regulations and standards do not supercede State, county or local ownership laws or ordinances.

If the first prelicense inspection cannot be completed within a reasonable amount of time from the date on the cover letter accompanying the completed application, you (the inspector) should inform the Regional Office in writing as to why an inspection could not be conducted.

NOTE: A reasonable amount of time should not exceed 3 months.

If you are **unable to contact** the applicant:

- document the date and time of all attempted contacts
- inform the Regional Office in writing, including the dates/times of the attempted contacts
- recommend cancelling the application

Prelicense Inspection Resulting from a Search

You (the inspector) may initiate the prelicense process, e.g., at the time of a search. If the person does not have a customer number, then you should:

- **at the facility:**
 1. give the person a prelicense packet
 2. have the person complete:
 - the Application For a License-New License (APHIS Form 7003-A), and
 - the Taxpayer Identification Number form
 1. collect the application fee

Note: You should make a notation on the inspection report that you collected the application fee. If the application fee was not collected, you should note

on

the inspection report that the applicant will be sending it into the Regional Office.

	<p>2. complete the inspection report using the Microsoft Word inspection report template</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • after the inspection: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. contact an ILA or the Program Specialist at the Regional Office 1. provide the ILA or Program Specialist the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ person or business’s full name ➤ complete business address ➤ complete site address ➤ county, if known ➤ business telephone number, including area code 2. obtain the customer number, if available 3. replicate the LARIS database, after you have been informed that the person has been entered into LARIS 4. enter the information exactly as it is on the Word Inspection Report into the LARIS database NOTE: Date of the actual inspection, date prepared, and date received should be the same as on the Word Inspection Report. 6. place the following statement in the narrative section: “This is an electronic version of the report dated xx/xx/xx.” 7. send a copy of the LARIS Inspection Report to the licensee by regular mail or email 8. attach a copy of the LARIS Inspection Report to the Word Inspection Report 9. submit the Inspection Reports to your SACS or the Regional Office following your standard procedure
<p>Inspection Procedure</p>	<p>The prelicense period is the best time to educate the applicant about the AWA regulations and standards. The time spent explaining what is necessary to be in compliance will benefit the applicant, the animals, and the agency. Encourage the applicant to ask as many questions as necessary to clarify his/her responsibility.</p>

The basic steps detailed below are the components of a prelicense inspection and need to be performed. However, the exact order is left to the discretion of the individual inspector.

Discuss the inspection process

Explain to the applicant that you will be:

- inspecting the animals and facilities
- inspecting transport caging and vehicles for traveling exhibitors
- identifying and discussing noncompliant items
- discussing general husbandry practices
- discussing handling and safety issues
- discussing public contact with large felids, if applicable
- discussing veterinary care
- discussing exercise for dogs, environmental enhancement for nonhuman primates, etc., if applicable
- examining records
- discussing dog/cat identification, if applicable
- answering questions

Review applicable required written plans, such as:

- Program of Veterinary Care (see Section 15.6)
- Exercise Plan for Dogs (see Section 12.2)
- Environmental Enhancement Plan for Nonhuman Primates (see Section 12.1)
- Proper Diet for Large Felids, if not using commercially prepared diets (see Section 12.3)
- Itinerary, if a traveling exhibitor (See Section 17.4)

Explain identification requirements for dogs and cats:

- discuss procedure for keeping tags on the cage rather than on the dog or cat
- discuss how to obtain an official tag, a tattoo code or approval for use of a microchip
- inform the applicant that the dogs/cats must be properly

	<p>identified as soon as possible after he/she receives the license number</p> <p><i>Explain record-keeping requirements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• supply the applicant with a set of official forms• instruct the applicant how to properly complete the forms• instruct the applicant how to order more forms <p><i>Review the Application for License (APHIS Form 7003-A):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• make sure the information is complete and correct• review the process for calculating the license fee <p>NOTE: If there are any errors, have the applicant fill out a new Application form.</p>
<p>Animals Present</p>	<p><i>If animals are present, conduct a thorough inspection of the physical facilities and animals:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• identify all noncompliant items, making sure the applicant understands the problem• explain the requirements of the standards, such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ food/bedding storage➤ daily cleaning➤ sanitation of food dishes/water bowls• ask questions about the operation of the facility, if necessary, to ascertain compliance• ask about the handling experience of the personnel• ask the applicant if he/she intends to acquire other species of animals and discuss the standards for those animals• ask about direct public contact with large felids• anticipate and discuss problems that may occur:<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ at other times of the year➤ with a change in the size of the animal➤ with an increase in the number of animals➤ while in travel status, if applicable
<p>No Animals Present</p>	<p><i>The species of animal(s) to be housed at the facility should be present at the time of the prelicense inspection. However, under special circumstances, Animal Care may license a facility without</i></p>

animals being present. You should consult with your SACS if this situation occurs.

*If **no** animals are present, determine what species of animals are to be housed at the facility and conduct a thorough inspection:*

- determine if the facility can meet the requirements for that species
- identify all noncompliant items, making sure the applicant understands the problem
- ask questions about the operation of the facility, if necessary, to ascertain compliance
- explain the requirements of the standards, such as:
 - food/bedding storage
 - daily cleaning
 - sanitation of food dishes/water bowls
- anticipate and discuss problems that may occur:
 - at other times of the year
 - with a change in the size of the animal
 - with an increase in the number of animals

Dangerous Animals

If the applicant intends to exhibit potentially dangerous animals, explain that he/she must demonstrate adequate experience and knowledge of the species he/she maintains and all animal handlers must have proper training and knowledge to handle the animals.[2.131(a)]

Give the applicant a copy of the “handling potentially dangerous animals” letter. (See pages 8.12.22-8.12.23)

Potentially dangerous animals are:

- elephants
- large felines, such as:
 - lions
 - tigers
 - cougars
 - leopards
 - jaguars

***No Direct Public Contact
Experience and Training***

Explain to the applicant that any animal handler must have adequate experience, training and knowledge to handle the animals.

Explain that the animal handler should:

- have demonstrable knowledge and skill in currently accepted professional standards and techniques in animal training and handling
- be able to distinguish between normal and abnormal behavior in the animals
- be able to recognize signs of behavioral stress in the animals
- be able to apply his/her knowledge to the safe exhibition of the animal(s)
- generally have handling experience involving the species he/she will be exhibiting

Inform the applicant that the information about the handler's training and experience should be submitted to the Regional Office.

Personnel Safety

Explain that for the safety of the personnel, at least two persons should be present when working with dangerous animals in a free or potential contact environment.

Explain that if this is not possible, the use of comparable safety measures will be evaluated on an individual basis. Comparable safety measures may include:

- shift doors operated from outside animal enclosures
- lock out areas
- alley way systems

Direct Public Contact

Direct public contact venues include, but are not limited to:

- carnivals
- circuses
- elephant rides

- magic acts
- photo opportunities
- public feeding of animals

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- be able to distinguish between normal and abnormal behavior in the animals
- be able to recognize signs of behavioral stress in the animals
- be able to apply his/her knowledge to the safe exhibition of the animal(s)
- generally have experience handling the species he/she will be exhibiting
- have experience with public contact exhibition of the species involved

Inform the applicant that the information about the handler's training and experience should be submitted to the Regional Office.

Public Safety

Explain that the AWA handling regulations prohibit the use of drugs to facilitate, allow, or provide for public handling of any animals.

Explain that direct public contact with juvenile (over 3 months of age) and adult felines such as lions, tigers, jaguars, leopards, and cougars:

- may **not** be done safely under any conditions

- does **not** conform to the handling regulations

If the applicant intends to exhibit juvenile and adult large felines, you should explain that the Regional Office is willing to review his/her proposed exhibition to determine if it complies with the handling requirements.

If the applicant wants the Regional Office to review the proposed exhibition, he/she should send a description of the intended exhibition which should include:

- number of animals
- species of animals
- age of the animals
- expected public interaction
- description of the exhibit
- method(s) of restraint used
- photographs of the exhibit and restraint methods

Explain that direct public contact with infant animals is not specifically prohibited as long as:

- it is not rough or excessive
- there is minimal risk of harm to the animal and the public

Explain that during all periods of public contact, an employee must be present who is:

- responsible
- knowledgeable
- readily identifiable

Explain to the applicant that during periods of public contact:

- only handlers who meet the handling qualifications should be allowed to handle animals
- **at least two** qualified handlers should be present
- more than two qualified handlers may be needed depending on:
 - the number of animals, and
 - the circumstances of the exhibition
- additional personnel may be needed to guard against

members of the public inappropriately approaching the animals

Note: These personnel must be properly trained but do not have to meet the “qualified handler” requirements.

Emergency Contingency Plans

Explain to the applicant that facilities with marine mammals must have written contingency plans for emergency water and electric power in the event of failure of the primary sources. (See Section 10.11)

Explain that the applicant should have a written contingency plan to address restraint, recapture, and/or euthanasia of an animal(s) in the event of aggressive behavior, escape, or other emergency situation.

NOTE: A lack of a contingency plan may not be cited as a stand-alone violation, except for marine mammals.

The contingency plan should include, but not be limited to:

- procedures for handling and recapturing escaped animals
- chain of command during an emergency situation
- criteria for selecting a restraint method
- protocols for euthanasia in an emergency situation
- provisions for contacting local law enforcement and animal control officials
- available emergency equipment, such as:
 - chemical restraint drugs
 - darting equipment
 - CO₂ fire extinguishers
 - high pressure hoses
 - pepper sprays
 - nets
 - cell phones
 - 2-way radios

Note: Explain that emergency equipment listed in the

contingency plan should be available during all periods of potential public contact.

In assessing a facility's ability to handle an emergency situation, you should ask the following questions:

- who has access to the restraint drugs & equipment
- are the people who have access properly trained on the equipment at the facility
- when was the last training for emergency personnel
- are the people qualified to use the restraint drugs/equipment on site on a regular basis
- are emergency phone numbers, including the personnel qualified to use the restraint drugs/equipment, posted on or near the phones
- is there 24 hour coverage for the use of restraint equipment
- when was the last time drugs were checked for expiration dates
- when was the last time the equipment was checked to make sure it is working properly

Documentation Requirements

Explain that the applicant should submit to the appropriate Regional Office for review and determination of acceptability:

- documentation of qualifications of any proposed handlers
- proposed method of exhibition of juvenile and adult large felids, if applicable
- Emergency Contingency Plan, if applicable

Non-dangerous Animals

If the applicant intends to exhibit non-dangerous animals, explain that *he/she must demonstrate adequate experience and knowledge of the species he/she maintains* and all animal handlers must have proper training and knowledge to handle the animals.

Explain that:

- there must be adequate public barriers to protect the animals and the public when appropriate

Inspection Report

- a readily identifiable employee or attendant must be present at all times during periods of public contact
- young or immature animals may **not** be exposed to rough or excessive handling
- animals may be exhibited for a period of time and under conditions consistent with their good health and well being
- drugs may **not** be used to allow or facilitate public handling of the animals

Enter the inspection report into LARIS.

NOTE: If the applicant was previously licensed, make sure that you **DO NOT** enter the new prelicense inspection under the previous license number. There should **never** be a license number on a prelicense inspection report.

Specify the number of the prelicense inspection (Prelicense Inspection #1, #2, or #3) in the type of inspection block.

No Noncompliant Items

If there are **no** noncompliant items:

- put the applicable following or similar statements in the narrative:
 - **“No noncompliances identified this inspection.”**
 - “Applicant wants to be licensed as a Class C Exhibitor.”
 - “NO REGULATED ACTIVITIES MAY BE CONDUCTED UNTIL USDA LICENSE IS ISSUED.”
 - “Record-keeping requirements were explained to the applicant.”
 - “Identification requirements were explained to the applicant.”
 - “Dogs/cats must be identified with official USDA identification within 30 days after license number is received.”
 - “Applicant should submit documentation of handler qualifications and a copy of the contingency plan to the Regional Office (*type in address if necessary*).

	<p>Left copy of handler qualifications letter with applicant.” Note: You, the inspector, should put a note or memo on the front of the inspection report alerting the ILA not to process the inspection report without checking with the appropriate SACS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• if appropriate, document as a “Note” potential problems that were discussed• if the applicant pays the license fee, state in the narrative: “License fee received.” (DO NOT ACCEPT CASH.)• if the applicant does not pay the license fee at this time, state in the narrative that he/she will be sending the license fee to the Regional Office. Note: Inform the applicant that the license will not be issued until the license fee has been received and cleared the bank.
<p>Noncompliant Items</p>	<p>If there are noncompliant items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• cite all noncompliant items using the four-point citation (see page 7.3.1)• do not give correction dates• put the following or similar statements in the narrative:<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ “All items must be in compliance within (<i>number of prelicense inspections left-2 or 1</i>) more inspections or by (<i>date-90 days from 1st prelicense inspection</i>) or applicant will forfeit application fee and must wait 6 months to reapply.”➤ “NO REGULATED ACTIVITIES MAY BE CONDUCTED UNTIL USDA LICENSE IS ISSUED.”• if feasible, schedule a date for the next prelicense inspection and state in the narrative: “The next prelicense inspection has been tentatively scheduled for (<i>date</i>).”• at the prelicense inspection where you explain record-keeping requirements, state in the narrative: “Record-keeping requirements were explained to the applicant.”• at the prelicense inspection where you explain identification

	<p>for dogs/cats, state in the narrative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “Identification requirements were explained to the applicant.” AND ➤ “Dogs/cats must be identified with official USDA identification within 30 days after license number is received.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if appropriate, state in the narrative: “Applicant should submit documentation of handler qualifications and a copy of the contingency plan to the Regional Office (<i>type in address if necessary</i>). Left copy of handler qualifications letter with applicant.” • at the prelicense inspection where you explain the submission of an itinerary for a traveling exhibitor, state in the narrative: “Itinerary submission requirements were explained to the applicant.” • if appropriate, document as a “NOTE” potential problems that were discussed
<p>Failed 3rd Inspection</p>	<p>If the applicant does not pass the 3rd prelicense inspection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cite all noncompliant items • put the following or similar statements in the narrative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “Applicant has failed to pass the 3rd prelicense inspection and does not meet the requirements for licensing.” ➤ “NO REGULATED ACTIVITIES MAY BE CONDUCTED UNTIL USDA LICENSE IS OBTAINED” ➤ “Applicant will forfeit application fee.” ➤ “APPLICANT MUST WAIT UNTIL (<i>Date-6 months from the 3rd prelicense inspection</i>) TO REAPPLY.”
<p>Exit Briefing</p>	<p>If noncompliant items have been cited on the first or second prelicense inspection, during the exit briefing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss the noncompliant items cited • show the applicant the section of the regulation/standard cited, if requested • explain the maximum 3 inspections or 90 day period

	<p>Note: Do not collect the license fee.</p> <p>If no noncompliant items have been cited on the prelicense inspection, during the exit briefing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• discuss the enforcement process, e.g., APHIS Form 7060, stipulations, license suspension/revocation• inform the applicant that the inspection reports are available to the public through the Freedom of Information Act• collect the license fee or instruct the applicant how to submit the license fee to the Regional Office (DO NOT ACCEPT CASH.)• note on the inspection report whether the license fee was received or the applicant is sending the fee to the Regional Office <p>NOTE: The license will not be issued until the payment has cleared normal banking procedures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• explain that he/she is subject to periodic unannounced inspections throughout the year• ask the applicant for his/her schedule• ask the applicant if there is a phone number or another person you can call, if he/she is not at home
<p>Extension of the Prelicense Process</p>	<p>If after the first or second prelicense inspection, the applicant informs you that he/she will not be able to complete the prelicense process in the 90 day period, you should discuss with the applicant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the reason the deadline cannot be met, and• how much additional time may be needed <p>If in your professional judgment, the reason and the additional amount of time needed is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• valid:<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ determine a date for the next inspection➤ inform the Regional Office in writing of your discussion with the applicant• invalid:<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ recommend that the applicant cancel his/her

<p>Termination of the Prelicense Process</p>	<p>application to avoid the 6 month waiting period to reapply</p> <p>NOTE: Applicant will not be refunded the Application Fee and must submit a new Application for License and Application Fee if he/she does reapply.</p> <p>Inform the Regional Office in writing if during the prelicense period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the applicant requests cancellation of the prelicense process, and• is unwilling or unable to contact the Regional Office, or• you, the inspector, request the prelicense process be canceled for reasons, such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ applicant's facility failed to pass three prelicense inspections➤ applicant moved out of your territory➤ applicant never contacted you to schedule the next prelicense inspection <p>NOTE: If the applicant does not contact you prior to the end of the 90 day prelicense period, you should contact the applicant to determine his/her status.</p>
<p>Traveling Exhibitor</p>	<p>Prelicense Inspection Requested by SACS/Regional Office</p> <p>If your SACS or the Regional Office requests that you conduct a prelicense inspection of a traveling exhibitor, you should contact the home inspector to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• determine if home inspector has inspected the home base or permanent facility• discuss the applicant's records, Program of Veterinary Care, Exercise Plan for Dogs, Environmental Enhancement Program for NHPs, diet approval for large felids• check on any previous NCIs• determine any areas of concern the home inspector has

- check on areas that the home inspector may want you to follow up on with the applicant

Prelicense Inspection Resulting from a Search

If you find an unlicensed exhibitor on-the-road, you should inform the exhibitor that:

- a USDA license is required for the activity he/she is conducting
- all applicable AWA regulations, standards, and policies must be met at all sites
- he/she cannot exhibit until licensed

You should obtain the following information from the exhibitor:

- location of the home base or permanent facility which he/she returns to between tours (see page 8.12.19)
NOTE: A traveling exhibitor must have a home base or permanent site in order to get a license.
- animals currently housed at home base or permanent site
- name of any other Animal Care inspector that exhibitor has been in contact with and the results of that contact
- ways to contact exhibitor while on-the-road
- itinerary

NOTE: If exhibitor refuses to give you any information, you should:

- try to get contact information and itinerary from the manager of the circus/group/venue, if applicable
- get vehicle license tag number, if possible, to use to obtain follow up information

Licensing Process Started

If the exhibitor chooses to start the licensing process, perform a prelicense inspection. Be sure to:

- follow the procedure outlined on page 8.12.3
- use TRA as the Site designation
- have the exhibitor complete an application and TIN form
- collect the application fee
- discuss all records required by the regulations, such as:

- Program of Veterinary Care
- acquisition and disposition records
- Dog Exercise Plan
- Nonhuman Primate Environmental Enhancement Plan
- Health Certificates
- document on the inspection report all pertinent information discussed
- obtain an itinerary
- obtain on-the-road contact information
- obtain location of home base/permanent base
- inform exhibitor that the home base/permanent site must be inspected and be in compliance before a license will be issued

If noncompliances are identified, be sure to:

- inform the exhibitor that all noncompliances must be corrected prior to the next inspection
- determine with the exhibitor when and where the next inspection will be conducted
- inform the exhibitor that he/she cannot exhibit until a license is obtained

Send the inspection report and all related paperwork to your SACS or Regional Office with your weekly paperwork.

If another prelicense inspection **is** required:

- contact your SACS with this information
- determine with your SACS who will contact the next inspector, if required

*Licensing Process **not** Started*

If the exhibitor chooses **not** to start the licensing process, you should:

- obtain contact information and itinerary (if necessary, check with manager of venue)
- reemphasize that he/she cannot legally exhibit without a USDA license
- inform the exhibitor that any further exhibition could result

	<p>in an enforcement action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• notify your SACS or Regional Office
<p>Home Base or Permanent Site</p>	<p>The applicant must have a home base or permanent facility.</p> <p>If a home base or permanent facility has not yet been inspected, contact your SACS or Regional Office with the location and other pertinent information.</p> <p>You should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• obtain the location of this facility• discuss the facilities available at this site• inform the exhibitor that a license will not be issued until all sites are in compliance with the regulations and standards• obtain contact information for the inspector at the home base/permanent site• include the following or a similar statement on the inspection report: “All sites must be in compliance before a license will be issued.”• DO NOT complete the prelicense process. (DO NOT state on the inspection report that “applicant meets all requirements to be licensed” or accept the license fee.)
<p>Final Prelicense Inspection</p>	<p>If another prelicense inspection is not required, i.e., no noncompliances were cited and the exhibitor’s home base/permanent site has already passed inspection, then you should follow the standard procedure for completing the licensing process as detailed on page 8.12.13 under “No Noncompliant Items.”</p> <p>The inspector conducting the final prelicense inspection should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• include the following or a similar statement on the inspection report: “Applicant meets all requirements to be licensed as a “C” exhibitor.”• collect the license fee or instruct the applicant how to submit the license fee



United States
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Marketing and
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Animal and Plant
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Services

Animal Care

Dear Applicant:

Before APHIS can issue a license to you to engage in regulated activities that involve the handling of dangerous or potentially dangerous animals, you must demonstrate compliance with the applicable Animal Welfare Act regulations and standards (including demonstrating that you and your employees have adequate experience and training to handle such animals in accordance with the regulatory requirements). For the safety of the personnel and the animals, we strongly encourage at least two persons be present when working with dangerous animals in a free or potential contact environment.

Exhibitions That Do Not Involve Direct Public Contact With Animals:

The handling regulations require that animals must be handled during public exhibition so that there is minimal risk of harm to the animals and to the public, with sufficient distance and/or barriers between the animals and the general viewing public so as to ensure the safety of the animals and the public. The regulations further require that dangerous animals exhibited to the public must be under the direct control and supervision of a knowledgeable and experienced animal handler. Animal handlers should have demonstrable knowledge of and skill in currently accepted professional standards and techniques in animal training and handling. They should also be able to recognize normal and abnormal behavior and signs of behavioral stress for the species being exhibited, in order to comply with the handling regulations. Handlers must be experienced and be able to apply their knowledge to the safe exhibition of animals. This generally requires at least two years of experience involving the species being exhibited.

Exhibitions That Allow Direct Public Contact With Animals:

Exhibitions that may involve direct public contact include, but are not limited to, circuses, carnivals, elephant rides, photo opportunities, magic acts, and public feeding of animals. The regulations prohibit the use of drugs to facilitate, allow, or provide for public handling of any animals. Public contact with certain dangerous animals may not be done safely under any conditions. In particular, direct public contact with juvenile and adult felines (e.g., lions, tigers, jaguars, leopards, cougars) does not conform to the handling regulations, because it cannot reasonably be conducted without a significant risk of harm to the animal or the public. The handling regulations do not appear to specifically prohibit direct public contact with infant animals, so long as it is not rough or excessive, and so long as there is minimal risk of harm to the animal and to the public. If you intend to exhibit juvenile or adult¹ large felines (e.g., lions, tigers, jaguars, leopards, cougars), and would

¹ over 3 months of age

8.12.22



Animal Care is a part of the Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

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like Animal Care to review your proposed exhibition to determine whether it will comply with the handling regulations, please include with your application a description of the intended exhibition, including the number, species, and age of animals involved and the expected public interaction.

The regulations require that a responsible, knowledgeable and readily identifiable employee be present during all periods of public contact. In addition to the handler qualifications described in the preceding section, handlers of animals exhibited in direct contact with the public should have at least one year of experience with public contact exhibition of the species involved.

Only handlers who meet these qualifications should be allowed to handle the animals during public contact. At least two qualified handlers should be present during periods of public contact, and more qualified handlers may be needed depending on the number of animals and circumstances of the exhibition. Comparable alternative safety measure will be considered on an individual basis. Additional personnel may be needed to guard against members of the public inappropriately approaching the animals. These personnel are not required to meet the handler qualifications.

We strongly encourage licensees who operate public contact venues to have a written contingency plan to address restraint, recapture, and/or euthanasia of the animals in the event of aggressive behavior, escape, and/or other emergency situations. Such a plan should include, at a minimum, procedures for handling and recapturing escaped animals, a clear description of the chain of command during such events, criteria for selecting restraint methods, protocols for euthanasia in emergency situations, and provisions for contacting local law enforcement and animal control officials. Emergency equipment identified in the contingency plan (such as CO2 fire extinguishers, high pressure hoses, pepper sprays, darting equipment, chemical restraint drugs, nets, cell phone, 2-way radios, etc.) should be available during all periods of potential public contact.

To facilitate the licensing procedures and to aid in determining whether an applicant can demonstrate compliance with the handler qualification and safety requirements, we request that documentation of handler qualifications and a copy of the contingency plan be submitted to this office for review and determination of acceptability under the Animal Welfare Act.

Please send all information to this office. If you have any questions, please call this office at () during the hours of 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

Sincerely,

Regional Director
Animal Care

8.12.23



Animal Care is a part of the Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

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