



# Animal Care and Management



**Supporting animal welfare and the wellbeing of those who work with animals is the key focus of the animal care and management industry.**

**Job roles across the industry are diverse, with unique expertise required to care for different animals according to their species and environment.**

**From dog trainers to zoo keepers, vet nurses to saddle fitters, every individual within this workforce has a role to play in supporting the welfare of wildlife, exhibited, working and domestic animals, as well as our broader community and ecosystems.**



Veterinary services contribute \$2.6 billion to Gross Domestic Product, with a revenue of \$3.8 billion.

(Source: IBISWorld Industry Wizard, 2021)

Over 30 million pets in Australia today – more pets than humans! This includes an estimated 6.3 million dogs, 4.9 million cats, 11.2 million fish, 5.4 million birds, 1.5 million small mammals, 663,000 reptiles and 401,000 'other' pets.

Almost two-thirds of Australian households currently have one or more pets.

Australia is spending over \$30.7 billion per year to keep our dogs and cats fed, healthy and well-accessorised, with food and veterinary services continuing to account for half of all ongoing expenditure.

Source: Animal Medicines Australia, 2021, *Pets and the Pandemic: A social research snapshot of pets and people in the COVID-19 era*

**Australia is home to some of the rarest animals in the world. In recent times, there has also been a substantial increase in pet ownership. The animal care and management industry is committed to keeping all these animals well cared for and safe. It is important that national skills standards for animal welfare are up-to-date and accessible.**

During COVID-19, “There has been a substantial boom in pet ownership, with an estimated 30.4 million pets across the country. Nationally, 69% of households now own a pet, up from 61% only two years ago.”

Animal Medicines Australia, ‘Pets and the Pandemic: A social research snapshot of pets and people in the COVID-19 era’

The national skills standards and qualifications for this industry are overseen by the Animal Care and Management Industry Reference Committee (IRC).



# Skills Forecast

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The importance of a skilled animal care and management industry was emphasised by the 2019-2020 bushfires and COVID-19. Receiving recognition as an essential service early in the pandemic allowed industry to continue work to maintain the health, welfare and feeding of animals, but different challenges continued to face different parts of the sector. Animal exhibitors such as zoos, wildlife parks and aquariums relied on government supports to continue to care for animals without their usual revenue. Meanwhile, adoption agencies were inundated with requests to adopt or foster pets. Preparing for and responding to future emergencies, such as bushfires has also been a focus for industry moving forward.

Work to update skills standards related to pet care and animal training, exhibited animal care and marine wildlife continued throughout 2020. As a result of feedback collected throughout this process, a need for skills in assistance dog training and companion animal incident management emerged. As this was outside of the scope of the 2020 projects, two key projects were proposed to address these skills needs in the 2021 Annual Update to the IRC Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work (Skills Forecast).

## Projects for 2020-21

The following projects have been approved by the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) for 2021-22.

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### Trainers of Assistance Dogs

Growing evidence for how assistance animals can improve the quality of life for people with impairments and disabilities is driving demand for more skilled trainers of assistance dogs. This proposal is for the development of national units of competency to support the range of skills required of dog trainers in this important area of expertise. The units would be packaged as a specialisation in existing qualifications. Assistance dogs are now supporting an expanding range of disabilities and impairments (e.g. epilepsy, dementia, mental health, mobility and hearing impairment), all requiring distinct training methods to prepare the dog for interpreting and reacting to various symptoms and situations. Trainers not only require knowledge of the impacts of health-related conditions and how to train dogs for specific tasks, but they must also understand applicable legislation, risk management strategies, and public and workplace health and safety guidelines. Assistance dogs are covered under numerous laws for public access rights when assisting a person living with a disability. Accredited training, that utilises national units and qualifications, will support existing regulation and consistency among accredited trainers.

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### Small Companion Animal Incident Management

The 2019-2020 bushfires highlighted the important role of animal facility workers, emergency service workers and evacuation centres in supporting injured and displaced animals. With many evacuation centres overwhelmed, the need for revised evacuation protocols, procedures for accommodating companion animals and staff training were recommended by several reports, including the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. The Royal Commission recommended 'national consistency in training and competency standards' to encourage resource and information sharing, and to enable 'someone trained in one state or territory to work effectively in another'. This proposal is for the development of companion animal incident management units of competency. The proposed project will provide a national approach to the skills standards for responding to incidents involving companion animals, which could also be used by local boarding kennels, shelters, and evacuation centres to upskill staff.

# Project Work Between 2020-21

## Skills Impact managed the following project between July 2020 and June 2021.

The Animal Care and Management Industry Reference Committee (IRC) oversaw the project development, as part of their responsibility to support engagement with their industry and to ensure the project met stakeholder needs.

The skills standards and qualifications updated as part of this project are expected to be endorsed by the AISC and State and Territory Ministers in early 2022.

### Horse Care Project

Caring for horses takes input from a whole range of professionals, each with unique expertise. Different skills are needed to keep a horse's body functioning well, to make sure equipment used is appropriate and safe, and to make sure basic needs are being met. Across all roles that work with or near horses, foundational skills in safety are vital. It is important that the skills required for all roles and tasks involved in the care of horses are captured in nationally endorsed skills standards, to support the safety of all involved and promote consistency in how services are provided.

Industry from around the country have contributed to this project to define the skills standards for a range of horse care professions. Qualifications have been updated to make them more flexible to deliver and to support career pathways. Skill sets have been updated and developed to support skills for emergency shoe replacement, coordination of horse care tasks and workers, and safety skills across a range of environments. Units have been revised and developed to strengthen safety skills and ensure flexibility of use across different job

roles involving horses. Some units have been merged to better reflect work tasks and some are proposed for deletion as they are no longer required by industry.

**"...skills in safe horse handling are an integral part of our institution here. Volunteers, riders, carers and parents are provided with training in varying levels depending upon their interactions with horses at our establishment.**

**I believe that the standards developed have reinforced safety and created clear job pathways for people within the horse industry. I look forward to teaching and working with individuals with the updated standards for horse care."**

**Jacqui Moon, CEO, Claremont Therapeutic Riding Centre**

**"The focus on safety for handler, bystanders and horse has been tailored to ensure everyone moving through any qualification has these skills prior to more intensive job roles. This ensures the safety of all people involved in and around horses and gives confidence to other professionals, such as vets and farriers, when engaged by a qualified equine person. The qualifications also allow clear progression in knowledge and skills through the different certificate levels, and again are tailored to the job roles within the equine industry."**

**Lisa Wallace, Lecturer, Central Regional TAFE WA**





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### Key Outcomes

- The Certificate II and III Horse Care qualifications have been revised to create distinct and clear pathways from the entry level horse care workers to broadly skilled and autonomous horse care practitioners, such as stable hands, grooms and riders.
- The Certificate IV in Equine Care has been created to provide a pathway in equine care, with occupational elective groups covering technical skills for a range of niche occupations.
- The Diploma of Equine Management has been updated so that it can provide a general qualification or options to focus on a specific technical area by selecting electives in horse, farm, stud or business management.
- The Diploma of Equine Allied Health has been restructured with a common core and elective groupings, potentially enabling other allied health job roles to be covered in the future without the need for an additional qualification to be developed.
- Three skill sets have been revised to incorporate changes to the units they contain.
- Three skill sets have been developed to support skills for working safely around horses, for performing horse groom functions and for transporting horses by road.
- Forty-one units have been reviewed and updated to improve flexibility of delivery, better reflect current terminology and Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) alignment. Best use has been made of cross-industry and cross-sector units to prevent duplication, and 20 units have been merged to become 13 to remove duplication. Specific safety and welfare knowledge and skills have been updated or added in each of the revised units where required. Specific assessor requirements for units instructing riding skills have been revised to strengthen the responsibility of RTOs and/or assessors to undertake appropriate risk assessment and control to ensure the safety of all involved in assessing the unit, including matching horses to the riders being assessed.
- Nine units were developed to address skills needs for specific expertise needed across the horse care sector.
- Six units are proposed for deletion, as feedback indicated they were no longer needed by industry.