



Animal Care and Management

Animals and humans have a long history of coexistence, facilitated by the skills and knowledge of animal care and management.

Skills in this industry promote the safe existence of wildlife, exhibited, working and domestic animals, supporting our broader community and ecosystems. Updating skills in areas such as animal welfare practices, caring for wildlife, and supporting the mental and physical health of employees and the public are ongoing priorities in carrying out this work. The industry is diverse, including veterinary care, companion and assistance animal management, pet care and training, equine care and animal regulation.

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

Veterinary services contribute

\$2.6 billion

to Gross Domestic Product, with a revenue of

\$3.9 billion.

(Source: IBISWorld Industry Wizard, 2020)

Almost 29 million pets

in Australia today – more pets than humans!

This includes an estimated 5.1 million dogs, 3.8 million cats, 11.3 million fish, 5.6 million birds, 614,000 small mammals, 364,000 reptiles and 1.8 million 'other' pets.

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

Australia is spending over

\$13 billion per year

to keep our pets fed, healthy and well-accessorised, with food and veterinary services continuing to account for half of all ongoing expenditure.

(Source: Animal Medicines Australia, 2019, Pets in Australia: A national survey of pets and people)



Skills Forecast

Annual update and proposed projects for 2020-2021

This year's Annual Update to the IRC Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work (Skills Forecast) proposed two key projects for 2020 – 2021 and identified specific changes to the industry environment.

The droughts, bushfires and floods in 2019-20 have had a huge impact on wildlife and animal welfare. For example, the Zoo and Aquarium Association Australasia (ZAA) has supported a large-scale, coordinated response of zoos, wildlife parks and aquariums, focusing on wildlife rescue, rehabilitation and long-term species recovery. This has required significant expertise, resources, equipment and facilities across a network of accredited organisations to help native animals in crisis-affected areas. With estimates of more than one billion native animals killed by Australia's bushfires between September 2019 and January 2020, there is extensive short and long-term wildlife rescue, rehabilitation and recovery work ahead. The public's interest and concern about animal welfare, care and management continues to escalate, driven by these major events, as well as COVID-19.

There is also growing public interest in the welfare of horses' post work or sport involvement. Increasing expectations for horses to be appropriately cared-for in their post-racing life is expected to catalyse an increase in horse rescue centres, sanctuaries and charities. Extra skills will be required for the rehoming, care and management of geriatric horses, and horses unable to retrain. These are most likely to be available through importing units of competency from the RGR Racing and Breeding Training Package for retraining horses to new environments, which were developed in 2018-19.

The roles of pets, companion and assistance animals as a central component of human health and welfare has more recognition now, both through formal research and public attitudes. As a result, industry services are expanding into new fields of care for animals, and current services are experiencing market growth. While current 2019-20 project work has focussed on skills standards for these services in pet care, assistance animals and exhibited animals, it has not focussed on the services provided to equines.

The Animal Care and Management IRC commissioned an Equine Industry Survey to ascertain how work with equines is being done and who is doing that work. While several representative bodies have strong views on scope of practice, the survey was designed to provide evidence of the type and nature of services being accessed by equine owners, carers, trainers, riders and others responsible for the day to day welfare of equines. The combination of direct consultations, the equine survey, workshops and other feedback mechanisms identified two key issues to be addressed as part of the projects outlined below for 2020-21.

When it comes to the welfare of living creatures, the IRC believes that practitioners across the industry should be appropriately qualified, given the dangers that inappropriate treatments and services can create if undertaken poorly, carelessly or ignorantly. This concern was expressed clearly by consumers of services in the equine survey.

Projects for 2020-21

The following projects have been approved by the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) for 2020-21.

Equine Care Careers

There are transferable skills across a variety of sectors involved in the care of equines. It is recommended that existing qualifications and skills standards are reviewed and repackaged to enable a variety of job outcomes and reduce complexity in the VET system. To achieve this, a 'job family' is being proposed by the IRC to reflect the 'equine care' sector, which groups a range of current and emerging occupations, such as performance horse (equestrian events), rescue centres, sanctuaries, agistments, and allied health services (massage, body workers, saddle/equipment fitting, dentistry). Skills standards in these sectors will also be revised to meet industry expectations for practical skills in handling traditional and modern equine tools, horse safety, horse behaviour and horse welfare.

Pre-Requisite Barriers To Training

The aim of this project is to remove barriers to training and to strengthen skills in horse safety, behaviour and welfare. Extensive industry consultation and feedback from the IRC-led Equine Industry Survey has suggested that pre-requisite units should be removed. More effective ongoing learning could be achieved by embedding horse safety, behaviour and welfare skills in every practical unit of competency. This will negate the need for pre-requisite units and remove barriers to developing specialist skills and knowledge. It will also ensure the robustness and consistency of training, and will reflect the holistic approach to equine welfare that survey participants overwhelmingly demanded.



Equine Industry Survey

The aim of this survey was to determine the types of horse care services that are undertaken, who is carrying out this work and how, and the skills and knowledge workers and owners possess and, perhaps, develop (whether through formal qualifications or on-the-job experience). The results of this survey were used to inform the Annual Update, along with the information and feedback gathered through the interactions with industry and desktop research.

The survey received 546 responses.

Key findings

- The skills most in demand are associated with horse safety, animal behaviour and animal welfare.
- A shortage of skilled labour was mentioned in reference to specific occupations, including farriers, track (including exercise) riders, grooms and saddle fitters.
- There were calls for workplace-based training and practical skills, although some scepticism is expressed about its effectiveness given the lack of regulation in these areas of the industry.
- It is difficult to access equine services in regional, rural and remote areas. Many customers feel limited to 'what they can get', bemoaning the reliability of, or waiting times for, providers who service broad geographical areas.
- There continues to be specific labour force shortages, especially regarding farriers and track riders. These shortages are sometimes addressed by unqualified service providers, who are of varying quality.
- One key purpose of the survey was to establish the current use of equine dentistry in Australia. Most respondents (95%) to the IRC survey said they engage service providers for equine dental care, indicating widespread knowledge of the importance of horses' teeth to their overall health and the ongoing demand for services. The majority (53%) selected equine dental technicians as their service provider, while veterinarians were engaged by 23% of respondents. Around 24% arranged for both equine dental technicians and veterinarians to be present.

Projects

Project work between 2019-20

Outlined over the following pages is a summary of projects Skills Impact managed between July 2019 and June 2020.

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 projects meet stakeholder needs.

The skills standards and qualifications updated as part of the following projects are expected to be endorsed by the AISC and State and Territory Ministers later in 2020.

Pet Care and Animal Training Project

Pets and assistance animals are highly valued by people in Australia for their contributions to our communities, as evidenced by the expanding market for pet products and services. As assistance animals become more common and the public look to a broader range of options to keep their pets healthy and happy, demand is increasing for skilled workers in areas such as pet grooming, animal health care, animal training, assistance animals, companion and therapy animals, and regulation. Job roles in these areas require similar skills at a foundational level to care for animal wellbeing, as well as specialist expertise to perform tasks relevant to each role.

Consultation with industry across Australia took place to describe the skills standards for these job roles. This feedback has resulted in the revision and update of qualifications and skills standards for general animal care, animal behaviour and training, pet grooming and animal regulation and management. The qualifications and skills standards have been updated to reflect the full breadth of the sector and the changing ways animals are valued, managed and cared for.

Key Outcomes

- A Certificate IV in Animal Care Facility Management developed to replace the existing Certificate IV in Captive Animals and Certificate IV in Companion Animal Services. The revised qualification reflects the skills and knowledge for team leaders, supervisors, and specialist technical roles within an animal care facility, including companion animal and exhibited and wildlife environments.
- A Certificate IV in Animal Behaviour and Training developed to offer an entry level qualification for animal trainers and/or animal behaviour practitioners working with a specific species, or across a range of species and workplaces.
- The Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulation revised and retitled to Certificate IV in Animal Regulation and Management. It has been updated to include specialisations for investigations, animal holding facilities/shelters, animal management education, and rural and remote communities, and reflect current work practices and community values.

- The Certificate III in Animal Studies, Certificate III in Companion Animal Services and Certificate III in Pet Grooming have been merged to create a Certificate III in Animal Care Services. This qualification can be undertaken as a general qualification or individuals can select to specialise in one or two of the following areas: animal care, pet grooming or customer service.
- The Certificate II in Animal Studies revised and retitled to Certificate II in Animal Care to better reflect the vocational outcomes of entry level and support roles in the animal care and management industry.
- The Certificate I in Animal Studies revised and retitled to Certificate I in Animal Care Industry Pathways to better reflect its outcomes and users - many of whom are learners with special needs and/or people seeking community engagement, doing animal care work activities undertaken under close supervision.
- Forty-one units of competency revised and 11 units developed, to support skills across animal-assisted services, grooming and behaviour and training. Five units are proposed for deletion, as industry advised they are no longer required. In addition, four existing units have been merged into two units to reduce duplication.
- Two skills sets have been revised for microchipping dogs and cats and promoting animal health in remote communities. Six skill sets have been developed that cover grooming, animal shelter work, animal assisted services, animal breeding and animal management coordination in remote communities.

M'Liss Henry from Claremont Therapeutic Riding Centre with Diana McNaughton, Skills Impact Industry Engagement manager



Exhibited Animal Care and Marine Wildlife Project

Australia has one of the longest coastlines in the world and a vast landscape that is inhabited by some of the world's rarest animals. The work of our zoo keepers, animal carers and marine wildlife responders plays an important role in supporting the health, welfare and sustainability of some of our most vulnerable animals and marine wildlife. This project covered two distinct areas of animal care, to identify skills needs for both exhibited animal care and marine wildlife response.

Those who work with animals in zoos and wildlife parks play a key role in promoting animal welfare and conservation, through breeding programs, providing information to the public and supporting scientific research. Specialist skills are needed for working with endangered animals and rare species, as job tasks vary depending on the size and type of the animal and its environment. These animals need to be mentally and physically comfortable for successful breeding and conservation programs. As such, zookeepers and animal carers need to understand and be skilled at providing animal enrichment, as well as conditioning the animals to be handled.

Just as specialist skills are needed for different kinds of exhibited animals, a level of expertise is required for the participation and/or management of marine wildlife events and emergency situations. The skills to rescue marine wildlife are quite different to the skills required to rescue animals on land. The marine environment can present a particular challenge to humans involved in an emergency management situation. At the same time, marine life requires appropriate conditions to be maintained during the response, to comply with animal welfare regulations, legislation and workplace standards.

Over the past 12 months, industry has participated in the review of qualifications, skill sets and units of competency to better reflect current industry practices, terminology and skills gaps. As a result, the skills standards for a range of job roles in exhibited animal care and marine animal response have been updated.

“The new and updated components will no doubt allow students undertaking this qualification to obtain a far better opportunity and insight into the exhibited animal industry. In turn, this will make them more employable due to the appropriate and improved quality of the components, soon to be delivered.”

Anthony Molyneux, Wildlife Manager at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary QLD.



Kiandra from Moonlit Sanctuary with owl. Image by Natalie Davies

Key Outcomes

- Units of competency for Captive Animals (CAN) sector have been renamed to Exhibited Animals (EXH) to better reflect the work outcomes and the animal care facilities and environments where these units will be used, as well as contemporary community attitudes.
- The Certificate III in Wildlife and Exhibited Animal Care was revised to reflect current industry practices, terminology and skill gaps, and titled changed to reflect current industry terminology.
- The Certificate IV in Captive Animals is proposed to be superseded by the new Certificate IV in Animal Facility Management (developed as part of the Pet Care and Animal Training Project) with a specialisation in wildlife and exhibited animal facilities.
- Eight skill sets developed to address skills needs, including large whale disentanglement, animal welfare management, zoological horticulture, exhibited animal visitor experience, orphan native wildlife care, exhibited animal behaviour and training, species population management, and marine animal stranding.
- Four species specific rehabilitation skill sets merged into ACMSS00022 Native Wildlife Rehabilitation Skill Set to reduce duplication of content.
- Fifteen exhibited animal units and ten species specific units updated to provide greater focus on animal welfare, enrichment, habitat design and behavioural conditioning to support the mental and physical health of animals. Eight units have been merged into four units, to reduce duplication of content.
- Five units developed for marine animal incident management, describing the unique skills required for responding to animal incidents in a marine environment, including entanglements, strandings and pollution events.
- Two general animal studies units developed to promote health and welfare of both animals and humans: ACMGEN303 Assess the welfare status of an animal and ACMGEN304 Promote positive wellbeing in self and others in animal care workplaces.



Completed Projects

The following projects were endorsed by the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC). The revised qualifications, skill sets and units of competency, that were developed as part of these projects, are published on training.gov.au and available for delivery by registered training organisations (RTOs).

Visit www.skillsimpact.com.au/completed-projects for further details.

Animal Incident Management Project

The Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulation was revised and skills standards developed to support the skills required to safely rescue large animals or groups of animals during an emergency.

Animal Technology Project

Qualifications relating to the care and welfare of laboratory animals have been revised to reflect changes in technology and to support the ethical treatment of animals according to relevant guidelines.

Horse Education Project

Skills standards have been revised and developed to address the various skills for educating horses, from basic handling skills, to interpreting equine behaviour, transporting horses and educating horses to be ridden and driven.

Veterinary Nursing Project

Veterinary nursing units of competency and qualifications were reviewed and updated to reflect the occupational skill standards and needs of industry.