



IGS
INTERNATIONAL
GROOMING SOCIETY

IGS Welfare Guidelines for Grooming Events

The Event Organiser's Guide to Welfare Best Practice

A practical guide for
competitions, **workshops**,
seminars and
live demonstrations

*Because professional grooming
excellence must never be separated
from **Animal Welfare**.*



Document purpose and status

This guide sets out the International Grooming Society's practical welfare expectations for events involving live animals. It is designed to help organisers plan, deliver and review grooming events in a way that protects animals, supports professionals and demonstrates responsible leadership.

SCOPE

This guide applies to grooming competitions, workshops, seminars, demonstrations, training sessions, examinations, trade-show activities, brand activations and other organised activities in which live animals are handled, groomed, restrained, displayed or used for education.

The guide should be read alongside the full IGS Welfare Guidelines for Grooming Events, the event's risk assessment, venue procedures, insurance requirements, emergency arrangements and all applicable local laws. It does not replace veterinary advice or the organiser's legal responsibilities.

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1. How to use this guide

A practical decision-making framework for event teams.

This guide is written for event organisers, venue managers, schools, trainers, demonstrators, judges, stewards, brands, sponsors, animal handlers and welfare personnel. It can be used during planning, as a briefing tool on the day, and as a review framework after the event.

Meaning of the requirement words

MUST means a minimum IGS welfare requirement. An event should not claim alignment with the IGS Welfare Guidelines if a MUST requirement is knowingly ignored.

SHOULD means strongly recommended best practice. Organisers should follow it unless a documented, welfare-equivalent alternative is more appropriate.

MAY means an optional measure that can strengthen welfare, accessibility, communication or event quality.

GUIDING TEST

When a decision is uncertain, ask: Does this protect the animal, reduce avoidable stress, preserve safety and demonstrate the behaviour we want the profession to learn?

The event organiser remains accountable

Welfare tasks may be delegated, but overall accountability remains with the event organiser. The organiser must ensure that responsibilities are assigned, communicated, supported and documented.

Non-negotiable standards at a glance

- No animal is required to continue when welfare is compromised.
- A welfare pause, adaptation or withdrawal must be permitted without humiliation or retaliation.
- Live animals must be treated as sentient participants, not as equipment or disposable teaching resources.
- Handling, restraint, products, noise, airflow, temperature and duration must be actively managed.
- Signs of pain, distress, overheating, exhaustion or respiratory difficulty require immediate action.
- The event must have a clear route for raising concerns and recording incidents.
- Educators, judges and visible professionals must model the welfare standard expected from others.

2. The IGS Welfare framework

Respect. Safety. Care. Education. Compassion.

RESPECT	SAFETY	CARE	EDUCATION	COMPASSION
Every animal is an individual with physical, emotional and behavioural needs. Dignity, consent-like cooperation and humane treatment must guide every interaction.	The event environment, equipment and procedures must reduce foreseeable risk to animals and people.	Animals must receive water, rest, toileting opportunities, comfort, suitable handling and timely support.	The event must teach welfare through visible practice, not only through policy statements.	Professionals must be supported to slow down, adapt, pause or stop when that is the responsible decision. Animal-centred decision making

Animal-centred practice does not mean that every event must be silent, short or identical. It means that the animal's condition and response influence what happens next. The same procedure may be appropriate for one animal and inappropriate for another.



CORE PRINCIPLE

The planned programme never has greater importance than the welfare of the animal in front of you.

3. Governance and Responsibility

Clear roles prevent welfare from becoming everybody's concern but nobody's job.

Event organiser	Owns the welfare plan, appoints responsible personnel, approves procedures, provides resources and ensures concerns can be escalated.
Venue manager	Maintains safe premises, utilities, ventilation, cleaning, access, emergency routes and agreed animal areas.
Educators and demonstrators	Select suitable animals, explain adaptations, observe welfare and stop when continuation is not appropriate.
Judges and stewards	Apply rules consistently, reward welfare-conscious practice and intervene when unsafe or unacceptable conduct occurs.
Handlers and owners	Provide accurate information, remain contactable, communicate known needs and support decisions made for the animal.
Welfare Delegate	Observes, advises, documents and supports proportionate action while remaining independent enough to raise concerns.
Veterinary support	Provides professional assessment or urgent treatment when required and when available under the event plan.



Required governance arrangements

MUST Name the person with overall welfare authority before the event opens.

MUST Give that person authority to require a pause, adaptation or withdrawal.

MUST Provide a documented escalation route for welfare concerns.

MUST Ensure all relevant team members know who can make welfare decisions.

SHOULD Appoint an IGS Animal Welfare Delegate or a suitably competent equivalent for events involving multiple animals, public demonstrations, competitions or prolonged participation.

SHOULD Use a short written welfare briefing and require acknowledgement from participants, judges, stewards and educators.

4. Planning before the event

Welfare is designed before the first animal arrives.

Create an Event Welfare Plan

Every event involving live animals must have a proportionate written welfare plan. The plan may be brief for a small workshop and more detailed for a multi-day competition, but it must be specific to the event.

- event type, programme and expected animal numbers;
- species, breeds, ages and vulnerability factors likely to be present;
- animal selection and exclusion criteria;
- arrival, holding, preparation, active participation and departure arrangements;
- maximum participation periods and planned breaks;
- water, toileting and rest arrangements;
- temperature, ventilation, drying and noise controls;
- equipment and product approval;
- welfare staffing and escalation routes;
- veterinary and emergency arrangements;
- incident recording and post-event review.

Risk assessment

The event risk assessment must include animal welfare hazards as well as human health and safety. It should consider both the likelihood of harm and the potential seriousness of the outcome.

- falls, slips, unstable tables and equipment failure;
- escape, conflict between animals or contact with the public;
- pain, fatigue, prolonged standing or repeated handling;
- heat stress, poor ventilation, high humidity or cold exposure;
- excessive noise, vibration, crowding or visual overstimulation;
- airway compromise, inappropriate restraint or entanglement;
- product exposure, eye contact, inhalation, ingestion or skin reaction;
- transport delays, inadequate recovery time and prolonged time on site;
- lack of staff authority, communication failure or delayed escalation.

Communicate requirements in advance

MUST Provide participants with the welfare rules before they commit animals to the event.

MUST State clearly that organisers may require a pause, adaptation or withdrawal where welfare is at risk.

SHOULD Include animal suitability, health disclosure, equipment rules, prohibited practices, arrival times and rest expectations in the registration information.

SHOULD Ask exhibitors and educators to identify animals needing additional support before the event.

5. Animal eligibility and participation

Suitability must be assessed for the actual event, not assumed from past experience.

Principle of suitable participation

An animal may be generally healthy and still be unsuitable for a particular event because of the journey, environment, duration, procedure, crowd, noise or expected level of handling. Suitability must therefore be assessed in context.

ESSENTIAL STATEMENT

A live animal is never a teaching tool only. It is a sentient participant whose welfare comes first.

Information to obtain before participation

- owner or responsible handler details and emergency contact;
- age, species, breed or type and relevant physical characteristics;
- known medical conditions, pain, injury, allergies or current treatment;
- respiratory, cardiac, neurological, mobility or thermoregulation concerns;
- skin, ear, eye or coat conditions relevant to the planned procedure;
- behavioural history, fears, triggers and previous grooming experience;
- bite risk, escape risk and handling restrictions;
- date and nature of recent grooming, competition or travel;
- feeding, toileting, water and rest needs;
- veterinary contact information where appropriate.

Animals requiring additional caution

The following animals are not automatically excluded, but they require enhanced assessment, shorter participation, closer monitoring or veterinary advice where appropriate:

- very young, elderly, pregnant or recently post-operative animals;
- brachycephalic animals or animals with known airway compromise;
- animals with cardiac, respiratory, neurological or mobility conditions;
- animals with active skin disease, open lesions, infection or significant discomfort;
- animals showing fear, shutdown, repeated escape behaviour or aggression linked to distress;
- animals affected by heat, fatigue, travel stress or inadequate recovery;
- animals unfamiliar with grooming tables, dryers, crowds or close handling.

Exclusion or withdrawal

MUST Exclude or withdraw an animal when participation would create an unreasonable welfare or safety risk.

MUST Do not permit pressure from schedules, prizes, commercial commitments, audience expectations or travel costs to override the animal's condition.

SHOULD Explain withdrawal decisions respectfully and record the reason without publicly shaming the participant.

MAY Offer an alternative learning method, mannequin, pre-recorded material or observer role when live participation is not appropriate.



6. Venue, environment and setup

The environment should help animals cope, not require them to endure.

Space and layout

MUST Provide secure, stable and appropriately sized work areas.

MUST Separate animal routes from avoidable crowd congestion and uncontrolled public contact.

MUST Provide a quiet or lower-stimulation area for rest, recovery and reassessment.

MUST Keep emergency exits and animal evacuation routes clear.

SHOULD Create visual separation between waiting animals where staring, proximity or movement may increase stress.

SHOULD Place water, cleaning materials, first-aid equipment and waste facilities where they are quickly accessible.

MAY Use screens, acoustic panels, soft floor coverings or scheduled access to reduce environmental stress.

Environmental conditions

- Monitor temperature, humidity and ventilation throughout the event, not only before opening.
- Prevent animals from being left in direct sun, draughts, poorly ventilated rooms or parked vehicles.
- Avoid slippery surfaces and provide secure footing during movement and handling.
- Control strong odours, aerosols, perfumes, disinfectant fumes and airborne product residue.
- Maintain lighting that allows safe work without creating excessive heat or glare.
- Keep animal holding and rest areas clean, dry and appropriately separated from waste and food-preparation areas.



Table and equipment setup

- Tables must be stable, locked where applicable, and suitable for the animal's size and mobility.
- Non-slip surfaces must be maintained clean and dry.
- Cables, hoses and loops must not create entanglement, trip or escape hazards.
- Equipment must be inspected before use and removed immediately if damaged or unreliable.
- Animals needing assistance to get on or off tables must be lifted or supported safely; jumping should not be required.



7. Handling, restraint and equipment

Use the least restrictive approach that safely achieves the necessary purpose.

Handling standard

Handling should be calm, predictable and adapted to the animal. The professional must notice and respond to changes in posture, breathing, movement, facial expression, vocalisation and attempts to avoid contact.

MUST Use humane handling and the minimum effective restraint.

MUST Never use restraint to force continuation when the animal is showing pain, severe fear, respiratory difficulty, exhaustion or escalating distress.

MUST Protect the airway and avoid equipment placement or pressure that compromises breathing or swallowing.

MUST Release, adjust or remove restraint promptly when it becomes unsafe or unnecessary.

SHOULD Explain handling adaptations during education or demonstrations so the audience understands the welfare reasoning.

SHOULD Use a second trained person

when this reduces risk more effectively than increasing restraint.

MAY Change position, task order, surface, equipment or handler to improve cooperation.

Prohibited or unacceptable conduct

- hitting, shaking, lifting by a restraint device or deliberate intimidation;
- strangulating pressure, airway obstruction or leaving an animal suspended;
- forcing painful joint positions or ignoring obvious lameness;
- continuing while an animal is collapsing, repeatedly attempting escape or unable to recover;
- using public embarrassment, threats or prize penalties to discourage a welfare pause;
- using equipment in a way that is inconsistent with its safe purpose.

Signs requiring reassessment

A single signal may have several meanings. Decisions should be based on the whole animal, the context and changes over time. Reassess promptly when you observe:

- persistent panting unrelated to normal temperature or exertion;
- trembling, freezing, crouching, repeated lip licking or yawning;
- repeated attempts to turn away, climb, flee or hide;
- vocalisation, sudden defensiveness or escalating aggression;
- loss of balance, weakness, unusual stillness or inability to stand comfortably;
- rapid change in breathing, gum colour, alertness or coordination;
- obvious pain, skin trauma, overheating or extreme fatigue.

8. Scheduling, rest, water and toileting

A well-designed timetable includes the animal's needs, not only the audience programme.

Participation periods

There is no single safe duration for every animal or procedure. Organisers must set event-specific limits and require active welfare checks. Duration must account for travel, waiting, preparation, active handling, drying, judging, photography and recovery - not just time on the table.

MUST Build planned rest opportunities into the programme and allow additional unscheduled pauses whenever needed.

MUST Prevent unnecessary repeated presentation, handling or waiting for the convenience of the schedule.

SHOULD Document a welfare check at least every 30 minutes during active participation, and more often for vulnerable animals or intensive procedures.

SHOULD Avoid scheduling the same animal for multiple demanding activities without adequate recovery.

Water

- Fresh, suitable drinking water must be readily available.
- Water must be offered during breaks and whenever the animal appears thirsty, hot or fatigued.
- Access to water must not be withheld solely to avoid toileting inconvenience.
- Shared bowls must be managed hygienically; individual bowls are preferable where infection control or behaviour makes sharing unsuitable.

Toileting and rest

- Provide safe toileting areas and clear waste-disposal arrangements.
- Allow enough time for the animal to walk, sniff, toilet and decompress without being rushed.
- Rest areas should be quieter than active event spaces and protected from uncontrolled interaction.

- Crates or pens, when used, must be suitable, secure, ventilated and large enough for comfortable posture and movement.
- Animals must not be left unattended in conditions that create heat, escape, conflict or distress risk.



9. Heat, drying and noise

Manage the combined load of temperature, airflow, duration and sensory stress.

Heat and ventilation

MUST Use drying equipment with controllable airflow and temperature appropriate to the animal and procedure.

MUST Stop or reduce heat exposure immediately if the animal shows signs of overheating, respiratory distress or inability to cope.

MUST Maintain adequate room ventilation and prevent local heat build-up around cages, dryers or densely occupied areas.

SHOULD Use active monitoring rather than relying on equipment settings alone.

SHOULD Give enhanced protection to brachycephalic, elderly, very young, obese, cardiac, respiratory or heat-sensitive animals.

Drying practice

- Direct airflow away from eyes, nostrils, ear canals and other sensitive areas unless a safe, specific technique requires otherwise.
- Avoid prolonged concentrated heat or airflow on one area.
- Allow the animal to change position and take breaks.
- Never leave an animal in or under drying equipment without the level of supervision required for immediate intervention.
- Use drying methods that are proportionate to coat, health, behaviour and environmental conditions.



Noise

- Reduce simultaneous use of high-noise equipment where practical.
- Position speakers, dryers and generators away from rest and holding areas.
- Provide hearing protection for people where required, while remembering that animals cannot choose protective equipment.
- Use barriers, distance, scheduling or quieter tools to reduce exposure.
- Treat behavioural deterioration during noisy procedures as welfare information, not disobedience.

10. Products and procedures

Every product and procedure must be suitable for the species, animal and conditions of use.

Product approval and use

MUST Use products intended and suitable for the relevant species and application.

MUST Follow manufacturer instructions, dilution requirements, contact times, rinsing instructions and safety warnings.

MUST Prevent avoidable contact with eyes, airways, mouth and damaged skin.

MUST Stop and respond appropriately if irritation, respiratory signs, pain or an unexpected reaction occurs.

SHOULD Keep product labels and safety information available to the event team.

SHOULD Limit aerosols, powders, fragrances and volatile products where exposure may affect animals or people nearby.

SHOULD Use clear infection-control arrangements for shared tools, bowls, surfaces and textiles.



Procedure standard

A procedure must not be justified solely because it is traditional, visually impressive, commercially useful or expected by the audience. The organiser must consider whether the procedure is necessary, proportionate, safely delivered and compatible with the animal's condition.

- Painful, injurious or unnecessarily distressing techniques are not permitted.
- Cosmetic goals must be modified when required to protect skin, coat, joints, breathing, temperature regulation or emotional welfare.
- Colouring, creative work and decorative procedures require suitable products, informed owner consent and careful exposure control.
- Any procedure involving unusual risk should be reviewed in advance by a competent person and excluded when adequate controls cannot be provided.
- Demonstrators must be prepared to explain why a product or technique is safe and appropriate in the actual circumstances.



11. Education, demonstrations and examinations

The audience learns from what the educator allows as much as from what the educator says.

Educational responsibility

MUST Select animals that are suitable for the learning objective and environment.

MUST Adapt or stop the demonstration when the animal's welfare requires it, even if the planned result is incomplete.

MUST Never present distress, force or

exhaustion as normal professional practice.

SHOULD Explain welfare observations, adaptations and pause decisions aloud where this can be done without increasing stress.

SHOULD Use mannequins, models, diagrams, video or staged demonstrations for techniques that do not require a live animal.

SHOULD Limit the number of learners handling the same animal.

MAY Use a second suitable animal rather than extending one animal's participation.

Schools and training providers

- Welfare criteria should be included in lesson plans, practical assessments and educator feedback.
- Students should be assessed on observation, adaptation, communication and decision making - not only technical finish.
- A student must be able to request help or a welfare pause without fear of humiliation or automatic failure.
- Educators should intervene early enough to prevent escalation, not wait for an incident to prove that intervention was necessary.
- The animal's owner or responsible person should understand how and by whom the animal will be handled.

Assessment and examination

Examination rules must recognize that responsible adaptation is evidence of competence. Candidates should not be penalised for pausing, changing technique or ending a task where they can explain and justify the welfare decision.

ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLE

A technically perfect result achieved through avoidable distress is not professional excellence.

12. Competitions and judging

Rules, timing and judging must reward welfare-conscious professionalism.

Competition rules

MUST Publish welfare rules, prohibited conduct and intervention procedures before the competition.

MUST Authorise judges, stewards and welfare personnel to require a pause, adaptation or withdrawal.

MUST Ensure that requesting a welfare pause does not automatically result in public criticism or disproportionate penalty.

MUST Remove an animal when continuation creates an unacceptable welfare or safety risk.

SHOULD Include visible welfare criteria in scoring or judging guidance.

SHOULD Allow judges to recognise calm handling, appropriate restraint, safe tool use, good organisation and timely adaptation.

SHOULD Design time limits that do not encourage unsafe rushing or prolonged exposure.

MAY Create a welfare excellence recognition or award, provided it is based on meaningful observation rather than image alone.



Judges and stewards

- Receive a pre-event welfare briefing and know the escalation route.
- Observe the animal throughout, not only the final presentation.
- Distinguish technical difficulty from animal distress.
- Act consistently and document significant intervention decisions.
- Avoid comments that shame responsible withdrawal or encourage competitors to continue at all costs.
- Ensure final judging, photography and waiting do not unnecessarily extend participation.

Model preparation and recovery

- Preparation carried out before official competition time remains part of the animal's total welfare load.
- Organisers should consider travel, pre-event coat preparation, bathing, drying, waiting and post-competition presentation when planning limits.
- Animals should have an appropriate recovery period and should not be repeatedly handled for media or display after completion.

13. Public access, media and presentation

Visibility should promote welfare, not add uncontrolled pressure.

Audience management

- Use barriers, stewarding or designated routes to prevent crowding around animals.
- Do not allow unplanned touching, feeding, photography or handling by members of the public.
- Provide quiet access for animals entering or leaving active areas.
- Manage applause, amplified sound and sudden demonstrations where these may cause distress.
- Display simple welfare messages so the public understands why pauses and adaptations are professional.

Photography, filming and live streaming

MUST Obtain appropriate permission for filming or photography involving identifiable participants and animals.

MUST Stop media activity if it compromises safe handling or animal welfare.

SHOULD Limit flashes, close crowding, repeated posing and prolonged post-procedure presentation.

SHOULD Avoid publishing content that normalises distress or misrepresents a welfare intervention.

MAY Use live commentary to explain welfare pauses and adaptations positively.

Claims and IGS association

Use of IGS wording, logos, delegates or guideline references must be accurate. Following parts of this guide does not automatically constitute formal IGS approval, certification or endorsement. Any official claim should match the written agreement or recognition granted by IGS.





14. The welfare pause protocol

A welfare pause is a professional decision, not a failure.

WELFARE PAUSE

A temporary stop used to reduce pressure, assess the animal and decide whether to continue, adapt or end participation.

When to pause

Pause whenever the animal's response raises a reasonable concern that continuing without reassessment may cause harm or escalation. Examples include:

- repeated attempts to escape, hide, turn away or avoid contact;
- persistent panting, respiratory change or signs of overheating;
- trembling, freezing, shutdown or sudden loss of normal responsiveness;
- vocalisation, escalating fear, defensive behaviour or aggression;
- pain, lameness, skin trauma or inability to remain comfortably positioned;
- fatigue, weakness, loss of balance or refusal to stand;
- equipment failure, unsafe restraint, environmental change or product reaction;
- a handler, owner, judge, steward or welfare person expresses a credible concern.

The seven-step protocol

STOP	Pause the procedure and remove avoidable pressure.
MAKE SAFE	Secure tools, equipment, the animal and the immediate area.
REDUCE	Reduce restraint, noise, heat, crowding or stimulation where safe.
SUPPORT	Offer water, toileting, rest, a change of position or a calmer space as appropriate.
ASSESS	Observe breathing, temperature, posture, movement, behaviour and recovery. Seek veterinary input when indicated.
DECIDE	Continue with adaptation, extend the pause, change the plan or end participation.
RECORD	Document significant pauses, interventions, withdrawals and follow-up actions.

Restart criteria

Participation should restart only when the person responsible is satisfied that the animal has recovered sufficiently and that the cause of concern has been removed or effectively controlled. Restarting should involve an adapted plan and close monitoring.

End participation when

- the animal does not recover adequately;
- the concern is likely to recur immediately;
- safe adaptation is not available;
- the animal requires veterinary assessment or treatment;
- continuation would prioritise completion over welfare;
- the responsible welfare authority decides that withdrawal is necessary.

15. Responding to concerns, incidents and emergencies

Early, calm intervention protects animals, people and trust.

Raising a concern

Any participant, team member, owner, judge, steward or observer must be able to raise a welfare concern through a clearly identified route. Concerns should be received respectfully and assessed promptly.

MUST Identify at least one contact point for welfare concerns and display or communicate it.

MUST Protect people from retaliation for raising a concern in good faith.

MUST Take immediate action where delay may increase harm.

SHOULD Separate welfare assessment from arguments about reputation, blame or competitive outcome.

SHOULD Keep proportionate records of significant concerns and decisions.

Incident response priorities

1. Stop the activity and make the scene safe.
2. Provide first aid within the responder's competence and obtain veterinary or medical help as required.
3. Prevent further exposure, handling, crowding or filming.
4. Inform the owner or responsible handler and relevant event authority.
5. Preserve relevant product labels, equipment and factual information.
6. Record what happened, what was observed, who acted and what follow-up is required.
7. Review whether other animals or activities face the same risk.

Emergency planning

- Know the location and contact details of veterinary support appropriate to the event.
- Have safe transport arrangements for an animal needing urgent assessment.
- Maintain animal and human first-aid supplies appropriate to event risk.
- Plan for fire, evacuation, severe weather, loss of power, ventilation failure and equipment malfunction.
- Ensure emergency decisions can be made without waiting for unavailable senior personnel.
- Keep access routes clear for emergency services and animal transport.

After an incident

The purpose of review is learning and prevention. Records should be factual, respectful and proportionate. The organiser should identify immediate corrective action, systemic improvements and whether IGS, insurers, authorities or other bodies must be informed under applicable arrangements.

16. The IGS Animal Welfare Delegate

Here to help. Here to support.

The IGS Animal Welfare Delegate is a supportive, informed presence who helps events apply the IGS Welfare Guidelines calmly and professionally. The role is preventive and collaborative, while retaining the independence needed to raise concerns and recommend action.

Core functions

- review welfare planning before the event;
- brief organisers, judges, stewards, educators and participants;
- observe animal handling, environment and programme delivery;
- support welfare pauses and proportionate adaptations;
- advise on patterns of concern before they become incidents;
- document significant observations, interventions and recommendations;
- contribute to post-event review and continuous improvement.

What the role is not

- It is not a substitute for veterinary care, event management, legal compliance or emergency services.
- It is not primarily a policing or public-shaming role.
- It does not remove responsibility from organisers, handlers, judges or educators.
- It does not guarantee that no incident will occur.
- It does not provide automatic IGS certification or endorsement unless formally agreed.

Authority and access

MUST Where an IGS Animal Welfare Delegate is appointed, the organiser must define access, reporting lines, decision authority and confidentiality arrangements before the event.

MUST The Delegate must be able to observe relevant activity and communicate directly with the person holding welfare authority.

SHOULD The organiser should provide a quiet location for confidential discussion and access to schedules, welfare plans and incident forms.



17. After the event

Good events learn, document and improve.

Immediate close-down

- Confirm that animals have safely left or entered appropriate recovery arrangements.
- Follow up any animal requiring monitoring, owner communication or veterinary assessment.
- Secure incident records and relevant evidence.
- Remove unsafe equipment or products from future use pending review.
- Check that rest, holding and work areas are cleared and cleaned appropriately.



Post-event welfare review

- Were the planned controls actually used?
- Were animals suitable for the event and programme?
- Were welfare pauses accepted and supported?
- Did schedule pressure create avoidable risk?
- Were there patterns involving noise, heat, waiting, restraint, products or public access?
- Did staff understand authority and escalation?
- What feedback was received from handlers, participants, judges, educators and welfare personnel?
- What must change before the next event?

Continuous improvement

Organisers should turn review findings into named actions with responsible persons and completion dates. Improvement may involve programme design, registration wording, staff training, venue layout, equipment, judging rules, participant selection or welfare staffing.

SUCCESS MEASURE

A successful welfare framework is not one that avoids every pause. It is one in which concerns are noticed early, responsible decisions are supported and animals are protected.

A. Event Welfare Plan template

Complete this template in proportion to the size and complexity of the event. Attach supporting documents where needed.

Event name, date and venue

Event organiser and contact details

Person holding overall welfare authority

Welfare Delegate or equivalent

Event type and programme involving live animals

Expected species and number of animals

Animal suitability and exclusion criteria

Arrival, holding, participation, rest and departure arrangements

Maximum participation periods and welfare-check frequency

Water and toileting arrangements

Temperature, ventilation, drying and noise controls

Approved equipment, products and procedures

Public access and media controls

Veterinary, first-aid, transport and emergency arrangements

Concern escalation and incident-recording route

Post-event review responsibility and date

B. Pre-event welfare checklist

Done	Area	Check	Notes
☐	Governance	Welfare authority appointed and contact details shared.	
☐	Governance	Welfare Delegate or competent equivalent appointed where appropriate.	
☐	Planning	Event Welfare Plan and animal welfare risk assessment completed.	
☐	Communication	Rules and participant code issued in advance.	
☐	Animals	Suitability, health and behaviour information collected.	
☐	Animals	Exclusion and withdrawal process confirmed.	
☐	Venue	Work, holding, rest, toileting and emergency areas checked.	
☐	Venue	Temperature, humidity, ventilation and noise controls ready.	
☐	Equipment	Tables, loops, restraints, dryers, cables and tools inspected.	
☐	Products	Approved products and safety information available.	
☐	Programme	Breaks, welfare checks and animal movement times included.	
☐	Staff	Judges, stewards, educators and support staff briefed.	
☐	Emergency	Veterinary, first-aid, transport and evacuation arrangements confirmed.	
☐	Records	Consent, welfare observation and incident forms ready.	
☐	Public	Barriers, signage, media and audience controls in place.	

C. Animal participation and consent record

This template supports informed planning. It is not a substitute for any consent, insurance or legal documentation required in the event jurisdiction.

Animal name / identification

Species, breed or type, age and sex

Owner / responsible handler and contact number

Emergency contact

Planned activity and estimated duration

Relevant medical conditions, medication, allergies or pain

Skin, coat, ear, eye, mobility, respiratory or heat-related concerns

Behaviour, fears, triggers, bite or escape risk

Handling, equipment, product or positioning restrictions

Water, feeding, toileting and rest needs

Veterinary practice / contact where appropriate

Owner / handler declaration: I have provided accurate information and understand that participation may be paused, adapted or ended to protect welfare.

Name, signature and date

Event suitability assessment completed by

D. Welfare observation and pause record

Time	Animal	Observer	What was ob- served	Action taken	Outcome / decision	Initials

Suggested outcome terms: continued with adaptation; extended rest; changed handler or equipment; withdrawn; veterinary assessment recommended; emergency response initiated.

E. Incident report form

Event, date, time and location

Animal and responsible handler

People directly involved or witnessing

Factual description of what happened

Animal signs, condition and immediate welfare concerns

Immediate actions taken and by whom

First aid, veterinary assessment or transport arranged

Product, equipment or environmental factors involved

Owner / handler informed: when and by whom

Outcome and follow-up required

Could another animal be exposed to the same risk?

Corrective action before activity resumes

Report completed by / date / signature

Management review and closure

F. Participant Welfare Code of Conduct

The following wording may be issued during registration and acknowledged by competitors, educators, demonstrators, students, judges, stewards and handlers.

PARTICIPANT DECLARATION

By taking part in this event, I agree to place animal welfare before speed, appearance, competition outcome, teaching plans or commercial expectations. I will use humane handling, safe equipment and suitable products; observe the animal throughout; follow event welfare instructions; accept a welfare pause or withdrawal when required; and raise concerns in good faith. I understand that the organiser may pause, adapt or end participation where welfare or safety is at risk..

Expected conduct

- Treat every animal calmly, respectfully and as an individual.
- Provide accurate information about health, behaviour and handling needs.
- Use only approved equipment, products and procedures.
- Keep work areas safe, organised and hygienic.
- Offer water, rest and toileting opportunities as required.
- Respond promptly to stress, pain, fatigue, heat or respiratory signs.
- Follow instructions from judges, stewards, organisers and welfare personnel.
- Do not shame or pressure another professional for making a responsible welfare decision.
- Report incidents, injuries, unsafe conduct or significant concerns promptly.
- Support a professional culture in which welfare is visible, teachable and non-negotiable.

Name: _____

Role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

G. Briefing statements and event wording

Opening announcement

SUGGESTED WORDING

Welcome to this event. Animal welfare is part of professional excellence. Our team may recommend a pause, adaptation or withdrawal whenever an animal needs support. These decisions are responsible, and we ask everyone to respect them. Please follow stewarding instructions, avoid approaching animals without permission and report any concern to the designated welfare contact.

Competition briefing

SUGGESTED WORDING

Competitors are expected to observe their animals throughout and may request a welfare pause. Judges, stewards and welfare personnel may also intervene. A pause is not automatically a failure; it is a professional decision. Unsafe, painful or unnecessarily distressing conduct is not permitted.

Demonstration introduction

SUGGESTED WORDING

This is a live animal, not a fixed teaching model. The demonstrator may change the order, technique, equipment or planned result according to the animal's response. Any pause or adaptation is part of the learning.

Signage phrases

- Animal welfare comes first.
- A welfare pause is a professional decision.
- Please do not touch, feed or photograph animals without permission.
- Quiet area: animals resting.
- Professional grooming excellence must never be separated from animal welfare.
- Better standards. Better events. Better future for the animals we groom.

BETTER STANDARDS. BETTER EVENTS. BETTER FUTURE.

For the animals we groom. For the people who care for them. For our profession.
www.internationalgroomingsociety.org