

ISAAT species list

Preamble

Animal-assisted interventions (AAI) comprise animal-assisted therapy (AAT), animal-assisted education (AAE) and animal-assisted activity (AAA), according to the definitions of the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations (IAHAIO). All interventions are goal oriented and intentionally include or incorporate animals in health, education and human service for the purpose of therapeutic, educational and/or motivational and recreational gains in humans.

AAI include working in direct contact with animals as well as in indirect contact. Examples of direct and hands-on contact are: stroking the animals, feeding the animals, going for a walk with the animals, doing tasks together, riding etc. Examples of indirect contact are: cleaning the stalls or enclosures, observing the animals and reflecting about them.

According to the IAHAIO definitions, only domesticated animals can be involved in interventions with direct contact. Domesticated animals are those that have been adapted over generations for close contact with humans.

Wild, non-domesticated animals can only be involved in non-direct animal-assisted interventions. In this case, it is possible to observe them in their natural habitat or in wild life sanctuaries or zoos that meet national and international animal welfare standards whenever this does not cause stress to the animals or damage to their habitat.

The International Society for Animal Assisted Therapy (ISAAT) has compiled a comprehensive list of species for direct interaction in animal assisted interventions. We recommend that ISAAT members do not teach direct activities with non-domesticated animals in their courses or in AAI practice. If national laws define other species as domesticated, the ISAAT members need to carefully consider pros and cons for the animals' welfare.

ISAAT species list

ISAAT list of species for direct interaction in animal-assisted interventions

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Qualities, characteristics of species/animals on the POSITIVE list for AAI:

- 1 **Well prepared**, through domestication on the species level and socialization, habituation, and/or conditioning on the individual level, **for stress-free contact with people** in the age categories to be visited or treated
- 1 **Controllable and reasonably predictable** in behaviour and in the situations to be encountered (at most, low aggression levels)
- 1 Of an appropriate **temperament** for the clientel to be visited or treated
- 1 **Diurnal** (or at least crepuscular) and not mostly nocturnal
- 1 **Healthy** as attested by a practicing veterinarian specialized on animals of that species including immunizations against zoonotic agents, regular treatments for endo- and ectoparasites, and of an appropriate weight
- 1 **Clean** resulting from normal and preparatory coat care (brushing, washing/shampooing) and, if need be, accustomed to the use of protective items such as booties, diapers, bed-blankets
- 1 **Properly housed and cared for** at home and/or at the institution

NEGATIVE qualities, characteristics of species/animals NOT to be involved in direct interactions with clients/patients:

- 1 **Non-domesticated and unprepared** (non-socialized, non-habituated, unconditioned) **for direct contact with people** in the age categories to be visited or treated
- 1 **Uncontrollable or unpredictable** in behaviour and in the situations to be encountered (if provoked, moderate to high aggression levels with serious consequences)
- 1 **Inappropriate temperament** (e.g. hyperactive, inactive; generally aggressive or fearful)
- 1 Mainly **nocturnal**
- 1 Posing special **health risks** (known to be frequent carriers of zoonotic diseases, especially if difficult to prevent or treat; poisonous animals)
- 1 Animals **difficult to keep clean** (which do not allow coat care – e.g. brushing tangled hair, washing after wallowing)
- 1 Animals requiring **special permits** for housing (e.g. wild animal caretaker permit) or handling

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Note that non-domesticated, WILD animals in their natural habitats and such animals in zoos and centers for rehabilitation purposes, which follow *international* zoo animal welfare standards, may be observed and reflected upon (without interventional contact) in animal assisted programs.

Further, so-called “new” domesticated animal species will have to be considered in due course, as long as they meet all of the qualities/characteristics of species on the current POSITIVE list. The Current “Positive” Species List for Direct Contact with Clients/Patients assuming the individual animals involved meet the above-listed criteria

Domesticated Mammals

- Alpaca
- Domestic Bactrian
- Domestic cat (not including crosses with wild species)
- Cow (Cattle)
- Domestic dog (not including crosses with wild species)
- Donkey
- Domestic dromedary camel
- Ferret (**not** ideal as mostly nocturnal)
- Goat
- Domestic guinea pig (if cautiously handled and with retreat possibility)
- Domestic hedgehog (**not** ideal as mostly nocturnal, spit-balls & ectoparasites)
- Horse
- Llama
- Domestic mink (**not** ideal as mostly nocturnal)
- Fancy mouse (crepuscular or often nocturnal)
- Domestic pig
- Fancy rat (**not** ideal as nocturnal)
- Domestic rabbit (mostly crepuscular, mornings and late afternoons)
- Sheep

Domesticated Birds

- Barbary dove
- Domestic canary (only males sing)
- Chicken
- Domestic duck (also Muscovy duck) (need for water-related behaviour)
- Society finch

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- Domestic goose (nipping, noising greeting, warning)
- Domestic guineafowl
- Domestic pigeon (**not** ideal, diseases: Histoplasmosis, Psittacosis)
- Domestic turkey (**not** ideal, diseases and parasites)

Domesticated Fishes

- Goldfish (proper aquarium needed)
- Guppy
- Koi (large pond needed)

Domesticated Invertebrates

- Domestic silk moth
- Western honey bee

A general comment:

Whenever possible, one should favor endemic species over foreign ones, which, if they escape are usually a threat to the local fauna. Further, specialists for animal assisted intervention and pedagogy often serve as role models for children and patients, who later tend to keep the same species they have become familiar with and may be less responsible in looking after them.

Semidomesticated, routinely captive-bred or domestication status unclear (list incomplete, mostly smaller species listed)

Mammals

Capybara (**problematic**: special habitat requirements; mostly crepuscular)

- Long-tailed chinchilla (**not** ideal as nocturnal)
- (Short-tailed chinchilla) (**not** ideal as primarily nocturnal)
- Degu (diurnal)
- Mongolian gerbil
- Sugar glider (**not** ideal with special dietary requirements)
- Dwarf hamsters (**not** ideal: very fast, active and nocturnal)
- Egyptian mongoose (**not** ideal: diurnal, carnivorous, unpredictable temperament)
- Golden hamster/Turkish hamster (**not** ideal: nocturnal, territorial)
- Indian grey mongoose (**problematic**: omnivorous carnivore, invasive species, possibly illegal)

Birds

- Agapornis lovebirds
- Budgerigar
- Cockatiel
- White- /Sulphur-/Yellow-/Citron-crested cockatoo
- Indian peafowl
- Mandarin duck (**not** ideal: water availability)
- (Companion) parrot (**not** ideal: Psittacosis)
- Japanese quail
- Common hill myna
- Egyptian goose
- Zebra finch

Reptiles

- Ball python
- Grey-banded kingsnake
- Green tree python

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Invertebrates

- House cricket
- Roman snail

A comment on African Giant Snails (Achat-Schnecken):

African Giant Snails are occasionally involved in pedagogical work if one offers good conditions of captivity and is aware of the (problem of) their egg-laying behavior. However, in many countries they are actively hunted down as an invasive species. A gravid snail which survives an eradication program can found a new colony and regional eradication is usually unsuccessful.