



Special Props – Live Animals



Live animals in theater productions can pose a variety of hazards and challenges. The animal may cause illness or injury to the performers, crew, or audience. Materials for the care of the animals may increase the fire load within the building and may otherwise be hazardous to human health.

The animals themselves may be harmed by the actions of the performers, crew, or audience. Physical injury, such as scratches, bites, contusions, and broken bones can result when animals are frightened or threatened and use their natural defensive mechanisms. Animals can also transmit illnesses to humans through scratches, bites, simple contact, secretions, and airborne pathogens. Animals may also cause flea infestations. Performers and crew members may have an allergic reaction to the animals.

Ensuring the safety of the performers, crew, audience, and the animals requires adhering to specific steps before allowing the use of any animal in a production.

NOTE: No poisonous animals will be permitted at any time.

Conduct a Risk Assessment

The use of live animals in Performing Arts activities may require the review and approval of the Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee (IACUC). As part of production planning, contact your IACUC office early in the decision-making process and request assistance. The IACUC can help you work through the risk assessment process and document the safe procedures for handling and caring for the animals.

The risk assessment should answer these fundamental questions:

1. Is the animal essential to the production?
2. Are there alternatives?
3. How will the producers ensure the animal is obtained only from a competent handler/trainer or other legal provider?
4. What hazards are posed by the animal's natural behavior when reacting to loud noises, lighting, special effects on stage, stunts, other animals on stage, or service animals in the audience?
5. Will the animal be exposed to other animals on stage or in the audience?
6. How can you influence the animal's behavior?
7. With whom will the animal interact or have contact; i.e., crew, performers, or audience?
8. How much contact will there be with the animal?
9. What routes of entry might microorganisms be transmitted; i.e., hand to mouth contact, mouth to mouth contact, secretions, bites, scratches, or airborne?
10. Could the animal cause an infection that might threaten pregnancy, such as cats and litter box contact

transmitting the parasite that causes toxoplasmosis?

11. How will the animal's movements be controlled?
12. How will bodily fluids and secretions be managed?
13. Who will be responsible for the animal on campus? Off campus?
14. How will separation between the animal and any food and beverage areas be maintained?
15. Will the animal have an experienced handler/trainer?
16. Where will the animal be housed during the course of the production and between performances?
17. How will the animal be fed and cared for during the course of the production?
18. Will materials needed for the care and comfort of the animal, such as hay and/or straw, increase the fire load in the theater?
19. What are the costs of including the animal in the production? Be sure to consider all fees, licenses, rentals, equipment, insurance, security, food, veterinary inspections/care, maintenance products, and waste disposal.
20. What special emergency response and evacuation procedures need to be developed?



Control Measures

If the decision to use animals is approved after the risk assessment is completed, work with the IACUC to develop control measures designed to help protect the cast, crew, audience, and the animals. The following control measures must be activated.

Develop an Animal Care Plan

Develop an "Animal Care Plan" to ensure the safe and humane treatment of the animal and the safety of the performers, crew, and audience.

NOTE: The use of drugs and sedatives to control the animal's behavior is strictly prohibited.

Ensure the plan details

1. Who will be responsible for the care and behavior of the animal
 - a. During rehearsals and performances?
 - b. All other times? It is best if the animal is cared for off-site by its owner/trainer.
2. How the animal will be transported onto and off of campus
3. What travel paths will be used for the animal's transportation
4. How the animal's movements will be controlled
 - a. When waiting for rehearsals and performances?
 - b. On-stage?
 - c. During transportation?
5. What will be the frequency of the rehearsals and performances; ensure the amount of time is kept to a minimum
6. How long the animal will be on campus
7. How food and water will be provided while waiting for rehearsals and performances
8. What measures will be taken to ensure the animal is able to relieve itself
9. Who will dispose of the waste and ensure the area is kept sanitized
10. Who will groom the animal
11. How the animal will be protected from:
 - a. Unnecessary handling, including excessive contact from performers and crew, such as petting?

- b. The loud noise and activity of the production while waiting for rehearsals and performances?
 - c. Patron contact?
12. What are the emergency response and evacuation procedures for:
- a. Evacuation of the animal in case of fire or other emergency evacuation of the building/campus?
 - b. Escape and recapture of the animal?
 - c. Injury to the animal?
 - d. Injury to the performers, crew, or audience?
13. How and when the animal will be returned to its owner; how that return will be confirmed
14. What is the name and contact number for:
- a. The animal's owner?
 - b. The animal's trainer?
 - c. The emergency veterinarian?

Contact the Risk Management Department

Work with Risk Management to identify any insurance and/or contractual obligations. Risk Management may direct you to:

1. Notify all potential performers and crew members of the nature of the animal to be included in the production. Inform them of the amount of contact anticipated for each performer/crew member and the potential hazards associated with the contact.
2. Obtain hold harmless waivers from each performers and crew member. Ensure the hold harmless waivers also require the disclosure of any known allergies.
3. Obtain written verification the animal is healthy from a licensed veterinarian. This must be obtained prior to bringing the animal onto campus.
4. Ensure an adequate number of competent people have been retained to control the animal.
5. Obtain written verification the animal is properly licensed where required by local ordinances.
6. Provide adequate means to maintain personal hygiene, i.e. hand washing and/or sanitizing materials for use before and after handling the animal.
7. Provide the appropriate personal protective equipment when needed; i.e., safety shoes when working with large animals, gloves when working with large birds, etc.
8. Ensure patrons and the public are informed to the use of animals in the production. As with special effects notifications, this information should be included in advance advertising, posted in the lobby, and printed in the program.
9. Notify IACUC, Risk Management, Campus Police and Security personnel, Campus EH&S personnel, and the Office of Public Affairs.
10. Obtain a signed contract(s) with the animal's owner/handler that has been approved through the Risk Management Department.



Talk to your supervisor if you have any questions about this information.