



Guidelines for persons using animals in shows or performances.

Animals may be engaged in shows or performances, following these guidelines only:

- 1. Animals may be engaged in certain shows or performances, without the approval of the Director, Veterinary Regulation Directorate (VRD) and without any notification to the Director, such as:**
 - a. Animals used in all organised and legal sporting activities
 - b. Animals used in licensed zoos
 - c. Animals engaged in work such as:
 - i. Karozzini
 - ii. Service dogs
 - iii. Dogs engaged with military forces, police force, civil protection dept., customs dept.
 - d. Animals kept as pets:
 - i. Pets used for rehoming activities
 - ii. Pets taken for walks or trips
 - iii. Visiting animals in licensed sanctuaries for homing or educational reasons

- 2. Animals may be engaged without the approval of the Director, VRD but a notification 48 hours before the show or the performance is required, as stated in Article 31G of CAP439.**

Those shows and performances falling under the provisions laid out in Article 31G of the Animal Welfare Act (CAP439), as amended by Act 1 of 2023, all



artistic, theatrical and cinematic performances may be carried out using animals as props or extras. This prevails as long as no provisions as laid out in the Veterinary Services Act (CAP437) and Animal Welfare Act (CAP439) are breached, with particular reference to Article 8(2) of CAP439, i.e., animals will not be caused any unnecessary pain, suffering or distress. This means that all the animals, during any activity, must have the 5 freedoms, otherwise the responsible person is in breach.

3. Animals may be engaged in a show/s or performance/s only with the necessary approvals from Director, VRD as in accordance with Article 31G of CAP 439.

All animals which are used in a show, or a performance, but which are not covered by the point above, must apply to the Director, VRD for approval. This may be granted if the event/s which is being proposed will not cause any unnecessary pain, suffering or distress to the animal involved, and if the risk that this will happen is minimal. All the freedoms referred to in point 1 above, must still be abided to.

- Here under is an application form to be filled by the person who will be responsible for the animal/s' welfare during its/their performance/show. This application form can also be found online at servizz.gov.mt.
- **A non-exhaustive list of examples of animal shows and performances is provided further down.**
- The application has to be submitted at least 2 months before the start of the activity.

It must be noted that:

1. The Director, VRD or a representative, will have the right to verify the welfare of these animals whenever this is deemed necessary.
If any animal has been subjected to any form of pain, suffering or distress that could not have been predicted, then immediate remedial action must be taken. The Director, VRD must be informed immediately of this incurred problem, and the remedial action that was taken.
2. Other ancillary material may be required to assess applications, e.g., prior travel history, health records (including vaccination records, laboratory tests, etc.), animal wrangler dossier, veterinarian dossier, etc



In order for all animals to be shown or to carry out a performance, whether if an approval by the Director, VRD is required or not, then the person showing or performing must be abiding by the 5 freedoms of the same animals.

All animals must have the following 5 freedoms:

- a. Freedom from hunger or thirst.
 - i. Performing animals may be kept for only short periods without access to feed but must always have water available when there is the need.
- b. Freedom from discomfort.
 - i. This is referring to the physical spaces animals are placed within. During the performance, the space allowances may be smaller than the minimum housing standards required for that animal, as long as it is for a short period of time, and as long as the animal does not show signs of stress. After the performance, the animals must be placed in suitable housing where the space for the animal/s abides by at least the minimum standards as required by law.
 - ii. This is also referring to the microclimate where the animals are kept. Animals must not be subject to poor ventilation; temperatures far removed from their thermoneutral zone; poor air quality; loud
 - iii. sounds, etc. The microclimate may vary from the ideal values during the performance, and may be permitted for only short periods of time, as long as the animals do not show signs of suffering or stress.
 - iv. Animals must also be kept in a suitably comfortable environment when not performing. I.e., the housing must offer all the minimum requirements that the animal may need. During the performance, the animal must also not be kept in any place or situation that may stress the animal.
 - v. Animals that are used in performances must be in a serene mental state. Even though animals may be physically or thermally comfortable during a performance, or the performance may not involve anything that could physically injure or stress an animal, if there is evidence that the animal/s performing is mentally stressed in that situation, then that
 - vi. performance must stop and the animal restored to its comfort zone. An animal may not be treated with any medicine, or any other substance,



to encourage or to reduce the stress that the animal may be feeling, in order for it to perform.

c. Freedom from pain, injury or disease:

- i. This is referring to what may be inflicted to an animal in a show/performance, either by physical handling, or during the performance itself. Proper animal handling methods must be utilised at all times.
- ii. Care must be taken to prevent injuries to performing animals, e.g., from sharp or pointed objects, compressions, falling from heights, burning/freezing, excessive pulling, suffocating etc.
- iii. Animals which are placed either in a temporary or a permanent housing, must have adequate hygiene to prevent illness or disease.
- iv. The performance must not involve any action that will evidently cause, or risk to cause, any physical pain or injury to the animal.
- v. If during a performance, an animal accidentally suffers any pain or injury, that performance must stop immediately and remedial action must be taken, and if required, veterinary care must be sought immediately.
- vi. No animal may be utilised for any performance if the animal is ill, or
- vii. injured before the performance. If illness is noted during a performance, then the performance must be stopped immediately and adequate veterinary care must be sought.
- viii. All performing animals must be provided with adequate preventative care and medicine, as guided by the attending veterinarian.

d. Expression of normal behaviour.

- i. It is not possible for any animal to be part of any show, or
- ii. performance, where abnormal behaviour for that animal is expected. This refers to forced activities wherein animals are coached to move in a manner which is not typical for their species. Examples are: 4 legged animals walking on 2 legs; animals kept upside down; animals riding a bicycle, etc.
- iii. A performance of an animal with the intent of imitating human behaviour to entertain people, will not be allowed.

e. Freedom of fear and distress:

- i. Animals may suffer fear, even when not expected. For example, the presence of crowds; loud noises; bright lights; adequate handling of



- animals; fire, water etc. may all cause fear in particular animals. If there are signs of fear, the performance must stop, and the source of fear removed immediately.
- ii. Animals will be distressed if point b (Freedom from discomfort) is superseded, when the discomforts in point b are maintained for long periods of time, or are excessive.



Non-exhaustive list of animals participating in shows and performances requiring approval (or not) from the Director, Veterinary Regulation Directorate (VRD)

1. Total ban: Animals to be used in circuses.

As per article 31A, of the Animal Welfare Act (CAP 439), it shall not be lawful for any person to use animals for performances, exhibitions, shows or for the training thereof in circuses. This includes but is not limited to activities which make use of animals in performances which include shows that usually travel from place to place and that have a variety of exhibitions including acrobatic feats, animal displays, and performances by clowns, irrespective if these are held in temporary and/or permanent housing.

2. Animals utilised in events not requiring approval by the Director VRD but which require a 48 hr advance notification

- i. Magicians performing in households or in theatres, as long as the animals are used as props or extras.
- ii. In shows such as talent shows, where the animal/s being utilised is/are not the protagonist/s of the performance but is/are used merely as props or as extra/s in that event.
- iii. Animals which are being engaged in film productions, as long as they are used as props or extras.
- iv. All terrestrial and aquatic animal shows that allow the display or presentation of an animal, without these being made to perform or be presented in any act that is unnatural to the species.
- v. Shows with exotic pets that allow the display or presentation of an animal, without these being made to perform or be presented in any act that is unnatural to its species.
- vi. Animals (**not** regulated under CAP 437)(e.g., rabbits, equines, birds, etc.) in religious pageants and religious themed events.

3. Animals used in shows/ performances requiring an approval by the Director.

Application for approval is needed for the use of animals in:

- a. Animals (regulated under CAP 437 and subsidiary legislations)(e.g., bovines, small ruminants, swine, etc.) in agricultural fairs (e.g. Mnarja).



- b. Animals (regulated under CAP 437 and subsidiary legislations)(e.g., bovines, small ruminants, swine, etc.) in religious pageants and religious themed events
- c. Falconry events.
- d. Film, theatre, event (e.g. Talent shows) if the animal/s is/are the protagonist/s (e.g. Lassie, Flipper, Rex), as opposed to props or extras.
- e. Petting farms.

For any other events involving animals not listed above, or in case of further clarification, further guidance may be sought from the VRD Animal Welfare unit (tel. no. 2292 5320), or by email on veterinaryregulation.mafa@gov.mt.



**Application form to use animals in shows and/or performances which
require approval**

Name and surname of applicant/s:	
Passport / ID card / company Number:	
Email:	
Species of animal intended to be used:	
Number of animals to be used:	
Is this application for a show or a performance?	
Please give a brief description of this/ these shows/performances?	
Expected time period and duration of event:	
Expected time period that the animal will be outside its living quarters:	
Any possible injuries that the animal may acquire during this event?	
Required presence or availability of a veterinarian?	
Is this a repetitive event or a singular event?	
Date/s and time of event:	
Authorised by:	Signature:



Authorisation granted to:	
Authorisation granted for:	
A show/ performance (description):	
On this date/s:	
For this period of time:	
At the location:	