



CHAPTER 8G

SPECIES-SPECIFIC GUIDELINES EXOTIC/CAPTIVE WILDLIFE

GUIDELINES (Bears, Big Cats, Camels, Elephants, Marsupials, Primates [see the Primate chapter], etc., and “Working Wildlife” such as Chipmunks, Deer, Racoons, etc.)

ADVISORY: American Humane Society encourages that production request USDA inspection reports from owner compounds and training facilities prior to contracting their animals for production, and to reject those suppliers who have recent and/or repeated incidents of animal abuse and/or neglect, or other USDA violations related to animal care and treatment.

American Humane Society recommends that production require the animal handler to sign an affidavit stating that the handler uses only positive reinforcement techniques to train and manage animals in filmed entertainment. A copy of the affidavit shall be provided to American Humane Society prior to production commencing.

- 8-203 American Humane Society’s *Guidelines for the Safe Use of Animals in Filmed Media* apply to anyone bringing an animal to the set, including people who own or exhibit wildlife.
- 8-203.1 ... For safety and efficiency, American Humane Society recommends that producers hire animal handlers with experience in motion picture production, and with the wildlife required, to supply all working wildlife for production.
- 8-203.2 ... All wildlife animal handlers shall have appropriate permits that allow for the ownership and exhibition of wildlife, and they shall present this documentation to American Humane Society upon request.
- 8-203.3 ... Animals supplied by parties such as rehabilitation, educational and/or rescue facilities might or might not be trained working animals. These animals will be allowed to work only if they are comfortable in the filming situation, temperamentally and physically capable of doing the action required, and remain calm and free from stress.
- 8-203.4 ... Exotic animals that are underweight, overweight or otherwise not in appropriate physical or behavioral condition to perform the required work shall not be used. An animal shall not be used if, in American Humane Society’s

- judgment, the animal is not in appropriate condition and/or is not trained, prepared and conditioned to perform the required animal action.
- 8-203.5 ... When potentially dangerous exotic animals are on set, there should be at least two animal handlers present. Animal handlers must provide production with instructions for cast and crew on how to behave in the presence of such animals. The information shall be attached to the call sheet and must be conveyed to all people working with or near the animals. (Also see Industry-Wide Labor-Management Safety Committee Safety Bulletin #6, "Animal Handling Rules for the Motion Picture Industry.")
- 8-204 Whenever exotic animals are used, there shall be a safety meeting, prior to filming, that includes all relevant cast and crew. American Humane Society shall be invited to participate in all safety meetings.
- 8-205 Whenever exotic animals are used, the production and/or the animal handler must have an emergency safety plan in place to prevent the escape of any wild or exotic animals and to safely recapture them, without harm to the animals, should they escape. This plan should be discussed with the American Humane Certified Animal Safety Representative™ before filming. In the event an animal becomes aggressive or runs off the set, production members, cast and crew shall follow the explicit instructions of the animal handlers. (See *Guideline* 1-36.)
- 8-206 Animals should be kept in a quiet, secluded holding area when not working on set. It should be clearly communicated to production members, cast and crew that animals are off-limits when not working. Smaller exotic animals should have a separate room that is temperature-controlled when necessary. Larger exotic animals should have a separate sheltered area that cast and crew are prohibited from visiting.
- 8-206.1 ... Exotic animals should start work within two hours of arriving on set. Long filming delays should be avoided when using exotics.
- 8-207 Exotic animals should only be called to set when needed for rehearsal or filming. They should not be used as stand-ins or for lighting adjustments.
- 8-208 Ample rehearsal time should be permitted to ensure that the animals are comfortable with their new surroundings and the action they are required to perform.
- 8-209 No food or beverages should be on or near the set when exotic animals are being used. Strong scents, such as perfume, should also be avoided.
- 8-210 Exotic animals have keen eyesight and are easily distracted. Once the animals are on set, no extraneous work and no movements of people, equipment or props should occur without the advance verbal consent of the animal handler.
- 8-211 Well in advance of filming, animals must be habituated to noises, smells, lights, unusual objects and movements, and special effects (e.g., smoke, explosions, fires) to be used on set.

- 8-212 When animals are on set during filming, once the director says, “Cut!” the cast and crew should not resume any activities until the animals are secured and under complete control of the animal handlers, and the animal handler verbally releases the set. Cast and crew should remain motionless and quiet until given the “go ahead.”
- 8-213 The set must be closed. The number of people on the set should be kept to an absolute minimum when animals are present.
- 8-214 Conversations and noise must be kept to a minimum when animals are on set. This includes two-way radio communication.
- 8-215 Children should only be on or near the set if they are working in the scene with an animal and their presence has been cleared with the animal handler. Children may only be near potentially dangerous exotic animals while rehearsing or filming in a controlled environment that is monitored by an animal handler.
- 8-216 Absolutely no dogs (or other personal pets) are allowed on or near the set, except for working dogs with the permission of the animal handler.
- 8-216.1 ... When predator/prey relationships are to be depicted, animals must be either trained or conditioned, or the action must be simulated, to achieve the scene. Predator/prey situations can cause possible safety issues, put animals under stress and be a threat to the animals, as well as to cast and crew.
- 8-217 Whenever possible, “silent rolls” or “tail-slating” of the scene should occur once the animal is secured.

ADVISORY: Elephants

In 2007, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Executive Board approved the following policy statement on elephant guides and tethers, and American Humane Society supports these principles when elephants are used in films.

The AVMA’s policy on “Elephant Guides and Tethers” is as follows:

“Elephant guides are husbandry tools that consist of a shaft capped by one straight and one curved end. The ends are blunt and tapered and are used to touch parts of the elephant’s body as a cue to elicit specific actions or behaviors, with the handler exerting very little pressure. The ends should contact, but should not tear or penetrate the skin. The AVMA condemns the use of guides to puncture, lacerate, strike or inflict harm upon an elephant.”

“Tethers provide a means to temporarily limit an elephant’s movement for elephant or human safety and well-being. Tethers can be constructed of rope, chain or nylon webbing, and their use and fit should not result in discomfort or skin injury. Forelimb tethers should be loose on the foot below the ankle joint, and hind-limb tethers should fit snugly on the limb between the ankle and knee joints. Tether length should be sufficient to allow the elephant to easily lie down and rise. The AVMA only supports the use of tethers for the shortest time required for specific management purposes.”

ADVISORY: Declawing/Defanging

The **state of California**, as of Jan. 1, 2005, has outlawed declawing of wild and exotic cats, and the law states that no California resident may procure declawing of a wild cat. It also states that a wild cat may not be brought to another state to be declawed and then returned to California. The bill exempts from the prohibition procedures performed solely for a “therapeutic purpose,” defined as for the purpose of addressing an existing or recurring infection, disease, injury or abnormal condition in the claw that jeopardizes the cat’s health, where addressing the infection, disease, injury or abnormal condition is a medical necessity.

The **AVMA** opposes declawing captive exotic and other wild (indigenous) cats for non-medical reasons: “The AVMA is opposed to removal of canine teeth in captive nonhuman primates or exotic and wild (indigenous) carnivores, except when required for medical treatment or scientific research approved by an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. Reduction of canine teeth may be necessary to address medical and approved scientific research needs or animal or human safety concerns. If reductions expose the pulp cavity, endodontic procedures must be performed by a qualified person. To minimize bite wounds, recommended alternatives to dental surgery include behavioral modification, environmental enrichment, and changes in group composition.”

The **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)**, the national governing body over animals that are exhibited, sold or bred, has adopted a regulation stating that captive nonhuman primates or exotic and wild (indigenous) carnivores (including, but not limited to, big cats, canid species and bears) may not be declawed or defanged as of August 2006. Anyone who had an animal declawed or defanged after August 2006 did so against USDA regulation. These procedures are no longer considered to be acceptable when performed solely for handling or husbandry purposes, since they can cause considerable pain and discomfort to the animal and may result in chronic health problems. These procedures are no longer allowed under the Federal Animal Welfare Act.

ADVISORY: Filming With Exotic Cats

American Humane Society respects and upholds state and federal laws. However, there are exotic cats in the entertainment industry that were declawed prior to current laws which oppose this practice. American Humane Society will determine if such a cat is fit to do the expected animal action for filming. Should the animal display any signs of discomfort, arthritis, lameness, infection or other serious paw problems, the animal will be removed and not allowed to work. Should the animal appear to be healthy and conditioned for the required action, the animal will be allowed to work.

Trainers and production should be aware of current statutes and should be prepared with appropriate veterinary documentation on the exotic animals brought to the set. This is for the protection of the owner/trainer of the animals and production.