Handling Small Mammals

Teacher's Notes

Aim
To establish the industry accepted methods for handling a range of the most common small mammals.

Objectives
- The student will be able to:
- Interpret relevant aspects of animal psychology.
- Recognise the appropriate preparatory actions.
- Describe the most appropriate method for handling a range of small mammal species.

Content
This unit provides the basis for an understanding of how a range of common small mammals should be handled. The general principles are introduced, and preparatory actions are summarised.

Students are encouraged to consider the psychology of a small mammal, and form a rationale of why an animal is responding in a particular way.

An interactive 'Risk Assessment' task is provided, for completion by student(s).

It is intended that students can apply all principles to individual species of interest. Content lends itself well to classroom discussion, independent research; and particularly to practical tasks and handling, as applied within the suggested lesson plan:

Introduction - suggested lesson plan				
Timing mm:ss		Activity	Indicative Content	Suggested tasks
		Watch the film clip: Animal Psychology	How do small mammals perceive humans? What sort of response does this elicit?	Discuss predator/prey interactions. Debate: Most small mammals would normally or naturally encounter stress from predators during their lifetime. Does this mean that we should not be concerned if they become stressed whilst being handled? Identify dangers to the handler as a result of this animal psychology.
		Watch the film clip: Preparation of Enclosure	What is it important to do to the enclosure in preparation for handling?	Compile a step by step schedule of actions. Discuss, rationalise and justify schedule; including the Heath and Safety Act 1974.
		Watch the film clip: Health and safety	What are the Health and Safety considerations that must be taken in preparation for handling?	
		Watch the film clip: Attack / Bite	What happens when a stressed animal attacks? What is the correct course of action in the event of being bitten?	Discuss why it is so important to remain calm. Compile a step by step schedule of actions. Discuss, rationalise and justify the schedule.

Mouse – Suggested lesson plan				
Timing mm:ss		Activity	Indicative Content	Suggested tasks
		Watch the film clip: Mouse handling	Which are the more robust areas?	Explain which are the robust areas of the body that can be handled.
			Which are the more vulnerable areas?	Explain which are the more vulnerable areas of the body that must not be handled.
			What is the basic method of handling?	Describe the basic method of handling, and its purpose.
			What is the more complex method of handling?	Describe the more complex technique for handling, and its purpose and advantages.
			What is the safe return procedure?	Describe the safe return procedure.
		An Interactive task is included in this package – Students are required to complete a risk assessment, associated with the task of handling this animal. A 'calculator' will indicate the overall level of risk.		Complete the interactive risk assessment task via the link provided.

Rat – Suggested lesson plan				
Timing mm:ss		Activity	Indicative Content	Suggested tasks
		Watch the film clip: Rat handling	Which are the more robust areas?	Explain which are the robust areas of the body that can be handled.
			Which are the more vulnerable areas?	Explain which are the more vulnerable areas of the body that must not be handled.
			What is the basic method of handling?	Describe the basic method of handling, and its purpose.
			What is the method of handling used for an aggressive rat?	Describe the technique for handling an aggressive rat, and its purpose, advantages and disadvantages.
			What is the safe return procedure?	Describe the safe return procedure.
		An Interactive task is included in this package – Students are required to complete a risk assessment, associated with the task of handling this animal. A 'calculator' will indicate the overall level of risk.		Complete the interactive risk assessment task via the link provided.

Hamster – Suggested lesson plan

Timing mm:ss		Activity	Indicative Content	Suggested tasks
		Watch the film clip: Hamster handling	Which are the more robust areas?	Explain which are the robust areas of the body that can be handled.
			Which are the more vulnerable areas?	Explain which are the more vulnerable areas of the body that must not be handled.
			How good is a hamster's ability to perceive height?	Describe what considerations must be taken in order to protect the hamster?
			What is the basic method of handling?	Describe the basic method of handling, and its purpose.
			What is the more complex method of handling used for an aggressive hamster?	Describe the more complex technique for handling an aggressive hamster, and its purpose and advantages.
			What is the safe return procedure?	Describe the safe return procedure.
		An Interactive task is included in this package – Students are required to complete a risk assessment, associated with the task of handling this animal. A 'calculator' will indicate the overall level of risk.		Complete the interactive risk assessment task via the link provided.

Gerbil – Suggested lesson plan				
Timing mm:ss		Activity	Indicative Content	Suggested tasks
		Watch the film clip: Gerbil handling	Which are the more robust areas?	Explain which are the robust areas of the body that can be handled.
			Which are the more vulnerable areas?	Explain which are the more vulnerable areas of the body that must not be handled.
			What is specific about a gerbil's tail?	Describe why a gerbil will readily shed its tail – what is the scientific name for this process?
			What is the basic method of handling?	Describe the basic method of handling, and its purpose.
			Is it usual to encounter an aggressive gerbil?	Describe how gerbils usually respond to a threat?
			What is the safe return procedure?	Describe the safe return procedure.
		An Interactive task is included in this package – Students are required to complete a risk assessment, associated with the task of handling this animal. A 'calculator' will indicate the overall level of risk.		Complete the interactive risk assessment task via the link provided.