



5. Human-animal interaction

- General guidelines for farm animals:
 - Handler:
 - It is recommended that one person be responsible for the animal(s): the handler (Schöberl et al. 2016).
 - A good human-animal relationship is based on trust and not forced obedience.
 - Focus on a safe and good relationship with the animal (De Keuster et al. 2015).
 - The first weeks are crucial to establish a good bond between the animal and the handler (Topal et al. 2005).
 - The handler is a “safe haven” for the animal and the starting point for exploring new environments (Palmer and Custance, 2008).
 - For these reasons it is important that the handler:
 - Is reliable and consistent in his or her reactions (Konok et al., 2015).
 - Has, as far as possible, positive interactions with the animal. This improves the animal’s level of sociability (Bergamasco et al., 2010).
 - Encourages play and affiliative behaviour in the animal (lowers cortisol levels) (Horvath, 2008).
 - Does not use threatening body language with the animal.
 - Respect the following rules to improve the animal’s level of sociability:
 - Avoid fear! Remain below the animal’s threshold.
 - Be patient and monitor the animal’s progress. Skittish behaviour is always difficult to counter.
 - Animals that bite are not suitable for AAI.
 - Take into account the specific needs and constraints of young animals.
 - To render the animal less sensitive to touch:
 - Take time to render the animal insensitive to touch.
 - When touching the animal, increase slowly the level of intensity.
 - Always remain below the animal’s threshold.
 - The animal must allow itself to be touched over the entire body.

- Guidelines for each specific farm animal species:



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 - Prior to initial training, the chicken needs to be well socialized.
 - Therefore, it is recommended to start with a small group of chicks and to keep them in appropriate housing at home.
 - During the socialization period it is particularly important to develop a strong emotional bond with the chicken in order to familiarising him or her to other humans, new surroundings, noises, animals, target groups...
 - **Note: never lift a chicken by its legs or wings!** This is painful to the chicken and may lead to injuring the chicken.



Zorgbeest



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- Socialization of the rabbits should best take place in a domestic environment.
- Keep them in an adjusted cage so that the rabbits can go outside as well to investigate the room from time to time.
- Once the rabbits are habituated to being taken out of their cage, enjoy being stroked and seek out your company by themselves, you can gradually let them grow accustomed to other animals, people, scents, noise...
- Let them go outside during the socialization period (watch out for cats).
- **Note: never lift a rabbit by its ears or scruff of the neck!** This is painful to the rabbit and may lead to injuring the rabbit. Always support the hindquarters.



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- Socialization of the goats includes getting them acquainted with your target group, children and other animal species such a well-trained and friendly dog.
- Teach the goats from early on that it is ok to be separated from the herd for a short period of time, but make sure to do this very gradually.



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- Preferably, socialization of the pigs should be intense and best take place in a domestic environment.
- Once the pigs feel secure and come when you call, you can gradually let them grow accustomed to other animals, people, scents, noise...