CHAPTER 5
LOCATION AND/OR SET SAFETY

5-1 The American Humane Association Certified Animal Safety Representative™ and the animal handler shall inspect working areas prior to each day’s rehearsal or filming to identify hazards, obstacles and environmental conditions that may injure animals and people working with those animals.

5-2 Production and animal handlers shall familiarize themselves with local plant life that may be toxic to animals.

5-3 Safe footing shall be provided at any location or set as well as on any path to or from the location/set that an animal is required to traverse.
   a. An easily accessible area shall be available for loading and unloading animals. (Also see Industry-Wide Labor-Management Safety Committee Safety Bulletin #6, “Animal Handling Rules for the Motion Picture Industry,” paragraph 5.)
   b. When animals work on a studio stage or other potentially slippery surfaces (e.g., concrete, linoleum, wood, etc.), non-skid mats shall be placed in the area of action if needed to prevent slipping. An ample amount of rubber matting shall be supplied in order to maintain a safe pathway to or from the location/set that an animal is required to traverse.
   c. It is preferable to avoid the use of stairs for some species of animals, such as horses and livestock, which have difficulty going up and down stairs. American Humane Association recommends the use of ramps for movement of these animals.
   d. When filming on concrete or other hard-surface flooring (for example, to create an arena), the flooring must be covered in a manner to prevent injury to susceptible animals. Hard surfaces should be covered with rubber matting and, if necessary for set decoration, dirt may be added up to the recommended depth of 8 inches. If rubber matting is not used, dirt
shall be placed on all hard surfaces to a recommended minimum depth of 12 inches. Dirt that has been stored may need to be sifted and/or sanitized prior to use to exclude foreign objects, mold spores, and other harmful residue and debris found in stored dirt. American Humane Association recommends the use of fresh dirt. Under no circumstances shall silica dirt be used where animals will be present.

e. When appropriate, non-skid boots on livestock shall also be used.

f. In outdoor locations, the area must be checked for — and cleared of and/or mitigated for — railroad ties, holes and debris, such as tree branches, roots and stones, that could trip an animal, as well as slick or unstable ground, street or walkway conditions.

g. Stream bottoms must be cleared of debris, such as rocks, logs and trash; holes; dips in terrain; and unsafe footing before being traversed by livestock.

h. Deep muck, mire and quicksand must be avoided. If an animal encounters those conditions during filming, the animal must be extricated immediately and the physical condition of the animal must be evaluated, and the animal deemed uninjured, before it may be used further. The terrain also should be evaluated before deciding to proceed with any further action.

i. Scenery and props should be secured, as objects such as ladders or pedestals may tip over and startle animals. (Also see Industry-Wide Labor-Management Safety Committee Safety Bulletin #6, “Animal Handling Rules for the Motion Picture Industry,” paragraph 11.)

5-4* To ensure safety when animals work near or on railroad tracks or crossings, proof must be submitted to American Humane Association of communication with the railroad company or companies regarding train schedules. Care must be taken near railroad tracks so that the animals do not ingest creosote. Railroads are now protected by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, making trespassing a federal offense. (Also see Industry-Wide Labor-Management Safety Committee Safety Bulletin #29, “Guidelines for Safety Around Railroads and Railroad Equipment.”)

5-5 Obstacles that might strike an animal in the face or on the body as it traverses a scene shall be removed. For example, low-hanging branches must be removed before riding or chase scenes. All nails, splinters, wires and other debris must be cleaned up or otherwise made safe for the animals.

5-6 Animals shall not be exposed to contaminants such as slow-moving or stagnant water, putrid odors and toxins.

5-7 Raised platforms must be large enough and strong enough to support the animals they are intended for and must be tested appropriately prior to use by those animals.

5-7.1 Care must be taken when large animals such as horses and livestock are required to traverse stairs for filming. Animals must be prepped, trained and conditioned to perform this activity. The number of steps being traversed must be considered, as well as the size, width and grade of the stairway. The larger the animal, the wider the step/step board will need to be to provide the animal with safe placement for footing as it traverses the stairway.
**REMEMBER:** It is much more difficult for an animal to descend stairs than to ascend stairs. American Humane Association recommends that off-camera ramps be used to reset an animal.

5-7.2 Care must be taken to ensure that animals do not escape the set or location. Production and the animal handler must have a safety plan in place that will prevent the escape of an animal from the set or location and provide for an animal’s safe recapture should an accident or escape occur. (Also see Guideline 1-36.)

5-7.3 When filming in remote locations, the American Humane Association Certified Animal Safety Representative™ should be included in location scouts pertaining to animal action.

**AIRCRAFT SAFETY**

(helicopters, airplanes, ultralights, gliders, hot-air balloons)


5-8 Animals must be adequately conditioned to work in and around aircraft prior to filming. Should animals become stressed, they shall be removed from the aircraft or filming area immediately.

5-9* Production shall ensure that the pilot is properly licensed and follows all applicable FAA rules and regulations.

5-10 American Humane Association, the animal handler, and the pilot or aerial coordinator shall work together to ensure the safety of the animals. The pilot shall in no way be responsible for operating the camera when animals are being filmed.

5-12 Whether hot or cold loading, small animals such as cats, birds, reptiles and rats must be loaded in cages or crates. Larger animals such as dogs or small livestock must, at a minimum, be leashed or otherwise restrained — and preferably carried — onto and off of the aircraft. At no time should any animal handler approach an aircraft or helicopter without a clear and intentional signal from the pilot.

5-13 All animals, kennels and other equipment must be secured before the aircraft leaves the ground.

5-13.1 Properly trained personnel must be available to assist in clear communication with the aircraft and the opening and securing of occupants, harnesses and doors.

5-14 Care must be taken to protect animals’ eyes when near a running aircraft. When necessary and appropriate, the landing area should be cleared of debris and sprayed with water to keep dust and dirt at a minimum (i.e., rotor wash). (Also see Industry-Wide Labor-Management Safety Committee Safety Bulletin #3, “Helicopters,” paragraph 17.)