LONDON ZOO
a ZSL conservation zoo

EAZA ACADEMY

EAZA ANIMAL TRAINING WORKING GROUP

EAZA Academy's

Animal Training Seminar 2025

11-12 June, ZSL London Zoo, UK

HYBRID PROGRAMME

What you'll learn:

Compassionate Alternatives:
Discover innovative ways to use negative reinforcement that enhance animal welfare and resolve challenges like fear and aggression.

Debunking Myths:
Clarify common misconceptions about traditional strategies and gain confidence in your training decisions.

Expert Insights:
Gain knowledge directly from leading behavioral scientists who will share their expertise and guide the seminar.

Real-World Applications:
Hear inspiring case studies, see live demos, and dive into practical examples that bring these concepts to life.

Practice Your Skills:
Participate in an optional workshop on using distance as a reinforcer - a game-changer for mitigating fear and aggression and improving outcomes.

Tuesday 10th June

Free day at ZSL London Zoo (In-person only)

Optional - show your registration e-mail to the ticket office for entry

18:30 – 22:00 Icebreaker at Princess of Wales Pub (In-person only)

Optional - must be indicated on your registration form. Light snacks and drink included

Wednesday 11th June

08:30 – 09:00: Welcome (Hybrid)

09:00 - 10:00: Plenary Presentation: What Does It Mean to Be Constructional? (Hybrid)

Professor Paul Andronis, Northern Michigan University

10:00 – 10:30: Break

10:30 - 11:00: Science into Practice Presentation: The Constructional Approach to Compassionate Animal Training (Hybrid)

Barbara Heidenreich, EAZA Animal Training Working Group; Animal Training Fundamentals

This presentation bridges academic concepts with practical application, showing how building desired behaviours, identifying functional reinforcers, nonlinear contingency analysis, and creating genuine choice produce compassionate, lasting behaviour change.

11:00 - 11:30: Science into Practice Presentation: The Five Critical Elements of the Constructional Approach (Hybrid)

Annette Pedersen, EAZA Animal Training Working Group; Copenhagen Zoo

This presentation will provide practical examples of building new behavioral skills using the five key steps of the Constructional Approach: defining the behavioral goal, identifying the current behavioral repertoire, implementing shaping procedures, maintaining consequences, and monitoring progress along the way.

11:30 - 12:00: Case Studies (Hybrid)

Monica Haroun, EAZA Animal Training Workshop Group; Emerald Park

Rebecca Tull, Emerald Park

Mathias Skov, Copenhagen Zoo

12:00 – 13:00: Lunch

13:00 - 14:30: Animal Training Demonstrations (Hybrid)

Animal training demonstration will be delivered by ZSL London Zoo, demonstrating science into practice, with the opportunity for Q&A and discussion.

14:30 – 15:00: Break

15:00 – 16:00: Plenary Presentation: What Does It Mean to Be Nonlinear? (Hybrid)

Professor Joe Layng, Institute for Applied Behavioural Science, Endicott College

16:00 – 17:30: Workshop 1: Please Go Away! The Power of Using Distance as a Reinforcer (Hybrid - both in-person and online workshops offered)

** More information on this workshop can be found at the end of the programme document*

19:00 – 23:00: Event Dinner, Prince Albert Suite, ZSL London Zoo (In-person only)

Optional - must be indicated on your registration form

Thursday 12th June

08:45 - 09:00: Announcements (Hybrid)

09:00 – 10:00: Plenary Presentation: When Negative Reinforcement is the Procedure of Choice: The Role of Degrees of Freedom and Superimposition in Training (Hybrid)

Professor Joe Layng, Institute for Applied Behavioural Science, Endicott College

10:00 – 10:30: Break

10:30 - 12:00: Workshop 2: Beyond Compliance: Assessing Assent in Animal Training (Hybrid - Both in-person and online workshops offered)

** More information on this workshop can be found at the end of the programme document*

12:00 – 13:00: Lunch

13:00 - 14:30: Animal Training Demonstrations (Hybrid - In-person in ZSL London Zoo; Online - equivalent recorded demonstration and live Q&A/Discussion)

Animal training demonstration will be delivered within ZSL London Zoo, demonstrating science into practice, with the opportunity for Q&A and discussion.

14:30 – 15:00: Break & Group Photo

15:00 – 16:00: Plenary Presentation: The Importance of Contingency Adduction for Animal Training (Hybrid)

Professor Paul Andronis, Northern Michigan University

16:00 – 16:45: Q&A Session with Prof. Joe Layng and Prof. Paul Andronis (Hybrid)

16:45 - 17:00: Closing session

Friday 13th June

TBC: Visit to ZSL Whipsnade (In-person only)

Optional extra at an additional cost. Must be paid for in advance via registration.

Workshop 1: Wednesday 11th June 16:00 - 17:30

Please Go Away!

The Power of Using Distance as a Reinforcer

(Hybrid - both in-person and online workshop offered)

Outline & Learning Objectives

This workshop focuses on solving complex behavior challenges, such as fear and aggression, by giving animals what they want: distance! Participants will practice identifying distancing contingencies and applying behaviour change strategies that promote both improved welfare and successful training outcomes for behaviours maintained by negative reinforcement.

- **Understand** what "contingencies" are in behaviour science
- **Identify** distancing contingencies and related measurable behaviours
- **Identify** competing contingencies that hinder progress
- **Connect** contingencies to emotional behaviour and emotions
- **understand** how focusing on contingencies can lead to desired behaviour change and improved "emotional" welfare
- **Practice** application with video examples

Workshop description

Do any of these situations sound familiar? The animal tolerated an injection once but has not voluntarily participated in the behavior again. It is impossible to close the door when the animal is in holding. The animal refuses to enter a chute. The animal moves away when people approach or attacks specific individuals. These challenges are making it difficult for training to progress.

You may have followed all the standard recommendations, such as offering many preferred food items, giving the animal more time, and showing great sensitivity to body language. However, there has been little to no improvement in behaviour.

Frequently, such behaviors are maintained by the animal attaining distance from a stimulus. This means that providing distance as a reinforcer can shape new desired responses. This workshop aims to facilitate an understanding of how and when to apply a negative reinforcement procedure. Participants will practice applying interventions using emerging ideas in behaviour science to solve complex behaviour challenges maintained by negative reinforcement (distance as a reinforcer). The results are improved animal welfare and the achievement of desired behavioural goals.

Workshop 2: Thursday 12th June 10:30 - 12:00

Beyond Compliance: Assessing Assent in Animal Training

(Hybrid - both in-person and online workshop offered)

Outline & Learning Objectives

Learn how to assess and strengthen genuine assent in animal training by applying the Degrees of Freedom model, based on the work of Israel Goldiamond. Through collaborative activities and video analysis, participants will explore how compulsion, consent, and genuine assent differ, and why these distinctions are critical for both optimal animal well-being and effective behavior change.

- **Understand** the difference between compulsion, consent, and assent
- **Understand** critical consequences
- **Learn** the difference between apparent assent (implicit coercion) and genuine assent
- **Understand** degrees of freedom and how it can be used to evaluate and measure genuine assent
- **Learn** how to assess for the presence or absence of genuine assent in animal training
- **Learn** the benefits of genuine assent in animal training

Workshop description

This interactive workshop invites participants to move beyond evaluating simple participation and compliance in training. Together, we will carefully examine how compulsion, consent, and genuine assent differ, and why these distinctions are critical for both optimal animal well-being and effective behavior change. Participants will learn how to identify, measure, and strengthen genuine assent by using the Degrees of Freedom model, based on the work of Israel Goldiamond. We will explore how apparent assent may mask coercion, including circumstances where positive reinforcement procedures can be coercive, and how to recognize when genuine assent is truly present. Through the analysis of video examples, participants will practice applying the Degrees of Freedom model to assess assent and discuss strategies to enhance welfare when assent may be compromised.

Programme may be subject to change. For any questions, please contact the EAZA Academy Manager, Sally Binding (sally.binding@eaza.net)