

Animal Behavior Society Certification Program for Applied Animal Behaviorists (revised July 2021)

Animal behaviorists can be educated in a variety of disciplines including animal science, ethology, psychology, wildlife biology, behavioral ecology, and/or zoology as preparation appropriate to their particular professional applied animal behavior work. (for example, clinical animal behavior, conservation, research, education, wildlife management, pharma, animal control, shelter, animal welfare, pet products industry, and so on).

A professional applied animal behaviorist is a person with demonstrated expertise in:

- a. The theoretical principles of animal behavior,
- b. The process of conducting empirical research on the behavior of animals in either a laboratory or field setting,
- c. The application of animal behavioral principles to solution of animal behavior problems, and
- d. The dissemination of accurate information about animal behavior through teaching and/or research.

Certification of applied animal behaviorists is a means of demonstrating to the public, as well as to colleagues and peers, the training required to practice as a professional applied animal behaviorist. Certification constitutes recognition by the Animal Behavior Society that, to its best knowledge, the individual meets the educational, experiential, and ethical standards required by the Society for professional applied animal behaviorists. Certification does not constitute a guarantee that the applicant meets a specific standard of competence or possesses specific knowledge.

The objectives of the Animal Behavior Society's Certification program are:

1. To recognize the professional training of applied animal behaviorists by establishing specific standards and criteria for certification.
2. To educate and inform potential public and private clients and employers about the education and experience of applied animal behaviorists and to assist these same groups in evaluating applied animal behaviorists,
3. To assist the public in identifying applied animal behaviorists by establishing and maintaining a procedure for critical peer evaluation based upon defined minimum education, experience and ethical requirements,
4. To create and maintain public confidence in the advice and opinions of applied animal behaviorists as well-educated and experienced professionals who have pledged to uphold the Code of Ethics of the Animal Behavior Society and to act in the best interest of the public, and
5. To provide public and private clients more positive access to professional advice in matters concerning applied animal behavior.

Levels of Professional Certification

Associate Applied Animal Behaviorist (ACAAB)

Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (CAAB)

Requirements

Associate Certificate Applied Animal Behaviorist (ACAAB)

1. **Education.** Masters Degree in a biological or behavioral science with an emphasis on animal behavior and a research based thesis from a USDE or CHEA accredited college or university or international equivalent accreditation. The applicant's undergraduate and/or graduate course work must include a minimum of 30 semester credits in behavioral science courses (12 of which must be graduate level) to include a minimum of 9 semester credits in ethology, animal behavioral and/or comparative psychology (e.g., experimental psychology).

2. **Experience.** Minimum of two years professional experience in applied animal behavior. The applicant must demonstrate the ability to perform independently and professionally in applied animal behavior. Examples include independent studies, data analyses, formulation and testing of hypotheses, and professional writing. Evidence of significant experience working interactively with a particular species (e.g., researcher, research assistant, or intern with a certified applied animal behaviorist) prior to working independently with the species in a clinical animal behavior setting (i.e., one involving the identification and resolution of an animal's behavioral problem).
3. **Endorsement.** A minimum of three letters of recommendation from animal behavior professionals, as described in the application for certification. One must come from a currently certified member of ABS (CAAB or ACAAB) and another from a regular member of ABS (Non CAAB/ACAAB). Only two letters may come from the same institution.
4. **Association with the Society.** Must be a member of ABS in good standing, have presented a case study or research-based paper or poster at an ABS meeting prior to initial certification and within 5 years of each 5-year re-certification.
5. **Validity.** Once approved, certification is valid for 5 years and must be renewed annually. For renewal, a certificate holder must remain an ABS member in good standing, pay applicable annual fees, and provide proof of liability insurance as described above.
6. **Professional Liability Insurance.** Once an application is approved proof of professional liability insurance must be provided for certification to be granted (minimum of 1 million dollars per occurrence and 2 million dollars per aggregate). For applicants for whom all applied animal behavior work will be done through an employment where the employer covers professional liability of that work, documentation of the employer's coverage can substitute for a personal policy. **Insurance coverage must be maintained at all times.**

Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (CAAB)

1. **Education and Experience.** Doctoral degree in a biological or behavioral science with an emphasis on animal behavior and a research based thesis, including five years of professional experience; or a DVM (or VMD) plus two years in a university-approved residency in animal behavior, and three additional years of professional experience in applied animal behavior. Any of the degrees must include the course work required for an Associate Applied Animal Behaviorist.
Also:
 - a. Demonstration of thorough knowledge of the literature, scientific principles, and principles of animal behavior.
 - b. Demonstration of original contributions or original interpretations of animal behavior information.
 - c. For clinical animal behavior work, evidence of significant experience working interactively with a particular species (e.g., researcher, research assistant, or intern with a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist) prior to working independently with the species in a clinical animal behavior setting (one involving the identification and resolution of an animal's behavioral problem).
2. **Endorsement.** A minimum of three letters of recommendation from animal behavior professionals, as described in the application for certification. One must come from a currently certified member of ABS (CAAB or ACAAB) and another from a regular member of ABS (non CAAB/ACAAB). Only two letters may come from the same institution.
3. **Association with the Society.** Must be a member of ABS in good standing, have presented a case study or research-based paper or poster at an ABS meeting prior to initial certification and within 5 years of each 5-year re-certification.
4. **Validity.** Once approved, certification is valid for 5 years and must be renewed annually. For

annual renewal, a CAAB must remain an ABS member in good standing, pay applicable annual fees, and provide proof of liability insurance as set out above.

5. **Professional Liability Insurance.** Once an application is approved proof of professional liability insurance must be provided for certification to be granted (minimum of 1 million dollars per occurrence and 2 million dollars per aggregate). For applicants for whom all applied animal behavior work will be done through an employment where the employer covers professional liability of that work, documentation of the employer's coverage can substitute for a personal policy. **Insurance coverage must be maintained at all times.**

Re-Certification

Certification is valid for a five year period but must be renewed annually. All CAABs/ACAABs must apply for re-certification prior to the expiration of their current certification. To apply for re-certification, individuals must submit a completed re-certification application meeting all eligibility requirements and pay any applicable fees.

1. **Continued Experience.** Evidence of contributing to and staying current with the field of applied animal behavior.
2. **Endorsement.** A list of three animal behavior professionals, as described in the application for re-certification, that would be willing to provide a reference for you as an applied animal behaviorist if requested by the Board of Professional Certification. One professional must be a currently certified member of ABS and another professional must be a regular member of ABS. Only two professionals may be from the same institution.
3. **Association with the Society.** Must be a member of ABS in good standing, have presented a case study or research-based paper or poster at an ABS meeting at least once in the five year period preceding re-certification.
4. **Validity.** Once approved, re-certification is valid for 5 years and must be renewed annually. For renewal, a certificate holder must remain an ABS member in good standing, pay applicable annual fees, and provide proof of liability insurance as described above.

Annual Renewals

Once approved, certification is valid for 5 years and must be renewed annually. For renewal, certificate holders must remain an ABS member in good standing, pay applicable annual fees, and provide proof of liability insurance as described above. Failure to meet these requirements annually will result in de-certification.

Fee Structure

Initial Application Fee: \$100 (non-refundable, also covers first re-application)

Re-Application Fee: \$100 (second and subsequent)

Re-Certification Application Fee: \$100 every 5 years

A/CAAB dues: \$50 per year. Dues must be paid annually in January.

Ethics

Associate Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists and Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists shall:

1. Conduct their activities in accordance with the Code of Ethics of the Animal Behavior Society, with the highest standards of professional conduct and personal honor, and in accordance with the laws of applicable jurisdictions.
2. Accept employment to perform professional services only in the areas of their own competence and consistent with the Code of Ethics of the Animal Behavior Society. They shall seek to refer clients or employers to other applied animal behaviorists when expertise of such professionals shall best serve the interests of the public and the client/employer. They shall

cooperate fully with other professionals in the best interest of the animals, the public and the client/employer. They shall act in accordance with ABS/ASAB Guidelines for the use of Animals in Research.

3. Refrain from advertising in a self-laudatory manner, beyond statements intended to inform prospective clients/employers of qualifications, or in a manner detrimental to fellow professionals. They shall follow ABS Policy for the use of the Society's name.