



# Animal Care Attendant

Bio-economy Skills Profile



Building skills for Canada's bio-economy

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## About BioTalent Canada

### Helping Canada's Bio-economy thrive globally

Canada is a world leader in biotechnology—the application of living organisms to industrial, agricultural, medical and other processes and products. To maintain and build on this leadership, the sector needs highly trained, job-ready people.

By acting as a national hub and central resource for employers, job-seekers, students, educators and government agencies, BioTalent Canada helps make this happen.

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The opinions and interpretations expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.



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## About the BioTalent Canada bio-economy skills profiles

Biotechnology's fusion of science and business creates unique requirements for occupations in the sector. Executives and managers must have technical expertise; technical staff often need entrepreneurial skill sets. Occupational descriptions from other sources don't always fit the bio-economy context. That's why, in partnership with industry stakeholders, BioTalent Canada has developed skills profiles specific to the bio-economy including this description of the role animal care attendant.

## Occupational Definition

Animal care attendants provide husbandry, health care and surveillance and research support for laboratory animals, in keeping with regulatory requirements (CCAC). They provide care for a variety of terrestrial and aquatic species involved in various research studies. Animal care attendants clean animal housing units, empty waste matter, fill cages with fresh bedding, groom animals and prepare and feed animals according to established policies and procedures and/or individual research protocols. They may also provide routine postoperative care, administer medication orally or topically, or prepare samples for laboratory examination under the supervision of veterinarians or scientists.

Animal care attendants are employed by animal hospitals and clinics, animal shelters, breeding and boarding kennels, zoos, hospitals, universities, research laboratories, industry or may be self-employed. They work with scientists, physicians, veterinarians, and laboratory technicians. Animal care attendants work for Canadian biotechnology companies of different sizes (i.e., small, medium, large) and in various biotechnology areas such as:

- Agriculture
- Aquaculture
- Bioproducts
- Bioscience
- Genomics
- Human and Animal Health
- Life Sciences
- Medical Devices and Technologies
- Nutraceuticals
- Pharmaceuticals

### ***Components of the skills profile***

Every BioTalent Canada skills profile presents the areas of competence, tasks and sub-tasks associated with a specific occupation.

**Area of competence (AC):** This describes a major function or responsibility associated with the profession, trade or position.

**Task:** This is a specific, observable unit of work with definite start and end points. Tasks can be broken down into two or more steps and are generally performed in a limited period of time. Tasks and ACs are identified in behavioural terms, beginning with a verb that describes the applied behaviour.

**Subtask:** This is a distinct, observable activity that comprises the steps involved in a task.

**Important Action/Performance Standard:** This provides a criterion for assessing competence and may be used as a performance indicator.

### ***Focus on competencies***

The BioTalent Canada skills profiles are built around areas of competence because competencies are flexible, inclusive and linked directly to performance: they are the traits or qualities a professional must have to succeed in a given role within a given organization, and can be used for recruiting, professional development, curriculum planning and many other purposes.

### ***How to use the profiles***

The complete contents of this or any BioTalent Canada skills profile are unlikely to be used for any one position. Because they are comprehensive, they include every area of competence, task and subtask that could be required for a specific occupation. In reality, the definition of a given job will encompass a narrower subset of the profile. Hiring organizations must choose the elements of the profiles that are relevant to their businesses—and tailor those elements as necessary to more precisely describe their particular job requirements.

The profiles can be put to many uses:

- **Employers** can use them to develop job descriptions, performance evaluations, professional development, succession planning, team building, target skills needed, and recruitment plans.
- **Job seekers** can use them to tailor their resumes, prepare for interviews, see job descriptions and identify additional professional development needs.
- **Educators** can build industry-oriented curricula from the profiles to produce job-ready graduates.
- **Students** can enhance their understanding of employers' expectations and choose the right educational programs to equip themselves with the skills for success.

### **Scenario**

The following illustrates how an employer might use the BioTalent Canada skills profiles to identify professional development priorities for his or her team.

#### *Step 1*

The employer would review the ACs for each occupation and identify which apply to the related positions within his or her company, omitting those that are not relevant.

#### *Step 2*

Under the selected ACs, the employer then notes which of the associated tasks, subtasks and important actions are relevant to that specific position within his or her business.

#### *Step 3*

Now with a complete, tailored profile, the employer can assess employee performance. Needs areas are easily identified and defined—to a significant depth of detail.

#### *Step 4*

Based on the needs analysis, the employer can either develop or seek out professional development programs that address employee needs areas.

## Situational Analysis

Animal care attendants provide husbandry, health care and surveillance and support for research involving animals (both terrestrial and aquatic species), in keeping with regulatory requirements. They are responsible for ensuring that the day-to-day health and well being of animals within a research facility is maintained. They follow strict regulations related to the ethical treatment of research animals, established guidelines for their care and take measures to protect their health and safety. Animal care technicians often oversee the work of animal care attendants. Animal care attendants may have a number of responsibilities related to the care of animals in a research facility or laboratory including:

- Preparing food and feeding animals, fish or birds at scheduled intervals;
- Cleaning and disinfecting cages, pens and surrounding areas;
- Shampooing, clipping and grooming animals;
- Assisting veterinarians and animal health technologists and technicians with inoculation and treatment of animals;
- Assisting animal breeders to handle and nurture animals;
- Assisting scientists and researchers in conducting laboratory tests with animals; and
- Monitoring and documenting animal behaviour

Animal care attendants need to be comfortable working closely with animals, and being around animals generally. An attendant should be able to control the animals under their care as well as be alert to note changes in behaviour or health. Good observation skills are an asset. They need to be physically fit as the role may call for lifting, moving and restraining animals or large containers of food/bedding. They may be required to restrain animals and/or lift and carry light or heavy animals and cages that weigh over 20 kilograms. As they frequently handle animals, they are at risk of being bitten or scratched, or exposed to a disease that is transferable from animals to humans. Depending on the animals under their care, Animal care attendants may work entirely indoors in research facilities or laboratories, or they may work both indoors and outdoors in all weather conditions. No matter where they work, attendants must be able to tolerate unpleasant odours and not mind getting dirty.

Animal care attendants may be asked to participate in meetings with scientists, clinical trial managers and associates, veterinarians and animal care technicians to review animal care and/or to receive information related to animal care. Good written and spoken communication capabilities enable animal care attendants to work and interact with other staff and convey information about the animals in their care. Animal care attendants should be able to demonstrate consistent and organized work practices, pay attention to detail and be able to recognize and communicate problems/concerns as related to the animals. A familiarity with/ability to use computers and software systems to record data, track behaviour and monitor the well-being of animals is required. Attendants need to be adaptable to changes in routine, and respect and understand the policies, procedures, rules and guidelines associated with

their work, their personal safety, the safety of their co-workers, and that of the animals. As well, animal care attendant must be able to manage stress and maintain a focus on ensuring the best care for the well being of the animals in their charge.

A High School Diploma or equivalent is required for this occupation. Some employers do look for post secondary education. Certification is not a requirement, but it does indicate an attendant has the training and hands-on experience which is sought after by some employers. While not required for entry into a position as an Animal care attendant, job boards and secondary research identify that many employers look for previous experience working with or around animals and some require related training or post-secondary education. Some employers may also require an applicant to hold a valid driver's license.

Strict guidelines for the ethical and humane treatment of animals in research have been established and put into law. The Animal care attendant — working closely with veterinarians, laboratory and clinical and animal care technicians — has the responsibility to ensure that these guidelines are followed to ensure the well being of the animals under their care. An animal care attendant should ensure they remain current in their understanding, knowledge and application of these guidelines — completing training, participating in seminars. This continued training and updating also applies to safety procedures and protocols in a research environment. For example, as medical research is undertaken into aggressive and antibiotic resistant illnesses, Animal care attendant should ensure they have the appropriate training to ensure their own safety and that of those around them at all times. They should also consider completing training in emergency response, first aid, and hazardous materials preparation/storage and disposal.



## Essential Skills

The most important Essential Skill(s) for this Profile: ✓				
	Reading Text		Thinking Skills – Problem Solving	Working With Others
	Document Use		Thinking Skills – Decision Making	Computer Use
✓	Writing		Thinking Skills – Critical Thinking	Continuous Learning
	Numeracy		Thinking Skills – Job Task Planning & Organizing	
✓	Oral Communication	✓	Thinking Skills – Significant Use of Memory	
			Thinking Skills – Finding Information	

Animal care attendants need to record clearly and precisely the treatment regimen and status of animals in their care. They also require strong oral communication skills and good memory to ensure that verbal instructions are understood and retained as well as unusual or unique characteristics or responses of animals are noted and communicated to the researchers.

## Language Benchmarks

The majority of communications tasks associated with the required competencies and activities of a competent animal care attendant were found to be between Canadian Language Benchmark levels 5 – 7. This finding is based on a limited sampling of representatives in industry. The actual language benchmark requirements for this occupation within an organization will be subject to the organization’s requirements, and the definition of the occupational role within the organization.

## Competency Profile

*An Animal Care Attendant must be able to:*

### A. Provide animal care and husbandry

TASKS	SUBTASKS	IMPORTANT ACTIONS / PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
1. Maintain animal quarters (animals, fish, eggs, reptiles, etc.)	1.1. Inspect animal quarters and report any maintenance issues.	
	1.2. Make and report repairs to animal quarters as directed.	
	1.3. Clean animal quarters, as needed.	
	1.4. Clean feeding containers, as needed.	
	1.5. Check water supply and adjust if necessary.	
	1.6. Change bedding.	
	1.7. Change animal housing units.	
	1.8. Sanitize/disinfect animal housing units.	
	1.9. Monitor environmental conditions (e.g. water inflow and aeration).	
	1.10. Record observations on environmental conditions.	
	1.11. Report any environmental conditions that fall outside designated control ranges.	
2. Feed animals	2.1. Review feeding instructions.	
	2.2. Prepare animal feed (standard or special diet.)	
	2.3. Assess quality of feed and take appropriate action as necessary.	
	2.4. Distribute feed to the animals.	
	2.5. Monitor intake levels.	
	2.6. Record observations on feed intake.	
	2.7. Report any noted intake issues.	
	2.8. Remove and discard old feed.	

TASKS	SUBTASKS	IMPORTANT ACTIONS / PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
3. Groom animals as appropriate	3.1. Identify grooming requirements.	
	3.2. Wash/bathe animals as directed.	
	3.3. Brush animals as directed.	
	3.4. Clip/shear animals as directed.	
	3.5. Inspect nails and teeth as directed.	
	3.6. Observe animal reaction to the grooming process.	
	3.7. Record activities and noted animal response.	
	3.8. Report any responses that appear to be outside regular response range.	
4. Provide enrichment	4.1. Provide/replace enrichment tools/aids per study protocol.	
	4.2. Observe animal response to enrichment tools/aids.	
	4.3. Record observations.	
	4.4. Report situations where animal response appears to be outside regular response range.	
5. Observe animal behaviours/health	5.1. Monitor animal(s) health (e.g., appearance changes, illness, trauma or social instability).	
	5.2. Monitor animal output (i.e., feces, sweat, urine, vomit, etc.).	
	5.3. Record all observations and verbally report by exception.	Standard operating procedures (SOPs)
	5.4. Identify situations of animal distress.	
	5.5. Advise supervisor of situations where animal(s) are showing signs of distress.	
	5.6. Intervene as directed by the supervisor.	
	5.7. Record any interventions that are taken.	

An Animal Care Attendant must be able to:

**B. Support research efforts**

TASKS	SUBTASKS	IMPORTANT ACTIONS / PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
1. Transport animals	1.1. Pick up animals at depot/airport.	
	1.2. Confirm the expected animals have been delivered.	
	1.3. Review accompanying paperwork.	
	1.4. Assign the animal(s) to the appropriate facility location.	
	1.5. Transport the animal(s) to the appropriate facility location following SOP.	
	1.6. Check health status of animal and report any abnormalities (e.g. species, gender, colour, size).	
	1.7. Place each animal in appropriate quarters and confirm that environmental parameters are suitable.	
	1.8. Complete the identification label for each animal and attach to the animal's quarters.	
	1.9. Update the computer system and/or log book with the receiving documentation information.	
	1.10. Update the computer system and/or log book with the information on each animal (e.g. species, gender, colour, size, date received, assigned facility location, type of quarters).	
2. Provide technical services	2.1. Set up treatment area for studies/procedures.	

TASKS	SUBTASKS	IMPORTANT ACTIONS / PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
	2.2. Transport animals to and from the treatment/procedure rooms.	
	2.3. Hold or restrain subject animal during procedures.	
	2.4. Provide post-procedural care as directed by research scientist/veterinarian.	
	2.5. Collect samples (e.g. urine, blood, stool, hair).	
	2.6. Administer care protocols as directed and report any abnormalities.	
	2.7. Maintain records of activities undertaken with each animal.	
	2.8. Clean/disinfect treatment area as per standard operating procedures (SOPs).	

An Animal Care Attendant must be able to:

**C. Organize sampling activities**

TASKS	SUBTASKS	IMPORTANT ACTIONS / PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
1. Collect samples	1.1. Record relevant information on appropriate requisition forms.	
	1.2. Observe established protocols/guidelines for procurement of samples.	Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) standard operating procedures (SOPs), Institutional Guidelines, Provincial Guidelines, Federal Guidelines (for shipping across borders)
	1.3. Collect and prepare all necessary equipment for taking samples.	
	1.4. Obtain and label samples according to specific requirements, in a variety of conditions.	
	1.5. Arrange delivery of samples in a safe and timely manner taking into account priority and sample stability.	
	1.6. Dispose of samples deemed to be unsuitable according to protocols.	
	1.7. Clean/disinfect area.	
	1.8. Monitor animal health and record and report observations.	
2. Preserve sample integrity	2.1. Create sample record documentation.	
	2.2. Register samples into laboratory information system (e.g., logbook, computers).	
	2.3. Validate documentation to ensure that it corresponds with the sample.	

TASKS	SUBTASKS	IMPORTANT ACTIONS / PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
	2.4. Comply with existing guidelines for sample retention, storage and disposal.	
3. Store samples	3.1. Maintain appropriate storage facilities per standard operating procedure (SOP).	
	3.2. Maintain separate storage areas for different types of samples per standard operating procedure (SOP).	
	3.3. Clearly label storage areas.	
	3.4. Follow standard operating procedures (SOPs) for sample storage.	
	3.5. Ensure sample inventory logs are updated each time a sample is removed from or placed into storage.	
4. Dispose of samples	4.1. Update information in the sample inventory logs to reflect disposition, as necessary.	
	4.2. Remove from storage area in accordance with safety requirements and standard operating procedure (SOP).	
	4.3. Dispose of samples in accordance with policy and legislative and regulatory requirements.	
	4.4. Dispose of samples that are unsuitable for analysis in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements.	

An Animal Care Attendant must be able to:

**D. Perform administrative duties**

TASKS	SUBTASKS	IMPORTANT ACTIONS / PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
1. Maintain husbandry supply inventories	1.1. Monitor inventories of husbandry supplies (e.g., food, bedding, detergents, PPE – personal protective equipment: gown, gloves, caps, masks etc.).	
	1.2. Identify supply shortages and reorder as necessary.	
	1.3. Identify expired stock and order replacement stock as needed.	
	1.4. Order special diet food stock on an as-requested basis.	
	1.5. Monitor inventories of a special diet food stock and order as per research authorization.	
	1.6. Stock individual animal locations.	
	1.7. Store supplies in the appropriate storage location.	
	1.8. Monitor supply of sampling and procedure room supplies (e.g., needles, syringes, vacutainers, etc.)	
2. Maintain a clean and organized work environment	2.1. Apply appropriate facility, hygiene, bio-security and containment practices according to standard operating procedures and WHMIS standards.	
	2.2. Apply spill containment and clean up procedures as appropriate to the nature of the spilled material.	
	2.3. Keep work areas clear when not in use.	



TASKS	SUBTASKS	IMPORTANT ACTIONS / PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
	2.4. Clean equipment after use.	
	2.5. Store equipment once experiments are complete.	
	2.6. Store samples when not required for experiments or testing.	

An Animal Care Attendant must be able to:

**E. Apply consistent work practices**

TASKS	SUBTASKS	IMPORTANT ACTIONS / PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
1. Comply with established policies, procedures and protocols	1.1. Maintain confidentiality (e.g., data, records, intellectual property).	
	1.2. Practice and adhere to Canadian Council on Animal Care/Canadian Association for Laboratory Animal Science guides for the care of research animals.	
	1.3. Practice and adhere to standards such as Good Laboratory Practices (GLP) or International Organization for Standards (ISO) as required.	
	1.4. Practice and adhere to legislative/regulatory requirements e.g. Workplace Hazard Management Information System (WHMIS), Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), Canada Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs (OMAFRA).	
	1.5. Follow established corporate protocols and procedural documentation (e.g., policies, procedures, standard operating procedures (SOPs), test procedures).	
	1.6. Practice and adhere to quality assurance and quality control procedures/protocols.	
2. Demonstrate technical skills	2.1. Demonstrate knowledge in and use of all facility support equipment (washers, autoclaves, sterilization equipment).	

TASKS	SUBTASKS	IMPORTANT ACTIONS / PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
	2.2. Select and utilize the appropriate method for disinfection/sterilization.	
	2.3. Use equipment appropriate to the task to be completed.	
	2.4. Select and use appropriate sanitation/sterilization equipment to disinfect and/or clean animal facilities.	
	2.5. Utilize appropriate lifting techniques when dealing with heavy or bulky loads.	
	2.6. Work with animals related to field of work.	
	2.7. Prevent cross-contamination and/or apply aseptic technique.	
	2.8. Apply observation skills in monitoring animal health.	
	2.9. Use equipment associated with animal research (e.g. shears, injection guns, x-ray machines, and urinalysis meters).	
	2.10. Apply first aid skills in emergency situations, as per facility protocols.	
3. Ensure quality of work practices	3.1. Know and apply applicable standard protocols and practices, regulations, and legislation.	
	3.2. Record observations accurately and clearly.	
	3.3. Follow a standard routine and timetable for daily activities.	
	3.4. Report any noted variations promptly, with explanation where available.	

TASKS	SUBTASKS	IMPORTANT ACTIONS / PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
	3.5. Follow direction provided by facility manager, research scientists, and veterinarians.	
	3.6. Adjust daily routine based on directions received.	
	3.7. Use the computer, laboratory information systems and related technology in sample tracking and record management.	
	3.8. Take responsibility for actions and decisions.	
	3.9. Accept accountability for outcomes of actions and decisions.	
4. Take appropriate safety measures	4.1. Adhere to facility safety policies and facility standard operating procedures (SOPs) and guidelines while demonstrating competency in safety protocols.	
	4.2. Use appropriate personal protective equipment (e.g., mask, gloves, boots, laboratory coat, etc.) in a correct manner.	
	4.3. Utilize safety devices in a correct manner (e.g., animal restraints, cages, lockouts, safety containers and carriers, bio-safety cabinet (BSC), safety showers, eye washes).	
	4.4. Apply the principles of working with hazardous chemical or biological material regarding reagent preparation, storage and disposal and equipment cleaning and disinfecting (Workplace Hazard Management Information System (WHMIS)).	

TASKS	SUBTASKS	IMPORTANT ACTIONS / PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
	4.5. Take the appropriate actions to minimize the potential hazards/dangers related to working with animals – in and out procedures, disinfection/sterilization methods, biological samples, equipment and laboratory supplies.	
	4.6. Label, date, handle, store, and dispose of chemicals, dyes, reagents and solutions according to Workplace Hazard Management Information System (WHMIS) requirements and existing legislation.	
	4.7. Seek appropriate first-aid treatment (e.g. for cuts, bites, scratches).	
	4.8. Respond appropriately to fire emergencies.	
	4.9. Report incidents related to safety and personal injury (e.g., animal bites, wounds), in a timely manner to management.	

An Animal Care Attendant must be able to:

**F. Demonstrate personal competencies**

TASKS	SUBTASKS	IMPORTANT ACTIONS / PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
1. Demonstrate work ethic	1.1. Exhibit a professional demeanour and respect for the ethical treatment of animals at all times.	
2. Organize work	2.1. Plan work schedule according to direction and assigned tasks.	
	2.2. Demonstrate effective time management.	
	2.3. Set priorities and objectives.	
	2.4. Keep goals and objectives in mind.	
	2.5. Multi-task where possible and practical.	
3. Demonstrate attention to detail	3.1. Maintain accurate husbandry check-lists and ensure animal needs are met.	
	3.2. Maintain accurate, detailed records.	
	3.3. Validate reference information to actual samples.	
	3.4. Maintain up-to-date content in record keeping systems.	
	3.5. Ensure that records are orderly, coherent, and accurate.	
	3.6. Ensure achievable deadlines are met or advise where deviations are going to occur.	
4. Identify problems/concerns	4.1. Compare observed animal condition or behaviour to expected state.	
	4.2. Identify differences between observed and expected state.	

<b>TASKS</b>	<b>SUBTASKS</b>	<b>IMPORTANT ACTIONS / PERFORMANCE STANDARDS</b>
	4.3. Report identified differences to facility manager, research scientist or veterinarian.	
	4.4. Take action to address problems/concerns as directed by facility manager, research scientist or veterinarian.	
	4.5. Document situation and actions taken.	
5. Manage data and information	5.1. Use information systems (i.e., computer, paper, etc) for recording observations, test results, sample tracking, equipment print-outs and data management.	
	5.2. Apply computer skills in the entry and retrieval of data and information.	
	5.3. Utilize appropriate computer software (e.g., proprietary software, Microsoft Office) per standard operating procedures (SOPs).	
	5.4. Apply good record keeping skills (e.g., maintains up-to-date laboratory notebook).	
6. Adapt to change in work environment	6.1. Adapt to rapidly changing situations.	
	6.2. Apply existing skills to new situations.	
	6.3. Retain composure in stressful situations.	
	6.4. Recognize that change initiated in one area will impact on other areas and the research in that area.	
	6.5. Contribute to and work effectively in a changing environment.	
	6.6. Consistently search for improvements and discuss prior to implementing.	
7. Build effective working relationships	7.1. Work effectively with team members and others.	

TASKS	SUBTASKS	IMPORTANT ACTIONS / PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
	7.2. Share current knowledge with new colleagues.	
	7.3. Recognize the skills and abilities of others.	
	7.4. Show respect.	
	7.5. Accept and appreciate different ways of doing things.	
	7.6. Recognize the need for help and being able to ask for help.	
8. Communicate effectively	8.1. Explain point of view clearly and concisely.	
	8.2. Write clearly and concisely in the language of the workplace (i.e. English or French).	
	8.3. Understand directions/messages given.	
	8.4. Ask questions.	
	8.5. Seek out and listen to others.	
	8.6. Use appropriate terminology.	
	8.7. Recognize forms of non-verbal communication.	
	8.8. Identify barriers to effective communication.	
9. Demonstrate persistence	9.1. Maintain perspective.	
	9.2. Adapt goals and objectives based on changing conditions.	
	9.3. Manage emotional responses.	
	9.4. Assess progress and adjust accordingly.	
10. Embrace continual learning and development	10.1. Identify needs for on-the-job training.	
	10.2. Discuss on-the-job training needs with immediate supervisor.	



TASKS	SUBTASKS	IMPORTANT ACTIONS / PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
	10.3. Allocate time for on-the-job training.	
	10.4. Enrol in ongoing education courses.	
	10.5. Explore Canadian Association for Laboratory Animal Science (CALAS) certificate programs.	
	10.6. Attend conferences, workshops and lectures in your field.	

## Strong Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is composed of experts in the field of HR, CEOs, CFOs and CSOs from across Canada with extensive financial and industry experience representing companies and organizations in Canada's bio-economy. BioTalent Canada is not a membership organization and therefore relies on the guidance provided by its dedicated volunteer Board of Directors.

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