Why Is Certification Important?

Submitting an application to become a certified animal behavior consultant can seem like a daunting process. It requires gathering video for case studies, taking a written examination, and asking fellow professionals for references. It also costs money in application fees and membership dues for the organization, not to mention the emotional cost of worrying about not being approved. So why go through the process? In this article, I’ll explain how the benefits far outweigh the costs.

Certification is Good for You
Professional certification is a marker of confidence; specifically, confidence that the work the consultant will do will live up to the standards of the certifying organization. If the public trusts that organization, they will trust the individuals they certify. This transferred credibility means you will be in a better position to effectively communicate the value of your services, and how you differ from the trainers clients may have worked with in big box stores.

Getting certified as a behavior consultant means you can increase your visibility to potential clients. One of the benefits of IAABC certification is that you’re listed in our Behavior Consultant Locator, so people can find you.

Joining IAABC also means you get discounts on continuing education—including to our unique three-month intensive Animal Behavior Consulting: Principles & Practice course—and access to a community of like-minded professionals you can learn from and share with. For example, we have recently announced a mentorship program, which is ideal for early-career behavior consultants. Our mentors have years of experience in their fields and can provide individualized support over video chat and email.

Certification is Good for Everyone
Animal training and behavior modification are largely unregulated professions. Anyone can call themselves an animal behavior consultant or an animal trainer or a behaviorist, and we believe this leads to confusion for the public. IAABC and other professional organizations are trying to raise the standard of excellence, and get that standard recognized by the public so that public expectation can make the market demand a level of expertise. The more animal behavior consultants get certified, thus demonstrating they have the expertise needed to do the job, the more animal behavior consulting will be perceived by the public as professional, highly skilled work, not something you should trust just anybody with.

Of course, certification itself doesn’t make an individual an excellent animal behavior consultant; it is just a shorthand to indicate professional competence. But
it is important to have this kind of shorthand in the public consciousness. If we didn’t have certification we would have to rely on educating the public about animal behavior and training well enough for them to be able to sort the skilled, ethical experts from the rest of the field for themselves. This is a much more difficult task.

Think of it like the difference between teaching someone to find out whether a product is vegan by giving them a list of every single animal-derived ingredient (which runs into the hundreds, by the way!) and expecting them to read the label, compared with simply teaching them what the Vegan Society logo looks like and where to find it on the label.

Getting certified means being a part of creating the right conditions for excellence in your field. Getting certified with IAABC means you’re a part of an international organization that is dedicated to humane, science-based and considered approaches to animal behavior consulting.