

'Hotel for Dogs' Earns Its 'No Dogs Were Harmed'

American Humane's Film & TV Unit monitored all animal action on set.

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Beth Langhorst (right) of American Humane on the set of "Hotel for Dogs" Beth Langhorst takes the phrase "no animals were harmed" seriously. As the person who monitored all the dogs in action on the set of the new motion picture "Hotel for Dogs," which opens Friday, Jan. 16, Langhorst said she witnessed a variety of animal gimmicks and stunts.

"Every scene had an animal in it," Langhorst said. "It's a lot to keep your eyes on."

The film, a family comedy-adventure starring Emma Roberts, Jake T. Austin, Lisa Kudrow, and Don Cheadle, tells the story of two siblings in foster care – a system that won't allow them to keep Friday, their Jack Russell Terrier. They discover a way to not only keep their beloved dog, but a number of other dogs in need as well: at an abandoned hotel they turn into a paradise for pooches.

With more than 70 dogs working on the set of this animal-centric movie, Langhorst said her hands were full as senior safety representative for American Humane's Film & TV Unit. In all, she spent three months on the set looking out for the well-being of every dog to make sure the film earned the end-credit disclaimer "No animals were harmed."

She described the set as a fast, busy, and crazy place. An environment like that can be traumatizing to dogs, which is why it's necessary for her to be present and be able to read an animal's body language to keep stress levels in check, she said.

This includes making sure the production crew gives animals adequate rest breaks and meals. To get away from the hot lights on the set, dogs had large pen areas where they were able to go relax or play.

Austin plays the character of a young inventor who creates a multitude of contraptions to keep the dogs entertained at the hotel. Langhorst worked with trainers to make sure the dogs were comfortable working with the unique props.

These mechanical inventions help set the film apart from other dog movies, Langhorst said. For example, a door-knocking room was built for those canines who love to pounce at the sound of someone at the door. There's also a simulator ride involving car doors and travel footage.

All the activity on the bustling set can spook dogs. However, Langhorst said "Hotel for Dogs" earned its "No animals were harmed" disclaimer along with a "Monitored: Outstanding" rating, and captured the human-animal bond on film.

Jone Bouman, American Humane's Film & TV Unit spokesperson, said the organization is the only humanitarian group sanctioned to ensure the welfare and safety of animals that appear in filmed entertainment. This includes making sure dogs are stimulated and remain active during the process. All movies involving the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) require that an animal safety representative from American Humane is on-site monitoring the animals and their work.

"We're there to make sure and keep an eye out for the dogs," she said.