



Government
of South Australia

South Australian
Code of Practice for
The Husbandry of
Captive Birds



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 STATEMENT OF INTENT

This code will be promoted as a standard in the community. Failure to abide by this code may result in prosecution under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1985*.

1.2 SCOPE OF THE CODE

This code applies to captive birds with the exception of the keeping of waterfowl, pigeons used for racing, pheasants or poultry used for the commercial production of meat or eggs.

1.3 DUTY OF CARE TO CAPTIVE BIRDS

A person who has the care or charge of a captive bird must not use a method of management which is reasonably likely to result in unnecessary or unreasonable pain or suffering to the bird.

1.4 INSTRUCTION BY AUTHORISED OFFICERS

A person who has the care or charge of a captive bird must comply with any reasonable direction of an authorised officer as may be necessary to assess or ensure the welfare of any bird under their control.

1.5 OTHER RELEVANT LEGISLATION/STANDARDS

The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1985*, *National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1972*, and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) standards for the air transportation of animals.

1.6 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED IN THIS CODE

The term “authorised officer” means a person empowered by legislation to enforce welfare or protection laws.

The term “veterinary surgeon” means a person registered as a veterinary surgeon pursuant to Division II, section 25 of the *Veterinary Surgeons Act, 1985*.

The term “photo period” represents length of daylight hours.



2 HUSBANDRY OF CAPTIVE BIRDS

2.1 FEEDING

Adequate food suitable for the needs of the particular species of bird must be available at all times. Food must be fresh and clean and stored in a manner which prevents deterioration, spoilage or contamination.

Containers used to supply feed must be constructed or used in a manner which will not cause injury to the birds. They must be situated in a position where the food is least likely to be spoiled or contaminated by faeces.

Where applicable to the species a supplementary supply of either fresh fruit, vegetables, seeding grasses or other appropriate foods must be supplied regularly to ensure a variation of diet.

Mixed grit and a calcium supplement must be available.

2.2 WATER

Clean, cool drinking water must be available at all times. Water containers must be located in a position where they are least likely to become contaminated by faeces. Containers must be kept in a clean condition and as free as possible of foreign matter.

2.3 ACCOMMODATION

All housing must be kept in a state of cleanliness that is conducive to the good health of the birds. Accommodation must provide:-

- Protection from extremes of climate.
- Clean fresh air and adequate ventilation.
- Draught-free shelter.
- Protection from predators, vermin, and harassment.
- Well secured, wooden perches of varying thickness with sufficient space for all birds.
- An adequate number of feed and water stations to meet the requirements of all birds.
- Adequate floor drainage.
- Adequate light and regular photo periods.



2.4 HEALTH

2.4.1 Disease

Birds must be observed for ill health or stress. Symptoms of ill health or stress may be observed in birds in a variety of ways. Signs of ill health include:-

- changes in
 - appearance of droppings;
 - food or water consumption;
 - attitude or behaviour;
 - appearance or posture; and
 - body weight and plumage.
- Enlargements or swellings
- Vomiting, injury or bleeding.
- Discharge from nostrils, eyes, beak or vent.

Sick or injured birds must be isolated for observation and treatment. If the owner cannot provide effective or adequate treatment then prompt advice of a registered veterinary surgeon must be sought.

If required, overgrown beaks and toenails must be trimmed in such a manner as to avoid haemorrhage.

Birds must be given appropriate treatment for internal and external parasites.

2.5 GENERAL

Where leg rings are used these rings must be of the appropriate size and nature, so as not to cause injury.

Birds must not be tethered as a means of restraint except as authorised under the provisions of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1972*.

Birds must not be housed with any other species of bird, reptile or animal, the keeping of which in the same accommodation will be detrimental to the bird (s) health or welfare.

Captive birds, with the exception of quail, pheasants, plovers and waterbirds must not be pinioned. Birds less than forty eight (48) hours old must not be pinioned. The pinioning of any bird more than seventy two (72) hours old must be carried out by a registered veterinary surgeon.

Sufficient nesting sites must be provided in such a manner as to minimise fighting.



3. MINIMUM CAGE SIZES

These minimum cage sizes apply to young birds which are being tamed as a pet or birds which are humanised. An exception applies where a bird is sick, injured or being handraised where confinement may improve healing and facilitate treatment. All other birds must be housed under aviary conditions.

NB: Measurements in centimetres, w = width, d = depth, h = height

Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
30w x 25d x 40h	60w x 40d x 40h	60w x 60d x 60h	70w x 70d x 90h
Lovebird	Cockatiel	Galah	Sulphur-Crested
Budgie	Lorikeet	Little Corella	Major Mitchell
Canary	Red Rump	King Parrot	Alexandrine
Finch	Rosella	Princess	Eclectus
		Indian Ring Neck	
		Long Billed Corella	

- For birds other than the species listed refer to the benchmark species for each cage category.
- Where two birds are held in a cage the next cage size is necessary. For example, two Cockatiels must be kept in a Category 3 cage. An exception applies for Category 1 where two birds may be kept in the same cage.

It is strongly recommended that any more than one bird be held in an outside aviary.



4 CONTAINERS/CARRY CAGES

4.1 GENERAL

Incompatible birds must not be transported in the same container/ carrying cage.

All transport containers/carrying cages must have adequate ventilation.

Ventilation holes must not allow the head of the bird to protrude.

All containers must be enclosed on five of the six sides.

Birds must only be confined in a container/carrying cage for the duration of transit or overnight accommodation prior to release.

Food must be provided at all times. If the journey may exceed two hours, water must be provided and stabilised with cotton wool to minimise spillage.

During transportation all containers/carrying cages must be adequately enclosed to minimise stress or injury.

Birds must not be transported in high or low temperatures which may cause distress or death.

4.2 SHORT PERIOD CONTAINERS/CARRYING CAGES

Any person transporting birds must ensure they are transported in a container/ carrying cage which is appropriate to the requirements of the species and the number of birds.

Containers must be of clean material, for example shoe boxes and card board wine casks. Containers such as milk cartons, jars, plastic ice cream boxes, paper bags et cetera must not be used.

Containers/carrying cages must be sufficiently robust for the species they contain and must be escape proof during transport.

4.3 CONFINEMENT

Glass or acrylic dome cages must not be used for birds.

Leg chains must not be used for birds.

Sandpaper perch covers must not be used.



5. BIRD COMPETITIONS AND DISPLAYS

5.1 ACCOMMODATION – COMPETITIONS

Clubs engaged in bird competitions must meet State accommodation standards for the relevant species.

5.2 DURATION

Birds must not be held in competitive or display accommodation for more than 72 hours for any one occupancy.

5.3 STRESSED BIRDS

Birds showing any sign of injury or stress must be removed from the competition or display area immediately and be given appropriate treatment.



APPENDIX 1

HANDY HINTS

During the formulation of the Code of Practice, the Working Group often discussed the more common problems seen by members of the groups represented. These issues were considered to be more appropriately addressed in an appendix of handy hints rather than included in the body of the Code of Practice, designed to be a legally enforceable document.

This is not an exhaustive list of problems. It is strongly recommended that, should you have any concerns or queries related to your birds, assistance should be sought from a recognised authority.

FEEDING

Food and water containers should not be transferred to other cages without prior washing in a disinfectant solution and rinsing in clean water.

Multiple feed sites assist new birds to acclimatise to their environment.

Lorikeets are not a seed eating bird and should be fed an appropriate lorikeet mixture and fruit.

WATER

Birds should be given an opportunity to **bathe** in either a bowl or light spray of water.

POISONS/TOXICITY

If bait stations or traps are used inside cages, they should be designed in such a way that it is impossible for birds to reach the bait or traps.

New galvanised wire may be toxic, especially to parrots. The risk of “**New Wire Disease**” or **zinc poisoning**, can be reduced by allowing the wire to weather for a period of four to eight weeks, or by washing with a mild acidic solution such as vinegar followed by a rinse with water.

Cabbage, cauliflower and avocado are **toxic** to many birds.



HEALTH

Newly acquired birds should be **quarantined** for a suitable period for treatment and observation before being released into permanent housing. After quarantine a bird should only be **released into new surroundings** early in the day to allow time to acclimatise to the new environment before nightfall.

Captive birds can be affected by **internal parasites** causing health problems which may result in death. Treatment can be administered via food or water but dosing of individual birds is more efficient.

External parasites should be eradicated by application of an appropriate insecticide (for poultry or bird use), to birds, cages and nest boxes, and may include dusting, spraying or contact insecticides on perches.

Overgrown toenails are usually prevented by using rough perches of an uneven diameter and eliminating foot disease and obesity. Unnecessary trimming of beaks and toenails may lead to health problems for the bird.

Overgrown beaks and toenails may be indicative of a health problem and appropriate veterinary advice should be sought.

It is preferable that **perches** are replaced regularly rather than scrubbed. Scrubbed perches may be a source of disease.

The **catching of birds** may cause distress and should be kept to a minimum.

Identification rings may be used on the legs of captive birds. These rings must be of a size that fits closely yet moves freely on the leg of an adult bird. Over-large rings get caught in obstacles such as vegetation or wire and the rings that are too tight restrict blood flow to the leg (refer section 2.5 of the Code).

TRANSPORTATION

When transporting birds a strong, clean cardboard box may be suitable for some kinds of birds. Larger parrots and cockatoos may chew through cardboard or softwood and for those species a substantial hardwood box or metal cage is necessary.

The transportation of birds in temperatures exceeding 32 degrees Celsius is not recommended.

AVIARIES

Birds being introduced to an **outside aviary** should be released early in the day to allow acclimatisation.

Birds should not be introduced to an outside aviary during **extreme weather conditions**.

