

# General Guidelines for the Management of Protected Wildlife in Captivity in South Australia

**Note:** The *Animal Welfare Act 1985* creates an offence for a person who fails to provide appropriate and adequate, food, water, living conditions (whether temporary or permanent), or exercise, or fails to take reasonable steps to mitigate harm suffered by an animal in their care. In addition, the *National Parks and Wildlife (Wildlife) Regulations 2001* prescribes standards for keeping protected animals.

**Disclaimer:**

This publication contains advisory information only. While considerable care has been taken in researching and compiling the information, neither the Department of Environment and Natural Resources nor the South Australian Government accepts responsibility for errors or omissions or for any decisions or actions taken on the basis of this document.

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## Background

The Department of Environment and Water (DEW) is responsible for the administration of native wildlife management legislation in South Australia. Applicable Acts include the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* and the *Animal Welfare Act 1985*. DEW is responsible for the licensing and monitoring of persons involved in the keeping, rescue and rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned protected animals and the release, or retention in captivity, of those animals.

Part 5 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* specifically deals with the conservation and protection of native animals. Sections under Part 5 prescribe the restrictions on the taking of protected animals, the release of protected animals, the prohibitions and restrictions upon the keeping of protected animals and with certain dealings in protected animals.

Pursuant to section 53 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* provision has been made for individuals to apply for a range of permits for the holding of protected animals in captivity. A *Protected Animals Rescue Permit*, *Wildlife Rehabilitation Facility Permit*, *Wildlife Carer Permit* is required for the rescue, care and rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned protected animals. An appropriate Keep and Sell Permit is required, to hold wildlife obtained through sources other than rescue. For more information, please refer to;

<http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/faunapermits/permit.html>. Failure to comply with the provisions of the Act may result in significant penalties and/or imprisonment.

Irrespective of the class of permit approved for keeping or maintaining a protected animal, the need to ensure the welfare of the animal at all times is paramount. While these recommended guidelines provide a basis for meeting the minimum housing and husbandry requirements, permit holders are encouraged to exceed these standards wherever possible. It is strongly recommended that carers seek out additional information (see "Further Information") regarding the care of the species, as well as seeking the advice of an experienced carer and/or veterinarian.

In combination, the *Animal Welfare Act 1985* and the *National Parks and Wildlife (Wildlife) Regulations 2019*, require that a person who keeps a protected animal must keep the animal in a cage or enclosure that is adequate in size and is constructed and maintained so as to-

- provide adequate shelter in all circumstances;
- prevent the animal from escaping;
- protect the animal against predators;
- enable the cage or enclosure to be locked or otherwise secured against intruders;
- provide adequate exercise;
- provide appropriate veterinary care and treatment
- ensure that the cage or enclosure in which the animal is kept-
- is maintained in a clean and sanitary condition;
- except when the person is present - is securely locked or otherwise secured against intruders;
- keep an adequate supply of clean water in the cage or enclosure;
- provide sufficient and appropriate food in the cage or enclosure;
- not keep the animal with another animal that is likely to injure or kill it; and
- protect the animal from weather conditions that would be likely to cause it distress; and
- provide the animal with adequate heat or ultra-violet light from an artificial source if the animal is of a species that requires such heat or light for its well-being;
- not permit the animal to suffer distress from any other cause that can reasonably be avoided; and

In addition, a person must produce the animal for inspection at the request of a National Parks and Wildlife warden and, as far as is practicable, must facilitate the inspection of the animal. If, in the opinion of a National Parks and Wildlife warden, or an Animal Welfare inspector, a person is contravening or is failing to comply with these requirements there may be grounds for the warden or inspector to remove the animal from that person's possession or control. A warden is not bound to return an animal unless satisfied that there will not be a further contravention of, or non-compliance with, the requirements in relation to that animal. Similar provisions apply to Animal Welfare inspectors. In most cases, National Parks and Wildlife wardens are also authorized as inspectors under the *Animal Welfare Act 1985* so have the power to require compliance with both legislative instruments.

Part 6 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* deals with "Miscellaneous Provisions", including permits, failure to comply, penalties, regulations and codes of practice. Pursuant to section 80 (Regulations) of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* provision has been made for the creation of regulations necessary for the purposes of the Act, and that a regulation may require compliance with a specified code of practice, standard or other document.

DEW recognises that the work of wildlife rehabilitators contributes to conservation through research, community education and promotion of a respect for native wildlife. However, rehabilitation has limited benefit for biodiversity conservation as the majority of animals rescued are common species.

When keeping or rehabilitating protected wildlife, the priority must be to ensure that optimum levels of care and animal welfare are provided. This includes appropriate nutrition, the opportunity to express a range of natural behaviours and protection from harm and potential hazards. Carers and rehabilitators of protected wildlife should develop a working relationship with a veterinarian interested in native wildlife and seek advice and assistance as required.

## Scope

These guidelines apply to members of the public that apply for and/or obtain a DEW *Protected Animals Rescue Permit, Wildlife Rehabilitation Facility Permit, Wildlife Carer Permit* or a "permit to keep" protected wildlife in captivity.

These procedures do not apply to protected wildlife held in;

- Zoological Institutions
- Educational Institutions
- Approved Research Programs
- Veterinary Clinics
- Pet Shops

## Objectives

The objectives of this document and the species specific guidelines which it underpins are to:

- Provide recommended guidelines which protect animal welfare, identify when it is not appropriate to return a protected animal to the wild and to establish controls which assist in meeting conservation objectives;
- Provide recommended guidelines for the maintenance of protected wildlife kept in captivity;
- Ensure a consistent State wide policy for the rescue, rehabilitation, release, captive holding and euthanasia of protected animals;

- Provide a clear and consistent framework for DEW in developing and maintaining a partnership with wildlife rehabilitation groups and individuals in their approach to holding protected animals for any reason;
- Ensure that holders of protected wildlife are appropriately endorsed and accountable for their activities, and that rehabilitation activities are undertaken in the most effective and efficient manner; and
- Contribute to the maintenance of biodiversity through the successful return of temporarily compromised wildlife to their natural environments where possible.

## Licensing

DEW will issue permits to hold protected wildlife for rehabilitation or keep purposes if the applicant can demonstrate that they have the necessary skills, experience and resources to provide the animal with an acceptable environment and level of care. Applicants applying to hold or keep a specialist species may be required to provide written references from two people who can attest to your skills and experience in the care and captive management of the species, or a similar species. Fauna Permit staff may require photographs of enclosures, information on husbandry and facilities or a site visit before issuing a permit.

Rescue permits may be issued to an individual but not to a rescue group or organisation. Applicants for a rescue permit must reside in South Australia. All applicants for a permit must demonstrate that they can satisfy the following criteria:

- Demonstrated experience and capacity in the capture, transport, housing and husbandry of the species (or a similar species) that they are applying for, as described in the recommended captive management guidelines;
- Capacity to submit reports to DEW which provide information required as a condition of their permit;
- Agreement to euthanize animals under certain circumstances.

A permit is not required by a veterinarian who is holding protected wildlife which is sick or injured while those animals are undergoing treatment and are under the direct care of the veterinarian.

More information on wildlife permits is available at the Fauna Permits web site at;  
<http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/faunapermits/permit.html>

## Record Keeping

Record books must be used to keep up-to-date records for all protected animals held and provided in accordance with the prescribed process described on the permit. Record and return books must be kept at the premises where protected animals are kept, and be available for inspection by a warden at all times. This may be through electronic means such as internet submissions or computer records.

## Rescue of Protected Wildlife

The rescue of protected wildlife is defined as the act of assisting a native animal perceived to require immediate help. Rescues apply to the following situations:

- Sick, injured or incapacitated animals; or
- Orphaned dependent animals; or
- Escaped "pets" that have no apparent chance of survival in the wild; or

- Animals impacted by natural disasters (eg wildfire, oil or chemical spills, pollutants, poisons, etc.); or
- Humanised animals (either escaped or released); or
- Animals in imminent danger (eg located on a busy roadway).

A person finding a non endemic, healthy animal (eg Queensland Carpet Python in metropolitan Adelaide), should contact DEW for advice.

Animals should not be rescued in the following situations:

- Healthy animals (eg koala in tree) ; or
- Healthy juvenile animals (eg “fledgling” birds or hatchling reptiles) ; or
- Nectar feeders which get “drunk” from eating nectar at certain times of the year; or
- Animals whose injuries are unlikely to compromise their ability to survive in the wild (eg a lizard with the tail tip missing) ; or
- If the rescue is dangerous and puts human life at risk (eg Koala on a busy highway, injured venomous snake).

## Holding rescued animals

Holding is defined as placing a rescued animal into captivity, either on a short term or long term basis. An experienced and competent person should properly assess all animals prior to holding.

A person intending to hold a rescued animal should only do so if the carer has adequate time, appropriate facilities, appropriate skills and sufficient knowledge of species concerned (or similar species). A carer must be able to ensure that the necessary hygiene, safety and welfare standards can be met and that appropriate treatment for an animal’s injuries, disease or illness is sought and can be provided. If a person cannot provide for the needs of an animal the animal should be immediately transferred to a person who can.

A person should not hold a rescued animal if the person:

- Is inexperienced and unsupervised;
- Has inadequate facilities;
- Has a limited understanding of the husbandry requirements of the species;
- Cannot afford to provide the animal with food, treatment, housing etc.; or
- Has insufficient time to care for the animal.

Permits will not usually be issued if the animal:

- Is a marine mammal (see “Further Information”); or
- Was in imminent danger but is unharmed (eg reptiles on roads). If possible and safe to do so, these animals may be removed from the danger site and immediately relocated to a nearby location. In general, it is not necessary to take the animal into captivity.

An animal that is intended for eventual or immediate release should never be placed on public display or humanised.

## Short-term Holding Enclosures

It is sometimes necessary to provide short-term holding enclosures for the purposes of veterinary treatment, quarantine or isolation. Enclosures used for short-term holding (a continuous period of less than 24 hours and no more than 32 hours within a 48 hour period) must have the following characteristics:

- The animal can freely move limbs, stretch and turn around; and

- It has adequate protection from the weather and temperature fluctuations; and
  - The animal has access to appropriate food and water
- Health management enclosures are small enclosures that are used to hold an animal under veterinary treatment must have the following characteristics:
    - Of a size determined by the treating veterinarian
    - all appropriate husbandry requirements are maintained and
    - the animal is can rest and move without undue discomfort or distress (including housing separated from domestic pets)

If the animal is held in the health management enclosures for longer than seven days, written advice from the treating veterinarian that recommends continued holding in the health management facility should be obtained.

Animals held for periods of up to 60 days for the purposes of treatment or isolation, must be housed in enclosures that are at least one third the recommended enclosure dimensions for that species (refer to separate species specific guidelines).

## Food Preparation and Presentation

The area in which food for the animals is prepared should be constructed in such a way to ensure that a high degree of hygiene can be maintained. High standards of cleanliness must be observed in the preparation of food and drink and in relation to the utensils and equipment used.

All fresh and dry food items should be kept in suitable storage areas to ensure nutritional value is sustained. Fridges and freezers should maintain the appropriate temperature for fish, meat and vegetables. Dry feed such as grains and pellets should be kept dry and free from vertebrate and invertebrate pests.

Each animal should be offered a variety of wholesome and palatable food and water in quantities that are sufficient to provide for its good health and normal growth. The diet should be prepared with consideration of the species, age, size, condition and previous history of the animals. Nutritional advice from professional sources should be obtained in relation to the addition of food supplements to the ordinary balanced diet of animals.

Food must be unspoiled and free from fungal, chemical and bacterial contamination. Care must be taken to exclude any food or substance that is known to have deleterious effects to the animal. A toxic chemical or other harmful material must not be used or stored in the area used for preparing the food, with the exception of cleaning products or disinfectants used in cleaning the area, the food containers or the food preparation utensils.

Utensils and equipment used for the offering of food and drink to animals:

- Should be easy to clean and designed to avoid risk of injury to the animals; and
- Must be constructed to prevent animals from tipping them over or breaking them; and
- Should be placed in such a position that each animal in the enclosure has easy access to sufficient food and water and the risk of contamination from soiling by the animals is minimised; and
- Should be kept in a sanitary condition.

Dry food items fed out should be placed on an uncontaminated surface that is not exposed to weather, with the exception of enrichment feeds which can be provided in areas that are not covered. Self-feeders should be inspected daily to ensure that they are working effectively.

## Drinking and Bathing Water

Fresh drinking water sufficient to meet each animal's requirements must be provided at all times and must be either reticulated or changed daily and not be allowed to become stagnant. Water bowls must be cleaned at least every second day and more often if they are dirty or algal growth is apparent. Bathing water must be provided as required by the species. In general, bathing water should be maintained to the same standard as drinking water.

## Permit to Release

The Act provides restrictions on the release of a native animal from captivity. Section 55 of the Act states "A person must not release a protected animal or an animal of a species listed in schedule 10 from captivity unless that person is authorised to do so by a permit granted by the Minister".

*Wildlife Rehabilitation Facility Permits* and *Wildlife Carer Permits* provide the authority to release in accordance with an approved management plan. If the animal is held under a Rescue Permit, permission must be sought prior to its release. In addition to the requirement for a permit to release the animal:

- Permission from the landholder is required to release a rescued animal onto private land;
- release of an animal into a National Park, Conservation Park, Game Reserve, Recreation Park, Regional Reserve or Wilderness Protection Area is only permitted as part of an approved recovery program; and
- The release of an animal on other Crown land is only permitted with the approval of the relevant authority.

## Release of Protected Wildlife

To ensure the protection of wild populations, a rehabilitated animal should be returned as close as is practical to, the location of the original encounter or, if this is impractical or impossible to a suitable environment nearby. An animal should not be released at a location which compromises its ability to lead a normal life and survive in the wild.

The release of a rescued animal is acceptable if-

- The animal is likely to be able to fend for itself; and
- The release is conducted within 48 hours of rescue; and
- The release is conducted within its normal home range; and
- The rescued animal is not a biosecurity risk; or
- The release is conducted in accordance with a Threatened Species Recovery Plan.

Beyond 48 hours, a release can be conducted only if meets the following release criteria.

## Release Criteria

An animal being released must be:

- able to fend for itself,
- physically fit and
- able to recognise and obtain natural food.



- released within the species normal distribution.

An animal must not be released if it is:

- humanised,
- incapacitated,
- a biosecurity risk,
- showing signs of disease,
- permanently disabled,
- an exotic (non-native) species
- unlikely to survive.

It is an offence under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* to release exotic animals (eg turtle doves, Barbary doves, sparrows etc.).

Protected wildlife must not be returned to the wild if:

- The animal is imprinted, humanised, handicapped or disadvantaged by a disability, condition or age which could reasonably be expected to preclude it from leading a normal life and surviving in the wild, or
- The animal is reasonably suspected of carrying a disease or a condition which is likely to be transmitted to the detriment of local populations or habitat.

A carer must consider the following factors prior to any release:

- Season;
- Prevailing weather conditions;
- Territory;
- Predators;
- Adequate food supply;
- Hibernation;
- Habitat availability;
- Competition for resources; and
- Socialisation.

## Retention of Rehabilitated Protected Wildlife

DEW may permit an applicant to permanently retain an unreleasable rescued animal in captivity.

DEW may place limitations on the numbers of such animals which may be held and specify conditions under which they are to be kept.

Except in the case of threatened species which is the subject of an approved captive breeding and translocation programme, protected wildlife which cannot be released may not be retained for the purpose of captive breeding and release of progeny to the wild.

DEW may consider placing wildlife which has been hand-raised or is undergoing rehabilitation with an accredited zoo or wildlife park licensed to keep the species.

## Quarantine and Introductions

A newly-acquired animal should be kept in isolation for as long as necessary to provide for its

examination, acclimatisation and, if necessary, restoration to good health. Vaccinations, identification (perhaps including microchipping), worm treatments, mite and lice treatments and any other routine procedures should be undertaken while the animal is quarantined.

Depending on the species, the introduction of a new individual into an established group may result in aggression and injury. Such introductions must be conducted carefully and under close supervision.

## Veterinary Care and Preventative Medicine

Arrangements should be made with a qualified veterinarian for the care of each animal. Not all veterinarians will be familiar with native species, and carers should check on specialist services available before acquiring an animal.

An enclosed treatment area should be provided for the care of distressed, sick and injured animals. Individuals of some species are distressed by isolation and are better kept with their group. Other species will cannibalise a weak or injured individual and they must be separated immediately.

Records of all veterinary inspections and treatments should be maintained and be available for inspection by a warden upon request.

## Pest and Predator Control

A safe, effective and regular program for the control of parasites, invertebrate and vertebrate pests should be established and maintained. Flies and ants can be significant pests that can directly injure and kill animals as well as contaminate their food.

Enclosures must be so designed as to exclude predators, including free ranging cats to reduce the spread of Toxoplasmosis from cat faeces. Rodents are also predators. A good rodent control program should be established and maintained.

Insecticides and animal poisons (e.g. rodent baits) used in or around enclosures must be located with care to ensure that captive animals are unable to come in contact with them. Such compounds must always be used in accordance with registration and label requirements.

## Euthanasia

If the extent and severity of injuries or illness in an animal compromises its' ongoing welfare, euthanasia may be required. Rescued protected wildlife which cannot be released or retained with a good expectation of high quality of life must be euthanased. If euthanasia is necessary the task should be performed by a qualified veterinarian, if available. If a veterinarian is not available, the person performing the task should be competent in such procedures and licensed by the appropriate authorities to use a firearm or other method for the purpose of euthanasing an animal. A person euthanasing an animal must consider personal and public safety, efficacy, available humane techniques and the sensitivities of bystanders.

If the rescued animal is a threatened species, the carer should contact a veterinarian or DEW before euthanasing the animal, however if the animal is in extreme distress immediate euthanasia may be required.

For additional guidelines and information regarding euthanasia, see “Further Information”.

## Drug Administration

S4 and S8 drugs must only be administered to animals if they have been prescribed by a veterinarian or held under a licence issued by the Department of Health. Drugs may be given by persons such as owners and carers if they are competent in the administration technique, but only in accordance with the instructions of a veterinarian or the conditions of their licence.

Non-prescription drugs must only be used in accordance with labelled directions.

## Dead Animals

Provision should be made for the handling of dead animals in a way that minimises the risk of transmission of infection or disease.

A veterinary examination to determine the cause of death should be made if:

- it appears that there may be a pattern of deaths;
- the death is unexpected or the likely cause unknown;
- a large number of animals die or become ill;
- such an examination is directed by an authorised warden; or
- in any other case, if it is reasonably practicable to do so.

If there is a possibility of an exotic or new disease (eg Newcastle Disease) Biosecurity SA must be informed to arrange testing.

Unless the remains of a dead animal:

- are used for scientific or educational purposes; or
- are offered to, and accepted by, an approved museum or other approved scientific establishment;

it should be disposed of by incineration or burial or by any other method recommended by a veterinarian or the local council.

## Costs Incurred by Carers and Owners

All costs associated with the rescue, transport and rehabilitation of protected wildlife are to be met by the individual wildlife carer or owner.

## Further Information

### Contacts:

DEW Fauna Permit Unit

81 Waymouth Street,

Adelaide, SA, 5000.

Phone: (08) 8124 4972

Fax: (08) 8115 55694

Email: [DREfaunapermitsunit@sa.gov.au](mailto:DREfaunapermitsunit@sa.gov.au)

<http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/faunapermits/>

### Relevant Legislation:

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*

<http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/A/NATIONAL%20PARKS%20AND%20WILDLIFE%20ACT%2019>

[72/CURRENT/1972.56.UN.PDF](#)

*National Parks and Wildlife (Wildlife) Regulations 2001*

[http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/R/NATIONAL%20PARKS%20AND%20WILDLIFE%20\(WILDLIFE\)%20REGULATIONS%202001/CURRENT/2001.199.UN.PDF](http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/R/NATIONAL%20PARKS%20AND%20WILDLIFE%20(WILDLIFE)%20REGULATIONS%202001/CURRENT/2001.199.UN.PDF)

*The Animal Welfare Act 1985*

<http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/A/ANIMAL%20WELFARE%20ACT%201985/CURRENT/1985.106.UN.RTF>

*The Natural Resources Management Act 2004*

<http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/A/NATURAL%20RESOURCES%20MANAGEMENT%20ACT%20004/CURRENT/2004.34.UN.RTF>

**List of Suppliers:**

Central Animal Records (Aust.) Pty Ltd

(PIT tags and scanners)

22 Fiveways Boulevard,

Keysborough, Victoria, 3173.

Ph: (03) 9706 3187

Fax: (03) 9706 3198

Email: [info@car.com.au](mailto:info@car.com.au)

Web: <https://www.car.com.au/>

**Other:**

Wildlife Ethics Committee

Policy on the Euthanasia of Research Animals in the Field

<http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/science/pdfs/wec-sop/euthanasia-of-research-animals.pdf>

The correct procedures for undertaking euthanasia are outlined by the Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching (ANZCCART) who have published the "Euthanasia of Animals Used for Scientific Purposes". Copies of this booklet can be obtained from:

ANZCCART Australia,

C/- The University of Adelaide,

Adelaide, South Australia, 5005.

Ph: (08) 8303 7585

Fax: (08) 8303 7587

Email: [anzccart@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:anzccart@adelaide.edu.au)

Web: <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/ANZCCART/>

## Definitions

**Biosecurity:** Measures designed to reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases and the introduction of pests, invasive alien species and modified organisms.

**Carer:** An individual who has responsibility for the care and rehabilitation of a native animal under a rescue permit, or that has responsibility for the care of a native animal under a permit to keep.