

Specialised Permits Policy

Version 3 (August 2018)



BACKGROUND

Wildcare Australia Inc. has been issued with a Group Rehabilitation Permit for koalas, echidnas and venomous snakes.

Koalas, echidnas and venomous snakes are classified as ‘specialised species’ accordingly to the guidelines set down by the Department of Environment and Science (DES). Refer to DES Guideline ‘*Rehabilitating sick, injured or orphaned protected animals – Conditions and restrictions – Taking and Keeping protected animals for rehabilitation and release*’.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to document the procedure to be adopted when assessing a request for a Permit Endorsement under Wildcare’s Group Rehabilitation Permit for a specialised species.

PROCEDURE

Applications for a Permit Endorsement must be made on the prescribed Wildcare form ‘*Request for Permit Endorsement – Specialised Species*’.

When assessing an application for a Permit Endorsement for a specialised species, Wildcare must ensure that endorsements are only issued to those people that fulfil the requirements as set down by the Department of Environment and Science (DES). In effect, applications should only be approved if the applicant was able to successfully obtain such a Permit directly from the DES.

The decision to grant or deny a request for a Permit Endorsement for a specialised species lies solely with the Wildcare President who is holder of the Wildcare Group Rehabilitation Permit. This decision will be made after consultation with the Koala, Echidna and Reptile Coordinator and Venomous Snake Coordinator.

Attendance at a specialised species workshop does not guarantee that a Permit will be issued.

When making a request for a Permit, the member should provide the following information with their request:-

- Details of recognised training courses that they have attended (if not attended through Wildcare);
- Details of their rehabilitation experience (e.g. how long they have been rehabilitating wildlife, the species that they have cared for, stages of development, illness and wound management experience etc.);
- Details of the facilities/housing available;
- Any relevant workplace health and safety qualifications (e.g. First Aid/CPR certification); and

- If previous experience held, two references confirming their knowledge and experience.

KOALAS

When considering an application to issue a Permit Endorsement for koalas, the following considerations will be taken in account:-

1. Carers should have significant experience with a variety of other native wildlife species.

The term 'significant experience' does not only denote the length of time a wildlife rehabilitator has been actively caring. Other considerations taken into account include the species that the rehabilitator has been involved with, involvement with research projects and relevant industry qualifications.

2. Carers should have experience with caring for critically injured and/or sick wildlife (including experience with wound management).

Preference will be given to carers that are confident in the administration of injectable medications (subcutaneous or intramuscular routes) and fluid therapy (including subcutaneous and intravenous fluids) and wound management.

3. Carers must be able to demonstrate a high level of competence and confidence in koala handling.

Good handling skills are essential to ensure that daily assessments are carried out confidently and medications are administered competently. Extensive experience in rescuing and assessing koalas is essential.

4. Carers must have a thorough understanding of the anatomy, biology, physiology and behaviour of the species.

This is essential knowledge when dealing with any native wildlife species. Carers should research various literatures on these topics. It is expected that carers would have volunteered and worked with koalas for a considerable period of time at a wildlife facility such as the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital or Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary/Hospital.

5. Carers must have a close relationship with a dedicated wildlife veterinary facility such as the Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital or the RSPCA Wildlife Hospital (Wacol).

Koalas require specialised veterinary treatment (including blood and bone marrow tests, ultrasound and radiographs); carers in remote areas with no or limited access to these facilities will find it difficult to obtain appropriate veterinary care for this species.

6. A Wildcare Koala Coordinator or an experienced koala rehabilitator (appointed by a Koala Coordinator) must be available and prepared to mentor the carer.

This ensures that appropriate guidance and mentoring is provided.

7. Carers must have appropriate facilities as outlined in the *Code of Practice – Care and Rehabilitation of orphaned, sick or injured protected animals by wildlife care volunteers* (Appendix 1: Minimum cage sizes).

Koalas have very specialised housing requirements. Inappropriate housing can lead to stress-induced conditions and injury.

8. Carers must be able to satisfy Wildcare that koalas can be housed in such a way as to significantly reduce the amount of stress on the animal whilst in care. This includes being able to house the animal away from domestic animals and in a room/area that is quiet and where the animal will not be disturbed unnecessarily.

Appropriate stress-free housing will contribute towards successful rehabilitation. Koalas must NOT be in close proximity to dogs on both the carers property as well as neighbouring properties. Koalas that need to be kept indoors should not be placed with carers that have inside domestic dogs or cats, unless there are strict protocols implemented to ensure they will not come into contact with each other.

9. Carers must be able to demonstrate the ability to obtain natural food for the species whilst in care.

The provision of natural diet of preferred eucalypt species is essential. Carers will need to be able to display the ability to identify and collect sufficient food preferred browse species.

10. Carers applying for a Permit Endorsement for orphaned koalas must have extensive experience in hand-rearing a variety of Australian wildlife and must have demonstrated experience in the care of adult koalas.

Orphaned koalas require a much higher degree of specialised care than most other native mammal species. Extensive experience with hand-raising other mammal species will provide the carer with the knowledge and confidence to successfully hand-raise koalas.

ECHIDNAS

When considering an application to issue a Permit Endorsement for echidnas, the following considerations will be taken in account:-

Due to the secretive nature of the species, carers should have significant experience with a variety of other native wildlife species. *The term 'significant experience' does not only denote the length of time a wildlife rehabilitator has been actively caring. Other considerations taken into account include the species that the rehabilitator has been involved with, involvement with research projects and relevant industry qualifications.*

11. Carers should have experience with caring for critically injured wildlife including experience with wound management.

Preference will be given to carers that are confident in the administration of injectable medications (subcutaneous or intramuscular routes) and wound management.

12. Carers must be able to demonstrate a high level of competence in the handling of echidnas.

Good handling skills are essential to ensure that daily assessments are carried out confidently and to be able to competently administer injectable medications and apply topical treatments.

13. Carers must have a thorough understanding of the anatomy, biology and physiology of the species.

This is essential knowledge when dealing with any native wildlife species. Carers should research various literatures on these topics.

14. Carers must have a close relationship with a veterinary clinic/facility that is **confident** in the assessment and treatment of echidnas (it is preferable that such facility would include specialised wildlife facilities such as the Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital or the RSPCA Wildlife Hospital (Wacol).

Echidnas require specialised veterinary treatment (including blood tests and radiographs); carers in remote areas with no or limited access to these facilities will find it difficult to obtain appropriate veterinary care for this species.

15. A Wildcare Echidna Coordinator must be available and prepared to mentor the carer.

This ensures that appropriate guidance is provided.

16. Geographical considerations will be taken into account. Preference will be given to carers that live in a region where there are no or limited licensed echidna rehabilitators.

The demand for echidna rehabilitators is extremely low. There are generally no more than 3 to 4 echidnas in care throughout the Wildcare network at any one time.

17. Carers must have appropriate facilities as outlined in the *Code of Practice – Care and Rehabilitation of orphaned, sick or injured protected animals by wildlife care volunteers* (Appendix 1: Minimum cage sizes) and the housing requirements set down in the Wildcare training manual *Principles of Echidna Rehabilitation*.

Echidnas have very specialised housing requirements. Incorrect or inappropriate housing can lead to stress-induced conditions and injury.

18. Carers must be able to satisfy Wildcare that echidnas can be housed in such a way as to significantly reduce the amount of stress on the animal whilst in care. This includes being able to house the animal away from domestic animals and in a room/area that is quiet and where the animal will not be disturbed unnecessarily.

Appropriate stress-free housing will ensure a more successful rehabilitation.

19. Carers must be able to demonstrate the ability to obtain natural food for the species whilst in care.

The provision of natural diet for an echidna is paramount in its rehabilitation.

20. Carers applying for a Permit Endorsement for puggles, must have extensive experience in hand-rearing a variety of Australian wildlife and must have significant experience with the care of adult and juvenile echidnas.

Hand-rearing orphaned echidnas (puggles) is a highly specialised area and should only be attempted by those with significant experience with echidnas and extensive experience in hand-rearing a variety of other wildlife species.

VENOMOUS SNAKES

When considering an application to issue a Permit Endorsement for venomous snakes, the following considerations will be taken in account:-

21. Carers should have significant experience with a variety of snake species.

The term 'significant experience' does not only denote the length of time a wildlife rehabilitator has been actively caring. Significant experience will also take into account other considerations such as: the species that the rehabilitator has been involved with, involvement with research projects (and the like) as well as relevant industry qualifications and workplace experience.

22. Carers should have experience with caring for injured reptiles including experience with wound management.

Preference will be given to carers that are confident in the administration of injectable medications (subcutaneous or intramuscular routes) and wound management.

23. Carers must be able to demonstrate a high level of competency and confidence in the handling of venomous snakes.

Exceptional handling skills are essential to ensure the safety of the carer when carrying out daily assessments and administration of medications and topical treatments. Preference will be given to carers who handle venomous snakes on a regular basis, as part of their employment, or rescue/rehabilitation work.

24. Carers must have a thorough understanding of the anatomy, biology and physiology of the species.

This is essential knowledge when dealing with any native wildlife species. Carers should have a proven history in this regard.

25. Carers must have a close relationship with a veterinary clinic/facility that is **confident** in the assessment and treatment of venomous snakes (it is preferable that such facility would include specialised wildlife facilities such as the Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital or the RSPCA Wildlife Hospital (Wacol).

Venomous snakes require specialised veterinary treatment in a facility that has staff with appropriate training in the handling and treatment of venomous snakes. It is not appropriate to seek veterinary treatment for venomous snakes at a general veterinary clinic.

26. A Wildcare Venomous Snake Coordinator must be prepared to mentor the carer and/or be prepared to endorse the carer to receive a Permit.

This ensures that appropriate guidance is provided and/or the carer is known and respected within the wildlife care industry.

27. Carers must have appropriate facilities as outlined in the *Code of Practice – Care and Rehabilitation of orphaned, sick or injured protected animals by wildlife care volunteers* (Appendix 1: Minimum cage sizes).

Venomous snakes have highly specialised housing requirements to ensure safety. Incorrect or inappropriate housing can lead to stress-induced conditions and injury as well as pose a significant safety risk to the carer and other members of his/her household.

28. Carers must have appropriate rehabilitation equipment suitable for the restraint and handling of venomous snakes (including humane snake tongs, pinning tools and gauntlets).

This ensures that only safe methods are utilised during handling and restraint.

29. Carers must have appropriate containers to transport venomous snakes. Transport containers must be approved by the Venomous Snake Coordinator.

30. Geographical considerations will be taken into account. Preference will be given to carers that live in a region where there are no or limited licensed venomous snake rehabilitators.

The demand for venomous snake rehabilitators is extremely low. There is generally no more than 3 to 4 venomous snakes in care throughout the Wildcare network at any one time.

31. The Wildcare President may use his/her discretion to issue a Permit Endorsement for mildly venomous snakes only for a period of time prior to issuing a Permit for highly venomous species.

This provides volunteers new to rehabilitation of venomous snakes an opportunity to increase their skills and confidence with mildly venomous snakes prior to progressing to highly venomous species.

Mildly venomous snakes include:- Brown Tree Snake, Yellow-faced Whip Snake, Golden-crowned snake, White-crowned Snake and Marsh Snake.

Highly venomous snakes include:- Eastern Brown Snake, Red-bellied Black Snake, Small-eyed Snake, Rough-scaled Snake, Eastern Tiger snake, Common Death Adder, Coastal Taipan.

All Sea Snakes are excluded from the Wildcare Permit.