

Handling, Display and Best Practice of Wildlife

Version 3 (March 2016)



INTRODUCTION

Wildcare Australia Inc. (“Wildcare”) has high standards in regards to the management and display of wildlife. This Policy has been developed to ensure:-

- that animal welfare is of the highest priority;
- that the organisation meets all of its legal and ethical obligations; and
- that the reputation of the organisation within both the general community as well as peers and governing authorities within the wildlife and animal welfare industry, is protected.

The provisions of this Policy must be complied with by all Wildcare members (including rescuers, carers, coordinators, trainers and other representatives) and includes all workplaces and educational activities, including those undertaken at both private and public events under the auspices of Wildcare Australia Inc.

Failure by a Wildcare member to comply with the provisions of this Policy will be grounds for termination of their membership.

PURPOSE OF POLICY:-

The purpose of this Policy is to document the responsibilities of Wildcare members in relation to the use of animals.

LEGISLATION

All Wildcare members must comply with the legislative and regulatory requirements that govern the use of animals.

Below is a list of relevant legislation and standards, which must be complied with.

Queensland Government - Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP) -

Nature Conservation (Wildlife Management) Regulation 2006

Section 213 of the *Nature Conservation (Wildlife Management) Regulation 2006* allows for a wildlife care organisation to use animals held for rehabilitation for “display purposes”.

213 *Display particular animals authorised with approval*

(1) *This section applies if–*

(a) *the holder of a rehabilitation permit is a voluntary wildlife care association; and*

- (b) *the chief executive has given the holder a written approval authorising the holder to display an animal kept under the permit.*
- (2) *The holder, or a relevant person for the holder, may display the animal.*
- (3) *For subsection (1)(b), the chief executive may give the written approval only if the chief executive is satisfied -*
 - (a) *the animal does not have any visible signs of illness or injury; and*
 - (b) *the purpose of the display is –*
 - (i) *an approved display purpose; or*
 - (ii) *to raise funds to assist in providing care and treatment for animals kept under the permit.*

The definition for an ‘approved display purpose’ means:

Approved display purpose, for a display of an animal, means any of the following –

- a) to give public information about the ecological role of the animal;*
- b) to promote education about, and the conservation of, the animal;*
- c) to promote an understanding of ecology and the conservation of the animal.*

The provisions of Section 331 ***Housing and care of live protected animals*** must also be complied with if utilising live animals.

Queensland Government - *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*

This Act promotes the responsible care and use of animals. It places a legal duty of care on people in charge of animals to meet those animals’ needs.

Other Standards

Further, Wildcare has elected to observe the provisions of other relevant legislation and guidelines relating to animal welfare including:-

- *Australian Code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes* (Australian Government – National Health and Medical Research Council) and specifically the principals of “Replacement”, “Reduction” and “Refinement” (3R’s) which are encapsulated in the Code.
- *Code of Practice – Captive reptile and amphibian husbandry* (EHP Queensland)
- *Code of Practice of the Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria – Minimum Standards for exhibiting wildlife in Queensland* (EHP Queensland)
- Guidelines implemented by animal shelters (such as RSPCA Queensland) in relation to the display of animals.

Wildcare recognises that it does not have an Animal Ethics Committee and therefore must ensure that it is not using animals for any research or educational purpose that is outside the scope of its Rehabilitation Permit.

POLICY – WILDLIFE IN REHABILITATION

Pursuant to Queensland legislation, wildlife rehabilitators are restricted in how they are permitted to “display” wildlife in their care. Further, Wildcare has set guidelines regarding the manner in which they are managed.

Authorised persons to have contact with animals in care

Wildcare members should ensure that the only person(s) to have contact with animals being held are those listed on their Wildcare Permit Endorsement. Wildlife must only be held at the residential address listed on the Permit Endorsement. No other person should be permitted to handle, touch or feed animals in your care.

However circumstances where handling by others is permissible include:-

1. Veterinary staff if the animal requires assessment or treatment;
2. Wildcare Species Coordinator, or appointed mentor, if they are assisting with the care of the animal (e.g. demonstrating feeding techniques);
3. An experienced wildlife rehabilitator (e.g. Trauma Carer) if the animal is being assessed, treated or euthanased.
4. A “secondary carer” when required.

Secondary Carer

Most wildlife rehabilitators will have a secondary carer or “backup” person to assist them with the rehabilitation of wildlife in their care. A secondary carer is usually a family member over the age of 15 years or another experienced wildlife rehabilitator. The purpose of a secondary carer is to ensure continuity of care in the case of an emergency, and/or to help prevent animals being transported more than necessary.

Displaying animals to other people

No animal should be placed on display, or shown to other people or children (including other wildlife rehabilitators). Doing so, may contravene Section 213 of the *Nature Conservation (Wildlife Management) Regulation 2006 as noted above*.

Examples of incidents that constitute “displaying” an animal include:-

- Taking an animal to a school for a “show and tell” exercise;
- Taking an animal to a talk at a community group, library etc; and/or
- Taking an animal to a display, expo or event.

Taking animals to work

It is acknowledged that most wildlife rehabilitators work and there may be occasions where an animal may need to accompany its carer. Taking animals to a workplace is acceptable if the following guidelines can be met:

- The animal truly needs attention (e.g. it requires feeding or medication);
- The animal can be kept in a quiet area away from people and loud noises (e.g. not in a shared office space, factory, retail shop, or in the same room as loud machinery such as photocopier or printer);
- The animal will not be placed on display (e.g. the animal is not taken out or disturbed for “show and tell”, or passed around for people to see or hold); and
- That the animal can be kept in a safe and secure environment (e.g. away from strong smells/fumes and where they will not have access to dangers such as factory floors, stairwells or human traffic).

Taking animals to public places

Taking animals to shopping centres, restaurants, coffee shops or anywhere that members of the public may see them, is not permitted.

Alternative options for the carer include:-

- Leave the animal with a secondary carer;
- Leave the animal at a nearby premise of someone the carer knows and trusts, and that has a quiet room where the carer can easily return to feed it; or
- Secure the animal in a bag or container that gives no indication of what it contains, and the carer can return to a vehicle or a private area where it will not be seen whilst they attend to its needs. No animal should be left unattended in a vehicle.

Taking animals to training workshops

Undertaking training workshops on wildlife care and management is a condition of the Wildcare Permit Endorsement and is an integral part of being a diligent wildlife carer. When taking animals to a training workshop that requires feeding or treatment the following guidelines must be adopted:-

- Animals should only be taken if they truly require attention during that time (e.g. feeding, medicating);
- Alternative arrangements are not available (e.g. leaving the animals at home with a secondary carer);
- Animals must be able to be placed in a quiet location away from other workshop participants;
- Animals must be fed and tendered to as quietly and discretely as possible;
- Animals should not be displayed to other wildlife carers;

- Animals should not be permitted to be photographed by other workshop participants; and
- Animals must not be taken to venues where animals are prohibited.

POLICY – USE OF WILDLIFE FOR MEDIA OR EDUCATION PURPOSES

As noted, there is provision under the *Nature Conservation (Wildlife Management) Regulation 2006* for a wildlife care organisation to use animals for “display purposes”.

Approval can be sought from EHP by the Wildcare Management Committee to use a particular animal for media purposes pursuant to Section 213 – *Displaying particular animals authorised with approval*.

Note: Under Section 213, a wildlife rehabilitator with a private EHP Rehabilitation Permit is not permitted to use wildlife in their care for display purposes.

Newspaper, television etc.

The procedure to obtain approval for the use of wildlife is set out below:-

1. The Wildcare member should contact the Wildcare President or Vice-President and provide details of:-
 - The proposed media or publicity exercise including:
 - The date and time;
 - The address where the media/publicity will occur;
 - The type of media/public (e.g. newspaper, television);
 - The Wildcare member who will be in attendance; and
 - The purpose of the media/publicity which must be in accordance with definition of an ‘approved display purpose’ as noted above.
 - Details of the animal proposed to be used including:
 - The species;
 - Age (e.g. adult, juvenile);
 - The history of the animal (e.g. reason for rescue);
 - The current status of the animal (e.g. in pre-release, release); and
 - Any diseases, injuries or conditions that the animal may have.
2. The Wildcare President or Vice-President will consider the request and promptly provide a decision as to whether the approval will be sought from EHP.
3. If granted, the Wildcare President or Vice-President will liaise with EHP to ensure that appropriate written approval is received for the media/publicity event.

Approval of the Wildcare Management Committee will only be granted if:

- It can be assured that the animal will not be subjected to any unnecessary or undue stress;
- The animal is not showing any visible signs of being sick or injured;
- The exercise will not impact negatively on the animal’s rehabilitation; and

- The animal is not made to do anything that is unnatural (e.g. a nocturnal animal being made to be active through daylight hours, using props such as hats, being placed in unnatural positions).

Approval must be sought and received before the animal is used for media purposes.

Social Media

It is acknowledged that some Wildcare members may take photos and/or videos of animals held under their Permit Endorsement and post them to social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter).

The use of photos and/or videos in this manner constitutes a “display” of wildlife and therefore is subject to restrictions as noted in the *Nature Conservation (Wildlife Management) Regulation 2006*. Under Section 3(a), an animal cannot be “displayed” if it has any visible signs of illness or injury.

Wildcare members are encouraged to abide by the provisions of the Regulation and to take note of the following Wildcare standards:-

- No animal should be subjected to unnecessary stress or pain to enable a photo or video to be taken;
- Taking photos of wildlife suffering from obvious injury or disease whilst they are conscious is considered to be unwarranted and is in violation of Section 3(a). If taking a photo of the animal would be of educational value, then the photo should be taken when the animal is under anaesthetic, has been administered analgesics or post-death;
- All standard personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn by the carer pursuant relevant to the species of animal (e.g. gloves if handling a bat, protective clothing if handling a snake);
- The use of telescopic lens should be used wherever possible as opposed to a close-up or macro lens;
- Flash photography should be avoided;
- Animals that have endured a stressful rescue should not be subjected to photographs or videos until they have settled into care. This is particularly important for orphaned mammals and birds;
- Animals should not be staged or posed in a manner or in surroundings which are unnatural to them to achieve a better result;
- Nocturnal animals should not be removed from their rehabilitation enclosures, or released during daylight hours, simply to take advantage of better lighting; and
- Wildlife rehabilitators should always put the safety and welfare of the animal first. Placing an animal under stress for the sake of a photo or video is not acceptable in any circumstance. As such, rehabilitators should seek to educate themselves as to common signs of distress exhibited by the species in their care.

POLICY – USE OF LIVE ANIMALS AT WILDCARE DISPLAY AND EVENTS

The use of any animal (wild, domestic, pet or livestock) at a display, event or talk under the auspices of Wildcare Australia Inc. is strictly prohibited.

No member representing Wildcare at such an event is permitted to take and/or display a live animal regardless whether they hold approval from an appropriate governing body or not.

The use of live animals at a display, event or talk is in contravention of the objectives of the organisation and is based on the following:-

- The use of live animals by an animal welfare and wildlife rescue organisation such as Wildcare, gives the impression that it is usual practice for rehabilitators to place wild animals on display for the purpose of being admired, handled or petted;
- The use of domestic/pet animals to portray a sick/injured wild animal is contrary to the Regulation that states an animal must not be displayed that “appears” to be sick or injured;
- Wildcare’s core aims and objectives focus on wild animals, not domestic pets; and
- The use of live animals at an event is unwarranted when considering the 3R’s (Replace, Reduce and Refine). Alternative ways to portray the work we do, such as photos or video, are more appropriate.

POLICY – USE OF LIVE ANIMALS AT TRAINING WORKSHOPS

The use of live animals (wild, domestic, pet or livestock) at Wildcare training workshops is strictly prohibited.

With reference to the principals of the 3R’s, the use of live animals can be avoided by:-

- Utilising photos for identification purposes;
- Utilising videos to demonstrate handling and rescue techniques;
- Utilising deceased specimens as opposed to live ones; and/or
- Utilising other training aids in place of live animals (e.g. toys).

The only exception to this Policy is workshops that are conducted by external trainers who hold an exhibitor and/or demonstrators permit (e.g. Geckoes Wildlife Presentation or other entity approved by the Wildcare Australia Inc. Management Committee). In this instance, the trainer will hold appropriate insurance cover and will be utilising animals that are handled on a very regular basis and are ‘working’ animals.

The use of live animals at any workshop must be approved by the Wildcare Australia Inc. Management Committee and Standards Committee.

No live animals are to be used at any Wildcare event or training workshop unless appropriate Professional Indemnity Insurance cover is held by the exhibitor/demonstrator.

POLICY – USE OF DEAD ANIMALS AT TRAINING WORKSHOPS

The use of deceased wildlife at Wildcare training workshops is permitted on the following basis:-

- Animals that come through general rehabilitation activities ***are permitted*** to be used under the Wildcare Australia Group Rehabilitation Permit (e.g. an animal that dies in care or shortly after rescue).
- Animals that are obtained from other sources ***are not permitted*** to be used and approval must be sought from EHP for their use (e.g. animals collected from a vet, road kill or a dead animal found in the wild).

The Wildcare *Workshop Guideline and Standards* document outlines the procedures to be adopted in circumstances where dead specimens are used for training purposes.

References:-

Queensland Government

- Nature Conservation (Wildlife Management) Regulation 2006
- Animal Care and Protection Act 2001
- Code of Practice – Captive reptile and amphibian husbandry
- Code of Practice of the Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria – Minimum Standards for exhibiting wildlife in Queensland

Australian Government

- Australian Government *Australian Code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes* (Australian Government – National Health and Medical Research Council)