

**GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE CARE AND REHABILITATION OF INJURED AND
ORPHANED WILDLIFE IN TASMANIA**



**Injured and Orphaned Wildlife Program
Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment**

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INTRODUCTION

An ethical and legal obligation exists to assist wild animals found orphaned, injured, in pain or distress. The requirements laid down in this document provide for the welfare of injured and orphaned wildlife held by wildlife care volunteers pending the animal's release to the wild. They are based on knowledge of the biology, medicine, behaviour and the natural history of the animals concerned. The information is relevant to all people who rehabilitate wildlife, regardless of numbers and types of wildlife cared for or the location of the activity.

This document should be used as an initial foundation, as we learn more about enclosure sizes and materials, nutrition, species behaviour, wildlife medicine and other aspects of wildlife rehabilitation, methods will continually advance. Wildlife care volunteers are encouraged to constantly review and improve upon these general requirements as they strive to provide the best possible care. Future editions will reflect any advances as the field of wildlife rehabilitation grows and improves.

Rescue techniques have not been included in this document.



DEFINITIONS

- The term ***wildlife*** as used in this document refers to mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians that are native to Tasmania.
- ***Wildlife rehabilitation*** is the process of caring for sick, injured or orphaned native animals, supplying appropriate nutrition, housing, veterinary treatment and nursing care where necessary, with the goal of releasing them back to the wild in a fit and healthy condition and able to survive in the wild.
- A ***wildlife care volunteer*** is defined as a person who provides ongoing care to wildlife found orphaned, injured, in pain or distress, with the intention of releasing the animal back into the wild.
- An ***experienced wildlife care volunteer*** is a wildlife care volunteer with at least five years practical experience in wildlife care and:
 - has demonstrated the ability to successfully care for a range of species or a single species at varying stages of development, injury or illness;
 - has demonstrated the ability to offer appropriate holding facilities for the species;
 - has demonstrated a practical understanding of the planning, preparation and release techniques which give the rehabilitated animal its optimum chance for survival in the wild and
 - has kept up to date with current rehabilitation techniques.
- A ***rescuer*** is a wildlife care volunteer, member of the public, animal welfare organisation or departmental officer who assists native animals found in pain or distress.
- A ***departmental officer*** is an officer of the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, or the Parks and Wildlife Service who is responsible for wildlife issues.
- ***DPIPWE*** – Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment
- ***Secretary*** – refers to the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment. Communication can be made directly to officers within the Wildlife Management Branch who may be a delegate of the Secretary.



CODE OF ETHICS

A wildlife care volunteer should strive to achieve high standards of animal care through knowledge and an understanding of the biology of the animals in their care. Continuing efforts must be made to keep informed of advances in rehabilitation methods. Resources available include; species standards, current wildlife publications, wildlife veterinarians, wildlife authority's scientific staff, experienced mentors and personal experience, along with common sense and good judgement to make the best decisions for an individual animal.

A wildlife care volunteer should be aware of the responsibilities and demands that form part of this activity and should continually work toward improving the quality of care offered to native species undergoing rehabilitation.

A wildlife care volunteer must abide by any State or Commonwealth laws concerning wildlife, wildlife rehabilitation and associated activities.

A wildlife care volunteer should offer a high standard of care irrespective of species or the circumstance from which it came.

A wildlife care volunteer should seek assistance from a veterinarian, departmental officer or experienced wildlife care volunteer when appropriate.

A wildlife care volunteer should respect other rehabilitators and persons in related fields, sharing skills and knowledge in the spirit of cooperation for the welfare of the animals.

A wildlife care volunteer should place optimum animal care above personal gain.

A wildlife care volunteer should strive to provide professional and humane care in all phases of wildlife rehabilitation.

A wildlife care volunteer should encourage community support, with the common goal of promoting a responsible concern for the welfare of wildlife and the environment.

A wildlife care volunteer should conduct their activities in a professional manner, with honesty, integrity, compassion and commitment, realising that an individual's conduct reflects on the entire field of wildlife rehabilitation.



WILDLIFE CARE VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities of a wildlife care volunteer includes, but is not limited to:

- being aware that caring for wildlife is a voluntary activity - funding for feed, housing, veterinary care and emergency situations is the responsibility of the individual carer;
- the supply of immediate care or veterinary treatment where indicated;
- making time available to offer appropriate care for every stage of the animal's development;
- supplying correct nutrition, including suitable formula preparations for joeys;
- supplying appropriate supplements and natural dietary requirements for weaned animals;
- supplying clean pouches, bottles and teats;
- offering a safe heat source when necessary;
- offering enclosures appropriate for the species and the animal's stage of development, both indoors and outdoors;
- making every effort to keep the animal in a stress free environment;
- being aware of occupational health and safety issues when handling wildlife and taking precautionary measures where necessary;
- being aware of, and following strict personal hygiene procedures to limit the risk of zoonotic disease;
- taking precautionary measures to prevent the spread of disease;
- ensuring that the animal is fit and healthy for release;
- locating appropriate and safe release sites;
- obtaining permission from the landowner in advance of any release on their land;
- pre-planning release procedures, including enclosures and post release monitoring;
- supplying support and advice, including release procedures or special requirements to the land owner accepting wildlife for release;
- applying to regulatory authorities for rehabilitation permits where required;
- notifying regulatory authorities of the intention to release protected species;
- keeping up to date with current rehabilitation techniques.



DISPLAY

In general, wildlife under rehabilitation are not suitable for public display and may compromise the animal's well being. However, it is recognised that media access may in some cases encourage interest in native animals and their rehabilitation. Media access and displays should be conducted only at an appropriate time in the rehabilitation process and each case should be carefully considered.

Display of wildlife requires a permit to be issued with conditions including:

- the animal is to be held only by an experienced wildlife care volunteer or departmental officer in a manner that does not cause the wildlife undue discomfort, distress or physical harm.
- a secure enclosure for the confinement of the animal must be provided;
- the animal must not be released or allowed to escape;
- animals that are diseased or suffering from any wound are not to be displayed;
- the animal is not to be handled by the public;
- the animal is not to be subjected to actions that will cause it stress;
- the animal be withdrawn from public display if exhibiting signs of stress;
- the animal must be provided with adequate food and water;
- whilst the animal is being transported:
 - is not subject to excessive noise, exhaust fumes, heat or cold;
 - is provided with adequate ventilation;
- while the animal is not on display, it is to be kept in an appropriate enclosure that allows sufficient space for movement;
- any directions given by an authorised officer are complied with;
- appropriate public liability insurance must be held by a person conducting a public display of wildlife.

Where there is access to media opportunities it should be to promote:

- Conservation of a species and their habitat;
- Public awareness and consideration for the welfare of native animals.



RECORD KEEPING

The purpose of keeping records is to provide a means to monitor treatment and recovery of wildlife and provides case history data to improve the treatment of wildlife in rehabilitation. Data collected from personal experience is invaluable for improving methods of caring for and rehabilitating wildlife and will assist in the diagnosis and treatment of disease.

Records should include the following information:

- Date of acquisition;
- Species;
- Sex and approximate age on acquisition;
- Location of animal's origin;
- Name, address and contact number of rescuer;
- Weight on acquisition;
- Details of the nature of illness, injury or orphanage;
- Details of any treatment, nutrition or fluids offered by the rescuer or outside party;
- Details of any veterinary diagnosis, recommended treatment and prognosis, including surgery and medication;
- Outcome of any veterinary or in house treatment;
- Outline of the ongoing care and rehabilitation processes;
- Information on daily diet;
- General monitoring of health through regular weighing, body condition, temperature, behaviour, urine, faeces and other signs;
- Date of release/death;
- Location of release;
- Procedure implemented for release;
- Cause of death (if known);
- Post mortem results (if required).



VETERINARY CARE

Wildlife care volunteers should only administer first aid. Non veterinarians are precluded from practising veterinary surgery, veterinary procedures or administering restricted drugs without consultation. In cases where the veterinarian cannot examine the animal directly, every effort should be made to seek verbal veterinary advice before administering any advanced treatment or alternative therapies.

EUTHANASIA

Where euthanasia is indicated, barbiturate overdose is the preferred option, and must only be administered by a veterinarian. In extreme circumstances where a wildlife care volunteer is required to perform emergency euthanasia, a method appropriate for the species and circumstance should be employed to ensure minimum pain and suffering. Where the wildlife care volunteer is not familiar with suitable euthanasia techniques, every effort should be made to obtain expert advice from a veterinarian, experienced wildlife care volunteer or departmental officer.

Due to the risk of secondary poisoning, animals that have been euthanased by barbiturate overdose must not be fed to other animals. Advice should be sought from a veterinarian on safe disposal methods.



TRANSPORT

Transport containers must be designed to adequately contain and meet the welfare needs of the animal being transported. The transport container must be of sufficient size to allow the animal to stand or lie down as required, but must not be so large as to allow the animal excessive movement. Transport containers should preferably be purpose-built, plastic pet packs or veterinary crates. A cardboard box should only be used as a temporary measure for marsupials, but can be helpful for the transport of bird species to protect from feather damage.

- Animals must be contained when being transported in any vehicle.
- Animals should not be carried in the boot compartment of the vehicle.
- Animals should not be subjected to loud radio noise.
- All containers should have a non-slip lining on the floor area.
- Containers must be clean prior to use and if being reused must be thoroughly washed and disinfected with hospital grade disinfectant with all residues thoroughly removed. Containers should be dry before use.
- On a long trip, the comfort and well being of the animal must be monitored every two hours, more often if the animal is sedated or on medication.
- Veterinary advice should be obtained before sedating animals for transportation.
- Any sedatives used during transportation must be used under the consultation of a veterinarian.
- Transport should not be undertaken in extreme weather conditions, especially extreme heat.
- Care should be taken if using hessian bags as their weave can allow disease transfer between individuals and can cause skin irritation.
- Canvas bags should be sufficiently ventilated to allow unhindered airflow. Tasmanian Devils and Quolls, should only be transported over short distances if canvas bags are to be used, as these animals will chew through the canvas.
- Synthetic feed/grain sacks should not be used.
- Portable pet packs are the most suitable container for transport for most small animals, and if plastic, can be readily cleaned for multiple use.
- Bats and reptiles should be transported in calico/heavy cotton bags and placed within a crush resistant box.
- In the case of venomous reptiles and bat species, the box should be clearly marked as to its contents.
- Under no circumstances should wildlife be transported in open wire crates.



CASE ASSESSMENT

Initially, animals are frightened, stressed, disorientated, may be sick, injured or in pain. Catching and handling wildlife should be done quickly and expertly to avoid further stress and injury.

Once collected, the animal must be stabilised by first aid and then assessed accurately and swiftly to establish:

- identity of the species;
- viability of pouch young;
- degree of dehydration;
- overall body condition;
- presence of chronic, acute or infectious disease;
- severity of injury;
- prognosis and long term prospects for release;
- skill level required for ongoing care/treatment;
- requirement for consultation with departmental officers.

Wildlife care volunteers in the early learning stages of wildlife care, or any other wildlife care volunteer requiring assistance with case assessment, should contact a veterinarian, an experienced wildlife care volunteer or departmental officer.

- An animal suffering from extreme pain, trauma or disease that cannot be treated, must be promptly and humanely euthanased.
- An animal requiring extended treatment or major surgery with the likelihood of not recovering sufficiently to return to the wild or enjoy good quality of life should be humanely euthanased.
- Conditions that could exclude an animal from release are:
 - loss of limb or part thereof, including tails and wings;
 - loss of use of limb or part thereof;
 - dislocation of limb;
 - loss of hearing, sight or smell;
 - incurable infectious disease;
 - permanent damage to nervous system;
 - acute or chronic ill health;
 - imprinted behaviour;
 - jaw, tooth or beak damage;
 - inability to self feed;



QUARANTINE

It is important to prevent the spread of infectious disease among wildlife brought into captivity for rehabilitation. Upon arrival wildlife should be held in a separate, quiet area, away from other animals and enclosures until their disease status is determined.

- Sick animals should be quarantined at all times until veterinary advice has been obtained.
- Faeces and food scraps must be removed from enclosures daily and disposed of appropriately.
- Regular cleaning of enclosures should be carried out with hospital grade disinfectant.
- Enclosures holding infected animals should be cleaned last and care should be taken to eliminate run off into 'clean' areas.
- Enclosures may need to be quarantined from introduction of further wildlife for considerable periods depending on the nature of infectious disease.
- Special quarantine/handling requirements may be necessary for some species and should be strictly adhered to. For additional quarantine requirements specific to an individual species, refer to the standard for that species if these are in place.
- Hands and footwear should be washed with a disinfecting agent when leaving quarantine areas and a high level of personal hygiene should be maintained at all times.

HEALTH

Provision must be made for the handling of dead wildlife in a way that minimises the risk of transmission of disease or secondary poisoning.

- The Department must be notified if any wildlife is identified as carrying or showing clinical signs of infectious disease, for example, Beak and Feather disease in parrot species, Coccidiosis in Eastern Grey Kangaroos.
- In the situation of an infectious disease all hard surfaces of the enclosure must be sterilised, all substrate removed, all areas possible exposed to sunlight and expert advice sought before any animal is put back into the area.
- Carcasses, and organic wastes suspected of disease contamination must be removed and disposed of in accordance with local, state or commonwealth regulations.
- Wildlife (other than roadkill) found dead must not be fed to other animals.
- There must be separate refrigeration facilities for food (animal food kept separate from human food), carcasses and post mortem specimens.
- Post mortem examination is required on the death of any wildlife listed under the *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995* if infectious disease is suspected or the death is unexplained.



ZOONOSES

All animal species can harbour infectious organisms which have the potential to cause disease in humans; diseases passed from animal to man are termed 'zoonotic'. It is important to realise that often such infections have no effect on their animal host, but can produce a serious zoonosis in humans. If a zoonotic disease is suspected, contact your medical practitioner as soon as possible for diagnosis and appropriate treatment. The range of zoonotic disease is not limited to the examples listed below.

Bat Lyssavirus – is a virus that is related to rabies. In Australia, the virus is carried by bats and is spread via saliva of infected animals to people through bites or scratches. Biting or scratching can transfer the virus into an exposed part of the body. Even though there have only been two cases of human infection recorded in Australia, both in Queensland, there is a requirement to report all incidents of bat bites to the Department of Public Health, freecall 1800 671 738.

Scabies – Sarcoptic mange is caused by a mite known as *Sarcoptes scabiei*, which burrows into the skin of mammalian hosts, such as wombats, koalas, brushtail possums, dogs, and humans. However, it is the major infectious disease known in wombats. The disease is transmitted to humans through unprotected handling and is most commonly seen on the torso and arms, but can readily spread to other parts of the body.

Psittacosis - also termed ornithosis or parrot fever, is an infectious form of pneumonia caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia psittaci*. The disease is transmitted by various species of the birds that harbour the bacteria in their body cells. When transmitted to humans, psittacosis can produce an infection without symptoms, a mild influenza-like illness, or a serious form of pneumonia. Psittacosis is usually acquired by breathing the dust from feathers or dried excreta of infected birds.

Rickettsial Spotted Fever - some zoonoses are spread by biting insects, ticks etc. These are referred to as arthropod-borne zoonoses. One such disease is Rickettsial Spotted Fever, also known as Tick Bite Fever, or Flinders Island Spotted Fever. This disease tends to occur in summer and autumn, when ticks are active. Symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, skin rashes and joint pains. Infection is through exposure to "scrub ticks". Avoid sitting or lying on forest floors, especially during the warmer months. If exposed to a tick-prone environment check yourself nightly for ticks, both adult and larval.

Ringworm - Ringworm is a term used to encompass a range of fungal skin infections of animals and man. Ringworm is highly contagious and can be caught from any person or animal that has been infected. Skin lesions can appear as circular areas of hair loss anywhere on the body. If ringworm is suspected, prompt diagnosis and treatment should be sought.

Care should be taken to reduce the risk of zoonotic disease not only when handling animals, but also animal products, such as blood and excreta.

Disease can spread to humans by inhalation of infective dust or droplets, by ingestion, by contaminated food or water; or by penetration of skin by bites; or absorption through mucous membranes and uncovered cuts and abrasions.

There are some common sense steps that can be taken to lessen the risk of infection in general. Attention to personal hygiene which includes, not eating, drinking, smoking, applying sun screen, make up, or contact lenses around animals. Always wash hands thoroughly before and after contact with animals. The use of face masks, especially when cleaning aviaries, can reduce the risk of inhalation of infective dust.



HYGIENE

Most diseases of wildlife in captivity are induced or aggravated by stress and/or poor husbandry. For example, stress can result from over handling, exposure to excessive noise, irregular feeding, insecurity, over heating or inappropriate temperature, changes to diet and exposure to people and pets.

Ways to reduce the risk of disease:

- Parasites, both external and internal, and vermin, including rats, mice and feral cats, must be controlled without risk to wildlife.
- Provision must be made for the removal and disposal of faeces and food wastes and introduced rubbish from enclosures as often as is necessary to minimise vermin infestation, disease hazards and to prevent the ingestion of potentially harmful objects.
- Additional holding facilities must be available for the separation of wildlife as required, including the quarantine of new, injured, sick or wildlife of unknown disease status.
- Food supplies must be stored and handled to protect against pests, domestic pets, deterioration, mould, contamination and nutritional loss.
- Utensils and equipment used in food preparation must be kept clean at all times and should not be used for any other purpose.
- Containers used for food and water presentation to wildlife must always be:
 - able to be cleaned and designed to avoid risk of injury to wildlife;
 - placed in a manner that allows wildlife easy, uninhibited access;
 - robust enough to avoid being constantly tipped over;
 - inspected daily to ensure containers are free from caked or spoiled food;
 - placed out of direct sunlight;
 - sufficient to cater for all wildlife in the enclosure;
 - washed following use and kept in a sanitary condition;
 - Supplementary feed should never be placed in wet, muddy areas or fed directly from the ground.



NUTRITION

Nutrition must be provided that is suitable for the species and the its stage of development. Special diets may be required for convalescing animals, but the species natural diet should always form part of any feeding regime. Natural feeding behaviours must be allowed and encouraged as the animal's reliance on these skills are paramount for long term survival once released back into the wild.

- Infant mammals must be offered appropriate milk replacement formulas and must not be weaned prematurely.
- Infant marsupials must not be fed cows milk
- Supplementary food must be of high quality and any vegetation must be offered in a fresh condition.
- Dry foods must be placed in containers in a position suitable for the species and should never be fed directly from the ground.
- Food containers must be placed in suitable areas that are sheltered from sun and rain.
- Grains, pellets and milk formulas must be kept dry, and held in suitable storage containers to avoid contamination.
- Hay and straw should not be stored directly on the ground and must be kept dry and free of contaminates and pests.
- Clean freshwater must be available ad libitum.
- Sufficient feeding sites must be provided to cater for all wildlife held in an enclosure.



HUSBANDRY

Wildlife in rehabilitation has a number of essential requirements that must be met for the welfare and long term well being of each individual. Poor management and husbandry practices will have a major impact on an animal's ability to grow and develop the skills necessary for survival in the wild. Husbandry practices must be constantly evaluated and reviewed to supply the best possible care.

For additional standards specific to an individual species, refer to the standard for that species if these are in place.

- Water - fresh and checked daily, more often in hot, dry conditions;
- Food - fresh and appropriate for the species and its stage of development;
- Indoor Enclosures - enclosed, well ventilated, quiet, safe area;
 - position free from domestic animals, small children and household noises;
 - access to heat source if required;
- Outdoor Enclosures
 - enclosed, safe area;
 - enclosure size suitable for the species;
 - weatherproof above ground housing;
 - access to burrow systems (wombats);
 - access to nesting material (bandicoots, bettongs);
 - nest boxes or similar that provide security appropriate to the species (birds, possums);
 - materials for development of natural behaviours;
 - ability to withdraw from cold winds, rain, extreme heat and other wildlife;
 - shaded areas;
 - access to sunlight;
 - suitable drainage;
 - daily supervision;
- Protection from
 - excessive noise;
 - disease;
 - unnecessary human contact;
 - harassment/predation from other animals, native or domestic;
 - sight, sound and smell of domestic pets;
 - cigarette smoke or noxious gases;
 - vermin;
- Hygiene
 - daily cleaning of enclosures, feed and water containers;
 - daily removal of faeces and any foreign substances;
 - daily removal of spent food.



ENCLOSURES

Wildlife care volunteers should provide enclosures of appropriate size and containing suitable habitat for all stages of the species that they commonly treat. An understanding of a species behaviour and natural history allows proper choices to be made when providing suitable enclosures and habitat.

Assigning enclosures strictly by species may not always be realistic; many indoor and outdoor enclosures can be modified for multispecies use, but enclosures must be able to be adequately disinfected and adapted to meet the standard required for the species.

Alternative techniques for housing can be considered for special need individuals, so long as basic comfort, movement and hygiene needs are met. These areas should allow recovering animals the prescribed amount of self-imposed activity or supervised/forced activity to regain fitness and good health.

There are many ways of providing adequate and appropriate housing without huge expense; for example, enclosures can be constructed using recycled materials.

These general requirements do not provide for animals being kept beyond the normal scope of wildlife rehabilitation. Wildlife that is kept for education, display or captive breeding has different housing requirements. Those specific needs are not addressed in this document.

Indoor Enclosures

Minimising stress experienced by animals in rehabilitation is a key factor in the design of indoor enclosures. All indoor enclosures should be placed in an area that is quiet with minimal visual stimuli, away from high traffic areas and human activity.

- Enclosures must provide adequate ventilation to maintain the health of the animal and be designed to minimise drafts, odours and condensation.
- Indoor enclosures should not be subject to severe climatic change and should be kept away from direct sunlight.
- The design of indoor enclosures must be species specific and individual species standards must be adhered to if these are in place.
- Heating may need to be provided for some species and any installation must not endanger the animal nor should it be able to be damaged by the animal.
- Heat pads, hospital boxes or any other form of electrical heat source as well as adaptors and extension leads, should only be used if the product has been approved by and meets the Australian Standard.



Outdoor Enclosure Construction

Outdoor enclosures must be designed to provide adequate shelter, security and sufficient area for the addition of appropriate habitat. Each enclosure should possess an area that offers necessary protection from the elements, but at the same time conditions the animal for release. An enclosure size should be large enough for the animal to grow and develop, to learn or relearn behaviours, to play, rest, sleep and hide.

It may be necessary to supply a confined area within the outdoor enclosure to accommodate those animals that lack confidence when initially exposed to the larger, more open area outdoors. A confined area allows a gradual introduction and avoids imposing added stresses when transferring an animal to an unfamiliar environment.

- The design of enclosures, area size and placement is species specific and individual standards must be adhered to if these are in place.
- An enclosure occupied by several animals of the same species must be large enough to allow for normal patterns of group behaviour.
- Enclosures must be large enough to allow a developing or recovering animal an unrestricted area to run, climb or fly.
- An enclosure must be of sufficient size to:
 - avoid undue domination of a flock, mob or group by an individual or individuals;
 - avoid the risk of persistent and unresolved conflict between flock, mob or group members or between different species held in the same enclosure;
 - make it possible for an animal to avoid, or withdraw from contact with other wildlife;
 - ensure that the carrying capacity of the enclosure is not exceeded;
 - prevent an uncontrolled accumulation of parasites and other pathogens;
 - Enclosures, including external walls, barriers and fences must be designed and constructed to avoid the risk of injury.
 - Enclosures must be designed and constructed to avoid premature escape.
 - Enclosures must be structurally sound and kept in good repair. They must be built of non-toxic materials with no sharp, protruding or other dangerous features.



Outdoor Enclosure Construction (Cont.)

- Predator and prey species should not be placed in adjacent enclosures.
- Enclosures must be of a design that excludes predators.
- Enclosure entrances must be easily accessible to allow servicing and maintenance.
- Entrance doors must be fitted with a secure closing device.
- Heating may need to be provided for some species and any installation must not endanger the animal nor should it be able to be damaged by the animal.
- Heat pads, hospital boxes or any other form of electrical heat source as well as adaptors and extension leads, should only be used if the product has been approved by and meets the Australian Standard and is safe for outdoor use.



Habitat within Enclosures

Enclosure habitat should address and encourage wildlife to move freely and engage in a wide range of normal behaviours such as climbing, grazing, foraging, digging, hunting, resting, playing and sleeping. Enclosures must include habitat components that are species specific. For example, the Brushtail possum requires branches for climbing and browsing, and hollows for sleeping and shelter.

- Habitat components should be regularly added to and substituted with the exception of nest boxes, sleeping quarters and burrows.
- Enclosures must provide a variety of natural substrates, such as large rocks, leaf litter, gravel, sand or grassed areas.
- Enclosures must be well drained and animals must have access to dry areas at all times.
- All occupants must have access to shade and shelter from the elements and safe hiding areas for withdrawal.
- An enclosure must include items such as bedding material, leafy branch work, burrows, hollow logs and nest boxes where appropriate.
- Arboreal species must be provided with branches with bark to simulate the natural environment for climbing and have nest boxes and feed containers located off the ground.
- Access to a bathing area should be supplied, especially in hot, dry conditions.
- Aquatic and semi-aquatic wildlife must be provided with water for swimming.
- Semi-aquatic wildlife must be provided with dry areas for resting.



RELEASE

Releasing wildlife is the most difficult part of the rehabilitation process but should be considered the most important. Release options and procedures should be of the highest priority and taken into consideration at the time of acquisition of any wildlife.

Return to the wild must be a considered, prepared release for the animal, not abandonment.

Prior to releasing back into the wild, animals must have been maintained in an environment closely resembling natural habitat conditions. They must have access to natural social structures, species specific behavioural patterns and natural feeding regimes.

An overall assessment of every animal and the intended release site should be carried out prior to any wildlife being placed back into the wild and should include the following considerations:

The Animal

- must be independent of its *natural* mother;
- must be healthy and be of normal body weight;
- must have been held in a large enough area to exercise appropriately;
- must have been held in habitat as close as possible to the wild;
- must have been able to dig, graze or browse, as it would in the wild;
- must be weaned off all unnatural foodstuffs. (The animal's digestive system must adjust to the more fibrous content of a natural diet to avoid digestive problems after release.)
- should not be familiar with family pets;
- should be independent of the carer, except for the supply of nutrition;
- if a social species, should be socialised prior to release;
- must be housed outdoors 24 hours a day;
- must be disease free.
- must be released prior to sexual maturity.



The Release Site

- the release site should be near the area in which the animal was found;
- no animal should be released on a property without the permission of the land owner;
- there must be other animals of the same species present at the release site;
- the area must not be overpopulated;
- animals should not be released into drought conditions;
- long range weather forecasts should be checked prior to release;
- food/water/shelter should be plentiful and easily accessed;
- there should not be uncontrolled dogs on the release property or neighbouring properties;
- release should not take place near areas where poisons have been laid.
- animals should not be released where neighbouring properties have orchards, vineyards or where any other primary industry activities are in place, without the permission of the property owner engaged in those activities.
- release sites close to main roads should be avoided.
- animals should be released at a suitable time of the year. The season and seasonal conditions should be taken into consideration prior to release, for example, food supply over the winter months, breeding season/s for the species; migratory species.
- nocturnal species should be released on dusk or later.
- diurnal species should be released in daylight hours.
- The details of the process and facilities to be made available for the release of protected wildlife and the Common Wombat should be provided to the Wildlife Management Branch, DPIPWE prior to the release.

No wildlife shall be released unless free from disease and is displaying appropriate physical and psychological behavioural patterns.

Release into the wild must always be in the best interest of the wildlife, the population and the ecosystem.

There are no guarantees when releasing wildlife, there *will* be animals that only survive for short periods, for whatever reason, but there *will* also be those that go on to breed and contribute to the survival of the species.

The latter is successful rehabilitation.



LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Wildlife care volunteers require a possession or rehabilitation permit for any animal listed as specially protected or protected wildlife under the *Wildlife (General) Regulations 2010*.

Conditions on rehabilitation permits include:

- In the event of the death of any of the wildlife specified on the permit the Secretary should be advised within seven (7) days;
- The Secretary must be notified prior to the intended release of any wildlife referred to on the permit.
- Transfer of possession or offering to transfer, sell, exchange, or dispose of in any way, the wildlife specified on the permit is prohibited.
- Rehabilitation of animals listed under the *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995* requires prior approval from the Threatened Species Unit, Wildlife Management Branch, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment. Notification of possession of any of these species through injury or becoming orphaned is required at the earliest opportunity on the first day of business after receiving the animal. Information on species listed under this Act can be accessed via the DPIPWE website www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au
- An authorised officer may, at any reasonable time inspect facilities and records to ensure that wildlife are properly maintained. Random checks may also occur.

WEBSITES

- **Tasmanian legislation:** www.thelaw.tas.gov.au
- **Department of Primary Industries and Water:**
www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au, click on 'Natural Environment'
- **Parks and Wildlife Service:** www.parks.tas.gov.au

