



Wildcare Inc. Alice Springs Code of Conduct and Wildlife Rescue Guidelines

AIM

THE RESCUE, REHABILITATION AND RELEASE OF ORPHANED,
INJURED OR SICK NATIVE ANIMALS

OBJECTIVES

Provision of a rescue service for wildlife in the Northern Territory through the establishment of a network of trained volunteer wildlife carers.

Provision of an advisory service to suggest appropriate emergency care for wildlife in instances where an animal cannot be handed over to an experienced/trained volunteer wildlife carer immediately.

Training of volunteer wildlife carers in all aspects of care and rehabilitation of wildlife.

Provision of an information base comprised of relevant data about the care and rehabilitation of Northern Territory Wildlife.

PERMITS

All vertebrate wildlife that is indigenous to Australia is considered protected in the Northern Territory. To legally care for wildlife you are required to hold a **"Permit to Care for Vertebrate Wildlife"** with special conditions relating to the rescue and release of native animals. **This permit does not allow the holder to keep native animals on a permanent basis.**

The terms and conditions pertaining to this permit are as follows:

- The holder of the permit is only authorised to keep wildlife that is sick, injured or orphaned for the purpose of rehabilitation for eventual release back into the wild.
- The permit holder shall provide to the Parks and Wildlife Commission notification of any change of location where the wildlife is held within twenty one (21) days of such change of location occurring.
- The permit holder shall allow access by a Conservation Officer to the wildlife held, at any reasonable time, for the purpose of inspection.
- The wildlife held under this permit cannot be sold, bartered or removed from the Northern Territory.

- All wildlife held under this permit must be recorded on an approved Wildlife Report Form.
- The permit holder shall produce all Wildlife Report Forms for inspection by a Conservation Officer upon request.
- The permit holder shall contact the relevant coordinator before any wildlife is released. Parks and Wildlife shall be contacted before any kangaroos are released.
- Wildlife Report Forms are to be completed and returned to the Wildlife Rescue Coordinator upon release or death of each animal.
- This permit does not authorise the permit holder to hold or care for any wildlife of the Order Chiroptera (all bats) unless the permit holder has been vaccinated against Lyssavirus.
- This permit shall remain in force until the date of expiry unless cancelled by the Director of Parks and Wildlife pursuant to Section 59 of the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act.

CONDITIONS OF BECOMING A VOLUNTEER WILDLIFE CARERS

A person will only be granted a permit to care for wildlife under the following conditions:

1. They can show an acceptable degree of current knowledge in the rehabilitation of the species of native animals they intend to care for. This knowledge can be gained through previous experience; attending an approved wildlife care course or being trained through an approved wildlife care group. The person may be required to sit an oral or written test of their knowledge. (Note: special considerations will be given to people living in remote areas).
2. They have appropriate facilities and access to appropriate food for the species of native animals they intend to care for.
3. They agree to follow the operational procedure set out in the Wildcare Inc. Alice Springs Code of Conduct and Wildlife Rescue Guidelines

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE

1. ANIMAL ASSESSMENT

Upon acquiring wildlife, an accurate assessment of each case must be provided without delay in relation to:

- Identification of the animal and consideration for any special needs.
- Determination of any injuries or disabilities which may prevent successful rehabilitation.
- Acquiring appropriate veterinary treatment for any injuries or disease.
- The likelihood that the animal will be successfully rehabilitated
- The significance of the animal to PWCNT or the scientific community
- The capacity of the volunteer wildlife carer to provide the captive needs of the animal.
- Determine if the animal is on the list of specimens needed by the Alice Springs Desert Park.
- At this stage animals should be recorded on an approved Wildlife Rescue Report Form.

2. OUTCOME OF ASSESSMENT

- The animal is suitable to be rehabilitated and released into the wild.
- Animal to go to Alice Springs Desert Park.
- Further assessment is required by more experienced persons
- The animal requires euthanasia

3. ANIMALS SUITABLE FOR REHABILITATION

Animals, which are considered suitable for rehabilitation, will be taken into care by a volunteer wildlife carer with the appropriate facilities to provide the captive needs of the animal.

4. ANIMALS TO GO TO ALICE SPRINGS DESERT PARK

Animals that are on the list as wanted by the Desert Park are to be offered to the appropriate staff there as soon as they come in. Desert Park to update list of wanted species as appropriate

5. ANIMALS REQUIRING FURTHER ASSESSMENT

If a carer is unsure whether an animal will be able to be released into the wild after the rehabilitation process, they are required to seek further advice from one of the following areas

- Veterinarians with relevant experience in this area
- Wildlife carers with relevant experience in this area
- Members of PWCNT with relevant experience in this area

All animals should be periodically reassessed to ensure recovery remains likely. If an animal is not considered able to be released into the wild, then it shall be euthanased.

As stated in the beginning of the Wildlife Rescue Guidelines, the aim of Wildlife Rescue is the rescue, rehabilitation and release of wildlife. Only under special circumstances will animals be considered suitable to remain in captivity on a permanent basis. Special consideration will be given to –

- Rare or endangered animals that have some breeding or educational potential for a wildlife park or sanctuary (see previous point).

6. WILDLIFE FROM OTHER STATES/POPULATION DISTRIBUTION AREAS

Volunteer wildlife carers receiving wildlife that is not naturally found within the area that the carer lives from which the carer lives, must contact PWCNT upon acquiring the animal.

These animals must be passed onto a carer from the region which the animal came from whenever possible.

If a volunteer wildlife carer cannot be found from the region of origin, then the animal must be kept isolated from local animals in care or from the wild to reduce the likelihood of spread of disease.

When the animal is ready to be released, it must be released back into the region it came from, in order to preserve local gene pools and avoid the spread of disease.

7. EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia should be employed if wildlife is sick or injured in such a way that rehabilitation would be impossible, extremely expensive or have too great an impact on the animal's psychological state (too stressful).

Examples of conditions where the decision to euthanase should be considered include:

- Loss of limb or limb function
- Compound fractures of wings or legs
- Fractures involving joints
- Permanent vital sensory loss (eg loss of eyesight)
- Acute or chronic infectious diseases which could be transmitted to local populations
- Permanent nervous damage (eg severed spinal cord)
- Extensive damage to the body involving abdominal or thoracic organs (eg evisceration)

If a volunteer wildlife carer or a member of the public is required to perform euthanasia, a method appropriate for the species must be employed to avoid pain and suffering by the animal to the maximum extent practical. Senior Carers are experienced in the use of CO₂ and gassing facilities are available for birds. If this cannot be achieved then the carer must take the animal to a veterinarian.

8. FACILITIES OF PEOPLE WISHING TO CARE FOR WILDLIFE

Any volunteer wishing to care for wildlife must do so at their own expense. PWCNT will not take any responsibility for the provision of funds for veterinary fees, feeding, housing, transport, etc.

The maximum number of wildlife that may be held by one person is at the discretion of PWCNT. This decision will be made on the ability of the individual to care for wildlife and the facilities made available by the carer for such use.

Housing must fulfil the animal's needs during the care period in such a way as to assist in the rehabilitation process. Considerations should be given to:

- Minimising stress and handling
- Only housing compatible species together
- Avoiding imprinting by humans and domestic pets.
- Avoid housing with domestic animals (including pet birds)

Where individual animals are adapted to living in social groups and rehabilitate more successfully in these situations, cooperation between wildlife carers with regards to handing animals on to other carers will be pursued, as this will reduce the likelihood of imprinting onto humans.

Feeding

- Food of suitable quality and quantity must be provided to promote recovery and/or physical development.
- All animals must have a component of natural food in their diet prior to release to ensure survival behaviours are maintained.
- Captive diets must approximate the natural diet for the species to minimise the impact of captivity and to stimulate normal digestive functions.

Handling

- This must be kept to a minimum and performed in such a way to avoid injury to the animal and the handler
- Whilst young orphaned animals need to interact with their carer, this interaction must be progressively reduced as the animal is prepared for the wild. Depending upon the species of animals, interaction with members of its own species may also be required.
- Wildlife must not under any circumstances be permitted to develop a harmonious relationship with humans or domestic animals. With regards to dangerous domestic animals such as dogs and cats, native animals should be taught to become afraid of these animals.

It must be always remembered that these are wild animals that are being rehabilitated for release back into the wild. They must never be regarded as "family pets".

9. RECORDS

It is very important for the volunteer wildlife carer to record and maintain accurate records of animals coming into their care. Such records will assist in the treatment, rehabilitation and release of the animals and will provide valuable care history information for the future, as well as providing an important resource for other carers.

10. REHABILITATION PROCESS

Rehabilitation and eventual release into the wild must be considered for all native animals coming into care. For long-term survival of native animal, the rehabilitation process must incorporate not only return of physical health and well being of wildlife, but must also ensure the necessary survival skills are present. This is particularly important for predatory animals or animals with highly specialised diets. In these cases, the animal may have to be taught to hunt or weaned onto an appropriate diet prior to release.

11. RELEASE PROCEDURES

Factors that must be addressed when releasing animals include

- Suitability of the habitat
- Time of release – migratory habits of some animals must be taken into account

- Time of the day – eg nocturnal animals should be released at dusk or night time if possible.
- Social interaction of the animals – eg some animals will fare better when released in a social group
- Extremes of weather
- Availability of food sources
- The animal must be transferred to the release site and handled in such a way as to minimise stress

Animals should not be released into the wild if they are carrying an infectious disease. Some animals may require a veterinary check prior to release to be deemed free of infectious diseases.

If release is unsuccessful, despite repeated attempts to rehabilitate the animal to the wild, then the final decision on the animal's fate will rest with PWCNT

Tagging:

- Animals may be tagged or marked before being released in order to assess the success of rehabilitation to the wild and to record the subsequent movement of the animal.
- Tags or markers must be attached in a manner that causes no injury or impairment to the animal.
- Only tags and bands approved by PWCNT may be used.

MEDIA ACCESS

Media access to any wildlife held by wildlife carers is not permitted without prior consent of the Parks and Wildlife Commission.

Approval for media access will be granted for the following reasons:

- Promotion of the conservation of the species and its habitat
- Promotion of the protection of the species
- Public awareness of the Wildlife Rescue Program
- Fundraising for the use in approved Wildlife Care groups

Under no circumstances are wildlife carers to utilise wildlife in their care for their own personal financial gain.