

# Wildlife Shelter and Foster Carer

Authorisation Guide

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OFFICIAL



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and Planning

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# Wildlife Shelter and Foster Carer Authorisation Guide

## The Victorian wildlife rehabilitation system

In Victoria, sick, injured or orphaned wildlife can only be rehabilitated by a wildlife shelter operator or foster carer who is authorised under section 28A of the *Wildlife Act 1975* (Wildlife Act).

As a wildlife shelter operator or foster carer, you are authorised to acquire, receive, possess, destroy (euthanise) and dispose of wildlife for the purposes of the care, treatment and rehabilitation of sick, injured or orphaned wildlife for release back to the wild.

Your dedication and commitment to Victoria's native wildlife is highly valued by the Victorian Government and the community.

## Purpose of the guide

This guide was first prepared in 2015 by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) in consultation with the animal welfare unit within the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR), the RSPCA, Zoos Victoria, veterinarians and representatives from the wildlife rehabilitation community. It has since been reviewed in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 to ensure the information is accurate and up-to-date.

Wildlife shelter operators and foster carers are regulated by conditions that enforce the minimum standards required for the humane treatment and successful rehabilitation of wildlife in care.

This guide explains the objectives of your authorisation conditions, and how you can comply. The advice provided in the 'how to comply' section is not mandatory, but rather provides the suggested method of meeting the conditions. You may choose alternative methods if you meet the conditions.

Depending on your specialisations and facilities, your authorisation may include additional conditions that restrict the number or type of species you can care for. Please ensure you read your authorisation conditions carefully. For further information, please contact your local DELWP office (**Appendix 1**) or the DELWP Customer Contact Centre on **136 186**.

Information on capture and basic first aid for wildlife is provided in **Appendix 2**.

## Capacity to care

It is important to consider your capacity before agreeing to take wildlife into care. The concept of 'capacity to care'<sup>1</sup> refers to your ability to:

- provide the minimum care and essential needs of rescued native animals,
- have the resources required to appropriately prepare wildlife for release back into the wild.

Exceeding your capacity to care for wildlife may result in unacceptable standards and welfare outcomes that do not meet the conditions of your authorisation. Also consider the emotional load required to care for additional animals, and put your own safety and welfare first.

Please be mindful of your capacity, particularly when there is an influx of wildlife requiring care due to major incidents like bushfire, significant weather events and other natural disasters. Caring for some young wildlife (e.g. baby birds and joeys) requires significant time commitment and would not be appropriate for those unable to meet their care requirements.

DELWP recommends establishing good communication with other wildlife shelter operators and foster carers in your area. If you believe your capacity is exceeded and you are not able to provide adequate care for an animal, it is recommended you contact another wildlife shelter operator or foster carer to see if they have

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<sup>1</sup> State of Queensland, 2013, Code of Practice – Care of Sick, Injured or Orphaned Protected Animals in Queensland, available from: <https://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/caring-for-wildlife/pdfs/cp-wl-rehab.pdf>.

capacity to take the animal. If you are not able to find another wildlife shelter operator or foster carer who has the capacity to take the animal, then it should be humanely euthanised.

## Failure to comply with conditions

Failure to comply with the conditions of your authorisation is an offence under section 28B ('Offence of failing to comply with conditions of authorisation') of the *Wildlife Act 1975*. Failure to comply can result in fines of up to 50 penalty units<sup>2</sup> (\$8059.50 as at 1 July 2018).

If you are not complying with the conditions of your authorisation, you may also be committing offences under section 41 ('Hunting, taking or destroying threatened wildlife') and 43 ('Hunting, taking or destroying protected wildlife') of the *Wildlife Act 1975*. Offences under section 41 carry a penalty of 240 penalty units (\$38,685.60 as at 1 July 2018) or 24 months imprisonment or both the fine and imprisonment and an additional penalty of 20 penalty units (\$3223.80 as at 1 July 2018) for every head of wildlife in respect of which an offence has been committed. Offences under section 43 carry a penalty of 50 penalty units (\$8059.50 as at 1 July 2018) or 6 months imprisonment or both the fine and imprisonment and an additional penalty of 5 penalty units (\$805.95 as at 1 July 2018) for every head of wildlife in respect of which an offence has been committed.

In addition, the welfare of all animals in Victoria is protected under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* (POCTA Act) under which anyone who commits an act of cruelty or aggravated cruelty is liable for an offence. Failure to comply with some of the conditions of your authorisation may constitute an offence under the POCTA Act (for example undertaking surgical treatment on animals in your care).

The penalties for offences under the POCTA Act are considerable; fines of up to \$40,297.50 or jail for up to 12 months for animal cruelty (for individuals), and fines of up to \$80,595 or imprisonment for up to two years for aggravated cruelty. Aggravated cruelty is cruelty that causes the death or serious disablement of an animal.

### How to report illegal possession of wildlife and non-compliance

If you suspect someone is holding wildlife unlawfully you can report Wildlife Crime to Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or at <https://www.crimestoppersvic.com.au/report-a-crime/>

To report someone not complying with the conditions of their authorisation, you can report it to your local DELWP office (see **Appendix 1**), or via the DELWP Customer Contact Centre on 136 186.

## Authorisation conditions

### Species not covered by your authorisation

#### **Condition 1**

You must not acquire, receive, possess, destroy (euthanase) or dispose of the following wildlife: whales, dolphins, seals, marine turtles, platypus, fish, deer, non-indigenous quail, pheasants and partridges.

#### **Objective**

To ensure that wildlife that requires specialist care, treatment and rehabilitation, receives it.

#### **How to comply**

Authorised wildlife shelter operators and registered foster carers can rehabilitate most native wildlife indigenous to Australia or its territorial waters. However, whales, dolphins, seals, marine turtles and platypus require highly specialised care facilities and trained personnel to be rehabilitated successfully.

The following actions are recommended if you encounter animals not covered by your Authorisation:

- **Exotic and Pest Animals** (e.g. established pests like foxes and exotic pests like Boa Constrictors, Red Eared Slider Turtles, Hedgehogs, Squirrels and Corn Snakes) You are not authorised to care for, keep, sell or release pest animals. It is an offence under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* to import, keep or sell pest animals. Call 136 186 to report a pest animal.

<sup>2</sup> Penalty units are updated by the Department of Treasury and Finance on 1 July each year. As at 1 July 2018, a penalty unit equates to \$161.19

- **Introduced wildlife** (e.g. deer, non-indigenous quail, pheasants and partridges) – these animals are introduced wildlife in Victoria and must not be rehabilitated and released back into the wild.
- **Cats and dogs** – call your local council for assistance.
- **Livestock** (e.g. sheep, goats, cattle) - call your local council for assistance (or police if out of hours).
- **Whales and dolphins** - contact the Whale and Dolphin Emergency Hotline on 1300 137 017 to report a stranded or injured whale or dolphin.
- **Seals or marine turtles** – contact a DELWP Authorised Officer (**Appendix 1**), the DELWP Customer Contact Centre on 136 186, or the AGL Marine Response Unit on 0447 158 676.
- **Platypus** - contact Healesville Sanctuary Wildlife Hospital on (03) 5957 2829 to transfer the animal to their care. If this is not available, contact a DELWP Authorised Officer to discuss options.
- **Marine birds** – (e.g. penguins, petrels and pelicans) are best cared for by specialised facilities and trained personnel. Wherever possible, in the best interests of the animal, provide all marine birds to the Phillip Island Nature Parks available on (03) 5951 2800, or the Melbourne Zoo via the AGL Marine Response Unit available on 0447 158 676.

### Direction by Authorised Officers

#### **Condition 2**

You must follow any verbal or written direction of an Authorised Officer of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning in relation to any wildlife that you acquire, receive, possess, destroy and dispose of under your authorisation for the purposes of the *Wildlife Act 1975*.

#### **Objective**

This is a legislative requirement.

#### **How to comply**

DELWP Authorised Officers are authorised by law to undertake compliance and enforcement activities under the *Wildlife Act 1975* and other relevant Victorian laws. Some Authorised Officers are authorised under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* and so can also enforce the provisions of this Act.

#### **Officer Powers**

Under the *Wildlife Act*, Authorised Officers have the power to, at any reasonable time, and having regard to the circumstances:

- Enter, inspect or search any property and any buildings or structures other than a dwelling, as well as vehicles or boats for the purposes of the *Wildlife Act*, with or without notice.
- Ask to see, inspect or take photos of any wildlife held under your authorisation or wildlife licence.
- Ask to see, inspect or make copies of record books and any other documentation associated with your authorisation or wildlife licence.
- Inspect any parcel, bag or receptacle the officer reasonably believes either is being used or is likely to be used in contravention of the Act (e.g. a cardboard box they believe holds wildlife; a hunter's bags or esky).
- Investigate reports of alleged illegal activity relating to wildlife.
- Seize wildlife in your care if the officer reasonably believes an offence against the Act has been, is being, or is about to be, committed.

## **Inspections**

Inspections are usually, but not always, conducted by uniformed officers. Officers will always show you official identification. If identification is not offered, you should ask to see it. An Authorised Officer will generally approach you to inform you of the purpose of their visit and seek cooperation.

To enter any part of a premises used only for residential purposes, an Authorised Officer must have permission of the occupier or another person who apparently represents the occupier.

However, as part of your authorisation conditions, upon request from an Authorised Officer, shelters and foster carers must give reasonable access to wildlife held under their authorisation, including wildlife being held within your home.

Participating in an inspection does not mean that you have done anything wrong. Inspections are often conducted to monitor general compliance trends among authorisation holders.

Authorised Officers will often arrange a time to meet with you for a routine inspection, however can also inspect your property without notice for the purposes of monitoring compliance with authorisation conditions.

## **Shelter rights and obligations**

As an authorisation holder, you have certain rights and obligations.

If requested, you must:

- Give the Authorised Officer your name and address
- Allow an Authorised Officer to inspect wildlife held by you (including inside your house at any reasonable time) for monitoring compliance with the Wildlife Act, regulations or conditions of your authorisation. Failure to provide reasonable access to all wildlife held under a shelter authorisation may result in the cancellation of your authorisation.
- Produce your authorisation or record book for inspection
- Allow the Authorised Officer to search your vehicle, boat or property
- Surrender anything the Officer tells you is seized
- Comply with the conditions of any retention notice issued for wildlife in your possession
- Not obstruct, threaten or abuse an Authorised Officer during his or her duty
- Under the conditions of your authorisation, follow any verbal or written direction from an Authorised Officer relating to your authorisation

Your rights:

- You may ask to see an Authorised Officer's identification
- You do not have to answer any questions that you think might incriminate you
- If you are to be interviewed about an offence, you will be informed of your rights. You must, however, state your full name and correct address if asked.
- You may request a receipt for anything seized from you (including wildlife)
- You may request that an officer visit your home at a more reasonable time

For further information about enforcement and compliance, shelters are encouraged to contact a local DELWP Authorised Officer for assistance.

## Assessment and quarantine of wildlife

### **Condition 3**

You must arrange for the health of new wildlife to be assessed as soon as reasonably possible and within 48 hours by a registered veterinary practitioner or a person experienced in diagnosing illnesses, diseases and injuries in the species who has extensive knowledge of current rehabilitation techniques gained through professional training courses and many years of rehabilitating native wildlife, and follow their advice, including the provision of medication.

You must keep records of advice received in accordance with condition 23 and provide to a DELWP Authorised Officer on request.

### **Objective**

To ensure that wildlife you receive or acquire is correctly assessed to determine the best possible treatment options. Inaccurate examination can result in undiagnosed or incorrectly treated ailments which can significantly impact on the animal's health and welfare.

### **How to comply**

Establish a working relationship with a local veterinarian willing to provide veterinary care for wildlife. Most wildlife taken into shelters is frightened, stressed, disorientated and may be in pain.

Seek initial advice via telephone if you are in a remote location and cannot immediately get the wildlife assessed.

Some information on capture and basic first aid is provided in **Appendix 2**.

### **Condition 4**

You must isolate and quarantine wildlife you acquire or receive from other wildlife you possess, prior to a health assessment.

### **Condition 5**

You must isolate and quarantine wildlife that show symptoms of disease or infection from other wildlife you possess.

### **Objective**

To ensure that diseases and parasites are not transmitted between wildlife in care.

### **How to comply**

Prepare separate quarantine enclosures to house individual sick or injured wildlife.

Regularly clean enclosures and equipment with hospital grade disinfectant. Clean quarantine areas last, and don't allow drainage into 'clean' areas. Use quarantine procedures (i.e. disinfectant footbaths, separate protective clothing, equipment disinfection etc.).

Separate treatment and food preparation facilities between quarantine and 'clean' areas. Disinfect hands, footwear and equipment when leaving quarantine areas.

If there is a disease outbreak (e.g. botulism in birds) please report it to the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888 (24 hours).

### **Condition 6**

You must not release wildlife from quarantine until a registered veterinary practitioner, a person experienced in diagnosing illnesses, diseases and injuries in the species, as outlined in condition 3, or a DELWP Authorised Officer has advised you that release from quarantine is safe.

### **Objective**

To ensure that diseases and parasites are not transmitted between wildlife in care, and to prevent diseases and parasites from being transmitted to wildlife populations from released rehabilitated wildlife.

### **How to comply**



Seek advice and, if possible, a direct assessment of wildlife before releasing them from quarantine.

## Experience in caring for wildlife

### **Condition 7**

You must seek advice on the care of any species you acquire or receive that you have not previously cared for as soon as reasonably possible and within 24 hours by a registered veterinary practitioner, a person experienced in its care and treatment, as outlined in condition 3, or a DELWP Authorised Officer.

### **Objective**

To ensure rescued wildlife are appropriately cared for and rehabilitated for release back into the wild.

### **How to comply**

Network with other wildlife shelters to get advice and training in the care of species that you are unfamiliar with and to coordinate rescues. Your local DELWP Authorised Officer can assist you by providing information on shelters in your local area.

It is recommended that you request advice on the care of species in writing (i.e. written or email) to ensure you have a record to provide to DELWP Authorised Officers on request.

## Surgical treatment and medication

### **Condition 8**

You must not undertake surgical treatment on wildlife. Only registered veterinary practitioners can undertake surgical treatment on wildlife.

Subject to condition 3, you must only administer Schedule 4, 8 or 9 poisons to wildlife, in accordance with the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations 2017.

### **Objective**

To ensure that only qualified persons undertake surgical treatment of wildlife and provision of restricted medicines.

### **How to comply**

Surgical treatment is “the treatment of injuries or disorders of the body by incision or manipulation, especially with instruments”.

Examples of procedures that must be conducted by a veterinarian include:

- Anaesthesia or sedation
- surgery, including setting bones (splinting and plastering of limbs and tails) and suturing skin
- injections given into veins
- injections given into bone cavities.

If you are not sure whether a procedure would be considered surgical treatment, the following questions should be considered:

- does it entail entering a body cavity<sup>3</sup> of the animal?
- is there a potential for pain or stress to the animal if it is not done properly?
- is there potential for unnecessary or inappropriate management or treatment because of misdiagnosis?
- is there a potential for spreading disease?
- does it involve decisions on the use of medicines?

<sup>3</sup> A body cavity is any ‘hollow space’ or enclosed cavity and includes the abdominal cavity, thoracic cavity, pelvic cavity, cranial and spinal canal, teeth cavities, orbit and eye, tympanic cavity, joint spaces and other synovial cavities.

If the answer to any of these questions is 'yes', then the procedure should be conducted by a registered veterinary practitioner.

**Performing surgical treatment on animals is a breach of this condition and an offence under the Wildlife Act. It may also constitute an offence under the POCTA Act.**

There are also strict laws that govern the use of veterinary drugs in Victoria. A person can only administer Schedule 4, 8 or 9 poisons, where supplied for the treatment of an animal by a veterinarian. These poisons include certain types of antibiotics, sedatives, muscle relaxants, anaesthetics and anti-inflammatories, amongst others.

**Possessing or administering Schedule 4, 8 or 9 poisons without veterinary direction may constitute an offence under the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations 2017.**

## Euthanasia (destroying) of wildlife

### **Condition 9**

You must arrange for the following wildlife to be promptly euthanised:

- wildlife experiencing unreasonable and/or incurable pain, distress, trauma, sickness or injury; or
- wildlife (other than species listed as threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*) that have lost limbs or function of limbs, including tails; or
- wildlife (other than species listed as threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*) that are likely to require extended periods in captivity to be rehabilitated; or
- wildlife (other than species listed as threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*) that show clinical signs of disease which fail to respond in the expected timeframe to an appropriate treatment regime; or
- wildlife (other than species listed as threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*) that are unlikely to survive or integrate in the wild; or
- wildlife (other than species listed as threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*) that have permanent vital sensory loss (hearing, sight, smell) or permanent damage to their nervous system; or
- wildlife (other than species listed as threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*) that require euthanasia under Condition 22; or
- marsupials that are un-furred with eyes closed and ears down.

### **Objective**

To prevent animals experiencing extended or significant pain and to ensure that injured, sick and orphaned wildlife can be successfully rehabilitated and released back into the wild.

Threatened species are a priority for rehabilitation and therefore are exempt from some of the euthanasia requirements, as listed above. However, threatened species experiencing unreasonable and/or incurable pain, distress, trauma, sickness or injury must be promptly euthanised in accordance with conditions 10 & 11.

### **How to comply**

Euthanise wildlife that you receive or acquire that will continue to experience declining animal welfare if it remains alive. For example, the following must be euthanised:

- wildlife that have an incurable (able to be treated but not cured) infectious disease;
- wildlife that are unable to adjust to temporary care;
- wildlife with chronic ill health;

Wildlife should be released from care as soon as possible after rehabilitation. While some injuries take time to heal, long periods in captivity can place significant stress on wildlife and result in the loss of survival skills, increased familiarity and dependence on humans, a loss of instinctual fear of domestic pets and the risk that the wildlife's space in the wild will become occupied. The sooner wildlife can be rehabilitated and released, the greater their chance of survival.

Wildlife must be fully rehabilitated before being released. The risks of releasing wildlife not fully rehabilitated include starvation because they don't know how to locate food, harassment and competition from other animals, injuries or death from interactions with hostile resident wildlife or predators (e.g. cats) that they don't know to fear, or exposure to the elements due to their inability to find shelter. If wildlife is unable to be rehabilitated the responsible decision (although difficult) is to euthanise it to prevent further pain.

Before attempting to rehabilitate an animal, the long-term welfare of the individual must be carefully considered. The stress of treating the animal must be justified, taking into consideration resource availability and potential for future population management at the release site.

### **Hand-rearing young**

Although hand-rearing young animals can be a rewarding experience, it should be carefully considered as it may not be the most humane option for the animal in the long-term.

Survival rates of very young animals that come into care are low. This is particularly true for mammals who are not developed to a stage where their eyes are open, ears are up, or have not yet developed fur.

It is difficult for marsupials of this development stage to develop a strong immune system without their mother. Attempts to hand-rear marsupials at this development stage often results in abnormalities of their immune system. This compromises the health and wellbeing of the animal as it is unable to defend itself sufficiently against infection and the development of disease.

Hand-reared animals also have a higher death rate in the wild than wild animals, as it is very difficult for humans to teach young animals all the necessary survival skills and behaviours. This means that once the animal is released it may struggle to integrate into wild populations or be disadvantaged when competing for food, territory and mates. Hand-reared animals often fall prey to predators, as they have not learnt to recognise predators such as dogs and foxes and therefore do not have the appropriate flight response to escape.

Hand-reared animals may also become dangerous as adults. Due to their familiarity with humans, they may attack people if they think the person has food.

#### **Condition 10**

You must arrange for wildlife to be euthanised, in accordance with condition 9, by a registered veterinary practitioner where it is practical to do so.

You must euthanise wildlife promptly, in accordance with condition 11, where it is impractical to take the wildlife to a registered veterinary practitioner.

You must never release wildlife requiring euthanasia, in accordance with condition 9, back into the wild.

#### **Objective**

To ensure the timely and humane euthanasia of sick, injured or orphaned wildlife that should not be rehabilitated.

#### **How to comply**

Overdose by a barbiturate anaesthetic is the preferred method of euthanasia and, under the requirements of the *Veterinary Practice Act 1997* and the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations 2017*, must only be performed by registered veterinary practitioners.

Registered veterinary practitioners should be utilised where euthanasia is required wherever possible, however you should also ensure that you are able and prepared to euthanise wildlife in accordance with condition 11 when required.

#### **Condition 11**

You must use a euthanasia method that results in immediate loss of consciousness followed by death.

You must not use the following euthanasia methods:

- Hypothermia (placing the animal in a freezer) - many animals are still able to feel pain when undergoing hypothermia, but are unable to respond to this pain (i.e. by moving away). Freezing results in ice crystals in tissues that cause extreme pain before the animal dies.
- Air embolism (injection of air into the veins) - causes unacceptable pain.
- Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) - causes extreme levels of fear, distress and discomfort for animals.
- Carbon monoxide (CO) (e.g. car exhaust) - causes extreme levels of fear, distress and discomfort.
- Chloroform - dangerous and toxic hepatotoxin (damages the liver). It is highly irritating to animals.
- Ether - highly irritating to mucous membranes of animals. Its administration is highly distressing.
- Chemicals (e.g. cyanide or strychnine) - extremely dangerous, slow acting, and causes violent convulsions, pain and distress.
- Suffocation - causes extreme levels of fear, distress and discomfort for animals.
- Drowning - slow acting and causes extreme levels of fear, distress and discomfort for animals.
- Exsanguination (cutting the throat and bleeding out) - cannot be used as a sole method of euthanasia as it causes pain and fear in animals.

### **Objective**

To ensure that only appropriate methods of euthanasia are used to minimise pain, discomfort and distress.

### **How to comply**

Euthanasia is a core role of wildlife shelters, and is an important tool in ensuring the welfare of wildlife. Ensure that you only use humane and safe methods when you are undertaking euthanasia of wildlife.

Euthanasia should be carried out in accordance with relevant codes of practice (e.g. the National Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for Non-commercial Purposes).

The method of euthanasia must quickly render the animal unconscious, rapidly followed by death. The animal can be stunned and rendered unconscious by a hard, sharp blow to the skull. Stunning must be followed immediately by either blunt force trauma that destroys the brain, cervical dislocation, decapitation or exsanguination. The method used must be appropriate for the size and species of the animal. Ensure that you have received appropriate training in the method of euthanasia before attempting to euthanise an animal.

Contact an experienced shelter for assistance if a veterinarian is not available and you are unsure of your ability to safely and humanely euthanise an animal.

### Euthanasia via firearms

Firearms are an acceptable method of euthanasia, but should only be used when safe to do so. Firearms must only be used by holders of an appropriate firearms licence, in accordance with the *Firearms Act 1996*. Depending on the location, a 'Populous Place Permit' from Victoria Police may be required.

Wherever possible when using firearms for euthanasia, wildlife should be euthanised by a shot to the brain. Where a shot to the brain is impractical or unsafe, a shot to the heart/lung area is permissible.

Injured wildlife may be euthanised safely via firearm by local police.

### Roadside euthanasia of injured wildlife

If injured wildlife are found on or near a road and require euthanasia then the method of euthanasia needs to be carefully considered.

Under Section 130 of the *Firearms Act 1996*, it is an offence to carry or use a firearm on any thoroughfare or place open to or used by the public for passage with vehicles. You may choose to apply for a Populous Place Permit from the Victoria Police to allow the use of a firearm on or near a road by a person with a firearms licence. However, the decision of whether to grant a Populous Place Permit is up to the discretion of the Victoria Police. The application process is also unlikely to be completed in an appropriate timeframe for humane euthanasia of the injured wildlife using a firearm.

Other options that could be considered include:

- capture and transport of the injured wildlife to another location for euthanasia with a firearm,
- contact Victoria Police for assistance,
- contact a registered Veterinary Practitioner for assistance
- contact Victoria Police or the road manager (the Shire or VicRoads) if it is a road hazard, or
- euthanasia by blunt force trauma. This should be done away from the view of the public if possible. This must be done by a heavy blow to the base of the skull with sufficient force to destroy the brain. Please note that large kangaroos can be very difficult to euthanise using this technique.

### Confirmation of euthanasia

Examine all euthanised wildlife carefully to confirm that it has died before disposing of the carcass. To check that death has occurred, ensure you check all the following (in sequential order):

- the heart has stopped beating - check for at least 20 seconds, don't use your thumb as you may detect your own pulse. The best place to feel varies among species, seek veterinary advice if unsure,
- that the wildlife is not breathing - check for a minimum of 20 seconds,
- that the gum colour is grey/white - only applies to mammals,
- the corneal reflex - no blink in response to lightly touching the cornea (the middle of the eye),
- the pupil size - in dead animals both pupils are very large and unresponsive to light, and
- pinch reflex - firmly pinch skin between toes or nostrils, there should be no response if animal is dead.

Employ a second euthanasia method if there is any doubt about confirmation of death.

Reptiles, turtles, and amphibians are remarkably resilient and can remain inert for hours, especially when in distress. To ensure euthanasia, place the animal in a secure place after euthanasia and check for movement periodically over the course of 24 hours (if necessary draw a chalk outline around the body).

### **Disposal of carcasses**

#### ***Condition 12***

You must dispose of the carcasses of wildlife euthanised by barbiturates, bat carcasses and the carcasses of wildlife infected by mange by incineration or burial to a depth of 60cm to prevent scavenging by other animals. Carcasses must not be buried within 100 metres of a waterway to avoid contamination.

#### **Objective**

To prevent secondary poisoning and spread of disease to other animals and people.

#### **How to comply**

Carcasses of wildlife euthanised by barbiturates should be disposed of via burial or incineration to prevent secondary poisoning by scavengers (e.g. dogs, ravens, hawks).

Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABLV) may be present in bats. Euthanised bats (including any secretions and excretions) should be disposed of via incineration or, if this is not possible, by burial. Handle all animals with care and wear personal protective equipment to avoid potential ABLV exposure.

The carcasses of wildlife infected with sarcoptic mange (e.g. koalas or wombats) must be disposed of by burial or incineration to ensure other animals do not become infected by mange.

Please note that some wildlife shelters are authorised to variation of condition 12 in lieu of licensed arrangements for third party disposal.

### **Threatened species**

**Condition 13**

You must notify your local DELWP Authorised Officer if you acquire or receive wildlife that is listed as threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, within 48 hours of acquiring or receiving a threatened wildlife species.

**Objective**

The fate of individual animals can have serious impacts on the conservation of threatened species. Any threatened species entering rehabilitation can provide useful information to DELWP about population dynamics and threats to the species. If the wildlife is unable to be rehabilitated, DELWP Authorised Officers may arrange for it to be placed into a captive-breeding program or a zoological institution.

**How to comply**

A list of threatened species under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* is available on the DELWP website at <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/conserving-threatened-species/flora-and-fauna-guarantee-act-1988>.

You must notify your local DELWP Authorised Officer immediately if you receive or acquire a threatened species. Please contact your local DELWP Authorised Officer if you are unsure of an animal's conservation status – please see contact list I n Appendix 1.

**Enclosure size standards****Condition 14**

You must keep wildlife in enclosures that meet the following sizes:

**Birds**

In the design of any bird enclosure, the ratio between the lengths of the two longest straight lines which can be described on the floor of the cage and at right angles to each other shall not exceed 4:1 unless the shorter of those two lines is at least 900 mm long. The length of this line should be at least twice the span of the wings of the largest bird to be kept in the cage.

Bird enclosures with floor area exceeding 20 000 cm<sup>2</sup> must be of a minimum height of at least 150 cm and allow access for physical entry. The minimum length and width of any enclosure should be at least twice the length of the largest bird in the cage.

Provide wooden perches of a diameter and length to allow every bird in the enclosure to perch comfortably. Perches should not unduly impede flight or be placed above other perches or food and drink containers.

**Table 1: Birds – Indoor aviaries/cages**

Size of bird (approximate length)	Minimum floor area per bird	Minimum height	Increased floor area per additional bird
<b>100mm (10cm)</b> Zebra Finches	1000 cm <sup>2</sup>	34 cm	500 cm <sup>2</sup>
<b>200mm (20cm)</b> Neophema, Budgerigars, Lorikeets (except Rainbow and Red Collared)	1,600 cm <sup>2</sup>	34 cm	800 cm <sup>2</sup>
<b>300mm (30cm)</b> Rosellas, Cockatiels, Rainbow Lorikeets and Bronzewing Pigeons	5,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	90 cm	2,500 cm <sup>2</sup>

**Table 2: Birds – Outdoor enclosures**

Size of bird (approximate length)	Minimum floor area per bird	Minimum height	Increased floor area per additional bird
<b>100mm (10cm)</b> Zebra Finches	3,700 cm <sup>2</sup>	60 cm	1,800 cm <sup>2</sup>
<b>200mm (20cm)</b> Neophemas, Budgerigars, Lorikeets (except Rainbow and Red Collared)	7,200 cm <sup>2</sup>	60 cm	3,600 cm <sup>2</sup>

<b>300mm (30cm)</b> Rosellas, Cockatiels, Rainbow Lorikeets and Bronzewing Pigeons	10,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	90 cm	5,000 cm <sup>2</sup>
<b>400mm (40cm)</b> King Parrots, Princess Parrots and Superb Parrots, Galahs and Long billed Corellas	15,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	90 cm	7,500 cm <sup>2</sup>
<b>500mm (50cm)</b> Sulphur Crested Cockatoos	25,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	150 cm	12,500 cm <sup>2</sup>

Outdoor enclosures should be constructed in a way that every bird is able at all times to perch or roost in a place that is sheltered from the wind, rain and sun; whether by solid construction or cladding on the roof and walls, or by roosts covered by dense vegetation within the enclosure. If by solid construction or cladding of roof and walls, at least one-third of the total area should be covered; including a continuous area of three walls to form a shelter against winds. At least three-quarters of the area of one wall should be open weave mesh. The minimum height to the top of the enclosure should not be <1.5m above ground level to allow birds to escape harassment by predators.

Table 3: Wading Birds

Size of bird	Minimum floor area	Increased floor area for each additional bird	Minimum height	Minimum surface area of water
<b>Large Birds</b> Swans, Pelicans, Brolgas, Albatross	50,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	25,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	150 cm	2,000 cm <sup>2</sup>
<b>Small Birds</b> Wild Ducks, Cormorants, Water Hens and Herons	25,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	12,500 cm <sup>2</sup>	150 cm	1,000 cm <sup>2</sup>

Wading Birds require shallow areas providing soft substrate and natural feeding opportunities. Failure to provide these conditions may lead to chronic foot problems.

Table 4: Reptiles

Type of wildlife	Minimum floor area	Maximum number of animals	Minimum height	Increased floor area for each additional animal
<b>Tortoises</b>				
<10cm length	1,600 cm <sup>2</sup>	1	20 cm	400 cm <sup>2</sup>
>10 cm length	20,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	1	20 cm	10,000 cm <sup>2</sup>
<b>Snakes</b>				
Small terrestrial of <60 cm in length e.g. adult Little Whip or juvenile Pythons	1,800 cm <sup>2</sup>	2	30 cm	900 cm <sup>2</sup>
Less than 1.2 metres in length e.g. Children's Python, Tiger Snake and Copperhead	4,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	2	50 cm	2,000 cm <sup>2</sup>
Less than 2.5 metres in length e.g. Eastern Brown, and Taipan King Brown	15,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	1	120 cm	7,500 cm <sup>2</sup>
Tree snakes up to 1.2 metres in length	4,800 cm <sup>2</sup>	2	80 cm	2,400 cm <sup>2</sup>
Large Pythons up to 2.5 metres in length e.g. Diamond Python, Carpet Python, Water Python and Amenthystines	20,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	1	150 cm	10,000 cm <sup>2</sup>
<b>Lizards</b>				
Skinks, Dragons and Water Dragons	10,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	1	100 cm	5,000 cm <sup>2</sup>

Goannas	45,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	1	200 cm	20,000 cm <sup>2</sup>
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Heating in reptile enclosures is essential – the temperatures needed will depend on the species of reptile and its natural environment. Snakes longer than 2.5 metres require a minimum area of half their length squared.

Table 5: Mammals

Type of wildlife	Minimum floor area	Maximum number of animals	Minimum height	Increased floor area for each additional animal
Hopping Mice	1,400 cm <sup>2</sup>	1	25 cm	700 cm <sup>2</sup>
Dunnarts	2,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	1	25 cm	1,000 cm <sup>2</sup>
Kowaris, Antechinuses, Mountain Pygmy Possums	3,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	1	30 cm	1,500 cm <sup>2</sup>
Small Quolls	10,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	1	50 cm	5,000 cm <sup>2</sup>
Feathertail Gliders	2,500 cm <sup>2</sup>	6	100 cm	1,000 cm <sup>2</sup>
Tuans, Leadbeater Possums, Sugar and Squirrel Gliders and Ringtail Possums	2,500 cm <sup>2</sup>	2	100 cm	1,000 cm <sup>2</sup>
Brush-tail Possums	10,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	1	200 cm	5,000 cm <sup>2</sup>
Potoroos and Bettongs	20,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	2	200 cm	10,000 cm <sup>2</sup>
Tiger Quolls, Yellow Bellied and Greater Gliders, juvenile Kangaroos and Wallabies less than 5 kg, Echidnas and Koalas	20,000 cm <sup>2</sup>	1	200 cm	10,000 cm <sup>2</sup>
Wallabies greater than 5kg, Kangaroos less than 20kg and Wombats	50 m <sup>2</sup>	1	200 cm	25 m <sup>2</sup>
Kangaroos greater than 20kg	100 m <sup>2</sup>	1	200 cm	50 m <sup>2</sup>

Table 6: Nest boxes

Type of wildlife	Maximum number of animals	Minimum length	Minimum width	Minimum height	Opening diameter
Dunnart, Pygmy Possum, Feathertail Glider and Antechinuses	6	14 cm	12 cm	10 cm	32 mm
Kowari	1	25 cm	17 cm	11 cm	50 mm
Hopping Mice	6	25 cm	17 cm	11 cm	50 mm
Mountain Pygmy Possum	2 adults or mother and young	25 cm	17 cm	11 cm	50 mm
Tuan, Sugar Glider, Squirrel Glider and Leadbeater Possum	1 adult or breeding pair or family group	25 cm	17 cm	11 cm	50 mm
Ringtail Possum and Yellow Bellied Glider	1	20 cm	25 cm	43 cm	65 mm
Brush-tail Possum, Great Glider and Quolls	1	25 cm	30 cm	55 cm	85 mm
Wombat	1	55 cm	120 cm	50 cm	-

Leadbeater's Possums, Sugar Gliders and Squirrel Gliders prefer nesting in family groups. A choice of two boxes is recommended to accommodate individuals ejected after social disputes.

### Objective

To ensure that wildlife undergoing rehabilitation are contained in appropriately sized enclosures that minimise stress and allow free movement and natural behaviours.



### **How to comply**

The specifications give the minimum enclosure sizes for wildlife held under the Authorisation. Enclosures must meet or exceed the specifications. Further information about how to calculate the floor area and identify the height, width, length, radius and diameter of some common shapes as well as some worked examples are provided in **Appendix 2**.

### **Enclosure location and construction standards**

#### **Condition 15**

You must keep wildlife in enclosures that separate wildlife from domestic animals so that wildlife in your care do not see, hear or smell domestic animals.

#### **Condition 16**

You must keep wildlife in enclosures that separate wildlife from human living spaces (i.e. in a room dedicated to wildlife rehabilitation) and ensure wildlife are only handled justifiably by those involved in its care.

#### **Condition 17**

You must keep wildlife in enclosures that:

- prevent escape, and
- minimise disturbance to the enclosed wildlife, and
- allow for its movement, and
- allow for its physical characteristics and natural behaviours, and
- provide sufficient space for each individual animal, and
- is secure and comfortable, and
- provide protection from the weather with shelter, and
- protect it from harm, and
- minimise unnatural sights and sounds, and
- provide it with either natural daylight or full spectrum light that mimics natural light/dark cycles, and
- separates it from wildlife that may be incompatible and
- are not exposed to strong vibrations, noxious smells (e.g. wood smoke) or loud noises (e.g. radios and televisions).

### **Objective**

Enclosures that protect wildlife from disturbance and allow natural behaviours during rehabilitation are essential for animals to learn/relearn the behaviours necessary for them to survive in the wild post-release. Security and comfort decreases stress and hastens recovery.

Protection from harmful external factors is essential to maintain welfare and to prevent a health decline. Separation from the sight, sound and smell of domestic animals is essential, as it prevents transmission of disease and infections, prevents stress, and ensures that the wildlife's natural instinct to recognise and avoid predators (e.g. dogs and cats) is maintained.

### **How to comply**

Enclosures should provide opportunities for complete recovery from injuries and for learning and practicing behaviours such as foraging, hunting, climbing or flying.

Wildlife must not be kept in human living spaces such as the kitchen, lounge room or bedroom, and should only be handled when necessary to avoid trauma, stress, or the wildlife becoming humanised. Relatives, friends and visitors must not handle wildlife unless volunteering at the shelter and the handling is necessary for the care of the animal. Taming reduces the survival chances of rehabilitated wildlife on release. Wildlife is often not suitable for release if it doesn't display instinctual fear and avoidance towards humans and domestic pets.

Enclosures should not be on public display, and kept away from people and domestic animals, sheltered from the weather. Noise should be minimised and enclosures must be kept clean, hygienic and clear of obstacles or

hazards. Wildlife that form social groups in the wild should be housed with wildlife of an appropriate age and gender of the same species. Wildlife should be individually identifiable when housed together.

Avoid mixed-species housing whenever possible and, when mixed-species housing is necessary (such as in pre-release bird aviaries), ensure only compatible species are housed together. New additions to a wildlife group should be monitored closely for the first few days to ensure the safety of these animals and other individuals.

Enclosure design and furnishings should encourage the species' natural pattern of foraging, play, rest or sleep, hiding, and social responses of other individuals of the same species.

Enclosures should:

- be free from dangerous obstructions such as sharp points or edges,
- provide fresh air in a manner that avoids drafts, odours and water condensation,
- not be stacked in such a way that good ventilation is impaired, and
- be well drained.

Indoor enclosures should be in rooms able to provide both heating and cooling; they should be kept well separate from normal household activity to ensure wildlife in care are not disturbed.

Outdoor enclosures need to provide for acclimatisation to weather, but also provide shelter from sun, wind and rain and protection from predators.

Solid physical barriers are the best way to keep animals (i.e. domestic and incompatible wildlife) separate.

Wire cages used to house birds should be covered internally with shade cloth or other appropriate material to prevent feather damage.

## Enclosure care

### **Condition 18**

You must maintain enclosures and equipment in a safe and clean condition that:

- are hygienic and prevent pest infestation, odours and disease hazards,
- are disinfected after previous use,
- are structurally sound and free from materials that could injure or be detrimental to the wildlife, and
- have excreta, uneaten food and soiled materials removed daily and disposed of in accordance with local laws.

### **Objective**

Wildlife entering rehabilitation are often stressed, injured or sick, and are therefore more susceptible to disease. Care facilities, enclosure and equipment must be kept in a sanitary condition to attempt to eliminate the chance for transmission of disease and parasites between wildlife.

### **How to comply**

Ensure that all aspects of enclosures and housing, including nest boxes, bedding, substrate, perching, food and water bowls, are kept in a clean and hygienic condition.

Enclosures should be constructed to allow for easy cleaning and minimal handling of the wildlife. Ensure that the enclosures are structurally sound and constructed of materials that will not injure or be detrimental to the wildlife and are nonporous and waterproof to facilitate cleaning and disinfection. Disinfection can only be ensured when organic material has been completely cleaned off equipment and surfaces first.

Excreta, uneaten food and soiled materials should be removed at least daily, and should be disposed of in accordance with local laws and in a way that limits any access by other animals, in order to minimise pest infestation, odours and disease hazards.

## Food and water

**Condition 19**

You must provide wildlife in your care with food and water:

- that meets the animal's dietary and nutritional requirements;
- in a manner suitable for the rehabilitation of the species; and
- that is fresh and clean and stored in a manner that prevents spoilage or contamination.

**Objective**

To ensure wildlife in care obtain a diet of sufficient nutrition, and that allows them to recover, aiding their rehabilitation and eventual release back to the wild.

**How to comply**

Ensure that you know the dietary and nutritional requirements of the species that come into your care. Diet refers to the type and amount of food the wildlife generally eat; nutrition refers to the nutrients and other substances required by the wildlife. These may alter depending on the age of the wildlife, its injuries and its treatment.

If you are unsure of the requirements of wildlife that comes into your care, seek advice from a registered veterinary practitioner or a Wildlife Shelter Authorisation holder experienced in the species (e.g. Healesville Sanctuary Wildlife Hospital), or contact your local DELWP Authorised Officer.

Provide food and water at a frequency, quality and level appropriate to the species. To prevent transmission of disease, food and water should not be accessible to other animals.

**Display of wildlife****Condition 20**

You must not display wildlife for photography, filming, to the general public or the media without the prior written approval from a DELWP Authorised Officer.

**Objective**

The primary goal of rehabilitation is to restore sick, injured or orphaned wildlife to full health and return them as quickly as possible to the wild for a successful release and life following rehabilitation.

This condition is in place to prevent wildlife from becoming too familiar with humans. Several studies have shown that human familiarity and habituation can impact the ability of wildlife to survive in the wild post release. Stress caused by prolonged exposure to humans can also significantly impact on wildlife health and the ability to recover during rehabilitation.

**How to comply**

Ensure that only those authorised to care for wildlife and directly involved in caring for wildlife held under your authorisation have access to areas in which the wildlife is being held and the wildlife themselves. If you wish to display your wildlife (e.g. for photography or education about handling or care techniques), contact a DELWP Authorised Officer to discuss your proposal.

Wildlife should not be handled or cared for by people not authorised to do so.

DELWP strongly discourages any activity that causes unnecessary stress to animals being rehabilitated, including photography. DELWP acknowledges that photography and social media can be useful tools to educate the public and promote the valuable work you do in caring for native wildlife. Should you wish to take photographs of animals in your care, the following must be adhered to:

- photographs should only be taken by authorised shelter operators and foster carers,
- the number of photographs taken of wildlife in care must be kept to an absolute minimum,
- the time taken to photograph animals in any one session must be less than 5 minutes,
- the use of camera flashes and additional artificial lighting must be avoided,
- photographs must not be staged in any way, and

- under no circumstances should animals be dressed in costumes, and
- interactions with domestic animals such as cats and dogs must be avoided at all times

It is important that the animals are monitored for signs of stress during photographic sessions. Photography should cease immediately if an animal shows signs of stress.

If you are concerned that someone is taking inappropriate photographs of wildlife that you believe would have caused distress to the animals, please contact your local DELWP office (**Appendix 1**) or call the DELWP Customer Contact Centre on 136 186.

Examples of appropriate photographs include:

- Photographs of animals in a secure environment – for example their enclosure, nest box, pouch or cage
- Photographs of animals in the wild following release

## Release of wildlife

### **Condition 21**

You must release wildlife within 24 hours of it being ready for release and where it was found if it is a suitable location. A suitable location for release is one that;

- provides appropriate habitat and adequate food resources
- is occupied by members of the same species for social species to enable interaction
- has low risk of injury to the animal.

You must release wildlife in the closest suitable location if the location where it was found is not suitable, but within the home range and without releasing it across a boundary that it would not normally pass or further than it would move ordinarily.

### **Condition 22**

You must euthanise wildlife that cannot be released.

### **Objective**

To ensure that released wildlife are given the best possible chance for survival, protect animal welfare, and limit possible detrimental effects from the released wildlife on the ecology of the release site.

### **How to comply**

The further away from the point of capture that rehabilitated wildlife is released, the less likely it is that it will survive. This can be due to a range of factors including lack of appropriate habitat, increased numbers of predators, differing social structures (e.g. 'dominant' wildlife already present in the release area harassing the released wildlife) or lack of an existing population (i.e. for social species).

The release of wildlife outside their known individual range is not allowed due to animal welfare concerns and the significant risks such releases pose to resident populations through genetic contamination, disease and parasite spread, and negative impacts on their social structure.

To prevent disease transmission and to protect animal welfare, wildlife must be released within the individual animal's home range of the original capture site. If the site is unknown/unsuitable, then the animal must be euthanised.

The home range (also known as 'territory') of an animal refers to the area in which an animal lives and travels. The size of an animal's home range varies between species. For more information on home ranges for specific species, rehabilitators can refer to information available in reference books or through internet sources.

To assist in determining fitness for release, wildlife is ready for release when it:

- exhibits full recovery from the original injury or illness
- has no permanent physical impairment that may affect its chances of survival in the wild
- is able to tolerate outside conditions and its natural food sources
- no longer requires medical care

- exhibits no signs of active disease
- has fur, plumage or waterproofing (where applicable) that is adequate for that species to survive
- has adequate vision to find and catch food and manoeuvre in a normal manner
- exhibits locomotive skills necessary for that species to survive
- exhibits normal behaviour responses (i.e. an instinctual fear of humans and predators, able to forage and process food, find or construct shelter, mark its territory and move across the landscape with confidence)
- is of correct age for independent survival
- is of correct weight for that sex, species, age and season
- has been checked by a veterinarian/person experienced in the species for any diseases that may be transmitted to native populations and been cleared.

Ensure the release site has suitable habitat, water and food, and is free from any dangers (e.g. busy roads). Do not release wildlife during extremes of weather or outside the usual active times for the species (e.g. nocturnal wildlife during the day). Some animals are best released into an existing social structure (e.g. flocking birds such as corellas). Wildlife that require hollows should be released with a temporary nest box to reduce the chance of predation.

## Wildlife records

### **Condition 23**

You must record accurate and up-to-date information in relation to all wildlife that you receive, acquire, possess, destroy (euthanise), and dispose of. These records must:

- be recorded on DELWP Wildlife Record Sheets or in a manner approved in writing by DELWP, and
- record the species, when it was found, where it was found, a summary of its injuries/condition, the cause of its injury/condition (if known), its fate (if known) and the location and date of release (if applicable), and
- record details of veterinary assessment and advice, and
- be kept for a three-year period, and
- be available for inspection by a DELWP Authorised Officer without delay.

### **Objective**

To ensure that adequate records are kept documenting wildlife that have entered care, their original rescue location, the reason for their admission and the fate of the wildlife. This information is vital to keep accurate case histories, track emerging trends or threats to wildlife populations and provides useful data for rehabilitators, DELWP, veterinarians and research organisations.

### **How to comply**

Keep up-to-date records of the wildlife held under your authorisation and maintain them in a form that can easily be examined and understood. The best way to do this is to record the details of the wildlife the same day it is admitted into your care. If the wildlife is brought to you by another authorisation holder or member of the public, ask them for all the relevant details.

Copies should be made in case the original records are lost. Additional information useful to keep includes treatment details (e.g. medication requirements), feeding and toileting details, and any other relevant information.

### **Please note:**

**You are no longer required to submit your records to DELWP each year. However, you are still required to keep these records and make them available to an Authorised Officer upon request.**

## Other wildlife licenses

### **Condition 24**

Wildlife that you receive, acquire, or possess under this authorisation must be physically separated from any wildlife held under a private or commercial wildlife licence.

**Objective**

This condition is in place to help prevent disturbance to wildlife from captive wildlife; disease transmission from wildlife to captive wildlife and vice-versa; and wildlife undergoing rehabilitation learning imprinted behaviours from captive wildlife.

**How to comply**

If you hold a separate wildlife licence, ensure that all wildlife kept under that license is kept completely and physically separate, preferably in a different building. See condition 20 for restrictions on the display of wildlife.

**Supervising Shelters (Foster Carer Authorisation additional condition)****Condition 25**

Foster carers must notify the shelter operators they are registered under within 24 hours after receiving or acquiring wildlife.

**Objective**

It is important for shelters to keep track of the wildlife held by their foster carers to provide guidance and support, and to keep accurate records.

**How to comply**

Notify your supervising shelter of any wildlife that is brought into care and the details of the care required. If you are unsure of the care requirements of the species, you must seek advice and assistance from your supervising shelter to ensure that the animal is cared for appropriately.

## Appendix 1 - Important contact details for wildlife rehabilitators

**Table 1:** Contact details for DELWP offices

<b>DELWP Customer Contact Centre:</b> 136 186	
<b>Alexandra (Hume Region)</b> 5 Binns McCrae Road, Alexandra VIC 3714 (03) 5772 0200	<b>Bairnsdale (Gippsland Region)</b> 574 Main Street, Bairnsdale VIC 3875 (03) 5152 0400
<b>Ballarat (Grampians Region)</b> 402-406 Mair Street, Ballarat VIC 3350 (03) 5336 6856	<b>Bendigo (Loddon Mallee Region)</b> Corner Midland Highway and Taylor Street, Epsom VIC 3551 (03) 5430 4444
<b>Geelong (Barwon South West Region)</b> 30 Little Malop Street, Geelong VIC 3220 (03) 5226 4667	<b>Horsham (Grampians Region)</b> 110 Natimuk Road, Horsham VIC 3400 (03) 5362 2111
<b>Melbourne (Port Phillip Region)</b> 609 Burwood Highway, Knoxfield VIC 3180 (03) 9210 9222	<b>Swan Hill (Loddon Mallee Region)</b> 324-330 Campbell Street, Swan Hill VIC 3586 (03) 5036 4800
<b>Traralgon (Gippsland Region)</b> 71 Hotham Street, Traralgon VIC 3844 (03) 5172 2111	<b>Wangaratta (Hume Region)</b> 62-68 Ovens Street, Wangaratta VIC 3677 (03) 5723 8600
<b>Warrnambool (Barwon South West Region)</b> PO Box 105, Warrnambool VIC 3280 (03) 5561 9946	

**Table 2:** Contact details of facilities mentioned in this guide

<b>Whale and Dolphin Emergency Hotline</b> 1300 136 017	<b>AGL Marine Response Unit</b> 1300 245 678 or 0447 158 676
<b>Healesville Sanctuary Wildlife Hospital</b> (03) 5957 2829	<b>Phillip Island Nature Parks</b> (03) 5951 2800
<b>Emergency Animal Disease Hotline</b> 1800 675 888 (24 hours)	

## Appendix 2 - Further information

### Capture and rescue of injured, sick or orphaned wildlife

Rescuers have a responsibility to ensure handling and capture methods are humane and do not put themselves or others at risk. Capture is stressful for wildlife, and so must be carefully planned and undertaken quickly to avoid further stress or injury.

It is important to always put the safety of rescuers and members of the public first. Always assess possible hazards with each rescue (e.g. dangerous terrain, near a busy road, risk of injury from the animal such as bites or scratches) and put in place measures to minimise these risks (e.g. appropriate protective equipment).

**Carefully plan the method of capture** - time spent observing the animal, the escape route it wants to follow, and coordinating your movements is invaluable. Always assess the animal from a distance first, observing using binoculars if possible. This improves your own safety and minimises the possibility of an animal trying to flee and hurt itself further, or escaping. It will also help you confirm whether the animal requires rescuing (i.e. some minor injuries do not need treatment and will heal on their own).

**Minimise the time taken to capture the animal** - ideally less than three minutes, to avoid muscle damage.

The following should be considered:

- When the weather is warm, capture should be attempted early morning or late afternoon and should not be conducted during the heat of the day.
- Animals must never be chased over long distances or for long periods of time. For some animals, this can prove fatal.
- If you cannot capture the animal after the first couple of attempts, withdraw and consider using another method of capture.
- Wildlife should be handled calmly, without sudden movements and using the least number of people possible.
- Be firm but gentle when handling the animal and **handle it as little as possible**. Remember, it is a wild animal and is not used to humans.
- When restraining an animal by hand, use gloves that protect your hands but don't limit your dexterity.
- Always ensure that the animal can breathe and regulate its own temperature when restraining or transporting wildlife.
- Darkened cages and/or blindfolds (i.e. a blanket placed on the animal's head) should be used whenever possible to reduce stress and subdue animals.
- Excessive noise from loud equipment, vehicles or talking should be minimised during rescue and transport.

**Please note:** Some veterinary drugs, including drugs for sedation, are restricted under the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations 2017. Restricted drugs must only be administered to wildlife by, or under the direct supervision of, a registered veterinary practitioner. Direct supervision means that the veterinary practitioner has seen and assessed the animal and prescribed the medication based on the species, weight and type of illness or injury. Administering restricted veterinary drugs to wildlife without veterinary diagnosis and prescription is illegal.

**Check for young** – always check female animals to see if they are lactating or carrying pouch young. If they have a long teat, check the nearby area for young at foot. Taking a mother into care could result in the death of her young who will be left behind to fend for itself.

**Record the location** – it is important to ensure you record the exact location of where the animals was found and make sure this information remains with the animal until it is ready for release. This will enable the animal to be returned to where it was found and provide it with the greatest chance of survival.



## Basic first aid

The aim of first aid is to provide basic and immediate assistance to an injured animal, prior to it receiving veterinary attention. The goal is to address shock and prevent further damage occurring due to broken bones or bleeding wounds. First aid should be administered as soon as possible after capture.

First aid should be provided in the following order:

1. Perform an initial brief examination
2. Obtain and record the weight of the animal
3. Assess the degree of dehydration
4. Provide a warm and dark quiet place to treat shock
5. Provide fluids
6. Apply bandaging

After giving first aid, rescuers should arrange for animals to be assessed by a registered veterinarian or person experienced in diagnosing illness, diseases and injuries in the species as soon as possible to ensure accurate diagnosis and prompt treatment. If this is not possible (e.g. because of the remoteness of the location), expert advice must be sought via telephone or email.

### Initial examination

The first step is to examine the animal quickly (but gently) to determine whether its injuries or illness warrant euthanasia, or otherwise determine what treatment may be required, or where a more detailed veterinary assessment is needed (e.g. to check for fractures).

If possible, stand back and quietly observe the animal for a minute. This is a good, low stress way of checking for injuries.

If the animal is experiencing significant pain, distress, trauma or disease that cannot be relieved or if there are severe injuries such as exposed bones or intestines, the animal must be promptly euthanised in accordance with conditions 10 and 11 of your authorisation.

If the animal would not survive without extensive treatment or surgery, and/or is unlikely to recover sufficiently to be self-sufficient in the wild at the location where it was found, it must also be promptly euthanised.

### Obtain and record the weight of the animal

The weight of the animal should be obtained to determine:

- if the animal is the correct weight for its age and species
- what amount of fluids are needed to correct dehydration (see below)
- what amount of medication may be required
- what amount of food is required each day

### Assess the degree of dehydration

At the time of initial examination, it is important to know the severity of dehydration to identify those animals that may not survive and to provide the correct amount of fluid. Dehydration can be assessed by the degree of skin "tenting". This is assessed by gently pinching a small amount of the animal's skin and estimating how long the skin takes to return to its normal position. The longer this takes, the more dehydrated the animal is.

**Table 1: Determine the severity of dehydration**

Dehydration percentage	Appearance	Treatment	Prognosis for survival
5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Animal lively and active.</li><li>▪ Gums are tacky.</li></ul>	Oral electrolyte solutions.	Good

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Skin tenting takes less than one second to fall.</li> </ul>		
10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lethargic, tacky gums.</li> <li>▪ Skin tenting takes more than one to two seconds to fall.</li> </ul>	May require subcutaneous fluids as well as oral electrolytes.	Moderate
12%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lethargic, loss of consciousness, low body temperature, slow heart rate.</li> <li>▪ Skin tenting takes more than two seconds to fall.</li> </ul>	Requires intravenous fluids administered by a veterinarian.	Poor

Various animal species have different places to look for evidence of dehydration. Table 2 below outlines locations where skin tenting can be carried out to assess dehydration.

**Table 2: Locations where skin tenting can be carried out**

Animal group	Site to pinch skin to assess dehydration
Birds	Foot and over keel bone
Possum, macropod, flying fox	Over shoulder blades
Wombat, Echidna	Over abdomen
Koala	Over head
Snakes, Water dragons	Along body wall
Turtles	On neck

Your initial assessment should help you to decide whether the animal requires veterinary attention or if you have the skills and ability to support it. If veterinary assistance is required, try to get it to a veterinarian within 24 hours of rescue to provide the best chance of survival.

### **Provide a warm, dark and quiet place to treat shock**

Animals can enter a state of shock following injury or disease. These animals will have cool ears and feet and will not defecate or urinate as the body tries to conserve water.

Animals in shock must be provided with a quiet and dark location following the initial examination, weighing and dehydration assessment. An easy way to provide this is to cover enclosures with a towel. For marsupials, placing them into a pouch will provide a dark location.

You should also make sure the room or enclosure is warmed to a temperature appropriate for the species, although it is preferable to have a heating gradient across the enclosure to allow the animal to move away from the heat if they wish.

While an animal is in a heated enclosure, the temperature of the enclosure should be monitored with a thermometer. The behaviour of the animal should also be monitored to ensure it is comfortable. This is particularly important for animals that are unable to move to ensure the animal does not become too hot or too cold.

### **Provide fluids**

Dehydration will occur with orphaning, injury or shock. For normal digestion and healing to occur, dehydration must be corrected. All animals must be warmed before fluids are given. The fluid itself should also be warmed to the animal's normal body temperature before being given. Suitable temperatures of fluids are:

- Reptiles: 22 to 28°C
- Birds: 36 to 38°C

- Marsupials: 32 to 36°C

The standard approach is to assume that each animal that comes into care is 10% dehydrated. If it is less than 10% dehydrated and you give fluids, the animal will simply urinate more. If the animal is greater than 10% dehydrated you could prevent it from going into shock.

To calculate the amount of fluid to give an animal every 24 hours, use the following formula:

$$\text{Fluid volume to give (in ml)} = \text{body weight (in grams)} \times 0.1$$

For example, a 100 g Ringtail possum that has entered care due to orphaning will need to be hydrated. How much fluid should be given?

$$\text{Fluid volume to give (in ml)} = \text{body weight (in g)} \times 0.1$$

$$\text{Fluid volume (in ml)} = 100 \text{ g} \times 0.1$$

$$\text{Fluid volume} = 10 \text{ ml}$$

Therefore 10 ml is the total volume that the Ringtail possum needs in a 24-hour period. This should be broken up into smaller amounts that the possum can accept and be offered throughout the day. For example: this might be given as 2 to 3 ml every 6 hours over a 24-hour period.

Fluids can be given either:

1. **By mouth:** this route is used for conscious animals that can swallow and move. This is the ideal route and should be used wherever possible. Offer a small amount of water to the side of the mouth and wait for swallowing. Oral rehydration solutions that can be used include:
  - Cooled boiled water
  - Oral rehydration fluids: Vytrate®, Lectade® (Jurox), Gastrolyte®, Spark® (Vetafarm)
  - Home-made rehydration fluids: 1 teaspoon of salt and 1 teaspoon of sugar are dissolved in 1 metric cup of cooled boiled water
2. **Subcutaneous injection:** this route is used for depressed animals with poor swallowing reflexes. This route can be performed by wildlife carers after being taught this technique by a veterinarian and involves injection directly into tissue (not veins). Both Hartman's® (compound sodium lactate) and 0.9% saline are fluids that can be given subcutaneously.

### Apply bandaging

Bandaging injured wildlife is an important skill that needs to be carefully applied. It can make animals more comfortable but can also cause unnecessary pain and reduced animal welfare or complications to the animal's initial injuries if performed incorrectly.

It is important that carers feel confident that they can bandage an animal appropriately before attempting to do so. Bandages that are placed too tightly can block the blood supply to appendages. Bandages that are placed too loosely will fall off and thus not achieve their purpose.

**Table 3: Basic first aid kit for wildlife**

Item	Purpose
500 ml or 1 L saline solution or Hartman's fluid bags	Flush wounds of debris. Flush eyes. Applied as part of a wet-to-dry dressing.
Gauze squares	Used to clean wounds or applied on bleeding area as part of a pressure bandage.
Cotton tips, small and large	Used to clean small wounds.
Self-adhesive bandage (e.g. Vetrap®, Coplus®, Rip Rap®)	Used for pressure, immobilisation and dressing bandages in all animal groups.

Crepe bandages	Use limited to larger animals. Non-adhesive and so tape will be needed to hold in place.
Micropore® tape	Used to bandage bird legs, hold dressings in place.
Non-adhesive dressings (e.g. Melolin®)	Used to cover wounds and absorb discharge. Does not stick to wound.
1% Iodine or Chlorhexidine solution	Antiseptic solution used to flush wounds. Effective against bacteria, fungi and yeast on most animal species.
Surgical scissors	Cutting bandages, dressings or fishing line. May be used to trim fur or dead pieces of skin.
Tweezers	Handling sterile items, removing ticks/splinters/foreign objects.
20 ml syringes with 18G needle	Used to flush wounds of debris and bacteria.
Thermometer	Used to take the temperature of the animal.

### Further information

If you are unsure of the appropriate first aid treatment for an animal, further advice must be sought from a registered veterinary practitioner or a person experienced in the rehabilitation of the species.

DELWP also recommends that, where possible, wildlife rehabilitators should attend training courses to further develop their skills in wildlife rehabilitation, including first aid. Wildlife rehabilitators can apply for funding from DELWP to undertake training courses through the Wildlife Rehabilitator Grants Program.

More information on the grants program and eligibility criteria can be found on the DELWP website at <https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/grants/wildlife-rehabilitator-grants>.

### Enclosure size

To assist in meeting the requirements of condition 14, please refer to the following information as a basic guide when determining appropriate enclosure size.

To calculate the floor area of a;

- Rectangle or square: length x width = area

For example, you acquired or received a Rosella that was 30 cm long and you planned to keep it in an indoor enclosure which needs to have a minimum floor area of 5000 cm<sup>2</sup> with a minimum height of 90 cm.

**Question:** You have measured your rectangular/square enclosure and determined that it has a 100 cm length, 55 cm width and 100 cm height. Could you keep the Rosella in this enclosure?

$$\text{To determine the floor area} = 100 \times 55 = 5500 \text{ cm}^2$$

$$\text{Height} = 100 \text{ cm}$$

**Answer:** Yes, you can keep the Rosella in this indoor enclosure as 5500 cm<sup>2</sup> is greater than the minimum floor area requirement and 100 cm height is 10 cm greater than the height requirement.

- Triangle: (base x perpendicular height)/2 = area

For example, you acquired or received a Brushtail Possum which needs to be kept in an enclosure that has a minimum floor area of 10,000 cm<sup>2</sup> and a minimum height of 200cm.

**Question:** You have measured your triangular enclosure which has a 170 cm base length, 105 cm perpendicular height and 210 cm height. Could you keep the Brushtail Possum in this enclosure?

$$\text{To determine the floor area} = 170 \times 105 = 17,850$$

$$17,850 / 2 = 8925 \text{ cm}^2$$

$$\text{Height} = 210 \text{ cm}$$

**Answer:** No, unfortunately the floor area of your enclosure is too small to keep the Brushtail Possum in even though the height is greater than the minimum requirement.

- Circle: (radius<sup>2</sup>) x π = area      π = 3.142

For example, you acquired or received a Tortoise that was 15 cm long and needs to be kept in an enclosure that has a minimum floor area of 20,000 cm<sup>2</sup> and a minimum height of 20cm.

**Question:** Your circular enclosure has a diameter of 180 cm and a 23 cm height. Could you keep the Tortoise in this enclosure?

*To determine the radius from the diameter =  $180 / 2 = 90$*

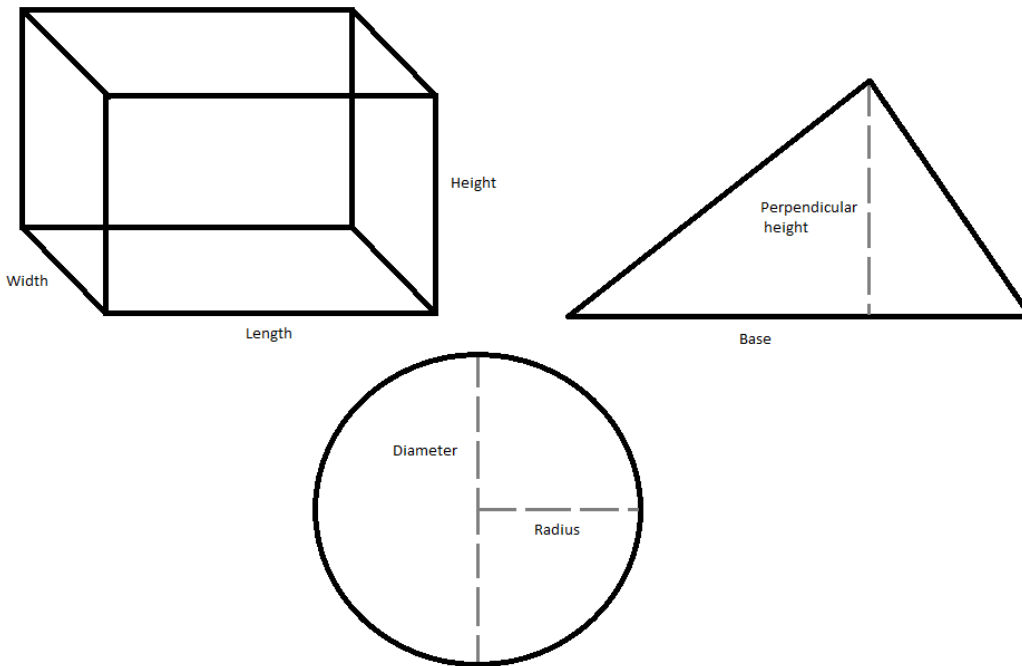
*To determine the floor area =  $90^2 = 90 \times 90 = 8100$*

*$8100 \times 3.142 = 25,450.2 \text{ cm}^2$*

*Height = 23 cm*

**Answer:** Yes, the Tortoise can be kept in this enclosure as the floor area is greater than 20,000 cm<sup>2</sup> and the height is 3 cm greater than the minimum height requirements. Keep in mind that as a Tortoise is a reptile, there may also be heating requirements for this animal's enclosure.

Information about how to identify the height, width, length, radius and diameter of some common shapes is provided below.



## Further resources

### Capture and first aid

Capture Myopathy – Dr Anne Fowler. Available (free) from <http://www.fourthcrossingwildlife.com/CaptureMyopathy-AnneFowler.pdf>

Recognition of Pain in Wildlife – Dr Anne Fowler. Available (free) from <http://www.fourthcrossingwildlife.com/RecognitionOfPainInWildlife-AnneFowler.pdf>

Treating Burnt Wildlife – Dr Anne Fowler. Available (free) from <http://www.fourthcrossingwildlife.com/TreatingBurntWildlife-Anne%20Fowler.pdf>

### Housing and husbandry

Australian Mammals: Biology and Captive Management – Stephen Jackson, CSIRO Publishing. Available from <http://www.publish.csiro.au/pid/3619.htm>

[www.wildlife.vic.gov.au](http://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au)