



Code of Conduct

Introduction:

All volunteers are required to become members of **Wildlife Rescue Queensland (WRQ)**. It is the requirement of the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP) that any member to be issued with a licence to care be a full financial member of WRQ.

As a volunteer at WRQ you are bound to comply at all times with the policies and procedures determined by WRQ management committee. Volunteers who consistently fail to comply with the requirements of this Code of Conduct, or demonstrate threatening behaviour, either in person or any other method of communication, shall have their membership suspended until the matter and action necessary has been considered by the WRQ management committee. WRQ management committee holds the power to refuse membership and revoke licences if it deems necessary at any time. In extreme circumstances where a committee meeting cannot be conducted the current (or authoritatively acting) President of WRQ holds the authority to refuse or revoke a licence to care. WRQ are governed by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP) and their **Code of Practice: Care of Sick, Injured or Orphaned Protected Animals in Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992**

A volunteer Code of Conduct protects WRQ by giving volunteers a clear idea of the kinds of attitudes, behaviour and actions that will bring the best possible outcomes for everyone involved. Having a Code of Conduct demonstrates that WRQ is serious about valuing the work our volunteers do, and that we respect our volunteers who want to bring a high standard of contribution into their role.

Wildlife rehabilitation is defined as caring for injured, sick or orphaned native animals and providing access to veterinary assessment and treatment where required, then nursing care and support with the goal of restoring them to their natural condition and habitat. For the purposes of the Code, wildlife is defined as any animal of a vertebrate species, other than humans or fish, which is indigenous to Australia or its territorial waters.

Principles:

Wildlife rehabilitation is generally viewed by the community as an ethical obligation to assist wild animals found in pain or distress; particularly if as a result of human interference (for example road trauma, pet predation, or oil spills). The work of WRQ volunteers contributes to conservation through research, community education and promotion of a respect for animals. The primary goal of WRQ rehabilitation is to facilitate animal welfare both during the rehabilitation process and upon release. Animals may be euthanased if they are considered unlikely to recover sufficiently to return to the wild, or if there is uncertainty regarding a release site (for example, if the factors that led to the original condition were to pose an unacceptable risk to the animal again upon its release). Animals should be returned

to suitable habitat in the general vicinity from which they were collected. Captivity can place significant stress on wildlife. Extended periods in captivity can result in loss of survival skills, and the risk that the animal's living space in the wild will be occupied by another member of the species. Wild animals are opportunistic and new individuals will rapidly attempt to fill available niches. WRQ aims to release adult animals from care as quickly as possible. A life in captivity is not a reasonable option for rehabilitated animals, other than in exceptional circumstances and reasons in the best interest of the animal. WRQ has the principle goal of rehabilitating all animals in care to return to the wild.

Case assessment:

Upon collection, animals must be assessed accurately and without delay by a person who is knowledgeable in the particular requirements of the species (a veterinarian if possible, or an experienced WRQ wildlife rehabilitator). At all stages of the rehabilitation process, animal welfare should be the primary objective. Where the animal is found to be suffering from significant pain, distress, trauma or disease that cannot be relieved, it must be promptly euthanased. If there is a reasonable expectation that the animal can be successfully rehabilitated and released to its own environment, the wildlife rehabilitator should ensure that he/she has the capacity to provide for the captive needs of the animal. For example, experience with the particular species, suitable housing, and access to species specific social groups where relevant.

Conditions which could preclude successful rehabilitation and release include:

- Loss of limbs or function of limbs, including tails
- Permanent vital sensory loss (hearing, sight, smell, feeding)
- Untreatable infectious disease
- Permanent damage to the nervous system
- Inability to adjust to temporary captivity
- Chronic ill health
- Imprinted behavior patterns.

The following considerations are important when assessing a release site:

The release site should be suitable habitat in the general vicinity from which the animal was originally collected. There should be an available home range for the animal upon release. The sooner an animal can be rehabilitated and released back to its own environment, the more likely its place within the home range will not have been reoccupied. If there are limited resources available at the release site (for example, due to large numbers of conspecifics or vegetation removal), the cost of release to the existing population must be justified in terms of competition for food and shelter. It is also important to consider whether the factors that lead to the original injury or condition no longer pose an unacceptable risk to the animal again upon release (for example, if there are unusually high numbers of introduced predators at the site). Continual reassessment during the process of rehabilitation is required, to ensure it remains in the best interests of the animal and that eventual release to the wild remains likely. Exceptional circumstances where a threatened species is involved should be discussed with an officer from EHP.

It is a condition of WRQ that all animals that come into care from whatever source are reported to the WRQ animal or species registrar. An accurate record of the animals pick up location and preliminary assessment report should also be completed for further record keeping. Capture myopathy is a risk to all animals however adult macropods are particularly susceptible. WRQ carries appropriate drugs to decrease the risk of capture myopathy however careful consideration should be taken into account before attempting to rescue any large macropod and assistance from senior WRQ carers may be required.

Animal Care:

It is the goal of WRQ is to provide the best possible care to all indigenous animals that come into the care of WRQ. WRQ is governed by the Department of environment and heritage protection (EHP) Code of Practice: Care of Sick, Injured or Orphaned Protected Animals in Queensland *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. Within the code are strict specifications that all WRQ volunteer carers are required to abide by, it is the responsibility of the WRQ carer to know the EHP code of practice and abide by the appropriate specifications and care requirements for the carers relevant animals. WRQ holds the power to revoke a licence should the EHP code of practice be broken in any way. Should WRQ find any member to be breaking the EHP code of practice the management committee is also obligated to report such misconduct to the EHP. WRQ will also support the EHP in any investigation regarding any of its members; furthermore WRQ will not tolerate any misconduct towards animals in any way from any of its members.

Members of WRQ recognise and accept that it is not appropriate to keep animals alive that:

- do not have the capacity to be restored and released to a good quality of life;
- are going to suffer unreasonably extended periods of unmanaged pain;
- have injuries that records of previous admissions indicate result in an unacceptably low probability of rehabilitation;
- carry an incurable disease that will eventually be debilitating or painful to the animal;
- carry an incurable disease that is transmissible to other animals, either in captivity or the wild.

Sick, orphaned and injured animals may be euthanased in the best interest of the animal or protection of other native fauna.

Media/Social Media:

The rescue and care of native fauna often attracts the interest and attention of many different media sources. That said WRQ has the responsibility to protect its integrity and public image as a community organisation. WRQ volunteers are not permitted to speak on WRQ's behalf unless authorised by a member of the management committee. WRQ carers and volunteers are also advised that they may be held responsible for any media misconduct should they choose to act on WRQ's behalf without expressed permission.

WRQ also has the responsibility to monitor any social media interaction that may be deemed "damaging" to the groups integrity. It is also the expectation of all WRQ members that they do not "involve" themselves in **any** way with slander, fighting and bullying on any social media outlet that in any way correlates with the care of native fauna. WRQ understands that there are sometimes conflicting views in how to care for specific animals; however WRQ acts to the best of its knowledge and research provided. The bullying of other carers, external groups and other organisations from any member of WRQ on social media cannot and will not be tolerated and all reports will be investigated by the WRQ management committee as a matter of concern. WRQ also manages a private Facebook page separate to the public Facebook page solely for carers. This page is intended as a forum between carers to communicate issues, troubleshoot any animal problems and for general correspondence between carers only. It is the expectation from the WRQ management committee that correspondence on this page remains private and for its intended parties only. The duplication or sharing of any information from the private Facebook page could result in disciplinary action from the management committee and may result in the termination of membership.

Conclusion:

WRQ relies on the ongoing support of its valued volunteers without whom the group cannot function. This code of practice is designed to protect the group's integrity, public image and name. WRQ wants to nurture an environment of trust and honesty with its members and volunteers. WRQ would like to remain respected and valued within the community and amongst its colleagues. WRQ is devoted to providing the best possible rescue and care to all wildlife.