

Rehabilitating sick, injured and orphaned protected animals – Conditions and restrictions – Taking and keeping protected animals for rehabilitation and release

Background

This guideline contains information that is relevant only to a person who takes and keeps a protected animal from the wild for the purpose of rehabilitation and release of the animal, including people who hold rehabilitation permits and wildlife exhibitor licences under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

This guideline does not deal with the keeping or use of protected animals as pets, the pet industry or in scientific research.

Wildlife may be taken for rehabilitation

The *Nature Conservation Regulation 1994* allows a person to take and keep a sick, injured or orphaned protected native animal in emergency circumstances by unlicensed persons and by people who hold particular licences and permits, especially a rehabilitation permit.

Unlicensed person

A person who does not hold a licence may take and keep a sick, injured or orphaned protected native animal.

If the animal is a marine mammal or marine turtle, you must make all reasonable attempts to immediately do the following (for another protected animal, you must comply within 72 hours of acquiring the animal):

- give the animal to another person who holds a rehabilitation permit for the animal¹; or
- notify a conservation officer who is an officer of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service that you have taken possession of the animal.

If you notify a conservation officer that you have taken possession of the animal, and the officer gives you a direction concerning the animal, you must comply with the direction².

A person who does not hold a rehabilitation permit may move an animal from the place where it was taken to the premises of another person who holds a rehabilitation permit within Queensland for the animal, or to any other place if a conservation officer directs the person to move the animal to that place.

¹ Note: A reference to a rehabilitation permit also includes a wildlife exhibitor licence.

² For example, an officer may direct you to release the animal to an appropriate natural habitat or give the animal to the officer or another person, or make application for a rehabilitation permit if satisfied that you have the appropriate knowledge and ability to rehabilitate and release the animal to the wild.

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Licensed person

A person who holds a rehabilitation permit may take and keep a sick, injured or orphaned protected native animal identified on the permit from the wild for the purpose of rehabilitating and releasing the animal back into an appropriate natural habitat once the animal is again able to live in the habitat.

If you receive an animal and the species is not identified on your rehabilitation permit, you are considered to not hold a permit for the animal and you will have to deal with the animal as if you were an unlicensed person.

The holder of a rehabilitation permit is not entitled to enter land for the purpose of rescuing wildlife without the landholder's consent.

Keeping sick, injured or orphaned protected animals

A person who keeps a sick, injured or orphaned protected native animal under a rehabilitation permit must keep the animal in a way that is conducive to rehabilitating the animal for release to an appropriate natural habitat once the animal is again able to live in the habitat.

The document "Code of practice for the care of orphaned, sick or injured protected animals by wildlife care volunteers" provides information for people who care for orphaned, sick or injured protected native animals.

Of particular importance are the following.

- Carers should undertake regular assessment of animals in care to ensure that they are making progress in rehabilitation for eventual release to the wild. If animals are not making progress, carers should either refer the animal to another licensed carer to continue rehabilitation or take the animal to a veterinary surgeon to ascertain if there is a medical reason for their failure to improve.
- Carers should not allow native animals in care to associate with other domestic animals, especially cats or dogs, as these associations may make them lose their natural fear of these animals in the wild. This is an impediment to their survival once released.
- Carers should not become attached to animals in care as this makes releasing the animal to the wild more challenging for the carer.
- Carers should acknowledge the cost of rehabilitating protected animals and make sure that they don't become financially overcommitted. Carers who become overcommitted by keeping more animals than they can reasonably look after generally provide a lower standard of care for wildlife and may also place themselves in a difficult situation.

Corporations and volunteer wildlife care associations

If a rehabilitation permit is granted to a corporation or a volunteer wildlife care association, the holder of the permit may authorise other people ("relevant persons") to operate under the permit.

The holder of the permit must give each relevant person a copy of the permit that:

- states the person's name and residential address; and
- is signed by the permit holder.

The holder of the permit may also limit the range of species that the relevant person may take and keep under the permit by striking out the name of the species identified on the copy of the permit and initialling the change on the copy. The holder of the permit cannot add species to the permit.

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Displaying wildlife in care

A person who keeps an orphaned, sick or injured animal in care is not permitted to display the animal. However, where a rehabilitation permit is granted to a volunteer wildlife care association, the chief executive may give the association written approval to display an animal kept under the permit, provided:

- the animal does not have any visible signs of illness or injury; and
- the purpose of the display is to raise funds to assist in providing care and treatment for animals kept under the permit and is:
 - to promote an understanding of the ecology and conservation of the animal;
 - to promote education about, and conservation of, the animal; or
 - to give public information about the ecological role of the animal.

Moving sick, injured or orphaned protected animals under a rehabilitation permit

A person who holds a rehabilitation permit may move an animal kept under the permit:

- from the place where the animal is kept under the permit to:
 - a place, within Queensland, where the holder of another rehabilitation permit is to care for the animal;
 - an appropriate natural habitat when the animal has been rehabilitated and is ready for release to the wild; or
 - another place if the chief executive has asked the holder to give the animal to another person who will keep the animal.
- to or from a display, but only if the holder of the rehabilitation permit is a volunteer wildlife care association and the holder has the written approval of the chief executive to display an animal kept under the permit.

In some situations, the chief executive may write on a rehabilitation permit that the holder of the permit may move an orphaned, sick or injured protected animal into the state for the purpose of caring for the animal under the permit. If your rehabilitation permit contains this statement, you may move the animal into Queensland for the purpose of caring for the animal under your rehabilitation permit.

Taking certain dead wildlife for care of raptors

This section only applies to a person who holds a rehabilitation permit that has a species of raptor (families Falconidae, Accipitridae or Strigidae) identified on the permit.

If this section applies to you, you are allowed to take a dead protected animal that is classified as common wildlife, other than an echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*), platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) or koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*), for the purpose of feeding the bird of prey.

You still need the permission of the landholder or manager to take the animal. You must not take any animal from a protected area.

Release of rehabilitated animals to the wild

A person who holds a rehabilitation permit must release an animal kept under the permit to an appropriate natural habitat once the animal is again able to live in the habitat. However, if the chief executive has specified

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on the permit a particular day on which the animal must be released, the holder must release the animal on that particular day.

The only time where a permit holder is not obliged to release an animal kept under the permit to the wild is if:

- the animal dies or escapes; or
- the chief executive has given the holder a written notice stating that the animal should not be returned to the wild.

Disposing of animals kept under permit

The holder of a rehabilitation permit is not permitted to sell or give away wildlife kept under the permit to another person, except where the other person is also the holder of a rehabilitation permit and intends to rehabilitate and release the animal.

Dealing with animals that cannot be released

The main objective of wildlife care is to rehabilitate and release wildlife taken and kept under the permit. However, the Environmental Protection Agency/Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is aware that from time to time, and despite the best intentions and efforts of carers, some animals never recover to the extent that they may be released to the wild.

If the chief executive gives the holder of the permit a direction that the animal not be released, the person may:

- make application for a permit to keep protected wildlife for the animal; or
- otherwise deal with the animal in the way directed by the officer (e.g. offering the animal to a wildlife exhibitor).

A permit to keep protected wildlife can only be granted in limited circumstances. Applicants for a permit to keep a protected animal of a species that is not listed in schedule 9 of the *Nature Conservation Regulation 1994*, which are those native animals that may be kept privately in Queensland, will need to demonstrate that the animal will contribute to the rehabilitation of other animals of the same species or closely related species.

Disclaimer:

While this document has been prepared with care, it contains general information and does not profess to offer legal, professional or commercial advice. The Queensland Government accepts no liability for any external decisions or actions taken on the basis of this document. Persons external to the Environmental Protection Agency should satisfy themselves independently and by consulting their own professional advisors before embarking on any proposed course of action.

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Approved by

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Signature

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