

Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital

Ethical and Animal Welfare Charter

Australian native wildlife are frequently impacted by human related activities, natural disasters, climatic events, predation and disease. In many instances this results in pain and suffering. Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital's purpose is to protect and ensure positive welfare outcomes for Australian wildlife through provision of exceptional veterinary care, education, communication and community engagement. Everything we do is underpinned by important principles of ethics and animal welfare.

The rescue, rehabilitation and release of wildlife is defined as: Taking wild animals that are injured, diseased or orphaned, and with veterinary support, provide humane care until they can be released to habitat from which they came, or are euthanased (Tribe and Orr 2018).

This definition is underpinned by two main goals:

- To ensure that the welfare of individual animals is paramount at all stages and intervention does not perpetuate suffering; and
- To ensure that when released, there is no harm to the individual being released and to free-ranging conspecifics, sympatric species and ecosystems

This definition and goals encompass the ethical and welfare foundation on which Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital operates.

Our commitment to protect and ensure positive welfare outcomes for Australian wildlife

Exceptional veterinary care

- Every individual animal that enters our care is assessed immediately. An assessment of prognosis for release is made early. Animals considered suitable for rehabilitation and release are treated and cared for by our veterinary team. While under our care animals will be provided with optimal housing, husbandry and nutrition. On recovery they are transferred to experienced wildlife volunteers for rehabilitation and preparation for release. Ongoing veterinary care and review of prognosis for release is provided throughout the rehabilitation process. Prior to return to the wild, animals are reassessed by our team to ensure they are healthy, fit (physically and behaviourally) and capable of survival in the wild, are released into appropriate habitat and pose no risk to other animals and the ecosystem into which they will be released.
- Alleviation of pain and suffering to ensure positive welfare outcomes is our highest priority. This is achieved through provision of appropriate veterinary treatment or euthanasia. Animals suffering incurable pain or disability and those considered unsuitable for rehabilitation and release are generally euthanased. We comply with criteria, standards and guidelines for euthanasia and methods of euthanasia as outlined in the various NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment Wildlife Codes of Practice. Under rare circumstances animals may be considered for permanent care in approved institutions and with appropriate permissions.
- Our veterinary team is highly skilled and experienced and provided with the necessary resources and training to ensure the highest standards of animal care. Decision making is evidence based, utilising the most current information available on clinical assessment and treatment of Australian Wildlife. Our hospital is equipped with state-of-the-art diagnostic and surgical facilities. When necessary we have access to Australia's leading wildlife veterinarians and other specialist veterinarians for assistance and advice.

- Our veterinarians will use and prescribe medicines responsibly and ethically, and follow guidelines on antimicrobial stewardship to minimise development of antimicrobial resistance.
- We are committed to accurate record keeping.

Education

- Through social media, television and written communications and publications, Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital aims to engender awe, admiration and wonderment of Australian wildlife and inspire compassion for wildlife and the environment. We will:
 - Highlight the plight and threats to Australian Wildlife and the environment.
 - Provide content that will inspire people to protect and conserve wildlife and the environment.
 - Provide information on what can be done to prevent and mitigate harm to Australian Wildlife and the environment.
 - Provide material on how to rescue wildlife in need and ensure they receive appropriate care to ensure optimal welfare outcomes.
 - Provide material and training opportunities for veterinarians, veterinary nurses and wildlife volunteers.
- Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital will ensure that at all times animals will be treated with dignity and respect and no harm will come to any animals during the production of social media, television, educational or promotional materials.

Communication and community engagement

- Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital commits to communicating with and engaging communities in all of its activities.
- All communication and interaction with veterinary professionals, wildlife volunteers (individuals and groups) and members of the community will be collaborative and collegiate and without exclusion.
- Our veterinary team will work with and provide support and advice to wildlife volunteers to ensure good welfare for animals throughout the rehabilitation process.
- In the event of a wildlife disaster response, Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital will ensure open communication and work with authorities, wildlife volunteers, local veterinary practices and communities to ensure safety of people and optimal welfare outcomes for impacted wildlife.

In all of its endeavours, Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital acts with integrity and honesty and in compliance with all relevant codes of practice and legislation.

Reference:

Tribe A., Orr B. (2018) Wildlife Rehabilitation Practices in Australia. In *Current Therapy in Australian Mammals*. (Eds L Vogelnest and T Portas) pp. 51-62. CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne.