

# Animal

## ROUNDAABOUT

ISSUE No. 13, Summer 2004

Produced for people with an interest in the exhibition of animals in zoos, circuses, mobile farms, fauna and wildlife parks in NSW.



NSW Agriculture

### Reducing risk of bat virus

A Sydney animal exhibit has ceased taking its flying foxes off site or out of their enclosure for demonstration purposes to reduce the risk of a potential, serious, health threat to its staff. This decision was made after a keeper discovered a wild flying fox clinging to the outside of the flying fox enclosure.

The wild flying fox was disoriented and showed aggressive behaviour that indicated it may have been infected with Australian bat lyssavirus (ABL), a potentially fatal disease that can be passed on to humans.

Flying foxes, like all Australian bats have the potential to carry ABL, so the wild flying fox was sent to Taronga Zoo for assessment. It was then euthanased and sent to NSW Agriculture's Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute and CSIRO Australian Analytical Laboratory for testing. It was confirmed that the

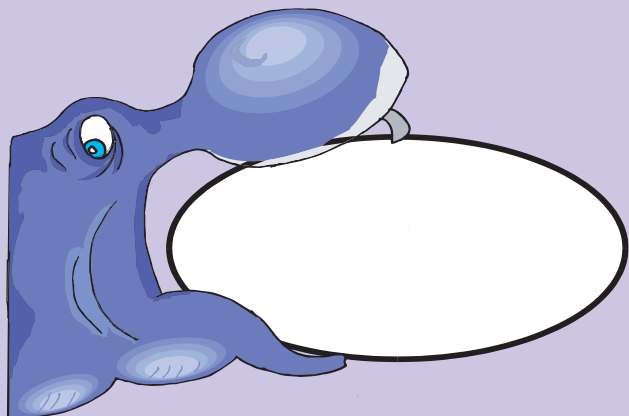
animal tested positive, to the virus.

Zoos, fauna and wildlife parks are urged to follow this exhibitor's example and limit contact with flying foxes to staff members who have been appropriately vaccinated. A vaccine is available from medical practitioners to bat carers, handlers, researchers and anyone who is involved in occupational or recreational activities that places them at risk of being bitten or scratched.

Zoos and parks currently exhibiting flying foxes in walk-through exhibits are encouraged to reconsider their practices to minimise the risks to visitor safety.

Australian bat lyssavirus was first discovered in 1996 and further information on the topic is available from the Communicable Diseases Network Australia at its website: <[www.cda.gov.au/pubs/other/bat\\_lyssa.htm](http://www.cda.gov.au/pubs/other/bat_lyssa.htm)>

*Photo by Stephen Jackson*



# Looze Lipz

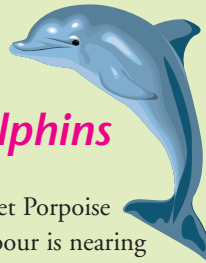


## Best response ever

The Animal Welfare Unit would like to thank all exhibitors for their prompt response in renewing their Authorities last year. This was the best response the unit has ever received, especially as the renewals were needed earlier than usual. Renewals must be in before the end of May each year, so that each application can be reviewed and dispatched before the due date. Keeping this in mind, and understanding how time gets away, exhibitors are reminded that the next renewal period is looming fast – so it's timely to start getting your paper work in order.

## Flying Inspector Service

New South Wales is a big place. Inspecting the more remote exhibitors or having to visit at short notice can be time consuming and expensive. *Exhibited Animals Protection Act* inspector, Len Cantrill, has put his pilot's licence to good use in the pursuit of animal welfare, by flying himself and other animal welfare colleagues to remote inspections. This method of travel to distant inspections has proved to be more efficient, faster and more cost effective than driving or using commercial flights.



## Happy dolphins

The new pool at Pet Porpoise Pool in Coffs Harbour is nearing completion. The management are hoping for a grand opening in March 2004. The pool will be considerably larger and deeper than

the old one and will provide an environment more suited to the needs of the dolphins and seals. Visitors will be able to view the actions of the animals underwater and dolphin encounters will be offered at the lower end of the pool for people with special needs.



## Wash your hands

Hand washing enclosures/toilet/bathroom must be provided on the premises or venue for mobile exhibitors where members of the public are allowed to contact animals. Members of the public must be encouraged to thoroughly wash their hands, using soap and running water after handling animals. Ideally, a sign erected by the mobile exhibitor should be displayed that outlines this information.

## Best wishes to Giovanna

At the November meeting of the Exhibited Animals Advisory Committee, Mrs Giovanna Pawson, Chairperson and member of the Committee, retired after many years of dedicated support to the Committee and the zoo and fauna park industry.

The Exhibited Animals Advisory Committee began in 1987. Giovanna was a founding member and devoted 16 continuous years of dedicated service to the committee.

During her time on the Committee, Giovanna has been personally involved in steering the direction of the zoo and fauna park industry in New South Wales, which she did with determination, passion and great enthusiasm.

Such a significant contribution to the zoo industry deserves high praise and accolades and the zoo industry thanks Giovanna for her contributions and accomplishments and wishes her well in her future endeavours.



# Parrots at play



Exhibitors keeping parrots and other native birds in captivity need to have some knowledge of the ecology of individual species.

It's important that exhibitors study the different species of birds to gain an understanding of their social behaviour and wild diet, so that the most appropriate enrichment techniques can be introduced.

If exhibitors do not have this knowledge, it's a shortcoming that results in a number of welfare issues for caged parrots, such as feather picking, excessive vocalisation, fearfulness and aggression.

There are a number of ways in which can be given behavioural enrichment:

- adequate space to promote free flight
- companionship for social species
- using mixed species exhibits
- escape areas so animals can retreat from aggressive birds
- variety of perching sizes and locations (re-perching periodically can stimulate activity)
- variety of substrates including compost, sand, soil, red clay and wood chips to add to the structural diversity of the exhibit; natural 'soft' materials like grass, earth, sand, and gravel provide opportunities for the birds to dig
- water features including deep or shallow pools, running water, moats and sprinklers for bathing and diving
- materials for nest building, boxes and hollow logs.
- diversity of live plants in exhibits
- freshly cut flowers for birds to lick the nectar and freshly cut branches for parrots to chew – sacrificial browse helps save the other plants from destruction and allows the birds to engage in

natural activity

- varied diet and feed times throughout the week
- live invertebrate feeds throughout the day to insect feeders
- food scattered about the enclosure to promote foraging
- whole fruit and vegetables instead of cut into small pieces
- vocalisations of other birds played for same or similar species
- animals trained using positive reinforcement.



Photo by Len Cantrill

# Progress of Standards

Significant progress is being made on updating a number of Exhibited Animals Standards.

A revised draft of the General Standards for Exhibiting Animals is currently being considered by NSW Agriculture's Legal Branch. This document has been re-organised after consultation with the Exhibited Animals Advisory Committee and the industry. It includes new areas dealing with staff experience and general principles relating to off-exhibit holding yards.

'Draft Standards for Exhibiting Reptiles in New South Wales' is also being considered by the Department's Legal Branch following industry consultation and the Exhibited

Animals Advisory Committee's recommendation that it be adopted.

Proposed updates to the 'Standards for Exhibiting Carnivores in New South Wales' have now been endorsed by the NSW Fauna and Marine Parks Association (NSW FMPA). Many of the proposed changes have arisen from suggestions from Zoological Parks Board staff at Taronga and Western Plains Zoos. We are waiting on a few final technical details (relating to heights of unclimbable walls) before submitting the revised document for legal scrutiny. Details regarding dingoes will be removed from this document and included in the new 'Australian Mammal Standards'.

'Draft Standards for Exhibiting Australian Mammals' have been amended following initial comments from the NSW FMPA which has endorsed our suggestion that the new document should incorporate relevant details from existing standards and guidelines that deal with Australian mammals (i.e. koalas, macropods, dingoes, possums, quolls and wombats).

'Draft Guidelines for Managing Free Range Fauna in Enclosed Areas' will soon be released for public comment. These guidelines have been drafted by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and NSW Agriculture via the Exhibited Animals Advisory Committee after consultation with operators in this relatively new field.

# Reptile hygiene

Juvenile king brown snake with mucoid tracheitis and pharyngitis associated with ophidian paramyxovirus?

Photo Lowan Turton



Strict hygiene controls have been introduced at the Australian Reptile Park (ARP) following positive diagnosis of the fatal respiratory disease, Ophidian paramyxovirus (OPMV) in some snake specimens.

OPMV is a serious respiratory disease that has caused wasting and deaths in some reptile collections in Australia during the last 12 months.

ARP advises that stringent sanitation control in reptile collections can help reduce the incidence of OPMV and the accidental risk of spreading material that may contain bacteria, other viruses or parasites.

The following information is passed on by ARP as a good practice guide for reptile keepers, to help reduce the spread of disease in reptile collections.

- **Introduction of new animals**

Quarantine new animals in a separate room for at least four weeks before introducing them to an established collection; disinfect cages thoroughly; use paper substrate in cages while in quarantine; routinely treat all new animals for mites; each animal should have its own set of equipment; and animals should be monitored for signs of disease or any other problems.

- **Cleaning enclosures**

Cages should be cleaned once a week making sure 'hard to reach areas' are scrubbed with disinfectant; place reptiles in a clean plastic container after removal from cage; destroy or throw away all substrate material; remove all uneaten food, faecal and urine wastes from cages each day; all equipment including snake bags, should be soaked once a week in disinfectant; any cage that has contained a sick animal must be emptied of all material and thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and left to dry for at least seven days.

- **Personal hygiene for keepers**

Hands must be washed in disinfectant after handling each animal; any cuts or wounds should be covered; no eating, drinking or smoking while handling reptiles; keep hands away from mouth.

- **Sanitation**

A coordinated approach is necessary when using disinfectants. Instigate daily, weekly and monthly schedules for disinfecting cages, equipment, material and personnel; use a broad spectrum virucidal disinfectant such as Virkon S for decontamination of reptile areas and cages.



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### Animal Roundabout is complimentary

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HERE'S YOUR  
CHANCE TO  
SHOWCASE YOUR  
BEST PHOTOS.

The Animal Welfare Unit is running a photo competition and the prize is a sightseeing 'Coffee Cruise' for two people with Vagabond Cruises, exploring the bays and premier landmarks of Sydney Harbour.

Sit back, relax and unwind while listening to a commentary from the Captain. Indulge in delicious home-made cakes and freshly percolated coffee or tea.

Fill out the enclosed entry form and send in your best photos of an animal or animals in a naturalistic exhibit. Photo entries close on 12 March 2004.

Photos will be judged immediately after the closing date, so get your entries in quickly. See the enclosed entry form for instructions and conditions of entry.



NSW Agriculture