

Animal ROUNDAABOUT



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



NSW Agriculture

Animals rescued

Those occasions when NSW Agriculture inspectors are called upon to take regulatory action to remove animals under the *Exhibited Animals Protection Act 1986* are fortunately rare. Such a case, however, arose earlier this year.

An alleged unexplained, high mortality rate among exhibited animals; non-compliance with fundamental standards of animal husbandry; and failure to provide sufficient trained animal care staff over a period of nearly two years; caused animals to be removed from an unlicensed fauna park near Sydney.

These serious animal welfare concerns, which involve alleged absence of any animal health records, left NSW Agriculture no alternative but to act in the interests of the animals.

Catching, identifying and transporting a variety of exhibited animals, including native birds, mammals and reptiles, required specialised knowledge and appropriate equipment.

The cooperation and assistance of experienced Zoological Parks Board, NSW Fauna and Marine Parks Association and University staff, RSPCA (NSW) inspectors, and officers of the NSW Police Service was essential to the success of the operation. Some of the animals required immediate veterinary attention, while others had examinations and treatment organised at their destinations.

A total of 145 animals were removed to locations where they could receive appropriate care.



Looze Lipz



Snake respiratory disease

Since December 2002, Australian animal health authorities have been concerned about outbreaks of a respiratory disease that has caused wasting and deaths among reptile collections. So far, the condition has affected species of elapid snakes and possibly, some others. The disease has signs consistent with that caused by Ophidian Paramyxovirus (OPMV), which is well-known in captive reptiles in Europe and the Americas, but not in Australia. Attempts are continuing to positively identify a virus thought to be associated with the disease and occurring in snakes here. Affected reptiles may develop signs of respiratory illness – noisy or difficult breathing, sticky discharge around nose and mouth, loss of appetite, weight loss and star gazing. In some cases, animals die after a period of 2-8 eight weeks of illness. Exhibitors who find animals in their collections that are showing respiratory distress or other unusual signs of illness, or which have died suddenly, should immediately seek the advice of their veterinarian and notify the Exhibited Animals Registrar.



Lizard standards

Lizard standards were recently reviewed at a meeting held at Taronga Zoo. Participants included members of the Fauna and Marine Parks Association, Mobile Reptile Keepers Association, Taronga Zoo, field experts, ARAZPA Reptile and Amphibian Taxon Advisory Group, NSW Agriculture, and an animal welfare organisation. The results of this meeting will be collated and forwarded to the Exhibited Animals Advisory Committee for consideration. Once approved, appropriate information will be circulated to all exhibitors, as part of the new draft Standards for the Display of Reptiles in NSW, for final comment, prior to being adopted.

Public liability insurance

Some exhibitors are seeking public liability insurance from overseas insurance agencies to try to combat the rising cost of public liability insurance. However, the Director-General of NSW has advised that as from 1 July 2004, public liability insurance should only be obtained from financial institutions that are registered with the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) as an 'Authorised General Insurer' under the *Insurance Act 1973*. If you would like a copy of the Exhibited Animals Protection Act circular regarding public liability insurance, phone Tammy Kirby on (02) 6391 3725.

Name change

The Forest of Tranquility has changed its name to Australian Rainforest Sanctuary. The name change will give visitors a better appreciation of the site's importance as an intact, temperate, coastal rainforest ecosystem. The change included the launch of a new website, improved signs along the self-guided walks, and eight education work stations. A fence surrounding part of the site excludes feral predators and protects native species including wallabies, lyrebirds, platypus and various reptiles. Owners Ed and Cathy Manners enjoy sharing their forest home. Their long-term project to protect the fragile ecosystem by education and careful management of visitors has been successful.

'Gates of hell'

Bushfires in Canberra last summer highlighted the danger fauna parks face when situated in areas of dense vegetation. Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve suffered devastating losses during the fires and only a few animals survived. 'These fires were like no others,' Mr Geoff Underwood, Senior Wildlife Officer at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve stated. 'The firestorms were like the gates of hell blowing open,' he said. Tidbinbilla lost its education centre, two homes and other heritage-listed buildings. The animal house, bird hides and boardwalks on the reserve were also destroyed and only 25 percent of the animal collection survived. A positive

outlook and the placement of new buildings is being considered to make sure there is minimum impact from the possibility of future fire events at Tidbinbilla.



Mobile exhibitors

To help discourage unlicensed operators, licensed mobile exhibitors are encouraged to include their approval number when advertising their business. It's hoped that potential clients will learn to ask exhibitors for their authority to display before hiring an exhibitor.

Koalas' best friend

Nancy Small from Gunnedah in north-western NSW has been busy rehabilitating koalas suffering the effects of the drought.

Nancy is well known for her expertise in rehabilitating koalas. She's been involved with wildlife for many years, and especially since opening the Waterways Wildlife Park.

Most of the koalas she takes in for rehabilitation are dehydrated and very thin. Nancy has found that about 50 percent respond to her re-hydration and weight gain program. Many are only as old as three or four months and weigh only 400 grams when she takes them in.

Natural koala milk is quite thick, so Nancy feeds them a commercially produced, low-lactose formula that is specifically for animals, with added plain yoghurt and glucose.

Nancy first started micro-chipping and tagging the koalas 10 years ago. After rehabilitation, the koalas are released back into the bush and one of these koalas returns to Waterways each year for a visit.

For information about koala rehabilitation, phone Waterways Wildlife Park on (02) 6742 1826

Devils and quolls



There are several ways that exhibitors can minimise stereotypic behaviour in Tasmanian devils and quolls.

These animals can be stimulated by providing hollow logs and branches for climbing and exercise. Placing obstacles in their pathways will also provide extra challenges and will help break abnormal pacing.

Hiding small pieces of food and supplying live insects also promotes hunting behaviour. Passive insect feeders and suitable logs can be used as temporary refuge for the insects.

A variety of feeding times and different methods of offering the food can be utilised. An example is to feed small amounts often on some days, and then allow the animals to gorge on other days. (No food should be given the next day after gorging.) Rats, rabbits or chickens can be frozen inside blocks of ice to stimulate smell and taste senses.

A 'Bungee Feeder' is a heavy-duty elasticised cord that has a brass clip on either end. One end is attached



Photo by Stephen Jackson

to a suitable fixture point within the enclosure and food is attached to the other end. When the feeder is pulled by the animals, it gives resistance and provides stimulating exercise.

Planting various species of plants such as grass tussocks and bushes will give the animals places to hide and forage while a variety of sand and soil gives the animals the opportunity to

dig. The well-developed smell senses of Tasmanian devils and quolls are stimulated by supplying various scents like wombat, possum or kangaroo faeces and even other novel smells such as spices or aromatherapy oils.

Contact Stephen Jackson on (02) 6391 3474 for further information on behaviour enrichment for Tasmanian devils and quolls.

Notable births



Staff members at Taronga Zoo were overjoyed to announce the birth of twin puggles (baby platypuses) named B1 and B2.

The zoo has devoted nearly 20 years to its platypus breeding program, so that when the platypuses mother, Maryanne,

began to act strangely, staff at the zoo knew something was going on!

The exciting news has become the talk of the zoo world as the only other successful captive platypus breeder is Healesville Sanctuary in Victoria.

Taronga Zoo's proud platypus keeper, Adam Battaglia, has devoted five years to the breeding project and he feels very privileged and elated to be part of such a rare and exciting event.

Photo by Helen Pantenburg, Zoological Parks Board of New South Wales ©

Fire emergency

Things to list when writing an emergency plan to help manage fire emergencies:

- emergency service contact numbers
- after-hours contact numbers
- evacuation procedures and emergency accommodation for animals
- emergency euthanasia procedures
- maintenance of emergency equipment
- rostering staff to provide back up personnel

Information about preventing fires and where to go for help:

- www.bushfire.nsw.gov.au
- www.nswfb.nsw.gov.au
- www.ses.nsw.gov.au
- www.ema.gov.au



Zoos and conservation

Numerous attempts to reintroduce animals bred by zoos into sanctuaries have been made during the last few years.

In NSW, bridled nail-tail wallabies and brush-tailed bettongs were released into a 400-hectare reserve at Peak Hill. The wallabies did well but the bettong population disappeared, possibly due to fox predation. In Dubbo, Western Plains Zoo has established a predator-proof sanctuary into which various native species have been, or will be, released in the future. NSW Agriculture has also licensed two small sanctuaries as animal display establishments.

Well-managed sanctuaries provide a protected environment in which the animals' normal behaviour can be closely studied. These enclosed areas can also assist in preserving threatened species of mammals.

However, establishing large fenced areas to hold free-range animals is costly and time-consuming and requires extensive knowledge of natural resource management. Long-term commitment is also necessary to survey the populations of both

plants and animals to make sure that the enclosed area does not become overpopulated.

NSW Agriculture and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service are presently working together to minimise problems that may occur and to develop standards to assist in the development of animal sanctuaries.

Do zoos and in particular, the smaller parks have a role to play in saving species from extinction?

Habitat destruction, urbanisation, competition and predation by non-native species are among the major causes of extinction, and zoos have an important role to play in education on these issues.

Zoos are in a position to bring these threats to visitors' attention and possible solutions can be put forward and discussed during keeper talks or formal education programs.

Exhibit signs can also be utilised as a way of delivering the message about conservation of native species.

Photo by Stephen Jackson



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Animal Roundabout is complimentary

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (June 2003). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up-to-date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of NSW Agriculture or the user's independent adviser.



NSW Agriculture