

Exhibited Animals Management in NSW

Exhibited Animals | Baseline Audit Program 2017-2018

Purpose

The Exhibited Animals Baseline Audit Program was introduced to assess zoos, aquariums, petting zoos, or anyone exhibiting animals to the public in NSW against the requirements detailed in the [Exhibited Animals Protection Act 1986](#) and [Exhibited Animals Protection Regulation 2010](#).

The baseline audit program was implemented to better gauge industry compliance against the relevant standard(s). It was also an opportunity to guide and educate industry in relation to ongoing compliance programs that will be conducted by NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI).



Background

Prior to 2017, compliance of exhibiting facilities was monitored by desk-based assessments as well as complaint triggered in-field inspections. To ensure that exhibitors are complying with the standards, DPI identified that an in-field audit program would assist in maintaining the high standards of exhibiting businesses and would complement the desk-based assessment process.

There are three main legislative outcomes for exhibiting businesses:

- animal welfare (based broadly on the 5 Freedoms model);
- public safety; and
- educational benefit.

These outcomes were used as the guiding principles to assess industry compliance during the baseline audit program.

What we did

The baseline audit program commenced in July 2017 and continued to May 2018. Audits were carried out by authorised officers from Biosecurity and Food Safety Compliance. Each officer received industry specific training to complement their extensive compliance experience gained through other DPI audit programs.

During the baseline audit program, 85 audits were carried out:

- 61 at fixed establishments;
- 23 at mobile establishments and
- 1 circus.

Standards for assessment

All exhibiting facilities are required to comply with the *General Standards for Exhibiting Animals in NSW*. These facilities include most zoos and aquariums at a fixed premises.

If these facilities are involved in the display of animals away from their fixed premises, they are also required to comply with *Standards for exhibiting animals during temporary removals in NSW*.

Mobile establishments, such as petting zoos, have further requirements outlined in *Standards for exhibiting animals at mobile establishments in NSW*.

Circus operators requirements are outlined in *Standards for exhibiting circus animals*.

Further, some facilities exhibit certain species that also have additional requirements relating to those species including:

- *Mammals*;
- *Bottle-nosed dolphins*;
- *Carnivores*;
- *Captive raptors*;
- *Seals*;
- *Primates*.

What was assessed during the baseline audits?

Documentation assessment included checking:

- daily animal records;
- animal record books;
- SOPs, work instructions or other documentation that supported husbandry, enrichment, treatment, quarantine, and safety systems;

- treatment, pest, health, and veterinary records;
- staff training and competency records;
- extra documentation for permit species
- contingency and emergency plans;
- exhibit monitoring (water conditions, temperatures, etc); and
- exhibit and facility maintenance.

Site inspections included assessment of:

- general grounds and buildings of the facility;
- exhibits, and off exhibit areas;
- food storage and preparation areas;
- treatment areas, facilities, medication security, and first aid;
- site security and fencing; and
- hygiene facilities and visitor amenities.



Addressing non-conformances

Non-conformances with standards or legislation that were identified during the baseline audit were documented within the final audit report as a corrective action request (CAR) and a rectification timeframe specified. Non-conformances were identified from physical and visual evidence, as well as the documented systems and processes of each facility.

Audit report

DPI used its mobile application to record and report on audit outcomes. To ensure consistency amongst auditors, a standard checklist was developed and each

exhibitor was provided with a full audit report on the day of the audit.

Industry Communication

Prior to commencing the baseline audit program, industry communication was developed and distributed via a [general circular](#). The general circular introduced the audit program and explained the audit process. Further, an audit guidance document was sent to each exhibitor prior to their first audit which:

- explained the audit program and why it was being implemented;
- clarified the process for carrying out the audit;
- allowed exhibitors to prepare for the audit; and
- explained how non-conformances were going to be managed.

What we found

Of the 85 baseline audits conducted, 84 were acceptable, 1 was marginal; there were no unacceptable audit results.

Auditors identified a number of areas for improvement with 118 CARs being issued; most of these relating to issues with records and procedures. Follow up on these CARs will be conducted by auditors either at the specified rectification date or at the next annual audit.

Industry feedback

At the completion of the baseline audit program, DPI sought feedback from exhibitors about the audit program as well as the licensing and assessment processes.

This feedback was extremely positive and has assisted in suggesting refinements to the audit program will and investigating options to improve reporting and follow up of non-conformances. Simplified industry guidance documents will also be

developed to make complying with the standards easier to understand.

Further, the Exhibited Animals team within DPI has undergone structural and process changes to streamline the licensing and approvals process.

Next steps

The Exhibited Animals audit program will continue in 2018-2019. The program is a key component of the regulation of exhibited animals' business in NSW and ensuring that high industry standards are maintained. The program will continue in its current form with each exhibitor subject to a compliance audit every 12 months.

More information

For further information visit:

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/animal-welfare/exhibit>

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