



**Global Federation of  
Animal Sanctuaries**

**General Animal Care Standards**

## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>DEFINITIONS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>ANIMAL HOUSING .....</b>	<b>6</b>
H-1. HOUSING .....	6
H-2. GROUND AND PLANTINGS .....	7
H-3. GATES AND DOORS .....	8
H-4. SHELTER .....	8
H-5. ENCLOSURE DESIGN .....	9
H-6. SANITATION .....	9
H-7. TEMPERATURE, HUMIDITY, VENTILATION, LIGHTING .....	10
<b>NUTRITION REQUIREMENTS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
N-1. WATER .....	11
N-2. DIET .....	11
N-3. FOOD PRESENTATION AND FEEDING TECHNIQUES .....	12
N-4. FOOD STORAGE .....	13
N-5. FOOD HANDLING .....	13
<b>VETERINARY CARE .....</b>	<b>14</b>
V-1. VETERINARY PROGRAM PERSONNEL .....	14
V-2. VETERINARY CAPABILITIES .....	14
V-3. PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE PROGRAM .....	15
V-4. QUARANTINE AND ISOLATION CARE AND FACILITIES .....	16
V-5. MEDICAL RECORDS .....	18
V-6. MEDICATION HANDLING AND STORAGE .....	19
V-7. BREEDING POLICY AND CONTRACEPTION .....	19
V-8. ZONOTIC DISEASE PROGRAM .....	20
V-9. EUTHANASIA .....	20
<b>WELL-BEING AND HANDLING OF ANIMALS .....</b>	<b>22</b>
W-1. PHYSICAL WELL-BEING .....	22
W-2. SOCIAL HOUSING AND GROUP/HERD MANAGEMENT .....	22
W-3. INTRODUCTION OF UNFAMILIAR INDIVIDUALS .....	23
W-4. BEHAVIORAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING .....	23
W-5. ANIMAL-CAREGIVER RELATIONSHIPS .....	24
W-6. HANDLING AND RESTRAINT .....	24
W-7. ANIMAL TRANSPORT .....	25

**Version Updates:**

New and amended content released April, 2023

- V-4 Quarantine and Isolation Care and Facilities – addition of one bullet point to require posting of visible signage
- W-2 Social Housing and Group/Herd Management – addition of one bullet point to require a protocol for response in the case of a serious animal aggression incident

New and amended content released April, 2025

- H-6 Sanitation – amendment to one bullet point to require safe and effective methods of composting animal waste, when this type of disposal is utilized

## General Animal Care Standards

The purpose of these standards is to assist sanctuary directors and personnel, other animal welfare agencies and professionals, and the public regarding best practices and appropriate criteria for the effective and efficient operations of an animal sanctuary. These standards are voluntary, but provide the basis for GFAS Accreditation and Verification.

It should be understood that each standard or each part of every standard may not be applicable to all animal sanctuary and rescue center facilities. Further, these standards do not include every practice, procedure, or policy that might be desirable for or implemented by a sanctuary since the programs, conditions, facilities and objectives of all sanctuaries are not identical. GFAS does not suggest or infer that those who do not follow all of these standards or recommendations engage in unsafe practices.

GFAS recognizes that there may be many acceptable ways of meeting the intent of each standard. In order for a sanctuary to be considered compliant with the GFAS Standards, the sanctuary must be able to demonstrate compliance with the entire standard, as applicable, through the totality of the accreditation process which may include, but is not limited to, submission of required documentation, interviews, and demonstration and/or confirmation of practices during a sanctuary site visit. GFAS encourages sanctuaries to offer feedback on the standards and to explain any reasons why it meets a standard or believes any particular standard is not applicable and/or appropriate to its situation.

The exceeding of the standards is encouraged. In addition to meeting these standards, an organization is expected to comply with all applicable international, national, state/province, and local laws and regulations.

Some standards refer to written documents that a sanctuary should have. A list of required documents for GFAS Accreditation and Verification, with the corresponding standard, can be found on the GFAS website at <https://www.sanctuaryfederation.org/accreditation/how-to-apply/application-documents/>.

### Definitions

**Sanctuary.** GFAS recognizes that some organizations operate valid rescue and rehabilitation programs with a goal of releasing wildlife to the wild pursuant to IUCN and/or other international or national standards. For those animals, lifetime sanctuary care may not be part of the organization's mission. While the care for these animals may be provided on an interim basis only, the organization is still expected to meet the standards below with regard to all animals in its care and for purposes of these standards it will be identified as a "sanctuary."

**Director.** Several standards make reference to a sanctuary's "Director." GFAS recognizes that a sanctuary may use a different title, and the term "Director" is intended to reference the sanctuary's Sanctuary Director, who may be called an Executive Director or Chief Executive Officer, etc.

**Personnel.** GFAS recognizes that sanctuaries may rely on volunteers for certain functions, including some aspects of animal care (such as food preparation). Standards referencing "personnel" may take into account appropriately qualified and trained volunteers as well as employees.

## ANIMAL HOUSING

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### H-1. Housing

**Animals are safely contained. Unless otherwise directed by a veterinarian, and for a specified medical reason, animals are provided sufficient opportunity to move about freely and rapidly, and to exercise choice in location so as to maintain positive welfare.**

#### General

- The habitat and living conditions provide a balance between hygiene and the species' physiological and psychological needs. This includes consideration of indoor and outdoor space, vertical and horizontal space, and diversity and complexity of space.
- Policies and procedures are in place such that personnel can enter enclosures without risk of having animals escape and can shift animals as appropriate out of enclosures prior to entering the enclosure. Facility design takes into account caregiver-animal safety and ease of maintaining a positive relationship.
- Animals are provided access to as many areas of the enclosures as possible at all times, except during personnel maintenance activities, unless security or welfare concerns dictate otherwise. All enclosures are constructed without creating 'dead ends' to allow for freedom of movement of subordinate individuals.
- Animals are provided with regular access to outdoor space (covered or open top) with sufficient room to engage in natural behaviors and designed to promote species-specific wellbeing. Access is ideally given daily, with consideration to weather and animals' individual needs (e.g., animals in quarantine or isolation, or being observed for medical reasons, may be kept indoors), and species-specific risks.
- In areas where solid barriers are not used, equipment, e.g. machinery and heaters placed outside the enclosure, is positioned far enough away from the enclosure that the animals cannot access it.
- The habitat provides appropriate visual and acoustic barriers.
- The habitat provides security from predators and unauthorized human access.
- Outdoor enclosures have enough acreage per animal to accommodate natural individual and group behaviors/ activities.
- Quarantine facilities have appropriate housing for treatment of injured or ill animals. Healthy animals admitted to quarantine have as large an enclosure as possible to help maintain natural locomotion and behaviors.
- For sanctuaries located in climates where freezing temperatures occur during any part of the year, indoor space is large enough to allow for all forms of species-specific behavior (running, climbing, etc.). Distance or barriers between animals and between enclosures and personnel is sufficient to minimize stress to the animals as well as reduce the risk of disease transmission.
- Enclosures are designed to allow for proper, safe cleaning and drainage.

- A regular program of sanctuary maintenance is in place. Any enclosure in need of repair, or any defect likely to cause harm to animals, is immediately repaired or replaced, or the animals are relocated to a secure enclosure.
- Safety signs on any electrified sections of the perimeter fences or enclosures are easily visible.

### **Enclosure Space and Size**

- Many factors influence the minimum space required for animals, including natural species-specific behaviors, health needs, and social groupings.
- For mixed-species housing, enclosure dimensions are adjusted accordingly so that the space reflects that required for both species if housed separately.
- Animals requiring treatment for illness or injury are housed in enclosures that allow for appropriate treatment and ease of care.

### **Outdoor Enclosures and Fencing**

- Perimeter containment of outdoor areas is constructed so as to demonstrably reduce breach by native wildlife, domestic species and the enclosure residents.
- Fences and enclosures are inspected daily for signs of breach.
- The supporting posts for fences are firmly fixed into the ground. Where fencing meets hard surfaces such as rock or concrete, the fencing is securely anchored in place.
- Fences are sufficiently high and constructed in such a way to prevent escape (e.g., use of overhang, hot wire).
- Barbed or razor wire are not used.
- Fence material is sufficiently secured to supporting posts in such a way that the weight of the animals could not detach it from the support nor dislodge the supporting posts.

## **H-2. Ground and Plantings**

**Ground cover indoors and out is healthy for animals. Plantings are appropriate and safe.**

### **Vegetation**

- All plant materials in an enclosure are evaluated for potential toxicity to the species held before use, including leaves, buds, seeds, fruit, bark and flowers.
- Any vegetation capable of harming animals is kept out of reach.

### **Outdoor Enclosures**

- All outdoor enclosures have a natural substrate consistent with the site, and which drains well.

- Animals are provided with appropriate three-dimensional environments to accommodate an array of natural behaviors. Horizontal and vertical jump distance is considered when developing enclosure topography.
- Where natural topography of an enclosure is not varied, it is created through the addition of natural and placed elements.
- Trees:
  - Shade trees within an outdoor enclosure are protected from damage.
  - Trees, vines and shrubs that may be used as an escape route are pruned or removed, or means to prevent animals from accessing them have been implemented.
  - Trees close to fence lines are checked regularly and any removed if needed.

### **Indoor Enclosures**

- All indoor enclosures have appropriate flooring to allow for sanitation and drainage. Bedding materials are provided in a sufficient amount/depth.

## **H-3. Gates and Doors**

**Animal enclosure gates and doors, including transfer doors, are appropriately designed to ensure both animal and human health and safety, and are properly maintained to ensure proper functioning.**

- Gates and doors should be designed to allow caregivers a clear view of enclosures and animals while operating the doors.
- Doors are designed to allow for animals' normal posture while travelling through the doorway.
- Gates and doors are constructed of appropriate materials to ensure safety of animals and humans.

## **H-4. Shelter**

**Animals have access to natural or artificial shelter that provides each individual with protection from extreme weather.**

- Animals have space to seek refuge from sun, wind, inclement weather and enclosure mates.
- Shelter does not create or result in 'dead ends' in which individuals can be trapped by other group members.

### **Preferred practice:**

- ✓ Shade and shelter are provided in multiple locations within enclosures to ensure that all animals have access to shade throughout the day.

## **H-5. Enclosure Design**

**Animals are provided with an appropriately complex and rich habitat to explore, to ensure the animals' physical, nutritional and stimulation needs are met.**

- Enclosures, both indoor and outdoor, are equipped in accordance with the needs of the animals with bedding material, branch work, nesting/hide boxes, appropriate substrate, vegetation and other enrichment materials designed to aid and encourage normal behavior patterns and minimize any abnormal behavior.

## **H-6. Sanitation**

**Proper sanitation is practiced to reduce pathogen transmission.**

- Uneaten perishable food is removed within a timeframe appropriate for the type of foodstuff and size of enclosure, prior to molding or contamination.
- Animal waste is removed from the habitat as often as necessary to prevent contamination of the animals contained therein, to minimize disease hazards and to reduce odors. Soiled bedding material and substrate are removed and replaced with fresh materials daily, or as needed to prevent buildup.
- If animal waste is composted, a process is utilized which kills pathogens and produces a safe compost.
- Damaged and soiled enrichment items are removed daily, or as soon as the animals are allowed access to the area.
- Each enclosure has dedicated tools to prevent cross contamination between enclosures. When resources restrict the ability to have dedicated tools, tools are disinfected between enclosures to prevent the spread of parasites and disease.

### **Cleaning and Disinfection**

- Feeding areas, automatic water devices, water and food containers are cleaned and disinfected regularly.
- Animals are not present in enclosures being cleaned using power hoses. Care is taken to prevent accidental spraying of animals in adjacent enclosures when power hoses are used for cleaning.
- All hard surfaces including walls, floors, ceilings, benches, climbing structures, cage mesh and caregiver work areas are sanitized regularly to the extent possible. Note that in large outside enclosures with plenty of exposure to sunshine and rain, there may not be a need for scrubbing and cleaning but areas are monitored for potential sanitation problems.



- Cleaning and disinfection Standard Operating Procedures are developed and followed to address:
  - safe disinfectant use to prevent hazards to the animals, caregivers and the environment;
  - cleaning and disinfecting protocols for food preparation and veterinary care areas using more powerful disinfectants on hard surfaces;
  - cleaning schedules to minimize the risk of disease transmission;
  - disinfectants and other cleaning products stored separately from foodstuffs.
- Laundry for animals is done in a washer/dryer used to wash items soiled by animals only (e.g., towels, blankets, enrichment items).
- Sanitation tools or equipment, including wheelbarrows, are not used for transport or storage of foodstuffs or bedding.

**Preferred practices:**

- ✓ Animals are transferred from enclosures prior to cleaning, disinfection and/or sanitizing.
- ✓ Where available, a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) or equivalent is readily available for all cleaning products in use and all containers are properly labeled as to contents.

## **H-7. Temperature, Humidity, Ventilation, Lighting**

**Temperature, humidity, ventilation, and lighting are appropriately addressed.**

- The temperature is within an acceptable range for the species housed. Allowance is made to accommodate individual animals not able to tolerate temperatures above or below the usual range of comfort for the species. Great caution is taken with elderly, infant and disabled animals.
- Shade is available throughout the day in a number of areas, which provides an adequately sized space to accommodate all animals simultaneously with consideration for social structure and relationships within a group.
- Care is taken to prevent direct animal contact with heat sources.
- Proper ventilation of indoor enclosures is critical. Light, natural and artificial, is appropriate for the species housed.
- Supplemental lighting is provided as needed to ensure adequate light for caregivers to observe animals, clean enclosures and perform related animal care tasks.

**Preferred practice:**

- ✓ Any climate control systems include back-up power in case of equipment or power failure.

- ✓ Providing animals with opportunities to choose temperature ranges within an enclosure is preferred. This can be achieved by access to areas near heat vents, skylights, or hog warmers for example.

## **NUTRITION REQUIREMENTS**

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### **N-1. Water**

**Fresh clean water is available in sufficient quantity at all times to all individuals.**

- Water sources and delivery systems are assessed multiple times daily to ensure that water is available to all individuals and that high-ranking individuals do not dominate water sources.
- Where possible, potable water sources are tested for contaminants as indicated by the sanctuary director or veterinarian.
- All water receptacles (including water bowls) are cleaned at least daily, and disinfected as needed.
- Where automatic water devices are used:
  - Devices are tested daily to ensure fresh clean water is available in sufficient quantities.
  - Devices are easily disabled when animals must be fasted for medical purposes.
  - When monitoring of water consumption is required, an alternative means of providing water is devised.

#### **Preferred Practice:**

- ✓ In colder climates, steps are taken (such as installation of heat sources) to ensure water consumption does not decrease with lower ambient air temperatures.

### **N-2. Diet**

**A properly balanced and healthy diet is provided appropriately based on the needs of each animal, following veterinary instructions for special needs.**

#### **General**

- A veterinarian or qualified veterinary nutritionist periodically reviews all aspects of the animals' diets at the sanctuary and makes adjustments to individual diets with consideration of species, age, life stage, size and condition (including excess weight gain and diabetes).

- The calories in foods used as enrichment are considered when planning the overall diet.
- Diets of individual animals (including vitamin supplementation) are of a quality, quantity and variety to match the physiological and psychological state of the individual as it changes over time, with consideration for the age, life stage, species, condition, and size of the individual.
- Food is wholesome, palatable, free from contamination and of sufficient quantity and nutritive value to maintain all animals in good health.
- The sanctuary utilizes a feeding regimen that ensures each individual receives adequate nutrition regardless of status in social group, such as routine observation of feeding activity.
- Sudden changes in food consumption and other behaviors are immediately brought to the attention of supervisory staff.
- Where possible and appropriate, each animal's daily dietary needs are documented and made available to animal care staff.

### **Vitamins/Supplements**

- Prior to offering vitamins or other supplements, the individual animal's health and condition, as well as the diet, are reviewed by the veterinarian or a nutritionist experienced in the species' care.

## **N-3. Food Presentation and Feeding Techniques**

**Food is prepared and presented in a safe and appropriate manner to meet animals' health and social needs.**

### **General**

- Food receptacles, where used, are appropriate for the species housed in terms of number, size and placement, and are cleaned daily.
- Receptacles for animal food and water are designed to minimize spillage and risk of contamination, and are not used for any other purpose.
- Single feeding regimens are carefully monitored and reviewed frequently to ensure they meet the animal's nutritional and psychological requirements.

### **Feeding Techniques**

- The sanctuary utilizes a feeding regimen that ensures each individual receives adequate nutrition regardless of status in social group.
  - Distributing food throughout an enclosure allows natural foraging behavior and may limit food hoarding and aggression.
  - Feeding in multiple locations helps to ensure that low-ranking individuals have adequate access to food and water.

### **Diet Changes, Increases or Decreases**

- Any diet changes are made or approved by the veterinarian or other qualified personnel, with any adjustments made to the entire diet to ensure continued nutritional balance.
- Considerations for diet increase include weight and condition of the animal, food consumption, activity level and other medical or behavioral consideration.
- Underweight individuals experiencing health or behavioral problems may be separated for supplemental feeding as needed to avoid undesirable weight gain in conspecifics.

#### **N-4. Food Storage**

**Food is stored appropriately to prevent spoilage and contamination.**

- Dry goods (e.g., grains and biscuits) are stored in clean, dry storage areas in sealed containers or on pallets.
- Items frozen for use are dated and labeled, and no frozen items are thawed and refrozen.
- Browse, grass hay, alfalfa and other baled products are stored in a sheltered area on pallets, and oldest stock is used first.
- Food items requiring refrigeration are stored in a clean, dry refrigerator, and/or ordered at regular intervals in amounts that can be used prior to spoilage.

**Preferred practice:**

- ✓ Products are dated and rotated to use oldest stock first, and expired food as well as bags damaged by pests is discarded.

#### **N-5. Food Handling**

**Food is handled and prepared in an appropriate manner to retain nutritional value, freshness, and freedom from spoilage, invasive species or other forms of contamination.**

- Food is protected against dampness, deterioration, mold, and/or contamination by insects, birds, rodents or other animals.
- Diets are prepared in a safe and hygienic manner to reduce the possibility of contamination or spoilage.
- Food preparation surfaces are thoroughly cleaned after use.
- Personnel wash hands thoroughly prior to handling food, and wearing gloves during food preparation is recommended.

**Preferred Practice:**

- ✓ Separate cutting boards, utensils and food preparation surfaces are used when meats, fish and produce diets are prepared in a common kitchen area.

## **Veterinary Care**

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### **V-1. Veterinary Program Personnel**

**The sanctuary's veterinary medical program is developed and carried out under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian and with adequate support personnel. Veterinary care is on-site or on-call at all times.**

- Sanctuaries unable to maintain a full-time veterinarian have access to a part-time or on-call veterinarian with suitable training and experience for the animals housed at the sanctuary.
- The sanctuary has properly trained and qualified professional and supporting personnel as necessary to implement: (1) husbandry (caregivers) and (2) technical support (veterinary technicians, or individuals trained at the sanctuary).
- One or more personnel is trained and designated to deal with emergencies until a veterinarian arrives or is reached. He or she can, under the direction of the veterinarian, perform basic first aid, assess animals, administer prescribed medications and treatments, be responsible for administration of post-surgical care, and be skilled in maintaining appropriate medical records.
- Sanctuaries have the appropriate number of personnel, including veterinarians and veterinary technicians or assistants, to meet these standards for all animals in their care, with consideration given to the number of animals, number of enclosures and/or social groups, and individual medical conditions or needs (e.g., a large number of geriatric or elderly animals, known disabilities or conditions, etc.).

### **V-2. Veterinary Capabilities**

**The sanctuary has on-site and/or off-site capabilities for pathology, surgery, and other veterinary procedures and treatments, and any on-site facilities are appropriately maintained.**

- If the sanctuary does not have an on-site veterinary facility, or only a partially outfitted facility, it has an arrangement with a nearby veterinary practice for off-site treatment as needed.
- The sanctuary's on-site and/or off-site facilities and services include the following:
  - Diagnostic capabilities include cytology, microbiology, parasitology, complete blood count, blood chemistry, urinalysis, serology and other appropriate laboratory procedures;
  - Surgical facilities that are clean, have adequate lighting and ventilation, and can be easily cleaned and disinfected.

- Surgical facilities that have access to appropriate anesthetic and emergency equipment.
- If on-site, the sanctuary ensures that surgical equipment is maintained in good working order and is on a program of routine preventive maintenance.
- Only a licensed veterinarian performs surgery, using standard operating procedures. (Note: A veterinary technician appropriately trained by a veterinarian in locations where such action is permitted by veterinary practice acts can perform surgical first aid.)
- Veterinarians and support personnel are compassionate and knowledgeable about the humane aspects of animal treatment, including the proper use of anesthetics, analgesics, and tranquilizers.
- Basic physical capture and restraint equipment to facilitate medical treatment is available at the sanctuary. See also Standard W-6 “Handling and Restraint.”

**Preferred practices:**

- ✓ Where possible, an on-site facility has separate areas for examination and treatment for any of the following functions performed on-site:
  - sterile surgery
  - necropsy
  - storage of carcasses awaiting necropsy or burial/cremation (Note: Any refrigerated area for holding deceased animals is physically separate from live animal holding, treatment, and surgery areas and from food supply storage or preparation areas)
  - quarantine (see Standard V-4 “Quarantine and Isolation”)
  - laboratory
  - radiology and radiology equipment
  - animal holding areas for observation and pre- and post-surgical
- ✓ Where possible, any on-site facility is located away from areas of heavy public use to minimize noise levels for hospitalized animals.
- ✓ On-site veterinary facilities have non-absorbent and non-impact resistant surfaces, floors sloping toward drains, air handling systems, ceilings, doors, hospitalized animal enclosures, and storage areas.

### **V-3. Preventative Medicine Program**

**The sanctuary has a complete preventative medicine program, pursuant to a written protocol, appropriate for each species housed.**

- The veterinary medical program includes long term preventative medical protocols and disease surveillance and containment procedures, and is developed and carried out under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian with training or experience in providing medical care for the species housed at the sanctuary, and who is aware of any specific issues with the health of the animals at the sanctuary.

- Appropriate preventative medicine programs are in place to manage all animals, and the sanctuary has a written preventative medicine protocol addressing the following:
  - regularly scheduled physical examinations/health assessments
  - behavioral assessments
  - quarantine procedures
  - parasite surveillance and control
  - immunization
  - contraception
  - infectious disease screening
  - dental prophylaxis
  - periodic reviews of diets
  - applicable species-specific husbandry needs
- Appropriate care personnel are provided with this protocol and any updates made to it, and steps are taken to ensure compliance.
- The attending veterinarian, in consultation with the sanctuary director, determines any schedule for routine physical examinations, including ocular, dental and musculoskeletal assessment, and implements any necessary treatment.
- Animals are immunized as recommended by the attending veterinarian, using currently recommended procedures and products as appropriate for the country, species and individual. When animals are immunized on-site by sanctuary personnel, the type, serial number, and source of product are recorded in the individual animal's medical record.
- Where possible, each animal is weighed annually, either during a routine physical or through the use of a built-in scale, to monitor for signs of illness and to determine dosages for chemical anesthetics.
- A veterinarian, veterinary technician, or other trained personnel record body/muscle condition for each animal consistent with any applicable scoring system.

**Preferred practices:**

- ✓ A veterinarian, veterinary technician, or other trained personnel performs regular fecal examinations to look for pathogens (random enclosure sampling is adequate for group-housed animals). Results are recorded. Fecal examinations are repeated following treatment to evaluate efficacy.
- ✓ When circumstances permit, and as appropriate for the individual animal, physical exams include the following: blood is collected, serum banked as a baseline control, and the results are recorded.

#### **V-4. Quarantine and Isolation Care and Facilities**

**Appropriate quarantine and isolation policies and facilities are in place for the protection of animals and personnel.**

### **General**

- All animals undergo quarantine according to the protocol established by the attending veterinarian and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Animals previously housed together may be quarantined together.
- If the sanctuary does not have an adequate quarantine facility, steps should be taken to have animals undergo quarantine under these guidelines prior to their arrival.
- Where possible, staff working in quarantine areas does not work with other sanctuary animals. If this is not possible, work is done in the quarantine areas last.

### **Quarantine Areas and Equipment**

- Quarantine areas should be located such that they are removed from permanent residents so as to reduce direct contact, contact by aerosolization or drainage, or potential fomite transmission.
- Quarantine areas have adequate ventilation, heat and air conditioning, which are used to ensure optimum conditions, particularly in the case of young, elderly or sick animals who may be more sensitive to environmental changes.
- All utensils, equipment, supplies, and outer clothing used in quarantine are restricted to that area. Where this is not possible, items that the sanctuary does not have duplicates of and which cannot be restricted to quarantine areas must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected prior to being moved to or from quarantine areas, and movement between areas should be minimized.
- Protective clothing, boots and footbaths are used by all staff entering the quarantine area or areas containing quarantined animals. Quarantine clothing is not removed from the quarantine area, except in a sealed container for cleaning. Footbaths are changed regularly.
- Caregivers wear protective clothing and equipment (e.g., gloves, masks, boots) when cleaning or handling anything with which the quarantine animals come into contact.
- The quarantine area allows for daily cleaning and sanitation; and waste is removed and disposed of properly.
- In enclosures housing animals carrying infectious or transmissible diseases, to the extent possible, all surfaces of the enclosure are properly sanitized.
- Quarantine animal waste is handled separately from all other manure or compost at the facility. Because of the risk of disease transmission, quarantine waste is not spread on pastures or composted.
- Clearly visible signs indicating areas of quarantine are displayed as needed, with particular consideration for placement at entry/access points.

### **Quarantine Care**

- As soon as possible upon arrival, animals should be weighed and inspected for injuries or disease.
- During quarantine of incoming animals, the following procedures should be performed as applicable: examination, vaccination as appropriate, clinical and laboratory tests,



treatment for external and internal parasites as needed, evaluation of psychological well-being, verification of identification.

- Quarantine does not equate with solitary confinement, and an enrichment program should be in place for quarantined animals. Care includes social interaction with caregivers during periods of quarantine, particularly if they're not with a conspecific.
- An enrichment program is in place for quarantined animals.

#### **Isolation Enclosures**

- The sanctuary has enclosures for animals who need to be isolated for close monitoring, such as following injury or recovery from surgery.

#### **Preferred practices:**

- ✓ Quarantine staff cares for newly admitted animals in their quarantine area before caring for sick animals, which are housed in separate isolation enclosures.
- ✓ Animals that die in quarantine receive a complete postmortem examination including histopathology.

### **V-5. Medical Records**

#### **Complete medical records are maintained, and animals have permanent identification.**

- Complete medical records for all animals are maintained under the direction of a veterinarian or trained caregiver.
- Medical records are dated, legible and indicate care and procedures including the following: examination findings, diagnoses, treatments (types of medication, dosage, duration), surgical procedures, anesthetic procedures, laboratory test results, pathology reports, immunization records, animal identification (e.g., microchip number, tattoo, photo) and nutrition/diet information, and, where applicable, necropsy reports.
- Records of individual animals include both behavioral and veterinary history.
- Copies of medical records accompany any animal transferred to another sanctuary or other appropriate facility.

#### **Preferred practices:**

- ✓ Statistics are tabulated regularly on the rates and nature of illness and mortality in the sanctuary.
- ✓ Where possible, duplicate record sets are stored at another site, or in a fireproof or theft proof safe on site or an online storage system.
- ✓ Records are maintained in an electronic format.

## **V-6. Medication Handling and Storage**

**All medications are purchased, prescribed and administered under the guidance of the veterinarian, and controlled substances are prescribed and stored legally.**

### **General**

- Medications are maintained and used in accordance with local, state/province, and national laws and regulations and are administered in accordance with the applicable veterinary practice acts.
- The sanctuary has pharmaceutical storage on-site where routinely used drugs, such as emergency resuscitative medications, antibiotics, anthelmintics, fluids, anesthetics, analgesics, tranquilizers, etc. are maintained. Medications are stored according to label directions and, when necessary, in a safe for controlled substances that meets the standards set by applicable regulations (e.g., the Drug Enforcement Administration in the United States). Medications and vaccinations are stored appropriately, refrigerated as needed, and with access limited to essential personnel.
- All medical treatments and drug prescriptions are documented in the animal's medical record.
- Medications are regularly checked to determine expiration dates and discarded under the guidance of the veterinarian.

### **Controlled Substances**

- Only a licensed veterinarian prescribes controlled substances used at the sanctuary.
- Controlled substances are stored securely, with only key qualified personnel having access.
- Use of controlled substances is recorded in accordance with any applicable laws.
- Expired controlled drugs are marked as such and stored separately until they can be discarded consistent with applicable laws.

### **Preferred practice:**

- ✓ Medicines should be stored in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations. If it is stipulated that a medicine be used within a specific time period, it should be labelled with the opening date, once broached.
- ✓ Records are maintained for medications maintained in vehicles or other locations for offsite use

## **V-7. Breeding Policy and Contraception**

**There is no intentional breeding of animals in lifetime care.**

- Contraception programs are appropriate for the species and as determined by the veterinarian.
- In rehabilitative settings, a breeding-for-release program may be found appropriate upon consideration of factors including the threatened or endangered status of the species and the existence of appropriate release sites.
- If animals arrive at the facility pregnant, the sanctuary provides necessary care as determined by the veterinarian. Infants are only removed from the mother for hand-rearing if there is a threat to the life of the infant or mother.

## **V-8. Zoonotic Disease Program**

**The personnel and sanctuary veterinarian are knowledgeable about zoonotic diseases that may affect animals at the sanctuary, and implement appropriate policies and procedures as needed to mitigate risk and deal with any exposures that occur.**

- The sanctuary has emergency procedures and a defined process to avoid transmission of all potential or emerging diseases through bites, scratches, body fluids, direct contact with animals and other means. (Note: Additional precautions may be necessary for personnel classified as increased risk of disease, including those who are immune-compromised, and for personnel working with animals known to be carrying zoonotic diseases.)
- Personnel have adequate training to understand the potential risk of disease transmission, including potential sources of disease, modes of disease transmission, and clinical signs associated with disease. Records of any in-person training are maintained. All personnel are informed when a zoonotic disease occurs at the sanctuary, and relevant personnel are trained in how to safely care for animals with disease.
- When a reportable disease is identified, all local, state/province, and national regulatory officials are contacted, as required.
- All areas in which personnel have direct contact with animals have hand-washing facilities available in the immediate vicinity (or an equivalent; e.g., bactericidal hand-wipes).
- Human food consumption by personnel does not occur in the immediate area of animal contact.

### **Preferred practices:**

- ✓ Attendance logs are maintained for any training sessions.
- ✓ When possible, a necropsy is performed on deceased animals known or suspected to carry zoonotic disease.

## **V-9. Euthanasia**

**Euthanasia is governed by an ethical written policy that includes identification of appropriate personnel and procedures.**

- The sanctuary has a written policy addressing the circumstances surrounding euthanasia decisions and procedures, including the following:
  - Euthanasia is performed in compliance with any national or local law, administered under the strict supervision of a licensed veterinarian. The veterinarian, his/her authorized representative, or a trained staff member who is knowledgeable and skilled in performing euthanasia in a professional manner and ideally with an established relationship with the sanctuary and the animal, recommends and performs humane euthanasia. Euthanasia is in the best interest of the individual animal and is only used as a final option, and is not used as management tool (such as a means to create space for more animals).
- Acceptable reasons for euthanasia include:
  - incurable medical/behavioral health status that is likely to cause unmanageable pain or suffering;
  - medical/behavioral health status where treatment is likely to cause unreasonable pain or suffering;
  - medical/behavioral health status where available treatment will not be effective in restoring the animal to an acceptable quality of life;
  - medical/behavioral health where treatment is beyond the normal community standards of monetary expenditure and would cause an excessive burden on the sanctuary resources, and no other facility /placement provides a reasonable alternative option;
  - the process of aging has resulted in an unacceptable quality of life;
  - in the event of presenting an infectious disease risk to some or all of the residents;
  - in the event of presenting a high risk of harming themselves, other animals and/or humans.
- For facilities engaged in the rehabilitation and reintroduction of wildlife and which do not provide permanent sanctuary care, consideration of an animal's ability and/or potential to survive as a free-living animal may also form the basis for euthanasia, as this is part of the animal's quality of life. For these facilities, this determination should be in accordance with an appropriate protocol or other "decision tree" analysis that an animal cannot be reintroduced to its natural habitat and there is no appropriate (consistent with these standards) short-term or long-term care option.
- Euthanasia is performed so that it avoids distress to the animal, and unless impossible, is performed out of view of other animals.
- The species and ecosystems are carefully considered during disposition activities.

## **Well-Being and Handling of Animals**

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### **W-1. Physical Well-Being**

**Animals should be routinely monitored to ensure their physical well-being, and any unusual activity should be reported and recorded, with appropriate response.**

- Qualified personnel conduct daily observations of each animal to monitor for signs of physical abnormalities.
- Consideration is given to nutritional, physical and social conditions.
- Physical abuse, deprivation of food or water, aversive spraying with a hose, and other forms of negative reinforcement or punishment-based training are never used to train, shift or otherwise care for animals. Note: This does not preclude the use of hoses or other watering devices in caring for animals who enjoy this form of enrichment.

### **W-2. Social Housing and Group/Herd Management**

**Animals are grouped so that they are compatible, with consideration to their natural social groupings and individual history, and with the safety of animals and sanctuary personnel in mind.**

- Animals are housed so that:
  - those in the same enclosure are compatible;
  - they are not housed near animals that interfere with their health or cause them physical or psychological discomfort;
  - there is appropriate space between individuals within and between social groupings and to allow for temporary isolation from others;
  - no individual endures constant harassment or suffers physical injury, nor do social behaviors prevent any individual from maintaining proper nutrition and hydration.
- The sanctuary has the ability to separate and isolate animals to address behavioral concerns. If animals are isolated from a group for social reasons, all efforts are made to find another suitable social group within the facility or at another accredited institution.
- With the safety of sanctuary personnel, sanctuary visitors, and animals as priority, the sanctuary has a protocol which outlines the steps to be taken as a response in the case of a serious animal aggression incident. The protocol may include the roles of sanctuary personnel, techniques to separate animals, and management of animals post-serious aggression incident
- Except for those species that are naturally solitary in the wild, solitary housing is generally reserved for situations including, but not limited to: quarantine; medical assessment

and/or care; lack of appropriate social partners or social tension resulting in disruption to the social group or physical aggression leading to injuries. Ideally and when appropriate, individuals in solitary housing should have access to visual and auditory access to conspecifics as well as regular caregiver interaction.

### **W-3. Introduction of Unfamiliar Individuals**

**Introduction of any new animal to a social group is done safely and according to techniques appropriate for each species, under the direction of designated personnel.**

- As appropriate or needed, benchmarks or desired outcomes are identified for each step in the introduction process, such as the physical location of animals and behavioral goals during visual contact and tactile contact periods.
- All caregivers have a clear understanding of the plan, including contingencies for problems that might occur, and are empowered to take appropriate action in the event of perceived emergency.

#### **Preferred practices:**

- ✓ Professionals with experience in social introductions, if not sanctuary personnel, are consulted whenever possible during these considerations.
- ✓ An introduction plan is developed that details a series of steps that will be taken to integrate the individual animals involved. Necessary modifications to enclosures are identified and completed prior to beginning the process.

### **W-4. Behavioral/Psychological Well-Being**

**The behavioral well-being of each animal is monitored and evaluated.**

- The sanctuary has an enrichment program that promotes species-appropriate behavioral opportunities at all times (including periods of quarantine and isolation) and ensures the animals' psychological well-being. An appropriate program may include the following:
  - Structural enrichment - Enclosure design and furniture that add complexity to the environment and promote species-specific behavior (e.g., climbing, perching, and grazing).
  - Object enrichment – Objects that encourage inspection and manipulation and promote species-specific behavior (e.g., play, nesting, tool-use).
  - Food enrichment - Varying food choices and food presentation, including the use of puzzles that increase food procurement time.
  - Social enrichment – Affiliative interactions between caregivers and animals (e.g., grooming) may be appropriate in some instances.

- All animal care personnel are trained to recognize species-specific behavior, abnormal behavior and clinical signs of illness, and a plan to address the concerns is developed.

**Preferred practice:**

- ✓ Where possible and appropriate, a behavioral/psychological profile is maintained for each individual animal and updated annually. A copy of the report is kept in the animal's permanent file.

## **W-5. Animal-Caregiver Relationships**

**Positive relationships between animals and caregivers are maintained.**

- Animals arrive at sanctuaries with a variety of previous experience with caregivers, which caregivers take into account in their interactions with these species.
- Where possible, new caregivers accompany a trusted caregiver until the animal becomes comfortable with the new individual.
- Where possible and appropriate, animals become familiar with the veterinary staff, allowing close observation.

## **W-6. Handling and Restraint**

**Any necessary handling and restraint is done safely and appropriately, with minimal distress to animals, and personnel are trained in species-specific safe handling techniques/practices.**

- With the exception of infants being hand-reared and animals with certain severe disabilities, humans do not enter enclosures with wildlife. Direct physical interaction with dangerous animals is limited to protected forms of contact, by experienced personnel, to minimize the risk of injury.
- Handling for veterinary care is done as expeditiously and carefully as possible in a manner that does not cause trauma, overheating, excessive cooling, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort, and minimizes physical and psychological stress as much as possible.
- Chemical immobilization is performed only by a licensed veterinarian or by trained staff under the guidance of a licensed veterinarian, or other qualified individuals authorized by the sanctuary director or veterinarian. Specific anesthetic protocols, including record-keeping, are followed.
- Chemical sedation is not used when multiple animals are in an enclosure except in an emergency situation. In such cases, all possible precautions are taken to prevent danger to personnel and the animal being sedated.

**Preferred practice:**

- ✓ Where possible and appropriate, operant conditioning is used to minimize the need for chemical immobilization and to reduce stress during procedures.

## **W-7. Animal Transport**

**Animals are appropriately transported to maximize safety and minimize stress and in accordance with all applicable laws.**

- Where possible, health examinations are conducted prior to an animal's arrival at the sanctuary or prior to transfer to another facility. These examinations may include a complete physical exam with attention to parasite checks, necessary vaccinations, and completion of any tests required by regulations of the receiving state/province or country.
- Health certificates and any required transport permits accompany the animal when being transported interstate or internationally.
- Capture, restraint, and transportation methods consider the animal's temperament and behavior in order to minimize injury and distress.
- Equipment suitable for lifting, crating (where applicable) and transportation of animals kept within the sanctuary is maintained in good condition and readily available. Transport containers and vehicles are cleaned after use.
- All animals taken outside the sanctuary are kept securely at all times and managed in such a way that the animal is under control and not likely to suffer distress, cause injury or transmit or contract disease.
- Animals are given access to water during transport.