

**CODE OF ETHICS FOR THE KEEPING AND TRADING OF BIRDS**

**Draft 4th Edition - April 2002**

**FOREWARD**

Animals play an increasing role in human fulfilment. Animals can form lasting attachments to humans and these relationships provide genuine companionship. They can bring not only happiness but also therapeutic benefits to the humans concerned.

Due to this, and also due to the general community's increasing expectations with regard to animal welfare, it is appropriate that humans continue to recognise and improve their responsibilities to animals.

This document is one of a number of documents which prescribe regulated guidelines for the operation of animal trades. These documents are incorporated under the Animal trades regulation which is a regulation under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979. Familiarity with both this Act and this Animal Trades regulation will also be helpful to personnel involved in the animal trades industries. The animal trades which are now prescribed and the operational procedures which have been written are:

1. The Care and Management of Animals by, Companion Animal Transport Agencies
2. The Care and Management of Animals in Pet Shops
3. The Care and Management of Horses in riding Centres and Boarding Stables
4. Code of Ethics for the Keeping and Trading of Birds
5. The Care and Management of Dogs and Cats in Animal Boarding Establishments
6. The Care and Management of Breeding Dogs
7. The Care and Management of Breeding Cats
8. The Care and Management of Animals in Pet Grooming Establishments
9. The Care and Management of Security Dogs

It is mandatory that all people involved in animal trades adhere to directions such as those outlined in this document. Adherence to these documents will ensure that the welfare of many animals is improved and that the image of each animal trade is enhanced. It is also likely that where animal trade industries set high standards of animal care owners will be encouraged to follow by example.

I commend this document to you and believe that this initiative will continue to improve the welfare of animals.

Signed

**RICHARD AMERY MP**  
**MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE,**

### **(3) FOOD**

**3.1** Adequate food suitable for the needs of the particular species of birds should be readily available. Most species of birds should have access to food at all times.

**3.2** Food should not be mouldy or contaminated with harmful substances. It should be stored in a manner which best prevents its deterioration, be refrigerated or be prepared daily, depending on the nature of its ingredients.

**3.3** Food should be placed where it is least likely to be spoiled or to be contaminated. Open containers should not be located below perches.

**3.4** Except where it is a species requirement, direct feeding on the ground should be avoided and suitable containers used to reduce the risk of disease.

**3.5** Food containers should be checked frequently to ensure that food of suitable quality and quantity is available to the birds. Containers should be constructed and used in a manner which is not dangerous to the birds.

**3.6** Most birds benefit from a regular supply of fruit, greens or seeding grasses. These should be fresh, preferably supplied daily and old or stale food removed. For most species grit and other supplements should be readily available, especially to breeding birds.

**3.7** Care should be taken to avoid providing food that is contaminated with insecticides or other substances of toxic potential or food that is toxic.

### **(4) WATER**

**4.1** Except for short periods under veterinary direction for the treatment of disease, during transportation for short journeys or during short exhibitions water must be available at all times. Environmental temperatures and the water requirements of different species must be considered during these short periods.

**4.2** Water containers should be located to minimise contamination and exposure to the sun and rain. Placement below perches should be avoided.

**4.3** Containers should be cleaned at least weekly and disinfected regularly. They should be designed by size, shape, depth, slope of sides or contents, so as to avoid drowning or causing distress to birds. Containers should be disinfected before being

**4.3** Containers should be cleaned at least weekly and disinfected regularly. They should be designed by size, shape, depth, slope of sides or contents, so as to avoid drowning or causing distress to birds. Containers should be disinfected before being transferred to other cages.

**4.4** Except for water birds, continually wet areas may present health hazards and should be avoided as far as possible.

**4.5** Bathing water should be available for many species.

**4.6** It is totally unacceptable for birds to die from lack of food or water.

### **(5) ACCOMMODATION**

**5.1** Each species should be accommodated according to its need, including;

- a) protection from extremes of climate
- b) safety from predators
- c) ability to escape from, or to avoid distress caused by other birds animals,  
and humans
- d) protection of food and water containers from contamination or firm

rain or direct sunlight

- e) sufficient space, perches, nesting areas and / or feed and water station

to meet the needs of all the birds in the cage or aviary

- f) nesting sites and materials appropriate for the species for breeding

purposes where intended

**5.2** Cages and aviaries should be sited and constructed to minimise risks from flood or fire. Exits should allow for emergency evacuation.

**5.3** In cold climates some insulation or heating may be needed for some species. Where birds are likely to be distressed by heat some cooling mechanism should be provided. Birds in small cages should not be left exposed in the hot sun without shelter.

**5.4** Housing must be constructed so as to minimise the threat posed to birds by predators. Many species of birds, animals and reptiles are predators of or cause distress to aviary birds by day or night. These include cats, dogs, foxes, birds of prey including owls, butcherbirds and currawongs, snakes and even children.

**5.5** Vermin and other pests should be rigidly controlled to prevent their entry to cages, aviaries or food storage areas. If vermin are observed, control measures should be taken promptly.

**5.6** Bird enclosure or cages should be fitted with openings or doorways designed so as to avoid risk of injury or escape. Legislation in some States may make escape-proof construction compulsory for some species.

**5.7** Roosting sites, perches or hiding areas should be provided in the manner and positions most appropriate for the species e.g. many aviary species require high perches in protected areas for roosting and some ground dwelling species remain distressed if unable to use areas in which to hide. Perches should be of varied size and shape. Natural branches are preferred for most species.

**5.8** Appropriate protection from predators should be provided for water birds given free range or swimming/wading areas.

**5.9** Unless compatible, different species should be confined separately.

**5.10** Care should be taken with new equipment. New galvanised wire may be toxic, especially for parrots. The risk of "New Wire Disease" can be reduced by allowing the wire to be weathered for 4-8 weeks or by washing with a mild acidic solution, e.g. vinegar, and rinsed.

## **(6) HEALTH & HYGIENE**

**6.1** Good animal husbandry, as for any animal species, is essential for the welfare of birds.

**6.2** Newly acquired birds should be quarantined for a suitable time for treatment / observation before release into aviaries, cages or enclosures.

**6.3** Birds show ill health or stress in a great variety of ways, but careful observation may be needed as sick birds are able to suppress some signs when stimulated.

Signs requiring urgent attention include:

- \* changes in appearance of droppings.
- \* changes in food or water consumption.
- \* changes in attitude or behaviour e.g. inability to fly or to see
- \* changes in appearance or posture, ruffled feathers, tail pumping, etc.
- \* changes in weight.

- \* enlargements or swelling.
- \* vomiting, injury or bleeding.
- \* discharge from nostrils, eyes or beak.

Other signs that should be noted include:

- \* excessive loss of feathers –
- \* lameness or sores on feet
- \* overgrown beak or nails
- \* stains or scabs around feet, eyes or nostrils.

**6.4** Sick or injured birds should be isolated to facilitate observation and treatment and to prevent further damage and / or to restrict the spread of infection.

**6.5** Cages and aviaries should be cleaned regularly; the floor and food and water containers in holding cages should be kept clean.

**6.6** Birds should be inspected regularly, preferably daily, to ensure that adequate feed and water is available, to check on their state of health, and to identify and promptly remedy any problem that may develop. New, sick or young birds should be inspected more frequently.

**6.7** Where treatment to restore health or to repair injury is not possible or is not successful, euthanasia should be performed by a competent person and in an appropriate and humane manner. Veterinary advice should be sought.

## **(7) TRADING**

**7.1** Sick, injured or aged birds should not be traded without the full knowledge of the purchaser of their condition.

**12.2** Birds traded should not be misrepresented as to sex, age, origin, species or breeding history and soundness.

**7.3** Juvenile birds unable to feed themselves should not be traded except for the purpose of hand rearing. The sale of fledglings unable to feed themselves must be restricted to persons competent in the procedures of hand rearing and they must be adequately informed of the nutritional and husbandry requirements of the species and the hygiene and management standards necessary.

**7.4** A person trading birds to another should endeavour to ensure that the buyer understands the feeding and general husbandry requirements of the species being traded.

**7.5** Birds known or suspected of being obtained illegally should not be traded.

## **(8) PROCEDURES**

### **8.1 CATCHING:-**

The catching of birds usually causes them distress and some species are particularly susceptible. Birds should be caught by the least stressful method available and subjected to minimal handling.

### **8.2 RESTRAINT:-**

Special care and knowledge is necessary in holding or restraining birds, and the most appropriate method should be used for each species.

### **8.3 WINGS:-**

Except as may be provided under State or Territory legislation or policy of wings is an unacceptable practice and is an act of cruelty. Certain species of birds may be permitted to be pinioned under defined conditions.

### **8.4 RINGS:-**

The application of rings for identification purposes requires careful selection of the appropriate ring and its application. Some species, especially adult birds, should not be ringed because of the risk of self-mutilation. Special care is needed should a ring require removal. For example, to attend to a leg injury.

### **8.5 BEAK TRIMMING:-**

Overgrown beaks should be carefully trimmed. Unless due to curable disease or a nutritional problem, birds with overgrown beaks should not be used for breeding.

#### **8.6 TOE TRIMMING:-**

Excessively long nails should be trimmed without drawing blood, Toes must not be cut. Overgrown nails may be indicative of inadequate conditions, particularly in small cages.

#### **(9) PARASITE CONTROL**

**9.1** Worm control is necessary with most aviary birds.

**9.2** Water or feed medication may be indicated in some circumstances, but is least efficient.

**9.3** Individual dosing should be performed by competent operators.

**12.2** Chemicals, e.g. insecticides, should be selected and used carefully and in accordance with pesticide laws. For example, pest strips are ineffective except in enclosed areas.

#### **(10) TRANSPORT**

**10.1** Transport creates distress and therefore should be kept to the minimum necessary. Birds must not be left unattended in park vehicles.

**10.2** Except for short journeys, feed should always be available during transport, especially for small or young birds, and water should be provided at intervals, especially in hot periods.

**10.3** Transport cages should be spacious enough for the birds to move around but excessive space may predispose birds to injury and should be avoided. See IATA regulations for interstate or overseas transport.

**10.4** Transport cages must be constructed to minimise stress and injury and should be escape proof. For some species the roof of transport boxes should be padded to prevent head injuries. Other species may require transportation needs. For some species, at least for shorter journeys or periods of time, cages should be darkened.

#### **(11) TRAPPING**

**11.1** Trapping of native birds is illegal except under licence issued by the National Parks and Wildlife Service or Conservation Agency responsible for the administration of State or Territory legislation governing native fauna.

#### **(12) BIRDS ON DISPLAY**

##### **12.1 Show and Exhibitions**

Show and Exhibitions should be conducted over as short a period as possible and not more than 72 hours. Public access should be controlled. Birds exhibiting signs of distress, injury or disease must be removed from the display area for appropriate attention or treatment. Birds on display must be under competent supervision at all times. Food and water must be available and birds accommodated in accordance with this code. Cage sizes must be not less than the show standards for the particular species. Essential show requirements must be adhered to.

##### **12.2 Markets and Auctions**

These are stressful to birds and must be conducted over as short a period as possible and not more than 24 hours. Otherwise conditions as in 12.1 apply.

#### **(13) Special Conditions Applicable to racing Pigeons**

##### **13.1 Training**

Pigeons intended for competition should be trained and exercised daily to ensure their fitness for racing. Free flight exercise should be planned. Pigeons should be confined to their lofts when not training for racing, exercising or bathing.

##### **13.2 Housing**

Pigeon lofts should conform to the requirements of Local Authorities and be constructed and maintained to maintain an acceptable public image.

### **13.3 Racing**

Only birds suitably trained, in sound health, Feathering and physical fitness should be accepted for competition.

Pigeons must not be expected to race distances beyond their ability. Liberation of pigeons must not occur under rain or fog conditions.

Feed & water should be provided to pigeons prior to liberation in such a manner that they retain their reserves of energy to complete the journey but do not commence racing on a full stomach.

## **14. FURTHER READING RECOMMENDED**

- a) The Australian Agricultural Council's "Code of Practice For The Welfare of Animals No. 1 The Fowl" for those with poultry species.
- b) Code of Practice for the Keeping of Poultry for Non-Commercial Purposes. (South Australian Poultry Association)
- c) Code of Practice for the Keeping and Racing of Pigeons (Central Cumberland Racing Pigeon Federation)
- d) The International Air Transport Association (IATA) regulations for air transport of birds interstate or overseas.
- e) The Bird Observers Club's "Code of Ethics" for bird watchers.
- f) There are many commercially available books which address husbandry of specific species, diseases and their treatment etc.

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