



**Queensland Government**  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

# Code of Practice

Wildlife

Aviculture

*28/11/03*  
Laid upon the Table of the House  
The Clerk of the Parliament



## Code of Practice - Aviculture

*Nature Conservation Act 1992*



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Prepared by the Queensland Council of Bird Societies and the EPA.

Approved by the chief executive of the EPA in accordance with section 174A of the *Nature Conservation Act* 1992 on 12 November 2003 and notified in the gazette on 21 November 2003.

The administering agency is the EPA, 160 Ann Street, Brisbane, PO Box 155, BRISBANE ALBERT STREET QLD 4002.

## 1. Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Practice, the following terms have the meanings as indicated:

**"Aviculture"** means the breeding and keeping of birds in captivity for non-commercial, personal satisfaction, or hobby purposes and includes the commercial use of some species of birds that are common wildlife;

**"bird"** means a bird that is lawfully bred, kept or used in accordance with the requirements of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*;

**"indigenous"** has the same meaning as "indigenous to Australia" as contained in the Act;

**"person"** means an individual or a corporation that is the holder, in relation to live birds, of a Recreational Wildlife Licence, Recreational Wildlife (Specialist) Licence, a Commercial Wildlife Licence, an International Wildlife Licence or a Prohibited Wildlife Licence granted and issued under the Act;

**"the Act"** means the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and includes the *Nature Conservation Regulation 1994* and any Conservation Plan relating to Aviculture;

**"the Commonwealth"** means the Commonwealth of Australia including its External Territories;

**"the State"** means the State of Queensland.

## 2. Aims of aviculture

2.1 The aims of Aviculture are the-

- a) breeding and keeping of birds in a captive environment; and
- b) acquisition of knowledge of the biological aspects of bird species through the study of birds in captivity; and
- c) maintenance of the genetic integrity of indigenous avifauna by the captive breeding of birds.

## 3. Purpose of code

3.1 The purpose of this Code is to assist in-

- a) the proper care and welfare of birds in Aviculture; and
- b) the promotion of the understanding of the health and nutritional requirements of all birds; and
- c) the realisation of the need for the conservation of viable populations of indigenous birds in the wild; and
- d) compliance with any legislative requirements of the State or the Commonwealth relating to Aviculture.

## 4. Legislative requirements

4.1 A person must-

4.1.1 comply with the provisions of:

- i) the Act; and
- ii) this Code; and

- iii) any other legislative requirements of the State; and
  - iv) any other legislative requirements of a State or Territory of Australia and of the Commonwealth; and
- 4.1.2. advise the relevant Conservation Authority of the State or Territory or the Commonwealth of any unlawful activity that comes to the person's knowledge.

## **5. General requirements**

### **5.1 The basic needs of birds are-**

- 5.1.1. ready access to a balanced diet designed to the individual species needs and requirements; and
- 5.1.2. a supply of clean water; and
- 5.1.3. freedom of movement and ability to exercise; and
- 5.1.4. accommodation which provides protection and a safe captive environment specific for the need of each individual species.

## **6. Accommodation**

### **6.1 Accommodation recognised as suitable for birds are-**

- outdoor aviaries/cages;
- indoor aviaries/cages;
- breeding cabinets;
- suspended aviaries;
- transportation cages;
- show cages;
- display cages.

### **6.2 Accommodation should provide-**

- 6.2.1. draught free shelter with protection from extremes of weather, while allowing access to rain and sunshine, both being beneficial to a bird's health and breeding success.
- 6.2.2. protection from predators (whether native or exotic);
  - protection from snakes, which may gain access to an aviary either through the wire or through gaps in the roofing corrugations. Aviary wire should therefore be of a dimension to prevent the entry of snakes. Gaps in roofing corrugation can be filled either with wire or a proprietary building product specifically designed for this purpose. This procedure will also prevent the entry of rodents to the aviary.
- 6.2.3. a means of escape from, or minimisation of, stress from other birds, animals and people;
  - where necessary, every effort should be made to provide pairs of birds with their own space in order to encourage breeding. This applies especially to most species of cockatoos and the larger parrots;

- undue stress and harassment can be minimised during the breeding season by the provision of at least 2 nesting sites/boxes per pair and at least 2 feeding stations.
- 6.2.4. sufficient space, perches, nesting areas and nesting material, sufficient feed and water stations - care must be exercised with the provision of nesting material for finches as injury can be sustained through entanglement in unsuitable nesting material.
- 6.2.5. perches of varied size and shape;
  - perches, where possible of natural tree branches, should be provided and regularly replaced if used by larger parrots or cockatoos for beak conditioning;
  - perches coated with sandpaper should be avoided as this may lead to injury to the foot pad.
- 6.2.6. aviaries that are constructed of non-toxic materials, with particular care taken to clean new galvanised wire to minimise "New Wire Disease" - clean with an acidic solution such as vinegar then rinse.
- 6.2.7. aviary/cage interiors which are free from obstacles or sharp edges and points - cages should not be cluttered with decorations, toys or similar objects.
- 6.2.8. breeding cabinets (if provided) which are placed in a manner which does not impede ventilation.

## **7. Keeping of waterfowl**

- 7.1 Waterfowl kept in captivity fall into two main categories-
  - 7.1.1. the grazing waterfowl which do not spend a great length of time in the water; and
  - 7.1.2. the diving and dabbling waterfowl that require access to clean unpolluted water at all times.
- 7.2 Waterfowl kept in captivity must be kept in an area of sufficient size to avoid soiling and pollution or regularly cleaned.
- 7.3 Clean fresh water is essential to successfully keep and breed waterfowl as water is not only needed for drinking but also for swimming (the exception being Cape Barren Geese), dabbling for food and for bathing - some species of native waterfowl live most of their lives on water.
- 7.4 A number of species of waterfowl can be kept without ponded-water areas, provided water containers are of sufficient size to allow submersion of the whole head and bill while drinking.
- 7.5 All waterfowl benefit from access to a pond or dam - for several species, access to water for swimming is essential for their well being and survival.
- 7.6 Enclosures which are totally concreted with no natural surfaces are inadequate and detrimental to the health and well-being of waterfowl.

## **8. Transportation**

- 8.1 Carry boxes should be of a construction to withstand general handling, of solid construction on at least five sides, the sixth may be of wire.
- 8.2 Sufficient space should be provided to allow the birds to move, although not so large as to allow a bird to injure itself.

- 8.3 Incompatible species should not be transported in the same container. Even paired birds may need to be separated.
- 8.4 Appropriate food and water (or food with a high water content such as apple or celery) must be provided if the birds are to be transported for more than 4 hours.
- 8.5 Ventilation outlets should be on the sides of boxes, not the top - containers should be darkened during transport and care must be taken not to cover ventilation holes.
- 8.6 The floor of the container should be constructed of a material to allow birds a secure footing - flooring made of porous materials which could become saturated and fouled are not suitable.
- 8.7 Containers must not be left exposed to high temperatures, wind or rain. In Queensland, care during transporting must be exercised due to high temperatures and humidity especially in the summer months.

## **9. Show cages**

- 9.1 Show cages are required to meet the relevant accommodation standard for as set down by the Show Standards pertaining to each particular species of bird.
- 9.2 To ensure the health of the particular species, appropriate sustenance either in containers or on the floor must be provided - water must be placed in containers at appropriate positions and changed when necessary to minimise soiling.
- 9.3 Stressed, injured or sick birds should be removed immediately from the show bench and appropriate action taken to alleviate their problem.
- 9.4 Proximity of the public is at the discretion of the stewards. Adequate and regular supervision of the birds is essential.
- 9.5 The maximum period that a bird may be kept on display in a show cage must not exceed 72 hours in any 7 day period.

## **10. Display cages**

- 10.1 Display cages refer to commercial establishments keeping or using birds.
- 10.2 Display cages must be constructed of strong material that is able to be washed and sterilised.
- 10.3 Display cages must be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition.
- 10.4 Incompatible birds of the same species, or incompatible birds of a different species, must not be housed together.
- 10.5 Birds must have access at all times to clean water and sufficient food to each individual species' specific needs to maintain their wellbeing.
- 10.6 Evidence of harassment or fighting in birds housed in the same display cage must be dealt with by the immediate separation of those birds.

- 10.7 Display cages must be placed in a position that is free from draughts. If cages are placed near windows, care must be taken to protect the birds from direct sunlight and excessive radiating heat.
- 10.8 Sufficient perches must be provided to allow every bird in the cage to perch comfortably.
- 10.9 Catching and transferring birds must be done in such a way as to minimise stress.
- 10.10 Competent quarantine and health practices must be adhered to.

## **11. Use of birds**

- 11.1 Purchasers of birds should be provided with guidelines on the basic care necessary for the particular species of bird - the onus is on the vendor to provide information on a suitable diet and basic care necessary for that particular species of bird and the onus is also on the purchaser to seek out information to enable the purchaser to provide the bird/s with a correctly balanced diet to maintain health and wellbeing.
- 11.2 A person must not buy or sell a juvenile bird that has not fledged.

## **12. Feeding**

- 12.1 Wild birds consume a vast assortment and variety of foods, e.g. lorikeets (nectar feeders), the larger cockatoos (insect larvae, grubs), finches (live insects), fruit pigeons (native fruits). Adequate food suitable for the needs of the particular species of birds must be readily available at all times.
- 12.2 Specific species require special diets, i.e.
- 12.2.1. A well balanced diet for lorikeets should include-
- a dry mix, either commercial "lorri dry" or individually prepared recipe; and
  - daily provision of a "wet lorri" mix formula; and
  - fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Some lorikeets will consume dry seeds - seeds should be treated as an extra to the balanced diet and should not be fed as the main ingredient of lorikeets diet.
- 12.2.2. A basic seed mixture for larger cockatoos should consist of a mixture of-
- hulled oats, wheat, maize, canary, white millet, jap millet, grey sunflower and safflower;
  - care must be exercised that the percentage of the oil seeds, i.e. sunflower and safflower is not excessive to avoid overfeeding;
  - in addition, vegetables and greenfeed such as corn on the cob, carrots, silverbeet, celery, broccoli and apples, plus in a limited quantity, peanuts hazelnuts and almonds;
  - branches of native trees such as eucalyptus, hakea, bottlebrush, banksia with berries and nuts attached, which will be eagerly consumed, should be provided to avoid boredom - these branches must be of lawful origin;
  - live food such as grubs, pupae and mealworms are also sought by some species of large cockatoos.

12.2.3. Fruit Pigeons require a special diet. A diet for fruit pigeons used by a successful breeder of these species is as follows:

- diced fruit 10 mm by 10 mm cubes- apple 25%, pear, paw paw, rockmelon, banana, honeydew, and any other soft fruit;
- to the above may be added- diced steamed carrot, soaked sultanas and currents, grapes, Wombaroo insectivore mix, egg and biscuit and Vitamin E powder;
- soaked dog or cat biscuits (meat and vegetable variety) may be fed sparingly as a high intake may lead to obesity;
- madeira cake and dry lorikeet mixes are taken readily but should be used sparingly as they will often consume these mixes rather than fruit;
- bread and milk mixes are not recommended for use in Queensland as these mixes ferment quickly - most fruit pigeons will drink lorikeet nectar mixes;
- the above foods should be "firm" when mixed and not runny or sloppy.

12.3 Generally, shallow small terracotta dishes prevent the birds walking through the food.

12.4 Food must be fresh and supplies stored in a manner to prevent deterioration or spoilage.

12.5 Food containers must be constructed in such a manner as to avoid injury to the birds, and placed in a position to avoid contamination.

12.6 Grit and calcium blocks/cuttlefish must be provided at all times.

12.7 A regular supply of green feed, fruit or vegetables is of benefit to most birds.

12.8 All birds benefit from soaked seed - care must be taken to avoid spoilage – unglazed earthenware dishes are recommended for soaked seed and all residue left from soaked seed must be removed daily.

12.9 The use of artificial additives and supplements does not replace a well balanced nutritional diet. It should be remembered that additives and supplements can be lethal even in small doses.

## **13. Water**

13.1 Clean water must be available at all times, with the containers placed away from direct sunlight.

13.2 Containers should not be placed under perches or in areas where they could become contaminated with faeces (droppings).

13.3 Water and food containers must be kept clean at all times - containers must not be transferred to other cages without prior sterilisation.

13.4 Separate containers should be supplied for bathing.

## **14. Quarantine**

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



14.2 Birds should be released into aviaries or cages in the early part of the day to allow time for the bird to adjust to its new environment.

## **15. Health**

15.1 Ill health or stress may be observed in birds in a great variety of ways. Indications that require urgent attention include-

- changes in appearance of droppings;
- marked changes in food or water consumption;
- changes in behaviour;
- absence of preening;
- changes in appearance or posture;
- raised, ruffled feathers;
- changes in weight;
- enlargement of organs or swellings;
- vomiting, injury or bleeding;
- discharge from nostrils, eyes or beak.

15.2 Birds when unwell will fluff out their feathers to maintain body heat. Eyes that are dull and lacklustre may be an indication of illness.

15.3 Sick or injured birds must be isolated to facilitate observation and treatment and prevent further damage or spread of infection.

15.4 Internal parasite control must be practised. Treatment can be administered in food or water. However, individual dosing of birds is more effective. It should be remembered that over dosing can be lethal.

15.5 External parasites must be controlled. This can be achieved by the application of appropriate insecticide to birds, nest boxes and perches.

15.6 The advice of a veterinary surgeon should be obtained if an illness persists or if several birds become ill in a short time.

## **16. General**

16.1 The application of rings for identification purposes requires care. Select an appropriate ring size that will fit closely but moves freely on the leg of an adult bird. Adult birds should not be rung with closed rings, split rings are acceptable.

16.2 Catching of birds can cause stress and should be kept to a minimum.

16.3 Species of birds that are incompatible should not be housed together.

16.4 Tethering birds by any means of restraint must not occur.

16.5 Observation on a regular basis is essential to enable early detection of illness or possible problems.

16.6 It is desirable that grooming of overgrown beaks or excessively long claws be carried out without drawing blood and with the minimum of stress to the bird - overgrown beaks or claws may be indications of illness and such birds must not be used for breeding purposes.

## **17. Euthanasia**

17.1 Where treatment to restore health or to repair injury is not possible or not successful, euthanasia should, where possible, be performed by a veterinary surgeon in an appropriate and humane manner.

### **Disclaimer**

This publication contains only advisory information. While considerable care has been taken in researching and compiling the information, neither the Environmental Protection Agency nor the Queensland Government accepts responsibility for errors or omissions or for any decisions or any actions taken on the basis of this document.

Readers are referred to the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, the *Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 1994* and current amendments.