

Code of Practice

Nature Conservation Act 1992

Rehabilitation of Sick, Injured, or Orphaned Koalas in Queensland

Code of Practice for Rehabilitation of Sick, Injured, or Orphaned Koalas in Queensland

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Code of Practice Rehabilitation of Sick, Injured, or Orphaned Koalas in Queensland

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Acknowledgements

This Code of Practice has been prepared by the Department of Environment and Science in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Queensland, the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network (Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, Moggill Koala Rehabilitation Centre, and RSPCA Wildlife Hospital), South East Queensland First Nations representatives, and the koala rehabilitation community.

1. Purpose of this Code of Practice

- 1.1. The purpose of this Code of Practice: Rehabilitation of Sick, Injured, or Orphaned Koalas in Queensland (Code of Practice) is to:
 - 1.1.1. ensure rehabilitation (including rescue, care, and release) practices lead to the best possible conservation outcomes for koalas (*Phascolarctos cinereus*);
 - 1.1.2. ensure appropriate welfare outcomes for sick, injured, or orphaned koalas;
 - 1.1.3. minimise risks to human health and safety; and
 - 1.1.4. ensure a collaborative approach with First Nations peoples where possible, including fostering ongoing working relationships, consultation, and obtaining permissions from Traditional Owners and Elders where relevant.
- 1.2. This Code of Practice does the following things:
 - 1.2.1. outlines the fundamental principles underpinning this Code of Practice;
 - 1.2.2. outlines overarching objectives for koala rehabilitation and specific objectives for each aspect of koala rehabilitation; and
 - 1.2.3. provides a set of minimum standards for each key aspect of koala rehabilitation, specifically:

Part 1 provides a framework for the rescue of sick, injured, or orphaned koalas under section 55(2) or section 202 of the Nature Conservation (Animals) Regulation 2020, to ensure that koalas are rescued in a way that minimises the likelihood of their harm or death.

Part 2 provides a framework for the care of koalas under section 208 of the Nature Conservation (Animals) Regulation 2020 to ensure that koalas are cared for in a way that is likely to result in their rehabilitation and return to the wild;

Part 3 provides a framework for the release of koalas under section 16A of the Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2017 to ensure that rehabilitated koalas are released in the most suitable locations; and

Part 4 provides a framework for the safe transport of koalas under section 206 of the Nature Conservation (Animals) Regulation 2020, as well as outlining other requirements regarding records, wildlife rehabilitation organisations, and training.
- 1.3. This Code of Practice was made under section 174A of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (the NC Act), with consideration to other relevant legislation, including the Nature Conservation (Animals) Regulation 2020 (the NC Animals Regulation), Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2017 (the NC Koala Plan), *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*, *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936*, and *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.
- 1.4. Words in italics, apart from species names and legislation, are defined in section 20 of this Code of Practice.
- 1.5. Unless stated otherwise, terms used in this Code of Practice have the same meaning as those used in the NC Act.
- 1.6. Failure to comply with any provision of this Code of Practice or condition of a permit may result in suspension or cancellation of a current permit and may impact upon subsequent permit applications. It may also result in enforcement action being taken under the NC Act.

2. General information

- 2.1. All koalas in Queensland are protected animals and are classified as 'endangered' under the Queensland NC Act and the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.
- 2.2. The Department of Environment and Science (department) is the agency responsible for administering the NC Act, including the assessment, licensing, and enforcement of koala rehabilitation activities undertaken by individuals and organisations.
- 2.3. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) is the agency responsible for administering the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*.
- 2.4. DAF and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Queensland are the agencies responsible for enforcing the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*.
- 2.5. A person who rescues a koala, but is not a licensed rehabilitator, must surrender it to a licensed rehabilitator (such as a *SEQ Wildlife Hospital*) or conservation officer in accordance with section 56(2) of the NC Animals Regulation.
- 2.6. A person or organisation engaging in koala care or release must be licenced under a valid rehabilitation permit. Licensed individuals or entities are referred to herein as 'permit holders'.
- 2.7. This Code of Practice applies to all individuals, organisations and members of organisations operating under a rehabilitation permit that authorises koala rehabilitation, including rescue, care and/or release.
- 2.8. It is the responsibility of the permit holder to ensure compliance with the provisions of this Code of Practice.
- 2.9. To ensure compliance with local government laws, koala rehabilitators may also require local government approval to conduct the activity at the specified location.
- 2.10. This Code of Practice does not exempt a person or other entity from compliance with any Act, regulation, or other statutory instrument.
- 2.11. This Code of Practice has been prepared by the department in consultation with DAF, RSPCA, the *SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network* (Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, Moggill Koala Rehabilitation Centre, and RSPCA Wildlife Hospital), South East Queensland First Nations representatives, and the koala rehabilitation community.
- 2.12. This Code of Practice is current at the time of publication and may be subject to periodic review.

3. Principles underpinning this Code of Practice

- 3.1. The fundamental principles underpinning this Code of Practice that should guide koala rehabilitators at all times in the conduct of their activities are:
- 3.1.1. **Koala welfare:** Under section 17 of the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*, a person in charge of an animal during its rescue, treatment, care, or release has a statutory duty of care to appropriately provide for the animal's welfare. A main objective of koala rehabilitation is to ensure appropriate welfare outcomes for sick, injured, or orphaned koalas, within reasonable, humane, ethical, and sustainable means. The rehabilitation and release of koalas to the wild must **not** be pursued to the detriment of the welfare of the koala.
 - 3.1.2. **Koala conservation:** Koalas are listed as endangered in Queensland. The rescue, care, and release of koalas to the wild (collectively referred to as koala rehabilitation) can have a positive impact on koala conservation. However, inappropriate release of koalas may have significant detrimental effects on local ecosystems and koala communities. The potential for adverse conservation outcomes must be considered and avoided throughout each aspect of a koala's rehabilitation.
 - 3.1.3. **Human health and safety:** There are generic, situation-specific, and species-specific risks to persons involved in koala rehabilitation that must be considered and minimised. Anyone involved in any aspect of koala rehabilitation should contact their general practitioner or local immunisation provider for more information on appropriate disease prevention measures including any recommended or required vaccinations.
 - 3.1.4. **Fair, reasonable, and appropriate measures:** in deciding what is fair, reasonable, and appropriate, with respect to all aspects of koala rehabilitation, regard must be had to:
 - 3.1.4.1. the environment and circumstances of the animal; and
 - 3.1.4.2. the steps a reasonable person would reasonably be expected to have taken under the circumstances.

4. Objectives for koala rehabilitation

4.1. The overarching objectives for koala rehabilitation are to:

- 4.1.1. contribute to the conservation of koalas by promptly returning suitably rehabilitated koalas to their *rescue site* or a suitable release site as close as practicable to their rescue site;
- 4.1.2. ensure appropriate welfare outcomes for sick, injured, or orphaned koalas by providing appropriate husbandry, care, pain relief, and veterinary treatment when required, including timely euthanasia in cases with a poor prognosis, as per the Guideline - Determining Whether a Koala Requires Euthanasia;
- 4.1.3. ensure human health and safety; and
- 4.1.4. ensure a collaborative approach with First Nations peoples where possible, including fostering ongoing working relationships, consultation, and obtaining permissions from Traditional Owners and Elders where relevant.

4.2. Additional outcomes of the rehabilitation of sick, injured, or orphaned koalas may include:

- 4.2.1. contribution to the body of knowledge on the ecology, conservation, management, veterinary care, husbandry, and behaviour of koalas; and
- 4.2.2. contribution to the education of the general public, business and industry professions on issues related to the conservation and welfare of koalas.

4.3. Capacity to care:

- 4.3.1. 'Capacity to care' relates to the capacity of a koala rehabilitator or rehabilitation organisation to provide for the essential needs of rescued animals as well as have the resources necessary to appropriately prepare koalas for release back into the wild.
- 4.3.2. A rehabilitator or rehabilitation organisation's capacity to care may be exceeded when the need for rehabilitation services exceeds the ability of koala rehabilitators and rehabilitation organisations to provide appropriate care. This is likely to occur during significant environmental or weather events, and times of limited volunteer resources.
- 4.3.3. When the capacity to care is exceeded and animal welfare standards are likely to be compromised, there are three acceptable management options for koala rehabilitators or rehabilitation organisations, which are, in order of preference:
 - 4.3.3.1. the rehabilitator or rehabilitation organisation refers the koala(s) to another licensed individual or organisation with a current capacity to care for the koala(s);
 - 4.3.3.2. the rehabilitator or rehabilitation organisation increases their capacity to care by expanding or pooling resources;
 - 4.3.3.3. the rehabilitator or rehabilitation organisation contacts the treating veterinarian to discuss lowering the euthanasia threshold in combination with proper veterinary assessment and prognosis of koalas in care. In circumstances that involve major or catastrophic events, lowering the threshold for euthanasia is a more appropriate response than **not** rescuing koalas in distress.

4.3.4. The lowering of animal welfare standards such that they are **not** consistent with this Code

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of Practice is **not** an acceptable response to exceeding the capacity to care and may be in breach of section 17 of the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*.

- 4.3.5. Koala rehabilitators and rehabilitation organisations should develop protocols and procedures that clearly define appropriate actions and responses in the event of catastrophic events or other circumstances in which their defined capacity to care may be exceeded. For example: Policies and procedures relating to the establishment of good communication, collaboration, and pooling of resources between organisations during major wildlife events.

5. Interpretations

5.1. Objectives

- 5.1.1. Objectives are the intended outcome(s) for each section of this Code of Practice.

5.2. Standards

- 5.2.1. Standards describe the specific actions required to achieve acceptable levels of animal welfare and successful koala rehabilitation. These are the minimum standards that must be met, and persons should aim to exceed these standards wherever possible. They can be identified in the text by the heading 'Standards' and use of the word 'must'.

Part 1: Rescue

6. Rescue and handling

6.1. Objective

- 6.1.1. To ensure that koala rescues (under sections 55 and 202 of the NC Animals Regulation or valid rehabilitation permit for koalas) are conducted using appropriate methods to minimise risks to human safety and additional stress, pain, and injury to the koala.

6.2. Standards

- 6.2.1. Rescuers must be suitably trained, for example, in accordance with the training standards outlined in section 19 of this Code of Practice.

- 6.2.2. Rescuers must only rescue koalas that are:

- 6.2.2.1. sick;
- 6.2.2.2. injured;
- 6.2.2.3. orphaned.

In some circumstances, this may include koalas without obvious signs of sickness or injury but are displaying abnormal behaviour. Examples of abnormal koala behaviour include:

- a. being trapped inside or on a building, backyard, or section of road (e.g., roundabout, bridge, median strip, tunnel); and
- b. climbing or sitting atop a streetlight, telegraph pole or similar artificial structure.

Examples of normal koala behaviour include:

- a. utilising trees other than *Eucalyptus* species (e.g., palm tree, banana tree, leopard tree);
- b. utilising trees near a roadside or house;
- c. travelling through backyards along the ground or across fence structures; and
- d. remaining in the same tree throughout the day.

N.B. When a koala is **not** presenting obvious signs of sickness or injury, but it is unclear whether its behaviour is normal or abnormal, advice must be sought from a local koala rehabilitation organisation or, alternatively, the RSPCA 24hr Emergency Hotline: 1300 ANIMAL (1300 264 625).

- 6.2.3. If the risk of injury to a healthy, independent koala is not immediate, the hazard should be removed, where possible and safe to do so, and the koala should be observed and allowed the opportunity to move away from the risk independently.

- 6.2.4. To ensure human health and safety, rescuers must:

- 6.2.4.1. assess the risks to themselves and members of the public prior to a rescue attempt;
- 6.2.4.2. not attempt to conduct a koala rescue if doing so may put themselves or other

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- persons at risk of serious injury; and
- 6.2.4.3. use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as long sleeve shirts, long trousers, covered footwear, and thick gloves.
- 6.2.5. Prior to a rescue attempt, rescuers must:
- 6.2.5.1. assess the risks to the koala from the rescue equipment and/or technique(s), and environmental hazards, including hot ambient temperatures, heavy rainfall, or high winds;
- 6.2.5.2. ensure there is a sufficient number of trained personnel for the situation, size, and temperament of the koala(s);
- 6.2.5.3. take into consideration the koala's injuries and pain, noting that these may not always be externally visible or obvious, when designing their rescue plan; and
- 6.2.5.4. where the difficulty of a rescue is compounded by the presence of other persons or dangers such as heavy traffic, seek the assistance of local authorities (i.e., the Department of Transport and Main Roads, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, Queensland Police Service, or local Council) to mitigate these factors.
- 6.2.6. Rescuers must employ the most appropriate rescue equipment and technique(s) for the condition and location of the koala, and be trained in its use, including:
- 6.2.6.1. disengaging the koalas recurved claws before removing it from any tree or branch;
- 6.2.6.2. a canvas bag, blanket, thick towel, or thick gloves can be suitable for catching a koala on the ground;
- 6.2.6.3. a long pole with flagging or halo at the top is suitable for encouraging a koala to move down towards the ground;
- 6.2.6.4. in certain circumstances, a hoop net is suitable for preventing a koala from climbing back up a tree or containing a koala on the ground;
- 6.2.6.5. when a koala is unable to be rescued by use of the above equipment and technique(s), having a suitably trained and qualified tree climber retrieve the koala;
- 6.2.6.6. a ground trap is suitable for a koala that is unable to be safely rescued by use of the above equipment and technique(s). All reasonable efforts must be made to ensure that the trap does not pose a risk, or contribute to the detriment in health of any koala(s), other wildlife, or person(s);
- 6.2.6.7. covering a koala's head with a towel, blanket or bag will often assist with calming it down; and
- 6.2.6.8. koalas must be placed in a suitable transport container as soon as possible to prevent overheating. Preferred containers should be top-opening and consist of a solid plastic base with wire sides and top. The container must be promptly covered with a cotton cage cover, or similar material, to minimise stress but allow for airflow into the container.
- 6.2.7. The following rescue equipment and/or technique(s) must **not** be used by rescuers:

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- 6.2.7.1. grabbing the koala around the chest;
 - 6.2.7.2. noosing;
 - 6.2.7.3. the use of a projectile or net-gun;
 - 6.2.7.4. deliberately forcing a koala to jump from a height; or
 - 6.2.7.5. the felling, pruning, or shaking of the tree and/or parts of the tree containing the koala.
- 6.2.8. The following rescue equipment and technique must **only** be used when all other appropriate rescue equipment and techniques have been unsuccessful in rescuing the koala, **and** when assessed and approved by a veterinarian of the department, or when a veterinarian of the department cannot be contacted (e.g., outside of business hours), assessed and approved by a veterinarian of the RSPCA:
- 6.2.8.1. use of a tranquiliser dart, projected from a blow pipe. A fall-blanket must be used in this scenario to minimise the risk of injury to the koala.
- 6.2.9. Rescuers must make all reasonable efforts to avoid causing unnecessary pain, suffering, exacerbation of injuries, spread of disease, and disturbance to other wildlife, and protect the koala from additional stressors, such as loud noises, other animals, and extreme weather.
- 6.2.10. Rescuers must cease attempting to catch a koala if it begins exhibiting excessive signs of stress during a rescue. Examples include prolonged crying or panting, prolonged increased respiratory rate (normal respiratory rate is 10-15 breaths/minute), ongoing vocalisation (grunting, low whining, or high-pitched sounds), or continuous ear flicking.
- Attempts must only recommence when the koala is no longer exhibiting excessive signs of stress and a minimum of ten minutes has passed since the last capture attempt.
- 6.2.11. For female koalas with a dependent juvenile, rescuers must, where possible:
- 6.2.11.1. keep the mother and juvenile together throughout the entire rescue;
 - 6.2.11.2. avoid dislodging the juvenile when capturing the mother to prevent injury;
 - 6.2.11.3. allow the juvenile to remain on the mothers back during capture.
- 6.2.12. When a female koala and her dependant juvenile cannot remain together throughout the rescue, rescuers must **not**:
- 6.2.12.1. rescue the mother and leave the juvenile behind; or
 - 6.2.12.2. rescue the juvenile and leave the mother behind without making all reasonable efforts to rescue the mother, enabling them to remain together throughout rehabilitation.
- 6.2.13. If the koala is a female that exhibits signs of having a pouch young (e.g., elongated teat), the surrounding area must be searched for the pouch young. If the suspected pouch young is found, the mother and pouch young must **only** be re-united when;
- 6.2.13.1. supervised by a veterinarian; or
 - 6.2.13.2. the rescuer can establish with reasonable certainty that the pouch young belongs to the female (e.g., their proximity to one another, and the presence of no additional koalas within the immediate vicinity).

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- 6.2.14. If the koala is reasonably suspected to be a dependent juvenile (e.g., pouch young or back young), the surrounding area must be searched for the mother. If the suspected mother is found, the suspected mother and juvenile must **only** be re-united under veterinary supervision.
- 6.2.15. To prevent the spread of disease, if multiple koalas are rescued (e.g., during a natural disaster), rescuers must ensure:
- 6.2.15.1. thorough cleaning of hands, personal protective equipment (PPE) and rescue equipment using veterinary disinfectant containing quaternary ammonium compounds or similar, for example F10 at 1:125 solution.
 - 6.2.15.2. koalas are placed in separate containers. The exception to this is a mother and her confirmed juvenile (i.e., the juvenile was in the mother's pouch or on the mother at the time of rescue, or the rescuer can establish with reasonable certainty that the juvenile belongs to the female), which should stay together (unless one or both are severely injured). Rescuers must label each container with the rescue location, date, and rescuer's name.
- 6.2.16. Rescuers must ensure that any rescued koala is taken as soon as practicable to the closest appropriate veterinarian to receive an assessment, appropriate pain relief, and treatment.
- 6.2.17. In South East Queensland (SEQ), a rescuer must ensure that:
- 6.2.17.1. rescued koalas are taken as soon as practicable to a SEQ Wildlife Hospital, having regard to the koala's welfare, and the proximity and opening hours for these facilities; and
 - 6.2.17.2. if a koala is initially taken to another, closer, veterinary clinic for first aid, then a SEQ Wildlife Hospital must be contacted as soon as practicable (e.g., from the initial veterinary clinic), and any SEQ Wildlife Hospital advice must be adhered to. N.B. RSPCA and Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital can be contacted 24/7.
- 6.2.18. All moving/transport of koalas must be in accordance with section 16 of this Code of Practice.
- 6.2.19. Following veterinary assessment and/or treatment, koala rehabilitators must follow any instructions from a veterinarian regarding whether koalas require care or release, and any specific needs regarding the koala's care or release. In SEQ, in circumstances where advice is received from more than one veterinarian, any instructions from the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network (Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, Moggill Koala Rehabilitation Centre and RSPCA Wildlife Hospital) take precedence.

Part 2: Care

7. Monitoring

7.1. Objective

- 7.1.1. To monitor the health of a koala undergoing treatment and/or care so that issues can be promptly identified and managed. The type and frequency of monitoring will vary with the age or stage of development, type of injury or illness and required treatment.

7.2. Standards

- 7.2.1. Carers must be suitably trained, for example, in accordance with the training standards outlined in section 19 of this Code of Practice.
- 7.2.2. Monitoring a koala must include:
- 7.2.2.1. manually assessing body condition (standardised score out of 10);
 - 7.2.2.2. checking for signs of injury, illness, and parasites;
 - 7.2.2.3. assessing hydration levels;
 - 7.2.2.4. determining how much leaf has been consumed, and noting the koala's preference for species of leaf;
 - 7.2.2.5. noting the quantity and quality of faecal pellets (if multiple koalas are held within the same enclosure, the quantity of faecal pellets should be divided by the number of koalas held within the enclosure) and urine; and
 - 7.2.2.6. assessing behaviour and looking for indications of pain, distress, and activity.
- 7.2.3. Carers must monitor the health of orphaned pouch young or a koala in critical care housing at least twice per day and weigh them at least twice per week.
- 7.2.4. Carers must monitor the health of orphaned juveniles (excluding pouch young) or a koala in intermediate care at least twice per day and weigh them at least once per week.
- 7.2.5. Carers must conduct a close visual assessment of a koala in pre-release housing at least once per day to determine if veterinary care is needed.
- 7.2.6. Carers must regularly monitor the temperature (i.e., using a digital probe thermometer) of any artificial heat source (e.g., blankets, hot water bottles and electric heat mats) within artificial pouches and enclosures containing thermal support, to ensure appropriate temperatures are maintained.
- 7.2.7. Unless otherwise advised by a veterinarian from the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network, carers must return a koala to the closest appropriate veterinarian for a follow-up examination;
- 7.2.7.1. when monitoring shows unexpected results potentially indicating illness or disease; or
 - 7.2.7.2. at any time period the treating veterinarian advises; and
 - 7.2.7.3. with any moving/transport of koalas being in accordance with section 16 of this Code of Practice.

N.B. Within SEQ, the closest appropriate veterinarian and treating veterinarian means the closest SEQ Wildlife Hospital.

8. Controlling disease transmission between animals

8.1. Objective

- 8.1.1. To prevent the spread of diseases among koalas undergoing treatment and/or care. Koalas that are exposed to stressors may be more susceptible to contracting and expressing infectious diseases.

8.2. Standards

- 8.2.1. Carers must ensure that any koala suspected of, or known to be carrying, an infectious disease be taken immediately to the closest appropriate veterinarian.
- 8.2.2. Carers must use dedicated cleaning equipment for each enclosure.
- 8.2.3. Carers must ensure all transport containers, enclosures, enclosure furniture, food containers, and water containers are thoroughly cleaned with an appropriate cleaner and then disinfected after each occupant, using veterinary disinfectant containing quaternary ammonium compounds or similar, for example F10 at 1:125 solution. Any remaining traces of chemical disinfectants must be rinsed off.
- 8.2.4. Carers must prevent any domestic pets from coming into contact with koalas, or their transport containers, enclosures, enclosure furniture, food containers, and water containers. Carers must ensure that koala enclosures and transport containers are designed and/or positioned so the koala cannot hear or see domestic pets.
- 8.2.5. Carers must wash their hands thoroughly with soap or disinfectant before and after handling each animal in care.
- 8.2.6. Other species undergoing rehabilitation must **not** be kept in the same enclosure as a koala.

9. Food and water

9.1. Objectives

- 9.1.1. To ensure the koala has a feeding and watering regime that encourages rapid recovery, supports growth in juveniles, and assists with the maintenance of foraging behaviour necessary for survival in the wild.

9.2. Standards

- 9.2.1. Carers must ensure clean, fresh drinking water is available at all times and changed daily, except in the case of orphaned juveniles (e.g., pouch young).
- 9.2.2. Water containers must be designed and positioned to avoid spillage and contamination and must be appropriate for the size, age, and mobility of the koala.
- 9.2.3. Carers must ensure fresh leaves are available for the koala to eat at all times and replaced daily. At a minimum, branches from at least three different preferred koala feed species, with mature and young leaves, must be provided, and sprayed with water prior to offering. Suitable leaf from genera such as *Lophostemon*, *Melaleuca*, and *Casuarina* should also be provided weekly.
- 9.2.4. Branches must be placed in holders that contain clean water. The water must be emptied and refilled daily, and the holders must be disinfected thoroughly daily.

- 9.2.5. Carers may harvest leaves at least every two days and store prior to use. Stored leaves must not be accessible to pets, pests, and wild animals and must be protected from contamination, and nutritional and moisture loss (i.e., stored under cover in containers of fresh water for a maximum of two days). Branches must not be placed on or dragged across the ground as they may become contaminated.
- 9.2.6. If multiple koalas are kept within the same enclosure, carers must place branches in multiple locations so that koalas can feed simultaneously at a minimum of three leaf stations for one koala, and an additional two leaf stations for each additional koala.
- 9.2.7. Carers must feed an orphaned koala milk formula that is appropriate for its stage of development and condition.
- 9.2.8. Carers must ensure a majority of feeds for pouch young (post pap) are completed at night to replicate natural conditions and nocturnal behaviours.
- 9.2.9. Carers may offer contaminant-free soil to a koala in the intermediate and pre-release stages of care. Pieces of bark and termite mound may also be provided.
- 9.2.10. Koalas are very prone to humanisation and imprinting. All care must be taken to minimise social interactions with humans and natural behaviours must be allowed to develop.

10. Hygiene

10.1. Objective

- 10.1.1. To maintain clean care facilities so diseases are prevented or contained.

10.2. Standards

- 10.2.1. Carers must remove:
 - 10.2.1.1. faeces from enclosures on a daily basis; and
 - 10.2.1.2. uneaten leaf every day and ensure that any day-old leaf (recycled) is removed within a maximum of two days after it was originally offered.
- 10.2.2. Carers must gently and promptly clean koalas when soiled with faeces, urine, or uneaten food, with as little disturbance to the koala as possible.
- 10.2.3. Carers must clean:
 - 10.2.3.1. food and water containers on a daily basis. Cleaning involves the use of water and detergent if soiled followed by disinfection using veterinary disinfectant containing quaternary ammonium compounds or similar, for example F10 at 1:125 solution. Carers must ensure that any remaining traces of chemical disinfectants are rinsed off food and water containers;
 - 10.2.3.2. enclosure furniture, bedding, weighing bags and pouches whenever soiled; and
 - 10.2.3.3. bottles and teats used for feeding orphaned juveniles prior to every feed by sterilization.
- 10.2.4. Carers must wash their hands and clean all food preparation surfaces and equipment prior to preparing animal food.

- 10.2.5. Carers must ensure that equipment used for cleaning transport containers, enclosures, enclosure furniture, food containers, and water containers is safe to use and separate from those used domestically.

11. General housing requirements

11.1. Objectives

- 11.1.1. To ensure a koala undergoing treatment and/or care is housed in enclosures that keep it safe, secure, and free from additional stress.

11.2. Standards

- 11.2.1. Carers must ensure that all koalas are kept in appropriate housing for their stage of development and condition, commencing in the type of housing advised by the treating veterinarian, and moving to progressively larger enclosures whenever suitable weight gains and improvements in health are achieved. As necessary, carers should seek further advice from the treating veterinarian regarding progressing a koala to a larger enclosure.
- 11.2.2. Orphaned koalas may be progressed through the following housing:
- 11.2.2.1. unfurred pouch young housing;
 - 11.2.2.2. furred pouch young housing;
 - 11.2.2.3. juvenile care housing [A];
 - 11.2.2.4. juvenile care housing [B]; and
 - 11.2.2.5. pre-release housing.

Orphaned koalas may be progressed through housing in accordance with the following weights shown in the table below. The weights should be used as a **guide only** as there can be significant differences in weight depending on age (particularly in early stages of development) and sex. As necessary, seek further advice from the treating veterinarian:

Unfurred pouch young housing	Furred pouch young housing	Juvenile care housing [A]	Juvenile care housing [B]	Pre-release housing	Release to the wild
100g - 300g	300g - 700g	700g – 2kg	2kg – 2.5kg	2.5kg – 4kg	As determined by the treating veterinarian

- 11.2.3. Sick or injured koalas may be housed in the following housing and must **only** change between housing types when advised by the treating veterinarian:
- 11.2.3.1. critical care housing;
 - 11.2.3.2. intermediate care housing; and
 - 11.2.3.3. pre-release housing.

- 11.2.4. Carers must ensure enclosures are:
 - 11.2.4.1. maintained in accordance with any specific standards for the type of housing, as per sections 12–14 of this Code of Practice.
 - 11.2.4.2. escape-proof and designed and/or positioned so the koala cannot hear or see domestic pets and protects the koala from physical contact with wild animals, pests and domestic pets;
 - 11.2.4.3. sufficiently designed to protect a koala from climatic extremes and provide adequate shade and protection from the elements;
 - 11.2.4.4. safe for a koala to live in by excluding hazards that might harm it and positioned so the koala is not exposed to strong vibrations, noxious smells (e.g., wood smoke) or loud noises (e.g., radios, televisions and vehicles);
 - 11.2.4.5. designed so carers can readily access the koala;
 - 11.2.4.6. constructed from non-toxic materials that can be easily cleaned and disinfected; and
 - 11.2.4.7. sufficiently spacious for individuals to avoid undue conflict with any co-housed koalas.
- 11.2.5. Carers must ensure that orphaned pouch young are kept in artificial pouches made from soft fibres with no loose threads.

12. Orphaned koala housing

12.1. Objectives

- 12.1.1. To reduce activity for a short period of time to facilitate frequent monitoring, treatment and feeding, and to provide a mobile koala with enough space to allow some physical activity and greatly reduced interactions between the koala and humans, while enabling it to be readily caught for monitoring or treatment.

12.2. Standards – Unfurred pouch young housing

- 12.2.1. Unfurred pouch young housing must provide sufficient space for the koala to sit upright and to stretch its body and limbs.
- 12.2.2. The use of an Intensive Care Unit (ICU), such as a humidicrib, is essential for unfurred pouch young.
- 12.2.3. Unfurred pouch young housing must provide a constant temperature appropriate to the koala's stage of development. The temperature within the ICU must remain between 34°C – 36°C depending on the stage of development and requirements of the individual koala.
- 12.2.4. The temperature in unfurred pouch young housing must be regularly monitored using a digital thermometer, with minimal disturbance to the koala.
- 12.2.5. Electrical heat sources must be regulated by a thermostat.
- 12.2.6. Unfurred pouch young housing must contain a prop for the koala to hold on to (e.g., rolled up towels or teddy bear).

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- 12.2.7. Unfurred pouch young housing must be designed and/or positioned so that visual and auditory stimuli are reduced.
- 12.2.8. Substrate used in unfurred pouch young housing must be soft (e.g., blankets, towels, hospital padding) and replaced when soiled.
- 12.2.9. Unfurred pouch young housing must have a roof.
- 12.2.10. Unfurred pouch young housing must be adequately ventilated without allowing excessive draughts.

12.3. Standards – Furred pouch young housing

- 12.3.1. Furred pouch young housing must provide sufficient space for the koala to sit upright and to stretch its body and limbs.
- 12.3.2. The use of an Intensive Care Unit (ICU), such as a humidicrib, is essential for stages of furred pouch young development.
- 12.3.3. Furred pouch young housing must provide a constant temperature appropriate to the koala's stage of development.
- 12.3.4. The temperature in furred pouch young housing must be regularly monitored using a digital thermometer, with minimal disturbance to the koala.
- 12.3.5. Electrical heat sources must be regulated by a thermostat.
- 12.3.6. Furred pouch young housing must contain a prop for the koala to hold on to (e.g., rolled up towels or teddy bear).
- 12.3.7. Furred pouch young housing must be designed and/or positioned so that visual and auditory stimuli are reduced.
- 12.3.8. Substrate used in unfurred pouch young housing must be soft (e.g., blankets, towels, hospital padding) and replaced when soiled.
- 12.3.9. Furred pouch young must experience a light–dark cycle that replicates outside conditions.
- 12.3.10. Furred pouch young housing must have a roof.
- 12.3.11. Furred pouch young housing must be adequately ventilated without allowing excessive draughts.

12.4. Standards – Juvenile care housing [A]

- 12.4.1. Juvenile care housing [A] must provide sufficient space for the koala to move freely whilst being conveniently sized for capture.
- 12.4.2. Juvenile care housing [A] must;
 - 12.4.2.1. have a maximum of 4 koalas per enclosure;
 - 12.4.2.2. have dimensions of at least 2m (L) x 2m (H) x 2m (W) for one koala. For each additional koala housed, additional floor dimensions of at least 2m x 1m is required. Carers should seek to exceed these dimensions whenever possible for better animal welfare and management;

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- 12.4.2.3. have a minimum of three vertical branches, each with a fork, and two slanted poles for one koala. Additional vertical branches and forks are required for each additional koala housed.
- 12.4.3. A juvenile koala must experience a light–dark cycle that replicates outside conditions. This may be achieved by using a well-lit room or constructing an enclosure in a sheltered area outside.
- 12.4.4. The temperature in juvenile care housing [A] must be regularly monitored using a digital thermometer, with minimal disturbance to the koala.
- 12.4.5. Juvenile care housing [A] must have a roof.
- 12.4.6. Juvenile care housing [A] must be designed and/or positioned so that visual and auditory stimuli are reduced.
- 12.4.7. Orphaned koalas should be exposed to other koalas of a similar stage of development during the juvenile care stage [A/B] but must be kept as single sexes only once they begin exhibiting signs of sexual maturity (e.g., mounting, aggression between sexes).

12.5. Standards – Juvenile care housing [B]

- 12.5.1. Juvenile care housing [B] must provide sufficient space for the koala to move freely whilst being conveniently sized for capture.
- 12.5.2. Juvenile care housing [B] must;
 - 12.5.2.1. have a maximum of 4 koalas per enclosure;
 - 12.5.2.2. have dimensions of at least 2m (L) x 2m (H) x 2m (W) for one koala. For each additional koala housed, additional floor dimensions of at least 2m x 1m is required. Carers should seek to exceed these dimensions whenever possible for better animal welfare and management;
 - 12.5.2.3. have a minimum of three vertical branches, each with a fork, and three slanted poles for one koala. Additional vertical branches and forks are required for each additional koala housed.
- 12.5.3. A juvenile koala must experience a light–dark cycle that replicates outside conditions. This may be achieved by using a well-lit room or constructing an enclosure in a sheltered area outside.
- 12.5.4. The temperature in juvenile care housing [B] must be regularly monitored using a digital thermometer, with minimal disturbance to the koala.
- 12.5.5. Juvenile care housing [B] must be sufficiently designed to protect a koala from climatic extremes and provide adequate shade and protection from the elements.
- 12.5.6. Juvenile care housing [B] must be designed and/or positioned so that visual and auditory stimuli are reduced.
- 12.5.7. Orphaned koalas should be exposed to other koalas of a similar stage of development during the juvenile care stage [A/B] but must be kept as single sexes only once they begin exhibiting signs of sexual maturity (e.g., mounting, aggression between sexes).

13. Sick or injured koala housing

13.1. Objectives

- 13.1.1. To reduce activity for a short period of time to facilitate frequent monitoring, treatment and feeding for koalas affected by *critical* injury and/or illness. To provide a mobile koala with enough space to allow some physical activity and greatly reduced interactions between the koala and humans, while enabling it to be readily caught for monitoring or treatment.

13.2. Standards – Critical care

- 13.2.1. In SEQ, koalas that require critical care must be cared for:
- 13.2.1.1. at the SEQ Wildlife Hospital of the treating veterinarian; or
 - 13.2.1.2. if unable to be cared for at the SEQ Wildlife Hospital of the treating veterinarian – at another SEQ Wildlife Hospital; or
 - 13.2.1.3. if unable to be cared for at any of the SEQ Wildlife Hospitals – by an appropriately trained koala rehabilitator (for example, see section 19 of this Code of Practice) who has been specifically authorised by the department to care for a particular koala.
- 13.2.2. Outside of SEQ, koalas that require critical care must be cared for:
- 13.2.2.1. by a veterinarian; or
 - 13.2.2.2. at a veterinary clinic; or
 - 13.2.2.3. by an appropriately trained koala rehabilitator (for example, see section 19 of this Code of Practice) who has been specifically authorised by the treating veterinarian to care for a particular koala, or otherwise authorised by the department.
- 13.2.3. Critical care housing must provide sufficient space for the koala to sit upright and to stretch its body and limbs.
- 13.2.4. Critical care housing must:
- 13.2.4.1. have a maximum of one koala per enclosure. The exception to this is a mother and her dependent juvenile;
 - 13.2.4.2. have dimensions of at least 1.2m (L) x 0.8m (H) x 0.7m (W); and
 - 13.2.4.3. contain a prop for the koala to hold on to (e.g., rolled up towels, or teddy bear if young) or an upright fork if they are able to hold it.
- 13.2.5. The temperature in critical care housing must be regularly monitored using a digital thermometer, with minimal disturbance to the koala.
- 13.2.6. Electrical heat sources must be regulated by a thermostat.
- 13.2.7. A koala in critical care housing must experience a light–dark cycle that replicates outside conditions.
- 13.2.8. Critical care housing must be designed and/or positioned so that visual and auditory stimuli are reduced.
- 13.2.9. Critical care housing must have a roof.

13.2.10. Critical care housing must be adequately ventilated without allowing excessive draughts.

13.3. Standards – Intermediate care

13.3.1. In SEQ, koalas that require intermediate care must be cared for:

13.3.1.1. at the SEQ Wildlife Hospital of the treating veterinarian; or

13.3.1.2. if unable to be cared for at the SEQ Wildlife Hospital of the treating veterinarian – at another SEQ Wildlife Hospital; or

13.3.1.3. if unable to be cared for at any of the SEQ Wildlife Hospitals – by an appropriately trained koala rehabilitator (for example, see section 19 of this Code of Practice) who has been specifically authorised by the department to care for a particular koala.

13.3.2. Outside of SEQ, koalas that require intermediate care must be cared for:

13.3.2.1. by a veterinarian; or

13.3.2.2. at a veterinary clinic; or

13.3.2.3. by an appropriately trained koala rehabilitator (for example, see section 19 of this Code of Practice) who has been specifically authorised by the treating veterinarian to care for a particular koala, or otherwise authorised by the department.

13.3.3. Intermediate care housing must provide sufficient space for the koala to move about whilst being conveniently sized for capture.

13.3.4. Intermediate care housing must;

13.3.4.1. have a maximum of one koala per enclosure. The exception to this is a mother and her dependent juvenile;

13.3.4.2. have dimensions of at least 3m (L) x 2m (H) x 2m (W). Carers should seek to exceed these dimensions whenever possible for better animal welfare and management; and

13.3.4.3. have a minimum of three vertical branches, each with a fork, and three slanted poles.

13.3.5. A koala in intermediate care housing must experience a light–dark cycle that replicates outside conditions.

13.3.6. Intermediate care housing must have a roof or be sufficiently designed to protect a koala from climatic extremes and provide adequate shade and protection from the elements.

13.3.7. Intermediate care housing must be designed and/or positioned so that visual and auditory stimuli are reduced.

13.3.8. Sexually mature females must be housed separately from sexually mature males; and adult males must be housed as far as possible from other adult males.

14. Pre-release housing

14.1. Objectives

- 14.1.1. To give the koala the opportunity to gain physical condition, acclimatise to current weather conditions and practice natural behaviour. At this stage of care, interactions between the koala and humans will be almost eliminated except for the presence of the carer(s) in the enclosure during necessary activities.

14.2. Standards

- 14.2.1. In SEQ, koalas that require pre-release care must be cared for:
 - 14.2.1.1. at the SEQ Wildlife Hospital of the treating veterinarian; or
 - 14.2.1.2. if unable to be cared for at the SEQ Wildlife Hospital of the treating veterinarian – at another SEQ Wildlife Hospital; or
 - 14.2.1.3. if unable to be cared for at any of the SEQ Wildlife Hospitals – by an appropriately trained koala rehabilitator (for example, see section 19 of this Code of Practice) who has been specifically authorised by the department to care for a particular koala.
- 14.2.2. Pre-release housing must provide sufficient space for the koala to move freely, express a range of natural behaviours and withdraw from co-housed koalas.
- 14.2.3. Pre-release housing must;
 - 14.2.3.1. have a floor area of at least 36m² per koala. Carers should seek to exceed these dimensions whenever possible for better animal welfare and management;
 - 14.2.3.2. have a minimum of one large, live tree per koala, suitable to allow a koala to develop advanced climbing skills and/or build muscle tone;
 - 14.2.3.3. contain natural habitat elements, including multiple tree forks per koala and branches oriented both vertically and horizontally of different thicknesses and textures, suitable to allow a koala to perform a range of natural behaviours; and
 - 14.2.3.4. have internal and external walls, at least 1.2 metres high, constructed of materials which prevent the escape of koalas (and prevent entry of wild koalas). These walls should be at least 2 metres away from the nearest internal or external branch to prevent escape (and prevent entry of wild koalas).
- 14.2.4. Pre-release housing must provide areas where the koala can gain exposure to prevailing weather conditions and areas where it can shelter.
- 14.2.5. Pre-release housing must be designed and/or positioned so that exposure to humans is kept to the minimum required for feeding, cleaning, and conducting close visual assessments.
- 14.2.6. Sexually mature females must be housed separately from sexually mature males; and adult males must be housed as far as possible from other adult males.

Part 3: Release

15. Release of koalas

15.1. Objective

- 15.1.1. To ensure that koalas released to the wild have a high chance of survival and, where possible, can re-join a local breeding population to contribute to the conservation of the species with minimal negative environmental impacts.

15.2. Standards

- 15.2.1. Koala releasers must be suitably trained, for example, in accordance with the training standards outlined in section 19 of this Code of Practice.
- 15.2.2. Koala releasers must only release koalas that have been assessed by a veterinarian and determined by the treating veterinarian to be physically and behaviourally fit for release. Koala releasers must release a koala as soon as practicable after this assessment. In SEQ, the treating veterinarian must be a veterinarian from the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network.
- 15.2.3. A koala must only be deemed physically fit for release if:
- 15.2.3.1. it has adequately recovered from any pre-existing injury;
 - 15.2.3.2. reasonable steps have been taken to determine the koala is free of disease;
 - 15.2.3.3. its weight and body condition are within the normal range for the koala's age and sex, or its weight and body condition is equal to or exceeds that of when it was admitted to a veterinarian; and
 - 15.2.3.4. it has adapted to prevailing climatic conditions.
- 15.2.4. In accordance with the NC Koala Plan, a koala must be released as close as practicable to the place where it was rescued; up to a maximum distance of 10 kilometres for a koala that was rescued as an adult, and up to a maximum distance of 20 kilometres for a koala that was rescued as an orphan.
- 15.2.5. The release site must also be suitable for the koala's release. A suitable release site is one that:
- 15.2.5.1. contains appropriate habitat, shelter, water and food resources;
 - 15.2.5.2. is free of immediate hazards or risks (i.e., not a roadside);
 - 15.2.5.3. is known **not** to be subject to imminent land-clearing or significant development; and
 - 15.2.5.4. meets all other requirements in this section (section 15) of this Code of Practice.
- 15.2.6. If the rescue site is suitable for the koala's release, then the koala must be released there.
- 15.2.7. If the rescue site is **not** suitable for release, koala releasers must ensure that the koala is released at a suitable release site as close as practicable to the rescue site.

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- 15.2.8. Unless otherwise approved by the department, an infertile koala may **only** be released at the rescue site. Infertile koalas must **not** be released at any site that the treating veterinarian or koala releaser reasonably suspects to be at, or close to, *carrying capacity* for koalas, or at any site they reasonably suspect to have a high proportion of infertile koalas compared to fertile koalas.
- 15.2.9. For koalas in SEQ, the Guideline - Selection of Release Sites for Rehabilitated Koalas in South East Queensland provides additional guidance on the release of rehabilitated koalas.
- 15.2.10. In circumstances where a koala is proposed to be released at a location other than its rescue site, a releaser must make reasonable efforts to ensure that the koala is not being moved from or into different Traditional Owner's Country without first consulting with the relevant Traditional Owners.
- 15.2.11. Koala releasers must conduct an *on-site confirmation* of any proposed release site prior to releasing the koala to ensure it is a suitable release site.
- 15.2.12. Where a rehabilitated koala is proposed to be released on private property, approval must be obtained from the private owner prior to the release.
- 15.2.13. Where a rehabilitated koala is proposed to be released on Council owned or controlled land, approval must be obtained from the Council prior to the release. In circumstances where Council land is subject to a lease, approval must also be obtained from the lease holder.
- 15.2.14. Koalas must **not** be released into a protected area (e.g., a national park) or State forest unless all other release site options have been exhausted, and approval has been obtained from the department. For example, approval from the Ranger in Charge of a national park.
- 15.2.15. If no suitable release site can be identified for a koala through the above processes, the department may advise of a suitable release site.
- 15.2.16. If the rescue site of a koala is unknown, it must **not** be released without approval from the department.
- 15.2.17. Ensuring that risks to human health and safety are minimised, the release of koalas must take place as close as reasonably possible to the normal period of activity (e.g., early morning, or mid to late afternoon) to allow for the koala to immediately investigate its environment and avoid predation.
- 15.2.18. Koalas must **not** be released in weather conditions that are likely to cause significant hardship or reduced chances of survival.
- 15.2.19. Koala releasers must remain near the release site for a reasonable amount of time that is suitable to closely observe the koala's movement into the wild, for example, up to ten minutes. If a koala sustains or presents one or more of the following while the releaser is at or near the release site, the koala must be transported back to the treating veterinarian to be reassessed:
- 15.2.19.1. the koala sustains an injury during transport, or immediately sustains an injury following release; or
 - 15.2.19.2. the koala does not attempt to, or appears to be unable to climb a tree; or

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- 15.2.19.3. the koala is seen not using all four limbs when walking or climbing.
- 15.2.20. Koala releasers should return to the release site at least once within 48 hours of release to conduct a similar observation of the koala. If the koala cannot be found and may have dispersed from the release site, reasonable attempts to locate the koala should be made, for example, up to ten minutes.
- 15.2.21. Tagging, banding, or other marking, including microchipping, may only be performed by a person who is authorised by the department to tag wildlife or by a registered veterinary surgeon, and must only be performed as part of a department approved program.
- 15.2.22. Any moving/transport of koalas must be in accordance with section 16 of this Code of Practice.

Part 4: General

16. Transportation

16.1. Objective

- 16.1.1. To avoid unnecessary transport of koalas and to ensure that any necessary transport occurs in such a way that minimises koala stress, injury, or escape.

16.2. Standards

- 16.2.1. Koala rehabilitators must only transport koalas:
- 16.2.1.1. when necessary for koala rehabilitation (e.g., from the rescue site to a veterinary clinic, between a veterinary clinic and the premises of a koala rehabilitator when necessary, or to a release site);
 - 16.2.1.2. where koala transport is the sole purpose of the trip; and
 - 16.2.1.3. via the route that takes the shortest possible time.
 - 16.2.1.4. the exception to the above is the instance of orphaned juveniles. A koala rehabilitator may transport an orphaned juvenile to and from the carer's residence and place of work, and other reasonable locations but **only** while the juvenile requires feeding or care during this time, and providing there will be no breach of any provisions within this Code of Practice;
- 16.2.2. To avoid unnecessary pain or distress to the koala, koala rehabilitators must use transport containers that:
- 16.2.2.1. are appropriate for the size and condition of the koala;
 - 16.2.2.2. prevent injury (e.g., fitted with padding such as cloth towels on the base);
 - 16.2.2.3. prevent escape;
 - 16.2.2.4. prevent rolling or tipping during transit;
 - 16.2.2.5. are hygienic;
 - 16.2.2.6. minimise light, noise, strong smells, visual stimulation;
 - 16.2.2.7. are suitably ventilated;
 - 16.2.2.8. provide protection from direct sunlight, wind, and rain;
 - 16.2.2.9. include fresh leaf during longer trips; and
 - 16.2.2.10. minimise stress (e.g., cover container with a breathable cloth, provide a rolled-up towel for a koala to hold on to).
- 16.2.3. Orphaned pouch young require a suitable artificial pouch. Koala rehabilitators must safely secure this pouch within a suitable transport container (e.g., cage, box, or basket). Artificial warmth may also be required, koala rehabilitators must ensure that this is **not** positioned in contact with the koala or transport pouch.

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- 16.2.4. Koala rehabilitators must monitor containers during transport to ensure temperatures remain appropriate for the age and condition of the koala. In most circumstances, a range of 34-36°C is appropriate for an unfurred pouch young, a range of 28–32°C is appropriate for a furred pouch young, and a range of 20–25°C is appropriate for an adult.
- 16.2.5. Koala rehabilitators must not transport koalas:
- 16.2.5.1. in a hessian sack (koala's claws can become entangled and threads can irritate the eye or be inhaled);
 - 16.2.5.2. in the back of an uncovered utility vehicle;
 - 16.2.5.3. in a car boot that is separate from the main cabin;
 - 16.2.5.4. on a rescuer's lap; or
 - 16.2.5.5. whilst any domestic animal is in the vehicle.
- 16.2.6. The use of medication to facilitate transport must be assessed and approved by a veterinarian.
- 16.2.7. Koala rehabilitators must **not** hold a sick, injured, or orphaned koala without providing appropriate veterinary care when such veterinary care is reasonably accessible. For example, a person must not hold a koala that has been struck by a vehicle or attacked by a dog overnight, when access to 24-hour veterinary treatment is available.

17. Records

17.1. Objective

- 17.1.1. To maintain comprehensive records of sick, injured, or orphaned koalas. These records can be used to track and review individual case histories and identify trends and represent a useful resource for koala rehabilitators, regulators, veterinarians, educators, and research organisations.

17.2. Standards

- 17.2.1. Koala rehabilitators must keep records for all koalas they rescue, care for, and release.
- 17.2.2. All records must be maintained in a form that can be readily examined, analysed, and clearly understood, and be made available to a conservation officer of the department upon request. If the department advises of a method for entering records, that method must be adhered to.
- 17.2.3. Rescuers must record:
- 17.2.3.1. time and date of rescue;
 - 17.2.3.2. exact location of rescue (including co-ordinates);
 - 17.2.3.3. reason for rescue;
 - 17.2.3.4. method of rescue (e.g., ground capture, flagging, koala trap);
 - 17.2.3.5. brief description of health or injuries;
 - 17.2.3.6. approximate age or age class (neonate, juvenile, sub-adult, adult, aged);
 - 17.2.3.7. sex (M, F, Unknown);

- 17.2.3.8. any identifying numbers or tags;
- 17.2.3.9. veterinarian the koala was taken to; and
- 17.2.3.10. time and date of admission.
- 17.2.4. Carers must record:
 - 17.2.4.1. date a koala enters their care;
 - 17.2.4.2. veterinarian or rehabilitator that the koala was received from;
 - 17.2.4.3. all monitoring observations, including weight, amount of leaf/milk consumed, faecal counts, and behavioural observations, at the required frequency (see section 7 of this Code of Practice);
 - 17.2.4.4. date a koala leaves their care; and
 - 17.2.4.5. veterinarian or rehabilitator that the koala was relinquished to.
- 17.2.5. Koala releasers must record:
 - 17.2.5.1. time and date of release;
 - 17.2.5.2. exact location of release (including co-ordinates);
 - 17.2.5.3. whether the koala was released at its rescue site; and
 - 17.2.5.4. if not, the results of the assessment showing the rescue site to be unsuitable, and the results of all other assessments supporting the eventual release site.

18. Wildlife rehabilitation organisations

18.1. Objective

- 18.1.1. To identify the roles and responsibilities of koala rehabilitation organisations and persons operating under a group rehabilitation permit.

18.2. Standards

- 18.2.1. An organisation conducting koala rehabilitation activities in Queensland must be a legal entity (incorporated association or Australian company) and hold a valid rehabilitation permit issued under the NC Act by the department.
- 18.2.2. A voluntary wildlife rehabilitation organisation with a rehabilitation permit must ensure that:
 - 18.2.2.1. all members engaged in koala rehabilitation (rescue, care, and/or release) comply with this Code of Practice;
 - 18.2.2.2. the organisation and its members comply with the conditions of their rehabilitation permit;
 - 18.2.2.3. the organisation provides a current copy of the rehabilitation permit to members stating the period of membership and what species the member is endorsed to care for, together with the total number of animals that the member is entitled to hold, under the group rehabilitation permit;

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- 18.2.2.4. the organisation provides new and inexperienced members with appropriate and ongoing training and mentoring relating to koala rehabilitation;
 - 18.2.2.5. membership lists are updated and forwarded annually within 20 business days at the close of each financial year to Permissions Management, the Department of Environment and Science, palm@DES.qld.gov.au or GPO Box 2454, Brisbane QLD 4001; Additionally, organisations in SEQ must keep up to date lists of all members available for inspection at all times by the department;
 - 18.2.2.6. a process is established for handling alleged breaches of this Code of Practice , or non-compliance with other relevant rules of the organisation;
 - 18.2.2.7. a procedure is established for responding to complaints against members either from external or internal parties (all new members must be given copies of this procedure); and
 - 18.2.2.8. all members are given timely, clear, and detailed directions by the organisation concerning the activities that the member may carry out under the rehabilitation permit.
- 18.2.3. The organisation must advise the department in writing within 20 business days of any person who is no longer a member and that they are no longer permitted to operate under the permit.
- 18.2.4. If the organisation becomes aware that a member operating under the permit does **not** comply with this Code of Practice, the organisation must:
- 18.2.4.1. identify the actions or steps needed to be taken by the member to comply with this Code of Practice and the associated time frames;
 - 18.2.4.2. take responsibility for the individuals' actions under the group permit, and either:
 - 18.2.4.2.1. limit the authority of the member to operate under the permit; or
 - 18.2.4.2.2. instruct the person in writing that they are no longer permitted to operate under the permit.
- 18.2.5. Members of a voluntary wildlife care organisation authorised to rehabilitate koalas require written approval from the permit holder to lawfully rehabilitate koalas under the organisation's rehabilitation permit. The document [Information Sheet – Authorising a relevant person under a rehabilitation permit](#) outlines the requirements and process for rehabilitation permit holders to authorise a relevant person to care for sick, injured, or orphaned protected animals under their rehabilitation permit. The document [Form – Rehabilitation permit authorisation](#) is to be completed by the permit holder for the member showing their details of membership and species permitted to be cared for. This form must be carried by the member at all times when dealing with animals under the authority.

19. Training

19.1. Objective

- 19.1.1. To ensure koala rehabilitators have the appropriate knowledge and skills to safeguard the welfare of koalas in their care.

19.2. Standards

- 19.2.1. All newly permitted koala rehabilitators must complete a suitable training course for new koala rehabilitators, and must not undertake the rescue, care, or release of koalas until this training is complete.
- 19.2.2. A suitable training course for new koala rehabilitators is one that, at a minimum:
- 19.2.2.1. teaches the standards described in this Code of Practice, with practical and written assessment components relating to rescue, care, and release of koalas;
 - 19.2.2.2. teaches health and safety issues associated with koala rehabilitation (e.g., disease transmission, zoonoses, managing hazardous chemicals and operating in hazardous locations);
 - 19.2.2.3. focuses on what a person will be able to do as a result of completing the course (i.e., be competency-based);
- 19.2.3. A suitable training course for new koala rehabilitators should also:
- 19.2.3.1. within the rescue component, include awareness training regarding the need for euthanasia in various circumstances, normal koala behaviour in urban environments, and the risks associated with unnecessary rescue;
 - 19.2.3.2. within the care component:
 - a. include a training module for 'General koala care', that would enable a carer to appropriately:
 - i. undertake care of koalas relevant to the developmental stage of the koala and/or level of care required;
 - ii. maintain their facility in a way that is suitable for the relevant developmental stage of the koala and/or level of care required;
 - iii. monitor all facets of a koala's health (as per this Code of Practice);
 - iv. identify suitable leaf for feeding koalas; and
 - v. understand the need for euthanasia in certain circumstances.
 - b. include an optional training module for 'Advanced koala care', that would enable a carer to appropriately care for sick or injured koalas.
 - 19.2.3.3. within the release component, include awareness training that in many circumstances koalas are required to be released back at their rescue site, and for SEQ based courses that they should include training on application of the Guideline - Selection of Release Sites for Rehabilitated Koalas in South East Queensland; and
 - 19.2.3.4. be accompanied by ongoing in-field support from *experienced koala*

rehabilitators.

- 19.2.4. All previously permitted koala rehabilitators must attend a suitable refresher training course every three years and provide proof of recent training when they apply for renewal of rehabilitation permits.
- 19.2.5. A suitable refresher training course is one that, at a minimum:
 - 19.2.5.1. teaches the standards described in this Code of Practice, with practical and written assessment components relating to rescue, care, and release of koalas; and
 - 19.2.5.2. teaches health and safety issues associated with koala rehabilitation (e.g., disease transmission, zoonoses, managing hazardous chemicals and operating in hazardous locations).
- 19.2.6. Training may be provided by a Wildlife Rehabilitation Organisation, or another suitable organisation, and should be delivered by trainers with significant, relevant experience. For example, an advanced koala care module should be delivered by a trainer with suitable veterinary care experience.

20. Definitions

Animal — any member of the animal kingdom (other than humans) as defined in the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

Carrying capacity — the maximum number of koalas that a site can sufficiently sustain before it suffers significant deterioration.

Code of Practice — the Code of Practice: Rehabilitation of Sick, Injured, or Orphaned Koalas in Queensland.

Conservation officer — a person who is appointed as such by the responsible Minister under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

Critical — when the animal is affected by: major traumatic injuries, difficult breathing, major bleeding, serious head injury, or disembowelment; or is showing any signs of severe pain or discomfort; or has obvious injuries or illness that might cause the death of the animal; or is rescued or found in circumstances which might reasonably be expected to have caused such injuries or illness, even if they are **not** apparent (for example: dog attack); or the animal is moribund.

Department — the Department of Environment and Science.

Euthanasia — to achieve humane destruction of a koala, as per the Guideline: Determining Whether a Koala Requires Euthanasia.

Experienced koala rehabilitator — a person with a minimum of three (3) years, ongoing demonstrated wildlife rehabilitation experience specific to koalas.

Koala rehabilitator — a person who is engaged in the rehabilitation (rescue, care, and release) of sick, injured, or orphaned wildlife and is operating under a valid rehabilitation permit either as an individual or as member of a rehabilitation organisation.

NC Act — the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

NC Animals Regulation — the Nature Conservation (Animals) Regulation 2020.

NC Koala Plan — the Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2017.

On-site confirmation — an in-person visual inspection of the release site, conducted by a koala rehabilitator prior to the release of a koala, to confirm whether the release site is currently suitable for release.

Orphaned — a koala that was rescued at a stage of development where it was or would have been dependent on its mother but was kept, fed, and cared for by a person, in place of its mother due to the mother being deceased or temporarily sick or injured.

Permit — a rehabilitation permit issued under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

Protected wildlife — an animal that is prescribed as such in the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

Rehabilitation — a multi-phase process aiming to address the welfare needs of koalas that are found sick, injured, or orphaned, and contribute positively to koala conservation, including rescue, care (if necessary), and release of koalas to the wild, in such a way that they can, where possible, successfully re-join local breeding populations.

Rehabilitation organisation — a corporation or association holding a valid rehabilitation permit whose members engage in the rehabilitation of sick, injured, or orphaned wildlife.

Rescue — limited to koalas that are, or are reasonably suspected to be, sick, injured, or orphaned, as per section 6.2.2. of this Code of Practice.

Rescue site — the location where the koala was rescued.

SEQ Wildlife Hospital — a veterinary clinic or facility of the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network.

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SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network — Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, Moggill Koala Rehabilitation Centre, and RSPCA Wildlife Hospital.

SEQ or South East Queensland — the local government areas of Brisbane City Council, Gold Coast City Council, Ipswich City Council, Lockyer Valley Regional Council, Logan City Council, Moreton Bay Regional Council, Noosa Shire Council, Redland City Council, Scenic Rim Regional Council, Somerset Regional Council, Sunshine Coast Regional Council, and Toowoomba Regional Council.

Treating veterinarian — in SEQ, the closest SEQ Wildlife Hospital. Outside of SEQ, the closest suitably experienced and qualified veterinarian to assess, treat, and care for koalas.

Veterinary surgeon — a person registered as a veterinary surgeon under the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936*.

Veterinary treatment — the conduct and application of veterinary surgery and veterinary medicine when applied to sick, injured, or orphaned animals by a veterinarian.

Wildlife — a protected animal as defined in the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

Zoonosis (plural zoonoses) — any infectious disease that can be transmitted from both wild and domestic animals to humans.

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Approved by

Ben Klaassen

Signature

30 June 2023

Date

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