

PHILLIP ISLAND NATURE PARKS

ANIMAL WELFARE POLICY

Phillip Island Nature Parks (the Nature Parks) is a unique conservation organisation that was established in 1996 under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* “for the conservation of areas of natural interest or beauty or of scientific, historic or archaeological interest”.

We acknowledge the Bunurong as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live, work, and learn. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and recognise their role in caring for Country over thousands of years. We also acknowledge their continuous connection to the land, water, sea, and sky on Milawul.

The Nature Parks accepts the responsibility of treating animals with care and respect. We acknowledge all animals under our care deserve a ‘good life,’ experiencing good physical and mental health, and being provided with an environment that enables positive experiences, choice, and expression of the widest possible range of natural behaviours.

Our story

The Nature Parks Animal Welfare Policy adopts a holistic approach to achieve the highest standards of animal welfare in our organisation. Our commitment to maintain an evidence-led approach to conservation and animal welfare has delivered outstanding outcomes on Phillip Island (Milawul) and beyond. This unique research-based and tourism funded approach to conservation has positioned the Nature Parks as a global leader in tourism-integrated conservation.

It is well known that human health and wellbeing of humans, along with the sustainability of socioeconomic and ecological systems, are closely linked to animal welfare. Over the last 50 years, technological developments have been integrated into little penguin field research to improve animal welfare and enhance the efficiency of methods used in wild colony research. Some of these technological advances include:

- Enhancing the use of Automatic Penguin Monitoring Systems (APMS). This technology was introduced in 1994 and is designed to weigh individual little penguins and scan their microchips as they cross the dunes on their way to sea or back to the colony. An APMS allows researchers to collect data without physically handling each penguin and has significantly improved the quality and quantity of data collected each night.
- The development and production of custom-built handheld scanners to detect transponders used to mark/identify birds have eliminated the need to handle little penguins in their nests. This allows researchers to download the data directly from the scanner, reducing errors in physical data collection.

- The adoption of bio-logging technologies, such as time-depth recorders, accelerometers, and hydrophones, has enabled the collection of detailed behavioural and environmental data from individual penguins over extended periods. These technologies provide critical insights into penguins' movement patterns, foraging behaviour and interactions with their environment.

In addition to advancing scientific understanding, bio-logging technologies offer significant animal welfare benefits. By providing non-invasive and precise monitoring methods, these tools reduce the need for direct human intervention or frequent handling, which can cause stress to the animals.

Furthermore, the data collected can inform conservation strategies, helping to identify and mitigate threats in the penguins' natural habitats, ultimately supporting healthier and more sustainable populations.

While work on wild populations has been extremely successful and well regarded, the Nature Parks has also followed and implemented strong principles of the Five Domain Model (Mellor et al., 2020) by investing in greater captive animal welfare practices at Churchill Island, whilst remaining committed to continuous improvement.

The Nature Parks also cares for captive native animals at the Koala Conservation Reserve, which was established to support the conservation of koalas on Phillip Island and surrounds. Native wildlife will only be held for conservation and health research purposes, with management practices prioritising the reproduction of natural habitats and the animals' behavioural and physiological needs.

The Nature Parks takes pride in being a leader in 'tourism-integrated conservation' where visitors directly contribute to the conservation of wildlife and the environment while developing meaningful connections with animals and the natural world. We have an ongoing commitment to foster a culture of compassion, care and respect. We also strive to provide robust moral justification for animal care, adhere to high welfare standards, operate based on empirical evidence, and remain committed to continuous improvement.

The purpose of this policy is to establish the Nature Parks commitments to animal welfare and the framework for how this is integrated across the organisation. The policy supports the organisation's compliance with regulatory requirements, animal welfare guidelines, and scientific publications pertaining to animal welfare.



Jessica McKelson
General Manager Conservation

Vision

The vision of Phillip Island Nature Parks is to be a place where conservation and ecotourism excellence inspire people to actively protect the environment. Its purpose is to protect nature for wildlife and inspire people to act.

To achieve this vision, the Nature Parks works towards securing thriving terrestrial and marine ecosystems for wildlife populations, acknowledging that this is a shared responsibility with all who visit, live, and connect with Phillip Island (Milawul).

Animal welfare defined

Animal welfare is defined as the state of an animal as it attempts to cope with its environment (Broom, 1988). This definition incorporates both the emotional and physical health of an animal and can be measured on a scale from negative to positive. Animal welfare considerations may refer to actions or interventions designed to minimise suffering in an individual animal living in the wild. While decisions are primarily based on the welfare outcome for an individual, conservation status of species can also influence decision-making by prioritising those more at risk of extinction. However, the focus remains on preventing suffering and improving the animal's quality of life.

Animal welfare requires complex decision-making that considers current and likely future quality of life, and fitness parameters for individuals, as well as potential impact on wild populations and human livelihoods (Nature Education, 2012). An example may arise where there may be a challenge between sustaining certain human livelihoods and preserving a particular species, or there may be a challenging situation between the protection of wild populations and the ecosystem and animal welfare (Nature Education, 2012). The Nature Parks acknowledges the ethical balance required in how these challenges are managed into the future.

The international five freedoms (freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition; freedom from fear and distress; freedom from physical and thermal discomfort; freedom from pain, injury and disease; and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour) are a guiding framework for animal welfare (World Organisation Animal Health, 2024) and form the foundation for the Nature Parks animal care principles, ensuring that these standards are embedded into its conservation and management practices.

Our animal welfare commitments

The Nature Parks is in a unique position to promote animal welfare through interaction and management of both wild and captive animals. As such, the Nature Parks is committed to exceeding the requirements of animal welfare legislation and guidelines and acknowledges both its legal and moral responsibilities in animal care.

This policy outlines a series of overarching principles guiding the organisation's decision-making process and commitments under four pillars. These are underpinned by procedures, detailed animal welfare guidelines, euthanasia guidelines, and an evaluation procedure that complete the animal welfare governance structure (Appendix B).

- Pillar 1 – Animal welfare commitments for wildlife tourism
- Pillar 2 – Animal welfare commitments for wildlife conservation programs
- Pillar 3 – Animal welfare commitments for wildlife care, rescue, rehabilitation and release
- Pillar 4 – Animal welfare commitments for Churchill Island farm animals and conservation dogs

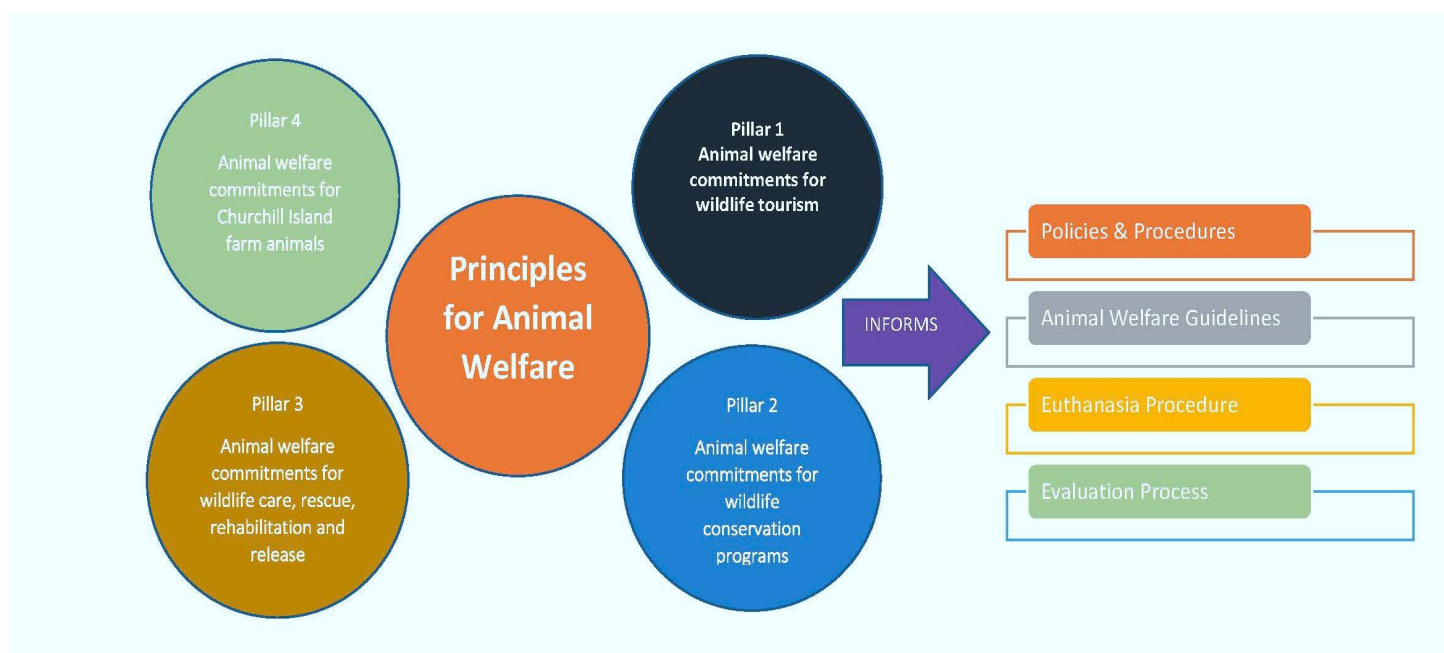


Figure 1: The Nature Parks animal welfare governance structure.

Principles of animal welfare

The Nature Parks purpose to 'protect nature for wildlife' naturally aligns with animal welfare goals by building compassion and respect for wild and captive animals and Phillip Island's (Milawul) special places.

The Nature Parks values have been developed to support this purpose and the organisation's aspirations. This section sets expectations for animal welfare under each of these values and will guide the implementation of best practice animal welfare and ongoing improvement.

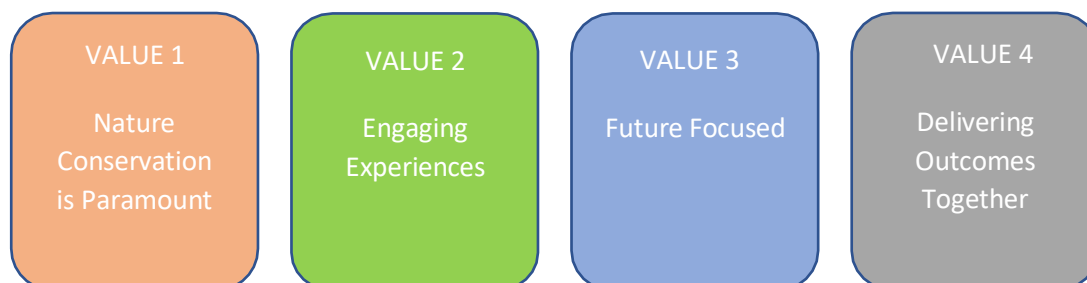


Figure 2: The Nature Parks values.

Nature conservation is paramount: Nature conservation must be integral to everything we do to fulfil our purpose and achieve our vision. This value ensures that all our activities either improve the environment or minimise harm in every way possible. To implement this value in regard to animal welfare, we commit to:

- **Recognising** that many animals, especially higher vertebrates, feel and experience emotions.
- **Acknowledging** the everlasting connection of First Nations peoples to nature and culture on Phillip Island (Milawul) is to be respected, nurtured, and adopted in animal welfare management.
- **Considering** the impacts on individual animals and populations in our decision-making around land management, threatened species conservation, wildlife research, and ethical tourism.
- **Understanding** that humane euthanasia may be appropriate in certain circumstances where it is in the best interest of the individual animal (to alleviate incurable pain and distress) or for the conservation of native wildlife populations.

Engaging experiences: The way our staff engage with each other, our stakeholders, and our visitors has a big impact on our success. We want our visitor experiences to inspire and delight, offering a window to Phillip Island's natural environment. We also strive to create a welcoming, fun, and inspiring working environment and culture for our team. If we are successful in creating this type of workplace, our stakeholders' experiences will also become more engaging. To implement this value with regard to animal welfare, we commit to:

- **Showcasing** our commitment to animal welfare to our visitors and community, both locally and abroad.
- **Striving** to be a leader in ethical wildlife tourism practices by putting the welfare of animals first and communicating this through natural experiences.

Future-focused: The Nature Parks has never faced a greater challenge than today's environment. Our greatest asset is our ability to sustain our own funding. It is imperative that we achieve this financial sustainability once again. To get there we need to be more adventurous, adaptable and driven by our financial success. To implement this value with regard to animal welfare, we commit to:

- **Embracing** an evidence-based approach that fosters continuous improvement in our standards and technology.
- **Continuing** to be future-focused, flexible and adaptable in identifying risks and opportunities to enhance animal welfare.

Delivering outcomes together: Our partnerships include our staff, volunteers, community, Bunurong, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and the many groups and organisations we work with. All our achievements are the result of the collective effort of many. We accomplish more when our teams work together effectively and when we leverage the knowledge, skills, and experience of our community and partners.

- **Collaborating** and building partnerships with our community to share solutions and expertise in animal welfare.

Four pillars of animal welfare

The Nature Parks has a diverse range of animal welfare responsibilities across the Crown land reserves it manages and within the businesses that it operates. There are four focus pillars of animal welfare activities, which are described on the following pages.

Pillar 1 – Animal welfare commitments for wildlife tourism

The Nature Parks engages in wildlife tourism experiences such as the Penguin Parade, Koala Conservation Reserve and Churchill Island. These experiences aim to connect visitors to nature and inspire future conservation-friendly behaviour. The revenue from these experiences goes towards our conservation outcomes, so tourism complements the role in upholding conservation and the commitment to ensuring good animal welfare. The Nature Parks ensures all wildlife tourism activities are conducted in accordance with best-practice animal welfare standards by:

- **Ensuring** animal behaviour is not interrupted, and visitor experiences promote authentic, responsible, and respectful wildlife watching.
- **Delivering** credible and strong conservation messages and interpreting natural animal behaviours leaving visitors informed and inspired to act for nature.
- **Discouraging** wildlife feeding by visitors and acknowledging that it is prohibited across all the Crown land reserves and strongly discouraged by wildlife management authorities.
- **Making sure** facilities or assets used for tourism are designed in a way that minimises impacts on wildlife by considering factors such as environmental footprint, lighting impacts, equipment use, traffic access, excessive noise and other potential disturbances.
- **Committing** to delivering all infrastructure projects that align with legislative and environmental standards, uphold best animal welfare practices and work with experts to avoid or minimise impacts on wildlife and natural environments.
- **Embracing** technology to accelerate research and delivery while minimising impacts on wildlife. By leveraging innovative technological experiences, we can reach broader audiences and connect people to the protection of our wildlife and environment.
- **Training** our tourism staff in wildlife response and ecotourism accreditations, enabling staff to intervene when they observe wildlife welfare concerns.
- **Continuously monitoring** and reviewing wildlife populations exposed to visitor experiences to ensure good animal welfare is upheld.

Pillar 1 – Case Study: Penguin Parade Boardwalks and Viewing Stands Redevelopment

The Nature Parks \$42M 'Penguin Parade Boardwalks and Viewing Stands Redevelopment' project aims to upgrade ageing infrastructure to ensure it meets safety compliance requirements, improves disability access, and that the Penguin Parade remains the number one regional attraction in Victoria.

The proposed works are conducted in accordance with the zoning of the land, designated as a Public Conservation and Resource zone, where the project looks to both protect the natural environment and provide facilities for public education and interpretation of the environment. This will be achieved through the proposed boardwalk, which will prevent the public from damaging surrounding sensitive habitat while enhancing the visitor experience on the Penguin Parade viewing stands and platforms. Current boardwalks allow members of the public access from the Penguin Parade Visitors Centre to the viewing areas at Summerland Beach. Several key constraints have been identified with the existing access, being:

1. The current boardwalk contains sections that are too steep and therefore are not compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).
2. The design of the current boardwalk contains areas of inefficiency, due to the route design not being a looped experience.
3. The current infrastructure is deteriorating in sections, is at the end of life and requires upgrading.

With the above items in mind, the Nature Parks has undergone a detailed investigation process to first understand the cultural and ecological values of the boardwalk area, before progressing to develop designs and an alignment for the boardwalks. The original concept plan for the project included 12 different alignment options, internally reviewed by the Nature Parks Conservation team for feedback, with a focus on the impacts on little penguins and short-tailed shearwater. A boardwalk route was selected based on the feedback provided, which avoided key areas of sensitive habitat. Key considerations for reducing impacts to little penguins was a map of the burrow locations near the proposed boardwalk upgrade area, based on recent data collected by the Nature Parks. In addition to little penguins, the project focuses on the visitor experience and how it can be improved in a cultural and ecologically sensitive way. During the design process for the project, seven refined alignment options were reviewed, and the final alignment option was selected with consideration of the following factors:

- Several different alignment options were considered for the location of the boardwalk, with the final alignment being selected above the others due to the lower impact on existing burrows, avoidance of culturally sensitive areas and ability to achieve DDA compliance.
- Preparation of a detailed Cultural Heritage Management Plan which identified several areas of significance. A large area of significance was present in an earlier alignment option, which resulted in this alignment being eliminated from further consideration. The final boardwalk alignment avoids all culturally sensitive areas in addition to the areas of sensitive fauna habitat.
- Detailed mapping showing the location of little penguin burrows within proximity to the project area, with an alignment selected that impacted the fewest burrows.
- A reduction in the number of footings required for the boardwalk.
- The height of the boardwalk to allow little penguins to easily pass underneath, with sections of the boardwalk proposed to be much higher.
- The boardwalk decking will be constructed out of fiberglass-reinforced plastic, which is designed to be longer lasting and easy to install. The design also allows light to pass through the boardwalk, reducing the amount of shading on vegetation underneath the boardwalk.
- All efforts to retain native vegetation and/or habitat within the construction corridor were applied through micro-siting during construction.

With the above items considered and incorporated into the boardwalk design, the delivery of the first stages of boardwalks and viewing stands project has resulted in minimal impacts to environmental and cultural heritage values.

Pillar 2 – Animal welfare commitment for wildlife conservation programs

Assisting with the reintroduction, conservation, and survival of fauna to Phillip Island (Milawul) is a key objective of the [Nature Parks 30-Year Conservation Vision – ‘Beyond the Horizon’](#) and is dependent on the conservation of existing, and re-establishment of, suitable habitat. The Nature Parks believes that native wildlife should remain in their natural environment whenever possible to achieve the best welfare outcomes.

The Nature Parks conservation work includes protection and re-establishment of natural habitat, threatened species recovery and reintroduction programs (e.g. eastern barred bandicoots), humane management and intervention of overabundant native and invasive pest species, and conservation research programs. Our animal welfare commitments within these activities include:

- **Ensuring** any wildlife management activities, including the control of invasive species or overabundant native wildlife, are conducted in a way that complies with government standards and legislation, are evidence-led, humane and effective.
- **Embracing** innovation and new advancements in humane animal control methods.
- **Demonstrating** best-practice animal welfare in threatened species programs and in preparing individual animals for release into the wild.
- **Continuously** monitoring and reviewing the animal welfare impact of our activities on native wildlife.
- **Designing** all infrastructure and assets in a way that minimises disturbance of native wildlife.
- **Securing** protection of natural habitat on the island through engagement with Traditional Owners, local community, Bass Coast Shire Council, State Government and businesses.
- **Considering** the individual animal welfare implications of our research and management activities and ensuring the most welfare-friendly research methods are used.
- **Providing** appropriate independent governance and oversight of our conservation work through the maintenance of two independent committees being:
 - An independent Animal Ethics Committee, which is required by law and is responsible for overseeing the ethical approach of the Nature Parks research projects and procedures involving wildlife.
 - The Scientific and Research Advisory Committee, which includes outstanding external scientists who advise the Conservation department and the Phillip Island Nature Parks Board on scientific programs and strategic research directions.

Pillar 2 – Case study: Adapting new technologies to further improve animal welfare practices for Australian fur seals

The Nature Parks is leading vital research with the use of advanced technology, to safeguard the Australian fur seal (*Arctocephalus pusillus doriferus*). Monitoring the population of seals and pups at major breeding colonies across Victoria is the best way to understand the health of the Bass Strait ecosystem. If there is a reduction in pups born in any given year, research on the causes of mortality or animal welfare can be investigated to provide a greater understanding of how to manage and make evidence-led changes towards protecting and managing the wild seal population.

The Nature Parks conservation team, along with external collaborators, has explored the use of Remote Piloted Aircraft (RPA), more commonly known as 'drones,' to improve techniques for surveying seal breeding sites. Researchers have developed methods that reduce disturbance to seals, compared to traditional methods that involve the physical presence of staff at breeding sites. The drones enable frequent and efficient of seal surveys, resulting in greater precision of results. This technique requires less staff resources, reducing potential risk to the welfare of the seals and safety of the staff. This is particularly important during the breeding season when young pups are most vulnerable to disturbance. In the past, surveys were performed every five years, however now, with annual surveys using the drone, scientists can better detect and understand rapid changes in the fur seal population and the Bass Strait ecosystem.

The Nature Parks harnesses the involvement of the global community through an online citizen science platform named 'SealSpotter', where participants contribute to the conservation outcomes by counting the seals. This helps to foster a connection between people, seals, and the marine environment, through engaging them in direct population surveys and conservation efforts, whilst enabling us to use new technologies to improve our research and the welfare of the seals.

Pillar 3 – Animal welfare commitments for native wildlife care, rescue, rehabilitation and release

The Nature Parks houses Victorian koalas (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) and bush-stone curlews (*Burhinus grallarius*) at the Koala Conservation Reserve. These animals form part of an ecotourism experience for the Nature Parks, where visitors can walk through natural habitat, view and learn about the conservation, research and recovery programs involving these animals. The Koala Conservation Reserve also has two large semi-wild holding areas to support rehabilitation of wild koalas in preparation for their release, as well as holding areas positioned away from visitors if animals require veterinary care. For the animals living under our care, our commitments include:

- **Continuing** to undertake captive animal practices that ensure animals have ‘a good life’ through application of the Five Domains Model (Mellor et al., 2020).
- **Designing and building** captive environments to support the animals’ natural behaviours.
- **Ensuring** that animals can express choice and control in their daily activities.
- **Establishing** breeding plans to consider conservation value and animal welfare outcomes.
- **Providing** animals with a high quality, nutritionally appropriate diet and present food in a way that encourages natural foraging behaviour.
- **Supporting** all individuals with proactive health care and the highest quality medical treatment when required.
- **Encouraging** all our visitors not to touch or interrupt the animals’ natural behaviour.
- **Researching** the health and welfare of captive koalas that can benefit wild populations within Australia.

The Nature Parks also cares for individuals being housed temporarily for rehabilitation at the Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre. Wildlife rehabilitation is defined as ‘caring for injured, sick, or orphaned native animals and providing access to veterinary assessment and treatment where required, then nursing care and support, with the goal of restoring them to their natural condition and habitat’ (Animal Welfare Victoria, 2022). Our commitment to animal welfare in wildlife rescue and rehabilitation includes:

- **Decision-making** for wildlife rescue and rehabilitation cases will consider animal welfare first, as well as conservation implications.
- **Providing** all native wildlife in care with the best chance for rehabilitation and return to their natural habitat.
- **Ensuring** all our wildlife rescue and rehabilitation guidelines are evidence-based and draw on expertise from leading professionals and practitioners in this field through partnerships with other organisations or engagement of specialist advice.
- **Providing** our Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre with appropriate housing for injured seabirds (and other native wildlife), including victims of emergencies in events like oil spills, heatwaves, bushfires, disease and road injuries.
- **Maintaining** expertise to assist in wildlife emergency events such as marine pollution, marine wildlife welfare issues, heatwaves and bushfires when requested by the lead agency.
- **Training** other key agencies and volunteers in seabird rehabilitation practices so they can support any future emergencies.
- **Supporting** research projects that are designed to build a stronger evidence base behind rehabilitation approaches.
- **Continuing** to showcase care and compassion for wildlife by engaging the community in the stories of animals undergoing rehabilitation.

Pillar 3 – Case study: Koala health research

Koalas are categorised as Vulnerable by the IUCN and are under various threats, such as habitat destruction, climate change and emerging diseases. One of these new threats is sarcoptic mange, which is caused by the mite *Sarcoptes scabiei*. While sarcoptic mange has been occasionally recorded in Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales, the understanding of its epizootiology is still insufficient. As health trends indicate that mange will have long-term effects on wild koala populations, solutions are urgently needed to protect wild koala populations.

The Nature Parks carried out a health study aimed to evaluate the safety and potential efficacy of transdermal fluralaner (Bravecto®) for treating sarcoptic mange in koalas. Five clinically healthy adult koalas (2 males and 3 females, aged 4–7 years) residing at the Koala Conservation Reserve were selected. These koalas were housed in free-range enclosures, ensuring natural living conditions and providing optimum food resources. The study was approved by the University of Sydney Animal Ethics Committee and Phillip Island Nature Park Animal Ethics Committee.

Based on prior pharmacokinetic studies in bare-nosed wombats (Wilkinson et al., 2024), a dosage of 85 mg/kg fluralaner was chosen. The spot-on application method was deemed most feasible for the captive koalas. The procedures were conducted by a wildlife veterinarian between March and June 2022. Daily monitoring by wildlife ranger staff included:

- **Behavioural observations:** Demeanour, movement, and responsiveness.
- **Appetite and faecal output:** Regular assessments to detect any changes.
- **Weekly health checks:** Conducted by park staff and the supervising veterinarian; these included pre-examination observations, body weight measurements, physical examinations under manual restraint, and blood sampling for haematological and biochemical analysis.

The koalas tolerated the treatment well, with no adverse effects observed throughout the study. Key findings included:

- No changes in gross behaviour, appetite, faecal output, or body mass.
- All koalas remained alert, responsive and in good health during the study period.

The results of this study indicate that treating healthy koalas could significantly benefit the welfare of wild populations. It presents encouraging evidence that fluralaner could be an effective treatment for sarcoptic mange in koalas, enhancing their welfare in the wild. Its transdermal application method makes it easy to use, especially for managing wild koala populations. These findings can help shape future research and management strategies focused on reducing the effects of *Sarcoptes scabiei* on koala populations.

Find out more here: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijppaw.2024.100999>

Pillar 4 – Animal welfare commitments for Churchill Island farm animals and conservation dogs

The Nature Parks believes that farm and other domestic animals have inherent value and deserve respect both as individuals and for their role in society. We operate Churchill Island for the purpose of representing the significance of the working farm to the history of this heritage listed site.

Developed in 1965 and internationally recognised, the Five Freedoms describe society's expectations for the conditions animals should experience under human control.

Our commitment to animal welfare for Churchill Island animals include:

- **Continuing** to undertake farming practices that ensure farm animals have 'a good life' through application of the Five Domains Model (Mellor et al., 2020).
- **Conducting** tourism activities that nurture respect for farm animals.
- Demonstrating how native wildlife and farming can co-exist to achieve positive outcomes in both food production and conservation.
- **Securing** a caring and enriching home for all domestic animals at the end of their working life.
- Undertaking tourism activities involving farm animals to promote the best farming practices and human/animal interactions.
- **Improving** the documentation of animal management methods to ensure the best-practice animal welfare and compliance can be evidenced.

The Nature Parks also manages conservation dogs for the purpose of pest animal control across Phillip Island. Our commitment to animal welfare for the conservation dogs include:

- **Continuing** to ensure the dogs have 'a good life' through application of the Five Domains Model (Mellor et al., 2020).
- **Conducting** field activities that are safe for the dogs.
- **Securing** a caring and enriching home for the dogs at the end of their working life.
- **Improving** the documentation of animal management methods to ensure best-practice animal welfare and compliance can be evidenced.

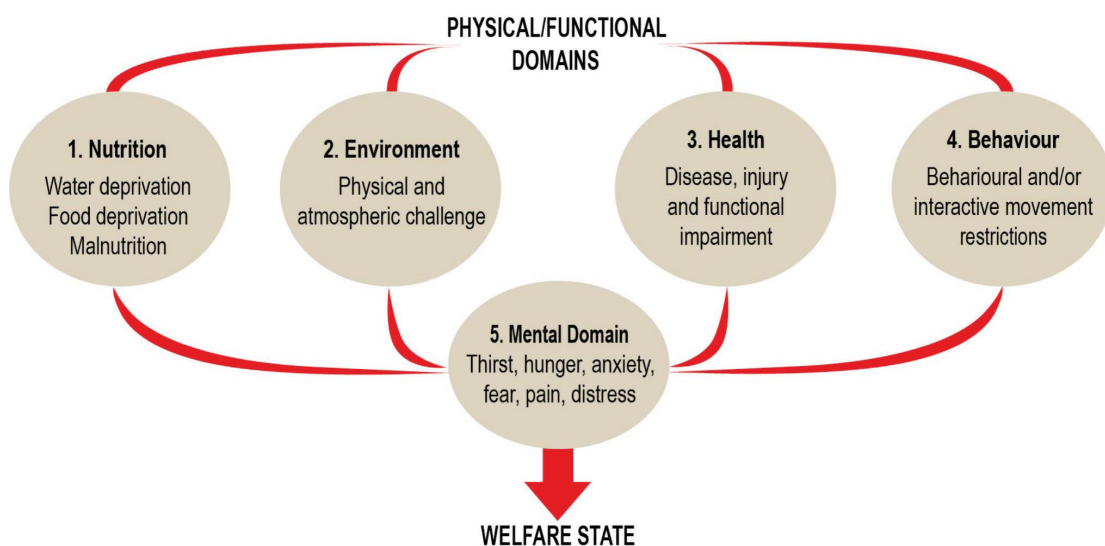


Figure 3: Five Domains Model (Mellor et al., 2020).

Pillar 4 – Case study: Working farm on Churchill Island

Churchill Island has been farmed since the 1800s. Since 1996, the Nature Parks has been managing the farm on Churchill Island, where animal welfare has been upheld and evolved over time. The facilities and enrichment programs are constantly evaluated and improved to meet the behavioural needs of all animals present. This includes cattle, sheep, horses, and a number of resident birds (cockatoo, roosters, and hens), many of which can freely roam the farm.

The establishment of a healthy population of endangered eastern barred bandicoots enables a narrative with visitors on how livestock (sheep and cattle) and native animals can coexist. In this example, the native animals also bring benefits to agriculture and land management through turning over soil and eating insects. Furthermore, Churchill Island offers Eastern barred bandicoot tours, led by experienced eco-accredited guides. The tours aim to educate visitors about the successful reintroduction of the species onto Churchill Island and the broader conservation efforts involved. To protect the bandicoot population from direct visitor interactions, the number of tours is limited, minimising potential disturbances and ensuring that they can continue their wild behaviour.

Understanding that healthy animals are productive animals is highlighted during visitor demonstrations, such as the shearing of sheep. Visitors learn that livestock can live healthy, well-cared-for lives while providing valuable resources like wool for clothing. Additionally, practices such as stock rotation ensure grazing animals have access to nutritious food, while allowing pastures to regenerate, exemplifying sustainable farming and optimal welfare standards.

Annual inspections of all wildlife and domestic animals on Churchill Island are conducted by a qualified veterinarian. Welfare reports are provided to the Nature Parks Churchill Island Attraction Manager and the General Manager Tourism with any concerns addressed.

Regulatory and compliance framework

The Nature Parks is committed to risk management and compliance as critical business processes to support its vision and strategic objectives. The management of wildlife both within and outside the Nature Parks is the responsibility of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). The Nature Parks will make decisions with priority given to ongoing animal welfare, habitat protection and the safety of visitors and staff, in consultation with DEECA and in accordance with the Victorian State Government Animal Welfare Policies and Guidelines (Appendix B).

The Nature Parks manages its compliance with the following legislation and regulations pertaining to animal welfare:

- The Nature Parks Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) ensures that all care and use of animals for research purposes is conducted in compliance with the Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 8th Edition 2013 (the Code). The AEC provides general oversight of all matters pertaining to animal welfare, and the care and use of animals (that are under the jurisdiction of the Nature Parks) by Nature Parks staff conducting research for scientific purposes.
- The codes of practice for animal welfare are made under either the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (POCTA Act) or the Domestic Animals Act 1994 (DA Act). Codes of practice set out recommended minimum standards and practices for the keeping of a wide range of species and animal-related activities. They should be read in conjunction with other relevant legislation.
- The Revised Code of Practice for the Welfare of Wildlife during Rehabilitation (the Code) to ensure the welfare of animals undergoing all stages of wildlife rehabilitation. It also provides an ethical guide for wildlife rehabilitation and outlines the responsibilities of those involved. The Code is incorporated under the POCTA Act.
- Any action taken in relation to an individual animal, e.g. euthanasia or contraception, must be undertaken with the wider goals and obligations of the Nature Parks in mind e.g. conservation of flora and fauna listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 & Flora and Fauna Guarantee Amendment Act 2019.
- Specific species translocations for conservation, whether introduction or re-introduction programs, must gain approval from the Nature Parks Board of Management. These programs must be conducted under appropriate permits from the Victorian Government and follow their procedures. Such programs take into consideration the potential ecological impacts on the welfare of resident wildlife, the conservation benefits for the translocated species, and implications for the community.
- To ensure the welfare of pest or non-target species, the Nature Parks implements control programs in accordance with the following State Government legislation:
 - *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CaLP Act)*
 - *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (POCTA Act)*
 - *Wildlife Act 1975*
 - *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
- Emergency Management Plans are developed under State and Federal Government direction to mitigate animal welfare and uphold best practices towards emergency preparedness. The Nature Parks has developed plans for bushfire, marine oil spill, heatwaves and wildlife diseases.
 - *Domestic Animals Act 1994*
- To ensure the welfare of livestock and domestic animals at Churchill Island, the Nature Parks implements the following State Government legislation:
 - *Livestock Disease Control Act (LDCA) 1994*
 - *Livestock Management Act 2010*
 - *Domestic Animals Act*

Monitoring and review

The Animal Welfare Policy will be reviewed every three years, but updates may occur at any time if changes to relevant legislation or accreditation requirements require an amendment.

Appendix A: References

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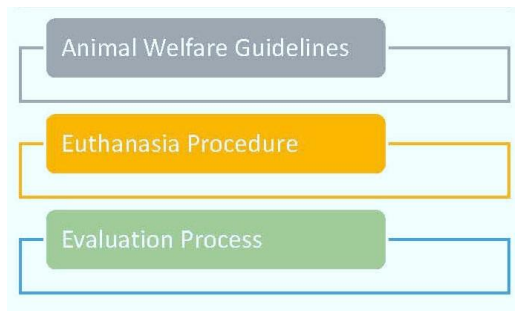
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Appendix B: Governance structure

List of Legislation/Regulations

- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (POCTA Act)
- Wildlife Act 1975
- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)
- Domestic Animals Act 1994 (DA Act)
- Code of Practice for the Welfare of Wildlife during Rehabilitation
- Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 & Flora and Fauna Guarantee Amendment Act 2019
- Wildlife (Marine Mammals) Regulations 2019
- Livestock Disease Control Act (LDCA) 1994
- Livestock Management Act 2010



C

Conservation

Private group

Home

Conversations

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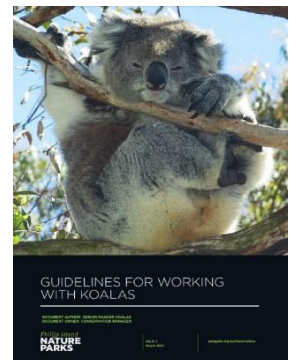
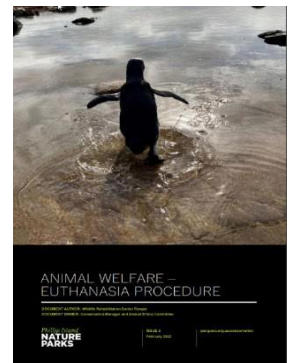
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Animal Welfare Procedures

	Name	Modified	Modified By	- Add col
	Bush Stone Curlew	July 20, 2022	Jessica McKelton	
	Conservation dogs	June 4, 2021	Paula Wasiak	
	EBB	November 22, 2021	Paula Wasiak	
	Koalas	October 29, 2021	Paula Wasiak	
	Penguin	December 30, 2021	Paula Wasiak	
	Seals	July 15, 2022	Paula Wasiak	
	WRC	November 13, 2024	Kimberly Moy	
	2022 The Nature Parks euthanasia procedur...	August 26, 2022	Jessica McKelton	
	SOP-OHS Lab Protocols V1.docx	May 22, 2023	Paula Wasiak	
	The Nature Parks euthanasia procedure 202...	August 26, 2022	Jessica McKelton	



Appendix C: Publications

The Nature Parks develops and conducts innovative research and technologies to support conservation and tourism activities across the business. The effectiveness of animal welfare outcomes is monitored as part of an adaptive management cycle and the research is shared globally to educate, promote, and update evidence-based industry practices.

You can find the list of our animal welfare publications on our [website](#).