

1.16 REPTILE POLICY

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Adopted 25 October 2008

Introduction

- 1.16.1 This policy incorporates the former policy 1.16 (Holding of Reptiles for Reptile Handling Courses) and supersedes former Policy 5.5 (Reptile Handlers Refresher Courses).
- 1.16.2 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all WIRES members who handle reptiles are appropriately trained. The primary concerns of the policy are for the health and safety of WIRES members and the welfare of the reptiles they handle.

Policy

- 1.16.3 Upon completion of the WIRES Rescue and Immediate Care Course any member may rescue and care for all varieties of lizards (excluding monitors) and turtles under the guidance of their branch Reptile Coordinator or branch Animal Officer/Coordinator.
- 1.16.4 WIRES members are only authorised to handle any WIRES snakes or monitors if they have successfully completed a WIRES Reptile Handling Course run by, or approved by, the WIRES Reptile Team.
- 1.16.5 Any WIRES member handling snakes or monitors prior to the successful completion of a WIRES Reptile Handling Course will not be covered by WIRES insurance.
- 1.16.6 WIRES members may attend Reptile & Amphibian Rescue, Rehabilitation & Release Courses without the need to go further and become a venomous reptile handler. Attendance at foster care courses does not confer authority to handle snakes and monitors.
- 1.16.10 It is recommended that Reptile Handlers (snakes and monitors) attend a WIRES Reptile Team approved refresher course at least every two (2) years. Those handlers who are not regularly called upon to handle reptiles should consider annual refreshers. If any Reptile Handler does not successfully complete a refresher course within three (3) years of their last course they will cease to be an authorised WIRES Reptile Handler.
- 1.16.11 At all Reptile Handling, Reptile & Amphibian Rescue, Rehabilitation & Release Courses and Reptile Beyond the Basics courses a vet or delegated member of the Reptile Team will be responsible for ensuring the wellbeing of live animals used for training purposes.
- 1.16.12 A central register of all WIRES Currently Authorised Reptile Handlers will be kept at WIRES Head Office and updated at least annually. All relevant privacy issues will be observed in keeping this register.
- 1.16.13 All WIRES Reptile handling and care is performed on a voluntary basis. Any “fee for service” relocations or care of Reptiles by WIRES members, whether or not they hold

an individual “catch and release” licence from NPWS, will be regarded as contrary to WIRES principles, and may result in disciplinary action. Any donations received by reptile handlers must be treated as donations to their WIRES branch, and a WIRES receipt issued.

- 1.16.14 WIRES Public Liability and Volunteers Insurance only covers members engaged in WIRES voluntary work.

HOLDING OF REPTILES FOR REPTILE HANDLING COURSES

Introduction

- 1.16.15 Due to the variability of activity and aggression of similar species in different regions of the state, there is a need to hold some local wild reptiles for use at WIRES Reptile Handling Courses.
- 1.16.16 Because of the inherently dangerous nature of these animals there is a need to have sufficient numbers of wild venomous snakes and indigenous non-venomous reptiles on hand at these courses so that both new and experienced reptile handlers will have sufficient opportunity to identify and practice reptile handling. It is essential that the handlers gain sufficient confidence and skill to enable them to become regular Reptile Rescuers within their branch.
- 1.16.17 It is important that the reptiles used at these courses are not unduly stressed or injured in any way due to overhandling or inappropriate housing, which may affect their successful release.
- 1.16.18 This policy's primary concern is for the welfare of the individual reptiles. This will encompass the initial capture, holding, housing, handling and release of the animal.
- 1.16.19 Prior to each season the WIRES Regional Reptile Teams will contact WIRES Branches within their region so that sufficient reptiles can be held to be used at whichever training courses have been planned. The holding of Elapids and Monitors for Handling Courses can only be done by an experienced and authorised WIRES member
- 1.16.20 The Branch Reptile Officers/Coordinators shall be responsible for liaising with the relevant Regional Reptile Team Leader leading up to a training course for which their branch is holding animals.
- 1.16.21 The Branch Reptile Officer/Coordinator shall be responsible for ensuring that the reptiles in care for the Reptile Handling Training Course are being held in suitable housing. Current housing standards are detailed in the Standards document “81 - Minimum Housing Standards for Reptiles”.
- 1.16.23 All reptiles conveyed to Reptile Handling Training Courses are to be passed into the care of members of the Reptile Handling Training Team prior to the commencement of each course, so that they may be placed into bags and tagged with the relevant Reptile Handler/Branch details to prevent confusion. The reptiles will be returned to the relevant Reptile Handler/Branch at the completion of the course, or as arranged.
- 1.16.24 All animals which are used at Handling Courses must be assessed as to their suitability for use prior to their being booked in for each course by the team members in attendance. Any animal may be removed at any time if it is found to be unsuitable.