

1.2 Nutrition for Native Animals in Care

Policy adopted 14/11/91: 1.2.1 – 1.2.5 - reviewed June 2007 – reviewed and presented to Council 31 May 2014 for approval to upload on intranet for comment, approved and adopted by Council 11 October 2014.

Introduction

This policy provides consistent and clear nutritional guidelines to assist members and Branches to ensure best nutritional outcomes for animals in care. The policy will allow new products to be added to an approved list, or a non-performing product to be delisted or not approved.

Definitions: “*staple*” means a food; “*supplementary*” means a product added to the food ie High protein mix.

Policy

- 1.2.1 (i) staple or supplementary dietary replacers used by carers for the rehabilitation of native animals will provide for the changing nutritional requirements of the animal in care.
- (ii) The approval of a product will be based on, where available, peer reviewed scientifically proven nutritional requirements of the animal, combined with information supplied by WIRES members, the manufacturer and expert advice. (e.g. Hume 1999)
- (iii) All approved products are to be used as described by the manufacturer.
- (iv) Based on (ii) an (iii) WIRES Inc. Board can decide if a staple or supplementary product is recommended.
- 1.2.2 Naturally occurring native food suitable for the age and species should be always considered as the primary source of nutrition.
- 1.2.3 WIRES members, Branches, Animal Management Teams, staff and manufacturers may provide information as described in 1.2.1 for a product to become approved.

PROCEDURE

It is recognised that diet and feeding are only part of a successful management regime; as such WIRES shall attempt to keep animal foods under review, including any new products on the market.

WIRES training will produce an outline of husbandry principles and practices where available for widely used products in WIRES training material. There are numerous manufactured food products that are suitable as a staple or supplementary food for native animals, which are being hand raised and rehabilitated.

It is expected over time a list of approved products and food manufacturers will be built up and all approved products will be subject to the WIRES Inc. food subsidy when available. A list approved products will be available from the branch treasurer and electronically. For consistency Branches will be subject to the same lists.

WIRES Use of Off Label Food Products in Native Animal Rehabilitation

As approved and accepted at WSC Meeting of 31 May 2014 for appending to policy 1.2 Nutrition for Native Animals in Care

Background

As wildlife carers, we rehabilitate a vast range of species that can be in care due to a varied and extensive range of illness and injuries. WIRES Inc. aims to rehabilitate animals effectively for successful release into their natural environment. With that in mind, WIRES Inc. promotes feeding a natural diet where ever possible. However, it is acknowledged that for some emergency and critical care cases, individual animals may need to be managed or supplemented with a non-natural diet to ensure their immediate survival whilst in captivity, prior to rehabilitation for release.

Due to species-specific requirements, species geographic variability and small species populations, not all species have documented nutritional requirements within WIRES policies, manuals, or indeed, in scientific literature. Similarly, nutritional requirements have been documented for some select species, but not necessarily for all disease conditions, physiological states (eg. lactation whilst in care, reproduction, post-surgical healing) or individual animal requirements. In most domestic animal species, it is generally well recognised in veterinary and nutritional literature that there can be large variation in requirements for animals recovering from specific disease conditions, physiological states, and between individual animals. It is intuitive that wildlife species would have comparable variations, and situations may require that some non-species specific human and animal food products may need to be used “off-label” under specific circumstances.

“Off-label” refers to a product used in a manner other than that specified on the specific product label or product insert.

Recommendations

WIRES Inc. does not endorse the use of “off-label” products where well-researched and proven labelled products exist. It is however acknowledged that not all species nor their associated conditions or physiological states have defined nutritional requirements. “Off label” use of food products by WIRES carers must therefore, be approved by the relevant species management team in consultation with veterinarians, animal nutritionists and scientists relevant to that species. Common general practice guidelines could be formulated and published in the relevant species care manuals, as well as communicated to the relevant species co-ordinators and carers in each branch. Only veterinarians may prescribe a specific “off label” diet to an individual animal under their care if that food product has not been previously approved through the species management team, recognising and respecting that veterinarians have experience in the nutritional requirements of animals, even if their wildlife experience is limited. Guidelines for ‘rehabilitation periods’ should be formulated by standards teams to cover a range of rehabilitation scenarios for which natural foods (and environments) need to be strictly followed.