

1.9 Euthanasia Policy

Policy revised 31/5/97 and 15/5/04: 1.9.1 – 1.9.9:22/01/05 reviewed 6/2007, July 2012

Approved at WSC Meeting of 15 September 2012

Introduction

- 1.9.1 The objective of WIRES is to rescue sick, injured and orphaned native fauna for rehabilitation and release. However if this stated aim of WIRES cannot be achieved due to age, condition, size, injuries or disease or, in extreme cases, lack of suitable habitat, then the native animals must be euthanased. In the interests of animal welfare and the fulfillment of WIRES NPWS licence conditions, if there is any question regarding the welfare of the animal then a veterinarian should be consulted. It is important for WIRES to foster and develop an understanding by veterinarians that the indicators for euthanasia of a native animal, which must fend for itself, will be more stringent than for domestic pets. Wherever possible, WIRES euthanasia activities should be performed by a veterinarian.
- 1.9.2 The most suitable method of euthanasia for most species under most circumstances is the parenteral administration of a barbiturate preferably by the intravenous or intracardiac route.
- 1.9.3 Other methods may be employed by WIRES members in emergencies, where recourse to veterinary assistance is impossible or impractical. In these instances WIRES members must be mindful of human safety, including their own, the animal's welfare and WIRES reputation as a caring organisation. Euthanasia can be a difficult and emotionally traumatic experience – particularly for unprepared observers, and WIRES members must be sensitive to public reaction.
- 1.9.4 Where uncertainty or the potential for conflict exists in regard to the elective euthanasia of an animal, a final decision will be made by a majority decision of the relevant branch coordinator and the branch executive.
- 1.9.5 No WIRES member will be coerced into witnessing or performing euthanasia on wildlife against their will. Animals may be removed from WIRES carers for euthanasia where a branch animal officer and the majority of the branch executive determine it is in the best interests of animal welfare and WIRES licensing conditions to do so.

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- 1.9.6 Euthanasia is defined as a “good death”, ideally it will be painless.
- 1.9.7 The method employed to euthanase an animal must be humane.
- 1.9.8 If euthanasia is planned, a veterinarian and/or the branch should be consulted.
- 1.9.10 Due consideration should be given to the species status (i.e. Common, Rare, Threatened etc) in decisions on euthanasia.
- 1.9.11 Animals will not be euthanased specifically to meet requests for bodies or tissue samples for research purposes.
- 1.9.12 If, after euthanasia for reasons consistent with this policy, bodies or tissue samples can be used for research purposes within NPWS guidelines, upon request every reasonable effort should be made to provide them.

1.9.13 Guidelines for Euthanasia technique

I. Veterinarians

In all circumstances parenteral administration of a lethal drug by a veterinarian as defined by the Australia Veterinary Association in its Guidelines for Euthanasia Policy is the preferred method of euthanasia.

II. WIRES members

a) Seek veterinary involvement, whenever possible.

b) In emergency situations unless a WIRES member is suitably trained and confident to handle the situation, the best course of action will be to call for outside help. (E.g. Police, other endorsed WIRES shooters NPWS staff, or another accredited and insured agency).

c) Ensure all Animal Welfare, Firearms Regulations and Acts of Parliament are complied with.

Appendix 1 – Some methods of euthanasia, which have been used in the past, are **no longer acceptable**.

1. **Inhalation of car exhaust.** This is considered inhumane as catalytic converters have reduced the toxicity of exhaust fumes and death is prolonged.
2. **Chloroform*** - see appendix 2 below - Chloroform is believed to be carcinogenic, and therefore an unacceptable risk to the user. This also includes strychnine.
3. **Exsanguinations** - (Bleeding out) unless preceded by some method of rendering an animal unconscious exsanguinations is considered both inhumane and aesthetically unpleasant.
4. **Freezing** – considered inhumane
5. **Suffocation** - via drowning, strangulation or chest compression.
6. **Poisoning** - with household products.
7. **Air embolism.**
8. **Electrocution or microwave irradiation**
9. **Neuromuscular blocking agents**
10. **Carbon Dioxide is not to be used**

Fauna that requires euthanasia should not be exposed to additional stressors such as large numbers of onlookers etc.

Appendix 2 – “Due to occupational health and safety concerns, the WSC finds it unacceptable to use Chloroform as a euthanasia agent for animals.” Chloroform is a hazardous substance with serious potential health effects for the user.

1.9.14 Process for becoming a WIRES endorsed shooter

- (a) The Applicant must be an authorised full member of WIRES Inc. This includes completing the RICC.
- (b) Submit an application to the BMC for permission to apply to become a WIRES Inc. authorised shooter endorsed as Genuine Reason - Animal Welfare. Provide written evidence of relevant training (type, when, where and by whom) and any other firearms experience.

- (c) Firearms safety training by an RTO of a nationally accredited course will be the minimum standard required by WIRES. Refresher training time frames of 3 years will be required for compliance for licence renewal.
- (d) The BMC to supply an assessment of the application along with numbers of animals in the particular location requiring euthanasia. Call sheets to be provided to support the assessment.
- (e) The application and assessment to be then forwarded along with the BMC recommendations to the Board for review.

If the Board considers that the Branch and the applicant has fulfilled all the requirements they will then supply a letter of recommendation with the application for endorsement as Genuine Reason - Animal Welfare to the Firearms Registry for the Commissioner's appraisal. The Firearms Registry will only accept applications on WIRES Inc letterhead signed by the WIRES Board Chair or General Manager. The adjudication process is at the discretion of the Firearms Registry.

When a member ceases to be a member, WIRES will notify the Firearms Registry of this so they can take the appropriate action.

Licence renewals will be at the discretion of the Firearms Registry.