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## **EUTHANASIA POLICY**

Acceptable methods for the euthanasia or humane killing of wildlife have now been considered and published by animal research and welfare organisations. State agricultural agencies, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), the Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching (ANZCCART) and National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) have overseen the development of approved codes of practice regarding the euthanasia for various species.

There are many ways of euthanasing wildlife and in an emergency you must decide which will be the most humane and quickest method. Some of the methods below have been used with varying success and should only be carried out by a trained or competent operator.

### **THE FIRST OPTION IN EUTHANASING ANY FAUNA IS TO CONSULT A VET.**

**Barbiturate Injection (pento-barbitone)** is the preferred and most common means of inducing a rapid and pain free death. **This can only be performed by a vet.**

**Firearms** – Must only be used by a trained and licensed operator. Care must be taken that ricochets will not occur. If you are licensed to use a firearm you must notify the local police first that you will be euthanasing an animal using this method.

If you do not have the equipment or knowledge to perform the task efficiently, refer to a species coordinator or vet who has the necessary skills. If you are unsure if euthanasia is warranted always get a second opinion. It is illegal to destroy wildlife, but if it is clear that the fauna needs euthanasing it should be put out of its misery as soon and as efficiently as possible.

### **The following factors should be considered prior to undertaking euthanasia of wildlife:**

- Your safety and the safety of your co-workers and volunteers
- Humane treatment of the animal
- Minimal distress and anxiety prior to loss of consciousness
- Rapid and pain free death (rapid loss of consciousness followed by respiratory and cardiac arrest)
- The method should not destroy tissues that are critical if diagnostic testing is needed.
- The method should not cause undue stress to human observers, and if possible, should be conducted away from members of the public. The procedure should only be performed by competent and experienced persons.
- If possible the procedure should be conducted in a quiet environment, away from other animals.
- Dependant offspring of the animals being killed should have care provided or humanely euthanased.
- Death must be confirmed prior to disposal of the carcass.



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**The following factors should be considered prior to undertaking euthanasia of wildlife: contd.**

- Secondary poisoning of predators and scavengers must be avoided by proper disposal (incineration or deep burial) of the carcass of animals euthanased by chemical means.

Wild animals are often capable of inflicting serious injuries as they try to escape handling. Effective animal restraint will facilitate euthanasia techniques.

The humane euthanasia of wildlife in a field situation can be difficult due to logistical concerns with available personnel, equipment and drugs. Logistical difficulties, however, do not absolve us of our responsibility to minimise pain and distress with euthanasing an animal.

The **methods of euthanasia that are considered humane** have changed dramatically over the years. Commercial carbon monoxide can produce a humane euthanasia, but should only be performed by trained operators as its use is not recommended due to human safety concerns.

**The following methods of euthanasia are no longer considered to be humane:**

- Cooling or freezing of reptiles, amphibians and fish
- Ether inhalation
- Decapitation of conscious amphibians, reptiles and fish
- Drowning
- Leaving fish out of water
- Death through the administration of neuromuscular blocking agents that paralyse the muscles controlling respiration.

### METHODS OF EUTHANASIA BY SPECIES

REPTILES	REPTILES
<p><b>ACCEPTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct administration of pentobarbitone</li> <li>• Striking reptiles on the head against a hard object causing rapid and complete destruction of the brain.</li> </ul>	<p><b>UNACCEPTABLE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooling or placing into a freezer, where ice crystal formation is slow and painful.</li> <li>• Decapitation, since the reptilian central nervous system may be slow to respond and lose consciousness.</li> <li>• Ether and carbon dioxide are not acceptable methods, since they act slowly and the animal will likely thrash violently.</li> </ul>
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<b>MACROPODS</b>	<b>POSSUMS &amp; GLIDERS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The animal can be restrained in a calico bag, with the tail or hind limb exposed to provide access to a prominent tail vein or lateral saphenous vein for direct administration of pentobarbitone.</li> <li>• Large macropods – At least 2 people are required to restrain the animal on the ground. The recommended method of euthanasia is via pentobarbitone overdose administered through the tail, cephalic or lateral saphenous or tarsal veins.</li> <li>• Experienced operators can shoot the animal through the heart or the head, but training and permits are necessary for this method.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiet animals can be restrained by holding the animal’s head with one hand, and the tail and hind legs with other. A towel over the animal’s head will reduce exposure to stimuli when barbiturates are injected intravenously.</li> <li>• Barbiturates can be administered via the jugular vein or femoral vein (best for gliders), cephalic vein, saphenous vein, ventral tail vein or lateral tail vein (best for possums).</li> <li>• Larger or more fractious animals can be placed in a calico bag and then into an anaesthetic chamber, or a mask can be placed over the muzzle (through or over the bag) for the administration of gas anaesthetic.</li> </ul>
<b>BIRDS</b>	<b>ECHIDNAS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical restraint and IV administration of pentobarbitone is a satisfactory method to euthanase most birds.</li> <li>• Gaseous anaesthesia can be administered via face mask (directly or through a calico bag) to facilitate intravenous injection.</li> <li>• CO2 can be used to euthanase small birds via a Soda Stream bottle. Seek advice from a coordinator regarding this procedure.</li> <li>• Pentobarbitone can be given via the cutaneous ulnar vein, medical metatarsal vein, or right jugular vein if accessible.</li> <li>• Larger birds, such as emus can be shot through the heart.</li> <li>• For small to medium sized birds less than approximately 150gms, cervical dislocation by trained personnel can be an effective means of euthanasia. If available, larger birds should be anaesthetised prior to cervical dislocation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intravenous injection of an echidna can be difficult, but the jugular vein is accessible.</li> <li>• If the animal is readily handled, gaseous anaesthetic can be used and then a single barbiturate overdose can be given.</li> <li>• Alternatively animals can be anaesthetised prior to euthanasia if required.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">Page 3 of 3</p>

**Reference: Wildlife Health Investigation Manual 2005 – Karrie Rose – Taronga Park Zoo**

Reviewed and authorised at a Committee meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2014      Item 39

To be reviewed yearly