



Fauna Rescue of SA Inc
ABN 20 601 494 364

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Wildlife Volunteer Help Line: 8289 0896

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FAUNA RESCUE RAPTOR POLICY

Raptors which commonly come into care in South Australia include diurnal (active during the day) species such as kestrels, sparrowhawks and hobby falcons and, less commonly, peregrine falcons, black kites, black-shouldered kites, whistling kites and wedge tailed eagles. They also include nocturnal species, predominantly barn and boobook owls.

Raptors are a very specialised group of birds which have very particular and specialised needs in terms of rehabilitation techniques, housing and dietary requirements.

A. SUMMARY OF PRE-REQUISITES FOR RAPTOR RESCUE AND CARE

1. In order to **rescue** an injured raptor, a carer needs to:
 - Have knowledge to assess whether a raptor needs to be captured and taken into care;
 - Have knowledge about how to safely capture, handle and restrain the raptor without causing injury to the carer, or injury or damage to the bird;
 - Have access to suitable methods of safely transporting the raptor.

2. In order to **care for** an injured raptor in the **short term** (ie 24 – 48 hours), a carer needs, in addition to the above, to:
 - Be able to identify the species, determine the gender of the bird and know the usual weight for that sex and species;
 - Be able to handle the bird confidently and safely to thoroughly examine it for injuries and illness;
 - Have extensive experience in identifying common injuries (bruising, concussion, fractures, eye wounds, gunshot wounds, barbed-wire injuries) and illnesses (trichomoniasis, starvation, dehydration);
 - Have sufficient experience to determine whether the raptor needs to be immediately euthanased;
 - Have access to specialised short term raptor housing which will not cause feather or foot damage and which will minimise stress on the bird;
 - Have the experience and ability to determine whether the raptor can be released within 48 hours or whether it will require longer term care;
 - Have the ability and experience to identify when a raptor is dehydrated and the ability to administer sub-cutaneous fluids;
 - Have sufficient experience to identify injuries or conditions which will make the raptor unreleasable.

3. In order to **care for and rehabilitate** an injured raptor in the **long term** (ie more than 48 hours) the carer needs, in addition to the above, to:
 - Have access to an experienced avian vet;
 - Have access to a suitable raptor-specific flight aviary;
 - Have access to reliable and ongoing food sources (mice, rats, rabbits, birds);
 - Have an ability to identify aberrant behaviour in captive raptors.



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4. In order to care for *orphaned raptors* a carer will need to:
- Have a thorough understanding of the concept of imprinting;
 - Take all steps necessary to avoid imprinting;
 - Have access to facilities and a suitable site to hack raptors (for species which can be hacked);
 - Have access to networks of carers to crèche orphans of the same species;
 - Have an understanding of how to determine when a baby raptor is capable of self-feeding;
 - Have access to suitable release sites;
 - Have access to reliable and ongoing food sources.

FAUNA RESCUE DOES NOT PERMIT ITS MEMBERS TO KEEP RESCUED RAPTOR OF ANY SPECIES IN PERMANENT CAPTIVITY.

FAUNA RESCUE HAS A FIRM "RELEASE OR EUTHANASE" POLICY.

B. RESCUE

1. All members who rescue a raptor are to contact a co-ordinator for advice immediately, or no later than 2 hours after rescue, to determine a rehabilitation plan. This is important as improper housing for even a few hours can cause irreparable feather damage.
2. Any raptor which has a severe injury which will not enable successful release is to be humanely euthanased as soon as possible, preferably by a vet. Such injuries which will require immediate euthanasia include:
 - irreparable loss of sight in an eye
 - a compound fracture of any part of a wing
 - a fracture in or adjoining a wing joint
 - loss of or permanent damage to the rear toe on either foot
 - loss of or permanent damage to the middle front toe on either foot
 - irreparable loss of use of one or both legs
3. Do not attempt to strap a wing.
4. A rescued raptor must not be held for any time or transported in a wire cage or a plastic slatted container as this can cause severe feather damage. The best method of transporting a raptor is in a cardboard box or other sheer sided container with no slats.

C. TREATMENT & REHABILITATION

1. Any decision to treat an injured raptor needs to be made after careful consideration, taking into account the species involved, the extent of the injury, the anticipated duration of the recovery period and the prognosis for a complete recovery to enable release.
2. A raptor co-ordinator must be consulted to develop a rehabilitation plan for each animal.



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3. Surgical treatment of raptors often carries with it a poor prognosis. Before any attempt is made at surgical intervention, a co-ordinator must be consulted and any such surgery should be attempted only by a very experienced avian vet.
4. Any bird which is ill or suspected of being ill must be properly quarantined from other birds and must not be released until possible contagious illness is ruled out.

D. HOUSING

1. All raptors must be housed:
 - away from all other species of domestic or native bird or animal
 - in a quiet area away from human traffic or human noise
 - all perches must be covered in soft material such as astro turf to avoid development of bumblefoot
 - no raptor enclosure is to have wire or slatted hard plastic sides
2. An intensive care cage is to be indoors, in a quiet room away from household activity and is used for the initial holding of injured raptors whilst they are in shock, dehydrated or requiring treatment for severe injuries or illness.
3. An intensive care cage is to be:
 - In a warm, dark, quiet environment
 - Large enough to allow the raptor to perch comfortably (perches to be covered with astro turf or similar) but not to fly or move about much
 - Have solid sides (no slats) with adequate ventilation
4. An outdoor aviary is to treat raptors which are no longer in shock or which require intensive treatment, but which should not yet be permitted to fly. An outdoor aviary is to be:
 - Located in an area away from pets and other animals
 - Minimum dimensions 3ft x 3ft for smaller species such as kestrels and owls, and 6ft x 6ft for larger species such as eagles.
 - Not constructed of wire mesh but to have solid walls and ceiling or wooden slats or, if a wire mesh aviary is used, it is to be lined **on the inside surface** by shadecloth so that the raptor cannot come into contact with the wire
 - Must not have pea straw, woodchips or hay as a bedding
 - Must be protected from the prevailing weather
 - Must contain numerous perches and/or perching stumps each covered with Astroturf and located sufficiently high off the ground that the raptor's tail is not touching the ground and sufficiently far away from the sides of the aviary that the bird's feathers are not coming into contact with the aviary
 - The aviary must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected between patients.



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5. A flight aviary is to be used to house raptors which need flighting before release to build up condition.
6. A flight aviary is to be:
 - Located in an area away from pets and other animals
 - Minimum dimensions 10m x 10m x 5m (high)
 - Not constructed of wire mesh but rather shadecloth or soft netting
 - Must not have pea straw, woodchips or hay as a bedding
 - Must be protected from the prevailing weather
 - Must contain numerous perches and/or perching stumps each covered with Astroturf and located sufficiently high off the ground that the raptor's tail is not touching the ground and sufficiently far away from the sides of the aviary that the bird's feathers are not coming into contact with the aviary.

TETHERING A RAPTOR IS NOT PERMITTED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES

E. DIET IN CAPTIVITY

1. Prey must be suitable to the species in care and thorough understanding of the dietary requirements of different species is necessary for anyone caring for raptors.
2. Raptor carers must have access to clean and reliable sources of whole body mammalian (mice, rats, rabbits) and avian (starlings, pigeons) prey.
3. Meat, dog biscuits or commercial pet food must not be fed.
4. Dehydrated raptors must never be fed fluids by mouth – all fluids are to be administered sub-cutaneously by an experienced carer.

F. RELEASE

1. Any decision whether a raptor is releasable must be taken in consultation with a raptor co-ordinator and, if applicable, upon veterinary advice.
2. An adult raptor **must** be released at the same location it was rescued. If the rescue location is not known (eg vet did not keep records of rescue address) consult with a raptor co-ordinator to determine a suitable alternative release site and release method.
3. A raptor will sustain loss of fitness and muscle condition once in care for a period exceeding 2 weeks. As such, a raptor must be released as soon as possible once it has recovered from the illness or injury which caused it to come into care. If the raptor needs to be in care for a period longer than 2 weeks, flighting the bird in a specialised raptor flight aviary to re-build fitness is required.



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4. A raptor must not be released if more than 4 primary feathers are broken, missing or damaged on either wing, or if 4 tail feathers are broken, missing or damaged. Rather than await a moult, such feathers may, in some cases, be able to be repaired by a process called “imping” which can only be done under general anaesthetic.
5. If the raptor is unreleasable it must be euthanased.

G. RAISING BABY AND JUVENILE RAPTORS

1. Young raptors imprint very easily, especially in the first 3 weeks after hatching. Extreme care must be taken to avoid imprinting.
2. Chicks must be encouraged to self-feed at the earliest opportunity.
3. Chicks must not be handled or be able to see or hear human beings except during the feeding process.
4. Where possible, the person feeding the chicks must disguise their appearance and/or use a feeding glove designed to resemble the adult bird.
5. All efforts must be made to crèche a single chick which has come into care with others of the same species and similar age.
6. Chicks of suitable species must be hacked by a member with a hack box located in a suitable location.

Reviewed and authorised at a Committee Meeting held on 14th April 2014 Item 44

To be reviewed yearly