Animal Rehoming Procedure

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This procedure addresses the requirements of the Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 2013 (the Code) regarding the provisions for animals at the conclusion of their use, specifically, rehoming, noting that:

a. clause 3.4.2 of the Code requires that '[o]pportunities to rehome animals should be considered wherever possible, especially when the impact of the project or activity on the wellbeing of the animal has been minimal and their physiological condition and behavioural attributes indicate that they can be introduced to a new environment with minimal, transient impact on their wellbeing' and
b. clause 3.4.3 of the Code requires that '[a]n animal must not be released to a person at the conclusion of their use unless:
    i. the AEC [Animal Ethics Committee] has approved such release
    ii. safeguards are in place and approved by the AEC to ensure the ongoing wellbeing of the animal etc.'

Scope

(2) This procedure applies where animals are no longer required for teaching, research or other scientific use and are deemed suitable for rehoming. A general guide is that if the animals have been covered by an Animal Ethics Committee usage authority, and they are owned by the University, they are within scope of this procedure.

(3) This procedure outlines specific responsibilities for people nominated as animal owners and rehoming coordinators.

(4) This procedure does not apply to the commercial sale of animals by the University farm.

Section 2 - Policy

(5) This procedure supports the Research Policy and should be read alongside that policy.

Section 3 - Procedure

(6) The University will endeavour to rehome animals that are no longer required for teaching, research or any other scientific use.

(7) The following should be considered when deciding which animals are suitable for potential rehoming:

a. Whether rehoming is in the animal's best interests.
b. That rehoming presents no danger to public safety.
c. That the rehoming process presents minimal negative welfare impacts to the animal.
d. Whether a suitable home can be identified affording the animal a good quality of life.

(8) The University will nominate a rehoming coordinator for each taxon where animal rehoming is reasonably

anticipated:

a. The rehoming coordinator for equids is the Manager, Animal and Field.
b. For other taxons, the internal University animal owner is the rehoming coordinator and can seek advice from the Animal Welfare Officer in relation to the implementation of this procedure.

(9) The University will seek to establish working relationships with appropriate rehabilitation and rehoming organisations with the intent of facilitating rehoming efforts.

(10) Animals can only be rehomed to persons aged 18 and over.

(11) All required registration requirements must be met, where applicable, before the transfer of ownership and relocation of the animal to its new home.

(12) All legal transfer of ownership must be completed before the transfer of ownership and relocation of the animal to its new home.

(13) Records kept of animals that are rehomed should include the records required by the Code and any additional records as set out below:

a. Records required by the Code include:
    i. animal identification, including as appropriate, passport or breed papers, or other means of identification such as branding, microchip details, other markings or scars
    ii. date of birth if known
    iii. if date of birth not known, date of acquisition by the institution
    iv. source of the animal
    v. fate of the animal post research and/or teaching, and
    vi. animal husbandry and veterinary records as available.
b. Additional records for rehomed animals should include, where appropriate:
    i. individual behavioural observations
    ii. behavioural and veterinary assessment prior to rehoming
    iii. details of the new owner or rehoming agency
    iv. details of any post-rehoming contact with or from the new owner, and
    v. failed rehoming attempts.

(14) Animals to be rehomed should be prepared to cope with novel environments and people. In general, the preparation of animals for rehoming should include the following:

a. Habituation to handling by humans to the point that animals are amenable to handling by multiple, potentially unfamiliar, individuals.
b. Socialisation with conspecifics to mitigate against agonistic escalation and encourage species appropriate interactions.
c. A level of basic training that will facilitate the animal's ability to be rehomed. One example would be training a horse to accept a head collar, be led, be tied up and have feet handled.

(15) In general, the selection of animals for rehoming should include the following:

a. Providing a period of time for the animals to recover physically and mentally from involvement in teaching and/or research activities before assessment for suitability for rehoming.

b. The application of species specific selection criteria for rehoming suitability. These criteria must consider the safety of the animal's new carers and the prospective welfare and wellbeing of the animal.
c. A health assessment of the animals by a veterinarian.
d. A behavioural assessment by a person with expertise in the behaviour of the species.
e. Assessment and input by the staff members familiar with the individual animals being considered, including animal care technical staff.
f. The capacity to identify animals not suitable for immediate rehoming but that might be suitable after remedial action.

(16) In general, rehoming guidance material should:

a. describe how potential owners are sought for each species
b. detail any collaboration with rehoming organisations, animal charities or animal keeper groups
c. provide specific criteria for determining the suitability of prospective new owners. Criteria might include the experience of the new owner with the species/breed, the number of animals already owned (to avoid hoarding), the facilities at the owner's property and any other criteria relevant to the animal's welfare
d. detail the information that will be provided to new owners relating to care and husbandry
e. detail the information that will be provided to the new owners relating to the history of the individual animal
f. detail the legal requirements and responsibilities of the parties to the transfer of ownership of the animal(s). This includes any registration requirements and financial considerations, and
g. detail how the physical transfer of the animal will be conducted, in consultation with the new owner.

(17) If possible and appropriate, foster care may be sought to enable rehabilitation of animals displaying undesirable behaviours and/or physical problems prior to starting the rehoming process.

(18) If animals have been used for drug trials or had non-routine drugs administered as part of a research program, then sufficient time for drug 'washout' must elapse before consideration for rehoming.

(19) Animals with known health conditions or physical disabilities may still be considered for rehoming with the following conditions:

a. The health condition or physical disability must be such that it still affords the animal a satisfactory quality of life.
b. The health condition or physical disability must be disclosed to the potential new owner.
c. The health condition or physical disability must be stable/manageable at the time of rehoming.
d. There must be a reasonable expectation that the condition or disability will remain stable or manageable.
e. A veterinary treatment plan must be prepared describing the condition, requirements for care, the likely prognosis/course of the condition as the animal ages and the anticipated associated costs.
f. The prospective owner, in the opinion of the rehoming coordinator, is able to meet the current and future needs of the animal.

(20) If possible and appropriate, prospective owners are strongly encouraged to meet the animals prior to rehoming. Where this does not occur the rehoming coordinator is to make a case to the Animal Ethics Committee as to why this is not required.

Information and advice

(21) At the time of rehoming an animal, a new owner should receive accurate written information, including a veterinary treatment plan where appropriate, about the care of the animal, at no charge.

(22) The general information that should be provided to a new owner includes, but is not limited to:

a. general care requirements of the species, including appropriate diet and feeding regimes
b. usual life span of the breed or species
c. best practice requirements for:
    i. shelter and accommodation
    ii. the security of the animal
    iii. social contact with humans and other animals of the same species
    iv. the transition of an animal to a new environment
d. information relating to the animals' history with the University, for example, length of time, purpose, nature of experiences
e. how to identify and appropriately manage common physical and mental diseases
f. procedures for seeking emergency veterinary treatment for the animal, and the value of establishing a relationship with a veterinary practitioner
g. the estimated costs associated with providing food and shelter for the animal
h. routine veterinary treatment which may be required for the animal, for example, vaccination and parasite control
i. maximum time an animal can be left unattended, recognising the needs of the animal
j. the expected normal behaviours of the species or breed, such as vocalisation, messy or destructive behaviour (birds), rooting (pigs) or grazing (ruminants)
k. information about the legal requirements for ownership, and the penalties for noncompliance
l. the benefits of desexing animals, where applicable
m. minimum requirements for exercise
n. costs associated with registering an animal (dog or cat), and
o. other information which is reasonable that the new owner should be made aware of.

Rehoming agreements

(23) It is recommended that a rehoming agreement be established between the University and the new owner. This requirement applies whether the new owner is a private individual, an animal welfare organisation, an animal rescue group or exhibitor. A person rehoming an animal must make a case to the Animal Ethics Committee as to why a rehoming agreement is not required, further demonstrating how the University's prospective liability is limited.

(24) Rehoming agreements should include:

a. expected ongoing care and welfare of an animal
b. the requirement that animals are not to be used for research purposes
c. the requirement that animals are not to be used for breeding
d. the requirement that animals are not to be abandoned and any arrangements for trial periods or rehoming failure
e. provisions for:
    i. the new owner to return the animals to the University for any reason
    ii. the University to seek return of the animals in circumstances of adverse welfare
    iii. the University to have first right of refusal in the event that the new owner seeks to transfer ownership of the animals to a subsequent third party
f. protections for the University against all liabilities, including claims of injury, disease or future ill health of the animals, and

g. information privacy protections, whereby neither the recipient of an animal nor University employees or associates will disclose confidential information. This prohibition may extend to non-disclosure of the identity of the University itself and/or the nature of the research being carried out.

(25) Rehoming agreements should set out the party responsible for transport of the animals from the care of the University to the new owner.

(26) Rehoming agreements should set out the point at which formal ownership (and therefore responsibility) of the animals transfers.

Transportation

(27) The University should assess, or arrange for the assessment of, animals prior to any intended journey to determine that they are fit for travel.

(28) During the transportation of animals to a new owner, the person in charge of the transport of the animals is to:

a. prevent injury, harm or distress, by ensuring species that may be distressed by the presence of another species are visually and physically separated, and incompatible animals of the same species are separated
b. monitor the condition of the animals and take any necessary action to protect them from injury, harm or distress, and
c. in the case of cats and dogs, where possible, every two hours, provide an opportunity for the animals to drink water, stretch, urinate and defecate.

(29) The rehoming coordinator is to ensure that transport methods and arrangements are appropriate to the species and circumstances.

(30) The rehoming coordinator is to ensure that containers used for transporting animals:

a. are of a size that enables animals to lie down flat, turn around, stand erect and stretch with adequate clearance, where appropriate to the species, and
b. are made of robust material, are escape-proof and sufficiently able to be secured.

(31) When applicable, the University representative (or their agent) transporting the animals is to ensure that containers and vehicles used for the purpose of transporting animals to or from a facility controlled by the University:

a. have adequate ventilation, shade, and temperature control sufficient to avoid harm and distress
b. are designed to protect animals from injury by being free from protrusions or sharp edges in the carrying area
c. are designed to protect animals from injury by having non-slip floors
d. protect against the unauthorised release or escape of animals
e. provide sufficient light to enable an animal to be inspected during the journey, and
f. are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after use to minimise the risk of the transmission of infectious disease between consignments of animals.

(32) Where the new owner is responsible for the transport of the animals the rehoming coordinator is to ensure transport provisions consistent with the requirements of this procedure are in place.

Animal Ethics Committee approval is required

(33) Before affecting ownership transfer or transport of an animal within scope of this procedure, the express consent of the Animal Ethics Committee is required.

(34) In seeking consent, the rehoming coordinator is to present information to the Animal Ethics Committee to satisfy that body that the provisions of this procedure have been complied with.

(35) In seeking an exemption from this procedure, the rehoming coordinator is to present information to the Animal Ethics Committee to justify to that body why an individual case should be exempt.

Section 4 - Guidelines

(36) Nil.

Section 5 - Glossary

(37) For the purpose of this procedure, the following terms have the definitions stated:

a. Animal owner - means, in the context of the animals owned by the University, the person who has primary responsibility for oversight of the husbandry of the animals. In the case of dispute, the presiding officer of the Animal Ethics Committee can nominate an appropriate individual to be identified as the animal owner.

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