



AWARE Wildlife Rescue Inc.
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Wildlife Rehabilitation – Foster Caring

Information Sheet

Interested in Becoming a Licensed Wildlife Rehabilitation Shelter or Foster Carer?

In Victoria, sick, injured or orphaned wildlife can only be rehabilitated by a wildlife shelter operator or foster carer who is authorised under section 28A of the Wildlife Act 1975 (Wildlife Act). As a wildlife shelter operator or foster carer, you are authorised to *"acquire, receive, keep, possess and euthanase (destroy) wildlife for the purposes of the care, treatment and rehabilitation of sick, injured or orphaned wildlife for release back to the wild."*

Caring for wildlife is very different from caring for domesticated animals and it can be very demanding and expensive. Volunteers first need to gain experience with wildlife and we recommend that you become a rescue and/or transport volunteer first. This is so you gain some experience handling wildlife and understanding the commitment needed. Also, this will allow you to build some important networks with other carers and shelters who may be able to mentor you.

You will need a wildlife rehabilitation licence to perform this role. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) issue these licenses to rehabilitate native wildlife. [Click here to be redirected to the DELWP website](#) for more information or call them on 136 186.

It is illegal to hold wildlife without the appropriate permit. Wildlife may only be cared for by authorised Wildlife Shelters or Foster Carers. Foster Carers must have a minimum of 12 months experience before being eligible to apply to be a Shelter Operator.

What to Expect as a Carer

Caring for wildlife can be very satisfying and rewarding, it is a privilege and responsibility. It can also be heartbreaking and exhausting. Some crucial factors to consider include;

Financial Commitment

As volunteers, all expenses to ensure an animal's needs are met are the responsibility of the carer. This includes providing appropriate housing, food and possibly medications and bandaging. You will also need some basic equipment and incur transport costs. Some animals require a 'nesting box' or other suitable home as part of their release.

Wildlife Welfare and Ethical Considerations

The prime consideration **must always be the animal's welfare**. They must be housed away from domestic pets, noise and children and in accommodation that meets the Code of Practice guidelines. Carers must provide the appropriate husbandry i.e. food, water, hygiene, security, space, lighting, supervision, clean air and protection from noise, disease, weather and unnecessary human contact.

Not all animals can be rehabilitated – it is illegal to keep 'feral species' and where it is unlikely that an animal will be able to recover sufficiently to return to the wild then it should be taken to a vet to be euthanised – wild animals need to be 100% fit to survive in the wild.

Time Commitment

Some animals are in care a few days but others require months of care such as orphaned young, some need round the clock feeds. Rehabilitating wildlife also involves maintaining and cleaning enclosures and equipment and keeping records.

Legal Obligations

Wildlife Shelters and Foster Carers must operate within the DELWP "[Wildlife Shelter and Foster Carer Authorisation Guide](#)" and the Department of Agriculture's "[Code of Practice for the Welfare of Wildlife During Rehabilitation](#)".

Zoonoses

There are a number of diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans. Wildlife rehabilitators need to be aware of these and practice preventative measures.

Steps to Becoming a Carer

1. Find a Shelter to mentor you. You can do this by contacting AWARE, directly approaching a shelter operator, attending an information event, contacting DELWP or approaching a Wildlife Rescue Group.
2. Attend training – training and learning is an ongoing commitment for rehabilitators. You will be expected to do one on one or group training with your shelter.
3. We also encourage you to attend training events that are run by other wildlife groups – details of many training opportunities can be found on the AWARE Facebook page.
4. We also recommend training offered by tertiary institutions and TAFE colleges such “Certificate III in Captive Animals”.
5. Consider working as a shelter helper before taking the steps to become a licensed foster carer. This will give you an insight into what is required and if wildlife rehabilitation will fit into your lifestyle and home environment.

How AWARE supports Carers

- Subsidised food
- Free equipment from donations such as pouches and medical supplies
- Loan equipment and in some cases loan aviaries/animal enclosures
- In-house training, mentoring and networking thus providing emotional support
- AWARE have agreements with other groups to attend their training at reduced cost

What AWARE expects from Carers

- Follow the DELWP and Department of Agriculture guidelines and protocols.
- Do not take in any wildlife without discussing with your shelter first, this is also a requirement under the code of practice.
- Maintain a good working relationship with your shelter and seek their help first with any concerns or problems you may have.
- Support the group that supports you by providing data as requested and assisting at fund raising events whenever possible.