



# Reptile and amphibian rehabilitation

Training standards for the wildlife rehabilitation sector

Department of Climate Change,  
Energy, the Environment and Water



## Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This resource may contain images or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

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# Introduction

Wildlife rehabilitation organisations and their volunteers play a critical role in the rescue and rehabilitation of sick and injured reptiles and amphibians in New South Wales. Each year an average of 10,000 reptiles and amphibians are rescued across more than 90 species. Volunteers participating in their care are trained to ensure the reptiles and amphibians are managed humanely and have the best chance of rehabilitation and release back into the wild.

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service have collaborated with leading rehabilitation providers to prepare these training standards for reptile and amphibian rehabilitation, for use by trainers in the NSW wildlife rehabilitation sector.

These training standards build on the high level of expertise that already exists within the sector and have been designed as a guide to evaluate, develop and support new and existing training. The intended outcome is to ensure minimum training standards are in place for volunteers across the sector, as recommended in the *NSW volunteer wildlife rehabilitation sector strategy* (DPIE 2020). This will give greater certainty about the quality of care afforded to reptiles and amphibians in rehabilitation.

These standards must be used for delivering introductory training for reptile and amphibian rehabilitation. They describe the skills and knowledge that such training must include to ensure volunteers meet the requirements of the *NSW Code of practice for injured or sick reptiles and amphibians* (the reptile and amphibian code) (DCCEEW 2024). Any person with an authority to rescue and rehabilitate reptiles and amphibians in New South Wales must be trained to these standards and be assessed as competent.

These training standards have been ordered into 3 suggested core areas of training. Training programs can be structured in their entirety to replicate the standards, broken down to cover individual or multiple standards, or can be based on certain roles within reptile and amphibian rehabilitation. Irrespective of the structure used, all training must include the standards relevant to a role and must cover the duties this role would be expected to perform upon completion of the training.

All training must be compliant with the reptile and amphibian code. It must have a written assessment component, be competency-based and be accompanied by ongoing in-field support from experienced wildlife rehabilitators.

Once a person is trained to these standards, they can undertake advanced refresher training and professional development opportunities as determined by their licensed wildlife rehabilitation organisation.

Additional information on training to these standards can be found in the companion *Reptile and amphibian rehabilitation: trainers' guide for the wildlife rehabilitation sector* (DCCEEW 2024). The trainers' guide has been designed to help the sector develop training in line with these standards.

## Structure of the standards

There are 10 reptile and amphibian rehabilitation training standards, organised into the following structure:

- **Objective** is the aim of each training standard.
- **Learning outcomes** are the knowledge and skills a learner will have obtained and be able to demonstrate upon completion of training.
- **Sections in the code** identify sections in the reptile and amphibian code that are applicable to each standard.

## Prerequisites

As required by the reptile and amphibian code, new wildlife rehabilitators must undertake an introductory training course. For generalist groups this could be in their induction training. For reptile or amphibian specific groups this can be completed as separate induction training or incorporated into Standard 1: The framework for reptile and amphibian rehabilitation in New South Wales.

## Definitions

**Advanced refresher training:** under the reptile and amphibian code, refresher training must be completed every 3 years.

**Amphibian:** any amphibian listed or referred to in Schedule 5 of the NSW *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* that is native to Australia, including their eggs and young. Amphibians are members of the vertebrate animal class Amphibia and include frogs, toads and salamanders.

**Code of practice:** there is a general code of practice and species-specific codes; these specify the minimum standards of care needed to protect the welfare of animals in rehabilitation. The *Code of practice for injured or sick reptiles and amphibians* (the reptile and amphibian code) is the relevant code for reptiles and amphibians.

**Competency:** the consistent application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in the workplace, as defined by the Australian Skills Quality Authority. It embodies the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments.

**Reptile:** any reptile listed or referred to in Schedule 5 of the NSW *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* that is native to Australia, including their eggs and young. Reptiles from the orders Testudines (turtles and tortoises), Crocodylia and Squamata (snakes and lizards) are found in Australia, but only members of Squamata and Testudines are native to New South Wales.

**Prerequisites:** some training requires a learner to have completed another course before they can enrol; the earlier course would be considered a 'prerequisite' of the more advanced training.

**Professional development:** activities that develop or maintain skills or knowledge. For our purposes, we are referring to those that develop or maintain skills and knowledge

with respect to reptile and amphibian rehabilitation. This could include relevant workshops, conferences, mentoring, independent research and courses.

**Training standards:** the skills and knowledge training programs must include to ensure rehabilitators can competently meet the requirements for standards of care, as described in the code.

# Reptile and amphibian rehabilitation standards: core areas of training

There are 10 reptile and amphibian rehabilitation standards organised into 3 core training areas.

Core training area	Relevant standard
<b>Foundations</b>	Standard 1: The framework for reptile and amphibian rehabilitation in New South Wales
	Standard 2: Work health and safety requirements of reptile and amphibian rehabilitation
	Standard 3: Record keeping
	Standard 4: Biology and behaviour of reptiles and amphibians
	Standard 5: Stress management in reptiles and amphibians
<b>Rescue</b>	Standard 6: Rescue of reptiles and amphibians
	Standard 7: Transport of reptiles and amphibians
	Standard 8: Assessment of reptiles and amphibians
<b>Rehabilitation and release</b>	Standard 9: Rehabilitation of reptiles and amphibians
	Standard 10: Release of reptiles and amphibians

# Foundations

## Standard 1: The framework for reptile and amphibian rehabilitation in New South Wales

### Objective

Familiarise learners with the relevant policies and procedures of reptile and amphibian rehabilitation and provide them with an understanding of the framework that exists to support and regulate reptile and amphibian rehabilitation in New South Wales. Learners must be aware of and understand the *NSW Code of practice for injured or sick reptiles and amphibians* (the reptile and amphibian code).

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 1.1 Discuss the reptile and amphibian code.
- 1.2 Ensure its policies and procedures (as relevant to reptiles and amphibians) are defined and understood by learners.
- 1.3 Ensure objectives of reptile and amphibian rehabilitation are understood by learners.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of Standard 1, learners will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• identify and demonstrate understanding of the reptile and amphibian code</li><li>• identify their organisation's relevant policies and procedures for reptile and amphibian rehabilitation</li><li>• recognise the objectives of reptile and amphibian rehabilitation.</li></ul>	All



## Standard 2: Work health and safety requirements of reptile and amphibian rehabilitation

### Objective

Ensure learners can prioritise their safety and that of the people around them when undertaking reptile and amphibian rescue and rehabilitation.

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 2.1 Explain the work health and safety (WHS) risks associated with the site, equipment or activity and how they can be minimised.
- 2.2 Explain the WHS risks associated with approaching, handling and restraining reptiles and amphibians and how they can be minimised.
- 2.3 Discuss the WHS risks associated with zoonotic diseases relevant to reptiles and amphibians and how they can be minimised.
- 2.4 Discuss rehabilitator wellbeing and the potential mental health impacts of wildlife rehabilitation.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of Standard 2, learners will be able to:	3. Rescue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• identify WHS risks associated with reptile and amphibian rehabilitation</li><li>• employ techniques to minimise the WHS risks to themselves and other people.</li></ul>	4. Transport
	6. Care procedures
	7. Rehabilitation care
	8. Housing
	10. Release considerations

## Standard 3: Record keeping

### Objective

Explain the record keeping requirements for reptile and amphibian rehabilitation.

To comply with this standard, rehabilitation organisations must:

- 3.1 Explain the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) reporting requirements.
- 3.2 Explain organisational reporting requirements.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of Standard 3, learners will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• keep records in accordance with NPWS and organisational requirements.</li></ul>	12. Record keeping

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## Standard 4: Biology and behaviour of reptiles and amphibians

### Objective

Ensure detailed knowledge of reptiles and amphibians is taught to learners. This is done by providing learners with the foundational tools to understand reptile and amphibian biology and behaviour and how these aspects inform interactions with reptiles and amphibians undergoing rehabilitation.

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 4.1 Explain features of reptile and amphibian biology including anatomy, physiology, social structure, stages of development and habitat, and relate them to reptile and amphibian rehabilitation.
- 4.2 Provide a basic understanding of reptile and amphibian ecology including population dynamics, habitat selection, migratory behaviour, competition and predator–prey interactions.
- 4.3 Provide the tools and understanding required to identify different species of reptiles and amphibians recorded in New South Wales.
- 4.4 Provide the tools and understanding required to identify normal behaviour in reptiles and amphibians.
- 4.5 Provide the tools and understanding required to recognise signs of abnormal behaviour in reptiles and amphibians.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of Standard 4, learners will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• relate reptile and amphibian biology, ecology and behaviour to their rehabilitation</li><li>• understand how to use the different tools to identify different species of reptiles and amphibians</li><li>• recognise signs of normal behaviour in reptiles and amphibians</li><li>• recognise signs of abnormal behaviour in reptiles and amphibians.</li></ul>	All

## Standard 5: Stress management in reptile and amphibians

### Objective

Communicate the importance of managing stress in reptiles and amphibians and to provide mechanisms for minimising this stress.

To comply with this standard, rehabilitation organisations must:

- 5.1 Explain the effects of stress on reptiles and amphibians at various stages of rescue and rehabilitation.
- 5.2 Provide the tools and understanding required to recognise signs of stress in reptiles and amphibians.
- 5.3 Discuss methods for minimising stress on reptiles and amphibians at various stages of rescue and rehabilitation.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of Standard 5, learners will be able to:	3. Rescue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• recognise signs of stress in reptiles and amphibians and its impact</li><li>• apply methods for minimising stress on a reptile or amphibian.</li></ul>	4. Transport
	5. Euthanasia
	6. Care procedures
	7. Rehabilitation care
	8. Housing
	10. Release considerations

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# Rescue

## Standard 6: Rescue of reptiles and amphibians

### Objective

Ensure learners have the skills to rescue a reptile or amphibian safely, efficiently and humanely.

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 6.1 Outline common reasons for reptile and amphibian rescue.
- 6.2 Detail how to perform a situational assessment, including the use of the decision tree in the reptile and amphibian code, to establish the appropriate course of action.
- 6.3 Detail the correct method and equipment required to capture, handle and rescue a reptile and amphibian, as suitable to common rescue situations, conditions and stages of development of a reptile and amphibian.
- 6.4 Detail how to rescue a reptile or amphibian to humanely minimise pain, stress and potential injury.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of Standard 6, learners will be able to:	2. Case assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• list the common reasons why reptiles and amphibians require rescue</li></ul>	3. Rescue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• assess a rescue situation and plan the rescue of a reptile or amphibian</li></ul>	4. Transport
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• safely rescue a reptile or amphibian using correct equipment</li></ul>	5. Euthanasia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• determine the type of intervention required at a rescue site.</li></ul>	

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## Standard 7: Transport of reptile and amphibians

### Objective

Ensure learners have the skills to transport a reptile or amphibian safely, efficiently and humanely.

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 7.1 Demonstrate how to appropriately contain a reptile or amphibian for transport based on different sizes, stages of development and conditions.
- 7.2 Outline how to secure the transport container to prevent escape and further injury.
- 7.3 Detail suitable transport conditions, including ambient temperature, to safely transport a reptile or amphibian.
- 7.4 Discuss the most suitable person or location that a reptile or amphibian should be transported to, based on different stages of development, animal condition and organisational policies.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of Standard 7, learners will be able to:	2. Case assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• prepare a carrier for transport</li></ul>	3. Rescue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• outline the transport conditions required to safely transport a reptile and amphibian</li></ul>	4. Transport
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• understand the appropriate person or location to transport a reptile or amphibian to, based on different stages of development, animal condition and organisational policies.</li></ul>	5. Euthanasia
	10. Release considerations

## Standard 8: Assessment of reptiles and amphibians

### Objective

Equip learners with the skills necessary to assess the health status of a reptile and amphibian.

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 8.1 Explain how to conduct an initial assessment of a reptile and amphibian.
- 8.2 Explain the requirements of a thorough physical assessment of a reptile and amphibian.
- 8.3 Emphasise the need to seek prompt advice and assistance for a reptile or amphibian from a coordinator, veterinarian or other relevant person, as appropriate to its condition.
- 8.4 Distinguish signs of and ways to determine common diseases and injuries affecting reptiles and amphibians.
- 8.5 Explain how to manage an injured or diseased reptile or amphibian based on the severity of its condition.
- 8.6 Outline criteria and approved methods for humane euthanasia.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of Standard 8, learners will be able to:	5. Euthanasia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• conduct an initial assessment of a reptile or amphibian</li></ul>	6. Care procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• assess the health status of a reptile or amphibian and recognise stages, symptoms and severity of common diseases and injuries</li></ul>	7. Rehabilitation care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• determine the appropriate course of action for a reptile or amphibian based on its condition</li></ul>	8. Housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• outline criteria for and approved methods of euthanasia.</li></ul>	

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# Rehabilitation and release

## Standard 9: Rehabilitation of reptiles and amphibians

### Objective

Provide learners with an understanding of the requirements for the rehabilitation of reptiles and amphibians and equip learners with the skills to provide quality rehabilitative care at the relevant stages of rehabilitation.

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 9.1 Explain the importance of and process for quarantining individual reptiles and amphibians entering rehabilitation.
- 9.2 Detail the facilities required to safely rehabilitate reptiles and amphibians relevant to stages of housing (intensive care and pre-release).
- 9.3 Describe appropriate equipment and furniture for each stage of housing (intensive care and pre-release).
- 9.4 Illustrate disease control and hygiene practices appropriate to stages of rehabilitation.
- 9.5 Explain how to appropriately provide food and water based on the species-specific dietary requirements and condition of the reptile or amphibian.
- 9.6 Detail common conditions and diseases that affect reptiles and amphibians.
- 9.7 Discuss how to monitor a reptile or amphibian based on species, its condition and stage of housing.
- 9.8 Demonstrate how to complete a rehabilitation care plan.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of Standard 9, learners will be able to:	2. Case assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• outline the requirements for reptile and amphibian rehabilitation</li></ul>	5. Euthanasia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• demonstrate correct set-up for housing reptiles and amphibians</li></ul>	6. Care procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• provide food and water appropriate to the species and condition of a reptile or amphibian</li></ul>	7. Rehabilitation care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• monitor a reptile or amphibian undergoing rehabilitation</li></ul>	8. Housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• apply hygiene and disease control processes to reptile and amphibian rehabilitation</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• complete a rehabilitation care plan for a reptile or amphibian.</li></ul>	



## Standard 10: Release of reptiles and amphibians

### Objective

Ensure learners understand suitability for release and criteria for releasing reptiles and amphibians.

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 10.1 Discuss release considerations for reptiles and amphibians including timing and site selection.
- 10.2 Explain how to determine a reptile or amphibian's suitability for release.
- 10.3 Detail the correct techniques and equipment for releasing reptiles and amphibians.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of Standard 10, learners will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• assess a reptile or amphibian for release suitability</li><li>• competently release a reptile or amphibian.</li></ul>	9. Suitability for release 10. Release considerations

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# More information

- [Australian Skills Quality Authority](#)
- [Reptile and amphibian rehabilitation: trainers' guide for the wildlife rehabilitation sector](#)
- NSW [Code of practice for injured or sick reptiles and amphibians](#) (the 'reptile and amphibian code')
- [NSW volunteer wildlife rehabilitation sector strategy](#)