



Reptile and amphibian rehabilitation assessment tool

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This resource may contain images or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

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Purpose

This reptile and amphibian rehabilitation assessment tool has been designed to help wildlife rehabilitation groups monitor their level of compliance with the *Code of practice for injured and sick reptiles and amphibians* (the code). Its primary purpose is to proactively help inform and guide improvements to their standards of reptile and amphibian care and optimise post-rehabilitation outcomes.

The tool is for use by species coordinators and experienced reptile and amphibian rehabilitators such as mentors and buddies. It aims to provide an objective snapshot of a group member's application of the code. When applied across multiple members, the tool can also strategically inform future training and guide grant applications for replacement enclosures or other assets which are not code compliant.

Everyone authorised to interact with reptiles and amphibians is required to act in accordance with the *Code of practice for injured and sick reptiles and amphibians*. It has been developed to protect the welfare of rescued reptiles and amphibians and support the conservation of wild reptile and amphibian populations. Compliance with the code is a condition of a Biodiversity Conservation Licence to conduct wildlife rehabilitation under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*. The person applying the tool must be familiar with the content and application of the code.

Wildlife rehabilitation groups are encouraged to maintain a register of volunteers who have been assessed under this tool so that in future they can be compared against previous assessments.

How to use this assessment tool

The tool is divided into 4 sections:

1. training
2. records management
3. facility inspection
4. field observation of animal rescue and transport.

An inspection may target one or more sections of the tool. Each section aligns with specific standards in the code. It is preferable to complete Sections 1, 2 and 3 together or Sections 1 and 4.

1. Content of each section

- A place to enter the assessor and group members' names, signatures and date of inspection
- Code standards to be assessed
- An overall assessment question and prompts to help guide the assessment
- Targeted questions which align with specific standards in the code
- Places to select a response, score and tally the results of the assessment
- Notes about any observations you make during the inspection and to make specific recommendations.

2. What to take to the assessment?

It is important to do some planning before you go on-site.

Things to think about

- Contact the group member and arrange a mutually convenient time.
- Consider whether an observer should also attend with the assessor.
- Explain the purpose of the assessment to the person before coming and at the premises.
- Ask if there are reptiles and amphibians on-site and at what stage of rehabilitation.
- Identify which standards you intend to assess.
- Pack a copy of the reptile and amphibian code of practice.
- Be familiar with the data report template.
- Bring a mobile phone and ask if you can take photos.
- Bring a tape measure, pencil, pen and clipboard or laptop.

3. Scoring each section and collating the results

Each targeted question requires the assessor to circle the appropriate answer in the adjacent column. Only one answer can be selected. The answers can be collated, scored and converted to a percentage.

This worked example has 7 target questions.

Code of Practice Standard 3 'Rescue'

Assessment question: Was the rescue of the reptile or amphibian undertaken in accordance with the standard?

Prompts: Observe the method and conduct of the reptile or amphibian's actual rescue.

Target questions	Select one response for each question		
1. Did the rescuer use the correct rescue equipment?	Yes ✓	No	N/A
2. Did the rescuer use the correct rescue method to capture the reptile or amphibian?	Yes	No ✓	N/A
3. Did the rescuer take steps to limit the animal's exposure to additional stressors such as onlookers, loud noises, other animals and extremes of temperature?	Yes	No ✓	N/A
4. Did the rescuer ensure the trap was set up and used so that the requirements of the code are met? (See Standard 3.1.11 in the code.)	Yes	No	N/A ✓
5. Did the rescuer take care to prevent further injury to the reptile or amphibian?	Yes ✓	No	N/A
6. Did the rescuer ensure the spine and tail of a reptile were protected from damage as they can easily fracture?	Yes ✓	No	N/A
7. If rescuing an amphibian, did the rescuer wear powder-free nitrile or latex gloves?	Yes	No	N/A ✓

How to calculate an assessment score

Step 1: Tally the number of responses for each column

Yes	No	N/A
3	2	2

Step 2: Subtract the number of Not Applicable (N/A) answers from the total number of questions. In this example $7 - 2 = 5$.

Display the score for each column as a fraction.

Step 3: Convert the above fraction to a percentage (%)

60%

40%

In this example, the 7 target questions were scored as 3 for **‘Yes’**, 2 for **‘No’** and 2 for **N/A**. The question about using a trap did not apply in this example because it was not used and the question about using gloves for an amphibian rescue did not apply because a reptile was rescued. So only 5 target questions apply. The total assessment score is therefore 3/5 (60% Yes) and 2/5 (40% No).

Insert the score or percentage for ‘Yes’ in the assessment summary.

Section 1: Training

The purpose of this section is to assess the currency of training. This should be done before other sections of the assessment and verified with the group member.

Member name:	Signature:	Date:
Assessor name:	Signature:	Date:

Code of Practice Standard 11 'Training'

Assessment question: Is the member trained to rescue and/or rehabilitate reptiles and amphibians?

Prompts: Check the member's details and group training register before the inspection. Confirm what tasks the member does with reptiles and amphibians and what training they require.

Target questions

Select one response for each question

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Is the member authorised to work with reptiles and amphibians? | Yes | No |
| 2. Has the member completed the required training for the tasks they perform? | Yes | No |
| 3. Is the member's training current? | Yes | No |

Tally responses for each column and display the score as a fraction out of 3

Convert to a percentage (%)

Notes:

Recommendations:

Section 2: Record keeping

The purpose of this section is to assess the member's reptile and amphibian records. It may help to review the previous year's records before commencing the assessment.

Member name:	Signature:	Date:
Assessor name:	Signature:	Date:

Code of Practice Standard 12 'Record keeping'

Assessment question: Is the member's record sheet current and accurate?

Prompts: Use Appendix 1 to record the animals currently on-site. Ask to see the wildlife rehabilitator's record sheets. The fields should be equivalent to the standard – that is, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service data template.

Target questions	Select one response for each question			
1. How many reptiles and amphibians currently in care are listed in the record sheet?	All	Some	None	N/A
2. How many reptiles and amphibians have their rescue date, exact rescue location details and encounter data entered in the record sheet?	All	Some	None	N/A
3. How many reptiles and amphibians have their initial weight, stage of development and species correctly entered in the record sheet?	All	Some	None	N/A
4. How many dead or released reptiles and amphibians have had their fates entered?	All	Some	None	N/A
5. How many released reptiles and amphibians have accurate release location details entered?	All	Some	None	N/A
6. How many reptiles and amphibians transferred to or from another facility have a dated identification record and location of transfer?	All	Some	None	N/A

Tally responses for each column and display the score as a fraction

(remember to deduct any N/As from the total)

Convert to a percentage (%)

Notes:

Recommendations:

Record keeping (continued)

Assessment question: Were decisions made about the release, euthanasia and permanent care of reptiles and amphibians in accordance with the standard?

Prompts: Check the fate and release location details section in the record sheet. Be familiar with the 'Release site selection' (10.2) and 'When to euthanise' (5.1) standards in the code.

Target questions

Select one response for each question

1. Of the reptiles and amphibians released, how many were put in a suitable environment at or as near as possible to their place of rescue*?	All	Some	None	N/A
2. How many reptiles and amphibians were euthanised in accordance with criteria in the code (list reasons in notes)?	All	Some	None	N/A
3. Are the limits for releasing large numbers of reptiles in a single location adhered to?	All	Some	None	N/A
4. How many amphibians have results recorded for chytrid fungus testing	All	Some	None	N/A
5. How many reptiles and amphibians listed as critically endangered or endangered on Schedule 1 of the NSW <i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i> have been reported to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)?	All	Some	None	N/A

6. How many reptiles and amphibians that are escaped or abandoned pets have details on efforts to find their owner, and have been reported to NPWS?	All	Some	None	N/A
7. How many reptiles and amphibians that are from government seizures have been reported to NPWS and have the details of the responsible officer handling the case?	All	Some	None	N/A
8. How many of the reptiles and amphibians held in permanent care have written approval from NPWS?	All	Some	None	N/A

Tally responses for each column and display the score as a fraction

(remember to deduct any N/As from the total)

Convert to a percentage (%)

Notes:

Recommendations:

* Exclude those animals that received approval from National Parks and Wildlife Service to be released elsewhere.

Section 3: Facility inspection

The purpose of this section is to assess the member's rehabilitation facility, including its housing and rehabilitation care procedures. If the facility does not participate in the intensive care, intermediate care or pre-release of reptiles and amphibians, then move to another section and place **N/A** in notes.

Member name:	Signature:	Date:
Assessor name:	Signature:	Date:

Section 3a: Housing and rehabilitation – General care

Code of Practice Standards 6 'Care procedures'; 6.3 'Controlling disease transmission'; 7.1 'Food and water'; 7.2 'Hygiene'; 9 'Suitability for release'

Assessment question: Are reptiles and amphibians at the premises managed according to the standard.

Prompts: Observe the reptiles and amphibians and their enclosures and ask to view the rehabilitation care plan if there is one. Ask the following questions and circle the appropriate response.

Target questions	Select one response for each question				
1. How many reptiles and amphibians have been examined by an experienced wildlife rehabilitator or veterinarian?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
2. Of the animals with major trauma, how many have undergone a veterinary assessment within 24 hours?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
3. How many reptiles and amphibians suspected of an infectious disease are in quarantine (an individual cage in a separate room)?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
4. How many reptile enclosures provide areas with different temperatures so reptiles can move to thermoregulate?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
5. How many enclosures, including food and drink containers, bedding, branches, hides, bathing pools and weighing bags, are clean and free of uneaten food, faeces and urine?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A

Section 3a: Housing and rehabilitation – General care

6. How many enclosures have fresh drinking water available for all reptiles and amphibians (excluding shinglebacks and reptiles with fungal infections)?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
7. How many enclosures are escape-proof and have no hazards that might harm the reptile or amphibian?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
8. How many enclosures have a light-dark cycle that replicates outside conditions and light and heat sources that can be operated separately?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
9. How many electrical heat sources are regulated by a thermostat?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
10. How many reptiles that naturally bask are provided with access to light including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ UV light sources installed at a suitable distance from basking area ○ No glass placed between the UV light source and the reptile? 	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
11. How many reptiles and amphibians have been offered natural food or food that mimics what they would find in the wild?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
12. How many reptiles and amphibians are clean (free of faeces, urine or uneaten food)?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
13. How many enclosures are positioned so the reptiles and amphibians have no contact with either wild animals or pests and cannot see domestic pets?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
14. How many enclosures with animals showing signs of stress (such as snout rub) have mitigation actions (for example, opaque walls or covers, extra hides)?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
15. How many occupants of enclosures with multiple animals are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ juveniles from the same nest ○ from a social species? 	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
16. How many reptiles and amphibians do not show any signs of habituation?	All	None	>Half	<Half	-

Tally responses for each column and display the score as a fraction.

Section 3a: Housing and rehabilitation – General care

(remember to deduct any N/As from the total)

Convert to a percentage (%)

Notes:

Recommendations:

Section 3b: Housing and rehabilitation – Intensive care

Code of Practice Standards 8.2 ‘Intensive care housing’; 6.2 ‘Monitoring’

Assessment question: Are intensive care housing enclosures (ICEs) for reptiles and amphibians constructed, positioned and maintained in accordance with the standard?

Prompts: Ask to see the intensive care enclosures and the rehabilitation care plan. Only answer if reptiles and amphibians are present.

Target questions

Select one response for each question

1. How many ICEs have floor dimensions that meet the requirements in the code?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
2. How many ICEs provide sufficient space for the reptile or amphibian to maintain a normal posture?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
3. How many ICEs provide an ambient temperature appropriate for the species of the reptile or amphibian, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 21°C for amphibians○ within the preferred optimal temperature zone (POTZ) for reptiles○ have a heated hide for outside enclosures for lace monitors?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
4. How many ICEs are clean and well maintained?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A

Section 3b: Housing and rehabilitation – Intensive care

5. How many ICEs are positioned to reduce excessive noise and vibrations?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
6. How many reptiles and amphibians in intensive care have been monitored 4 times a day and have their body condition, skin and scale condition, behaviour, activity level, scat quantity and quality recorded? (Ask to see evidence.)	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
7. How many reptiles have been weighed according to species: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ small lizards daily○ large lizards, snakes and amphibians once a week○ weighing at a consistent time?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
8. How many ICEs contain a substrate that is absorbent, easily cleanable or replaceable?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A

Tally responses for each column and display the score as a fraction

(remember to deduct any N/As from the total)

Convert to a percentage (%)

Notes: Enter **N/A** here if the person does not participate in intensive care or has no reptiles or amphibians.

Recommendations:

Section 3c: Housing and rehabilitation – Pre-release housing

Code of Practice Standard 8.4 ‘Pre-release housing’

Assessment question: Are pre-release care facilities (PREs) constructed, positioned and maintained in accordance with the standard?

Prompts: Ask to see the pre-release enclosures and rehabilitation care plan. Only answer if reptiles and amphibians are present.

Target questions

Select one response for each question

1. How many PREs have floor and height dimensions that meet the requirements in the code?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
2. How many outside PREs provide areas where reptiles and amphibians can shelter from and gain exposure to outside weather?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
3. How many PREs contain habitat elements to enable the reptiles and amphibians to perform a range of natural behaviours? (See Standard 8.3.3 for list.)	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
4. How many PREs are designed and positioned so that exposure to humans is kept to the minimum required for monitoring, feeding and cleaning?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A
5. How many PREs contain a substrate that is easily cleanable and suitable for the species?	All	None	>Half	<Half	N/A

Tally responses for each column and display the score as a fraction

(remember to deduct any N/As from the total)

Convert to a percentage (%)

Notes: Enter **N/A** if the person does not participate in intermediate care or has no reptiles and amphibians.

Section 3c: Housing and rehabilitation – Pre-release housing

Recommendations:

Section 3d: Pre-release assessment

Code of Practice Standard 9 ‘Suitability for release’

Assessment question: Have all reptiles and amphibians deemed ready for release been assessed according to the standard?

Prompt: Ask to see the reptiles and amphibians that have been assessed as suitable for release. If none are ready for suitable for release enter N/A in the notes section.

1. Has the release suitability of the reptiles and amphibians been confirmed by an experienced reptile or amphibian rehabilitator?	Yes	No	Some
2. Has the member correctly described why the animal is physically ready for release? (See Standard 9.1.1 of the code.)	Yes	No	Some
3. Has the member correctly described why the animal is behaviourally ready for release? (See Standard 9.1.2 of the code.)	Yes	No	Some
Are any of the reptiles or amphibians scheduled for release a critically endangered or endangered species on Schedule 1 of the Biodiversity Conservation Act (see Appendix A in the code)? If yes, go to question 4. Otherwise, circle N/A and skip question 4.	N/A		
4. Has the release suitability of the reptile(s) or amphibian(s) been confirmed by the local National Parks and Wildlife Service office, or a veterinarian experienced in reptile care?	Yes	No	Some

Tally responses for each column and display the score as a fraction

Convert to a percentage (%)

Notes: Enter **N/A** here if no reptiles and amphibians are ready for release

Recommendations:

Section 4: Field observation

This section is a practical assessment of the application of the rescue, transport and release standards in the code. It is best conducted in the field through observation, although parts – such as personal protective equipment, rescue equipment and release considerations – may be completed as part of the facility inspection and record management sections.

Member name:	Signature:	Date:
Assessor name:	Signature:	Date:

Section 4a: Rescue preparation

Code of Practice Standard 3.1 'Conducting a reptile and amphibian rescue'

Assessment question: Did the member prepare for the rescue in accordance with the standard?

Prompts: Observe how the member prepares for a rescue.

Target questions	Select one response for each question		
1. Were the risks to the reptile or amphibian from environmental hazards and capture assessed prior to the rescue attempt?	Yes	No	Some
2. Were the risks to the rescuer, other volunteers and members of the public assessed prior to the rescue attempt?	Yes	No	Some
3. Did the rescuer possess the appropriate personal protective equipment?	Yes	No	Some
Was the rescue for a snake? If the rescue is not for a snake circle N/A and do not answer question 4 and 5.	N/A		
4. Was the rescuer carrying a first aid kit with a snake bite compression bandage?	Yes	No	Some
5. Was the snake monitored to see if it was undertaking a natural behaviour? For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ shedding its skin (ecdysis) ○ digesting its prey after recently eating 	Yes	No	Some

- digging a hole to nest
- sluggish and inactive during an extended period of low temperature (brumation)
- part of a breeding ball
- part of a pair of male snakes fighting to determine who will breed with the female
- a species that gathers in groups.

Tally responses for each column and display the score as a fraction

(remember to deduct any N/As from the total)

Convert to a percentage (%)

Notes:

Recommendations:

Section 4b: Rescue conduct

Code of Practice Standard 3.1 'Conducting a reptile or amphibian rescue'

Assessment question: Did the member undertake the rescue in accordance with the standard?

Prompts: Observe the method and conduct of the reptile or amphibian physical rescue.

Target questions	Select one response for each question		
1. Did the rescuer use the correct rescue equipment?	Yes	No	N/A
2. Did the rescuer use the correct rescue method to capture the reptile or amphibian?	Yes	No	N/A
3. Did the rescuer take steps to limit the animal's exposure to additional stressors such as onlookers, loud noises, other animals and extremes of temperature?	Yes	No	N/A

4. Did the rescuer ensure the trap was set up and used so that the requirements of the code are met? (See Standard 3.1.11 in the code.)	Yes	No	N/A
5. Did the rescuer take care to prevent further injury to the reptile or amphibian?	Yes	No	N/A
6. Did the rescuer ensure the spine and tail of a reptile were protected from damage as they can easily fracture?	Yes	No	N/A
7. If rescuing an amphibian, did the rescuer wear powder-free nitrile or latex gloves?	Yes	No	N/A

Tally responses for each column and display the score as a fraction

(remember to deduct any N/As from the total)

Convert to a percentage (%)

Notes:

Recommendations:

Section 4c: Transport

Code of Practice Standard 4.1 'Transport'

Assessment question: Was the reptile or amphibian transported in accordance with the standard?

Prompts: Observe the method and conduct of the reptile or amphibian's physical transport.

Target questions

Select one response for each question

1. Was the transport container appropriate for the species, size and condition of the reptile or amphibian?	Yes	No
2. Was the transport container set up to prevent injuries to the reptile or amphibian?	Yes	No

3. Was the transport container escape-proof, secured and well ventilated?	Yes	No
4. Was the animal positioned so that its breathing was not restricted?	Yes	No
5. Was the transport container kept at a temperature that is appropriate for the species? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 21°C is appropriate for amphibians ○ avoid extremes of hot and cold temperature for reptiles. 	Yes	No
6. Was the transport container placed in the correct position in the vehicle?	Yes	No
7. Was the container designed to minimise noise and vibrations and prevent contact with people and animals during transport?	Yes	No

Tally responses for each column and display the score as a fraction

Convert to a percentage (%)

Notes:

Recommendations:

Section 4d: Transport (continued)

Code of Practice Standard 4.1 'Transport'

Assessment question: Was the reptile or amphibian transported in accordance with the standard?

Prompts: Observe the method and conduct of the reptile or amphibian's physical transport.

Target questions

Select one response for each question

1. If transporting an animal with a suspected spinal injury, was movement of the animal limited?	Yes	No	N/A
2. If transporting an animal in a snake bag or smaller container, was the bag/container placed inside a larger solid transport container?	Yes	No	N/A
3. If transporting a snake, was it in a lockable container with a label marked 'DANGER - VENOMOUS LIVE SNAKE'?	Yes	No	N/A
4. Was a snake bag used that is dark in colour and has the corners sewn at an angle (blind corners)?	Yes	No	N/A
5. Was the transport container lined with appropriate substrate (no paper, straw, sawdust, cat litter or hay)?	Yes	No	N/A
6. Was the reptile or amphibian monitored frequently if the trip was over 2 hours?	Yes	No	N/A

Tally responses for each column and display the score as a fraction

(remember to deduct any N/As from the total)

Convert to a percentage (%)

Notes:

Recommendations:

Section 4e: Release

Code of Practice Standards 10.1 'Timing of release'; 10.2 'Release site selection'; 10.3 'Release techniques'

Assessment question: Was the animal released according to the standard?

Prompts: Observe the method and conduct of the reptile or amphibian's release.

Target questions

Select one response for each question

1. Was it the right time of day to release the reptile or amphibian (note the time of day will differ depending on whether it is diurnal or nocturnal)?	Yes	No	N/A
2. Did the weather conditions encourage high activity levels (for example, not during a storm or cold snap, and not during a flooding event for freshwater turtles)?	Yes	No	N/A
3. Was the reptile or amphibian being released in a suitable environment at or as near as possible to their place of rescue?*	Yes	No	N/A
4. Had approval been given by the National Parks and Wildlife Service Area Manager or marine park manager for a reptile or amphibian being released in a national park or marine park?	Yes	No	N/A
5. Was it the right time since the last feeding to release the reptile?	Yes	No	N/A
6. If the animal was a venomous snake, was the wildlife rehabilitator carrying a first aid kit with a snake bite compression bandage?	Yes	No	N/A

Tally responses for each column and display the score as a fraction (remember to deduct any N/As from the total)

Convert to a percentage (%)

Notes:

Recommendations:

* Exclude those animals that received approval from National Parks and Wildlife Service to be placed elsewhere.

Assessment summary

There is no pass or fail associated with this assessment. Its purpose is to identify those standards in the code against which performance can be improved. Specific recommendations for improvement can be provided below. A timeframe should be discussed and agreed with the group member to implement any recommendations.

Summarise the outcome of the assessment in the table below:

- Circle 'Yes' for each section assessed.
- Enter the total score as a fraction for answers with a 'Yes' or 'All'.
- Enter the percentage score (%) for answers with a 'Yes' or 'All'.

Assessed	Section	Grade score Yes/All	Grade score (%) Yes/All
Sections 1, 2			
Yes	Training		
Yes	Record keeping		
Yes	Record keeping (continued)		
Section 3: Facility inspection			
Yes	Housing/rehabilitation care (General care)		
Yes	Housing/rehabilitation care (Intensive care housing)		
Yes	Housing/rehabilitation care (Pre-release housing)		
Yes	Housing/rehabilitation care (Pre-release assessment)		
Section 4: Field observation			
Yes	Rescue preparation		
Yes	Rescue conduct		
Yes	Transport (4c)		
Yes	Transport (4d)		
Yes	Release		

Recommendations:

More information

- *Code of practice for injured and sick reptiles and amphibians*
- Data report template

