Koala Rehabilitation Training Standards for the Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector

Cover photo: Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*). Hannah Ryan/© DPIE

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Introduction

Volunteers play a critical role in the rescue and rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned koalas in New South Wales. Each year about 1300 koalas on average are rescued and volunteers participating in the delivery of care are trained to ensure that animals in rehabilitation are managed humanely and have the best chance of release back to the wild.

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), in collaboration with leading koala rehabilitation providers, has prepared these *Koala Rehabilitation Training Standards* for use by trainers in the 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. This will give greater certainty about the quality of care afforded to koalas in rehabilitation.

These standards must be used for delivering introductory training for koala rehabilitation. They describe the skills and knowledge that such training must include to ensure volunteers meet the requirements of the NSW NPWS Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Koalas. Any person with an authority to rescue and rehabilitate koalas in New South Wales must be trained to these standards and be assessed as competent. This applies to both home care and facility-based models.

These training standards have been ordered into three suggested core areas of training. Training programs can be structured in their entirety to replicate the standards, or can be broken down to cover individual or multiple standards, or can be based on certain roles within koala 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 Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Koalas. It must have a written assessment component, be competency-based and be accompanied by ongoing in-field support from experienced koala 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 *Koala Rehabilitation Training Standards: Trainers Guide.* This document has been designed to support the sector develop their training in line with these standards.

Structure of the standards

There are 12 koala rehabilitation training standards, organised into the following structure:

- **Objective** is the aim of each 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 Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Koalas that are applicable to each standard.

Prerequisites

As per the Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Koalas new wildlife rehabilitators must undertake an introductory training course. For generalist groups this would be covered in their induction training. For koala-specific groups this can be completed as separate induction training or incorporated into Standard 1: The framework of koala rehabilitation in New South Wales.

Definitions

Advanced refresher training: a standard in each Code of Practice requires wildlife rehabilitators to complete additional training every three or four years depending on the species. In the Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Koalas refresher training must be completed every four years.

Code of Practice: specifies the minimum standards of care needed to protect the welfare of animals in rehabilitation. There is a general code and species-specific codes. The Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Koalas is the relevant code for koalas.

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

Learning outcomes: A clear statement of what a learner is expected to be able to do, know about and/or value at the completion of a unit of study, and how well they should be expected to achieve those outcomes.

Objective: The aim of each standard.

Prerequisites: Something that requires something to happen or be completed before the other; for example, some advanced courses require a prior subject or course to be completed before a learner can enrol in them.

Professional development: Activities that develop or maintain skills or knowledge. Examples could include workshops, conferences, mentoring, independent research and courses.

Standards: are a level of accepted quality.

Koala rehabilitation standards: Core areas of training

There are 12 koala rehabilitation standards organised into three core training areas.

Core training area	Relevant standard
Foundations of koala rehabilitation	Standard 1: The framework of koala rehabilitation in New South Wales
	Standard 2: Work, health and safety requirements of koala rehabilitation
	Standard 3: Record keeping
	Standard 4: Biology and behaviour of koalas
	Standard 5: Stress management in koalas
Rescue of koalas	Standard 6: Rescue of koalas
	Standard 7: Transport of koalas
	Standard 8: Assessment of koalas
Rehabilitation of koalas	Standard 9: Rehabilitation of adult koalas
	Standard 10: Rehabilitation of koala joeys
	Standard 11: Leaf identification and collection
	Standard 12: Release of koalas

Foundations of koala rehabilitation

Standard 1: The framework of koala rehabilitation in New South Wales

Objective: To familiarise learners with the relevant policies and procedures of koala rehabilitation and provide them with an understanding of the framework that exists to support and regulate koala rehabilitation in New South Wales. Learners must be aware of and understand the NSW Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Koalas.

To be compliant with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

1.1   Discuss the Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Koalas.

1.2   Ensure organisational policies and procedures applicable to koala rehabilitation are defined and understood by learners.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the Code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: • identify and demonstrate understanding of the NSW Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Koalas • identify organisational policies and procedures on koala rehabilitation • recognise the objectives of koala rehabilitation.	All

Standard 2: Work, health and safety requirements of koala rehabilitation

Objective: To ensure that learners are able to prioritise their safety and that of the people around them when undertaking koala rescue and rehabilitation.

To be compliant 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 handling and restraining koalas and how they can be minimised.

2.3   Discuss rehabilitator wellbeing and potential emotional and psychological impacts of rehabilitation.

Learning outcomes	Section in the Code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: • identify WHS risks associated with koala rehabilitation • employ techniques to minimise the WHS risks to themselves and other people.	3. Rescue 6. Care procedures 7. Husbandry 10. Release considerations

Standard 3: Record keeping

Objective: To explain the record keeping requirements of koala rehabilitation.

To be compliant with this standard, rehabilitation organisations must:

3.1   Explain the NPWS reporting requirements.

3.2   Explain organisational reporting requirements.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the Code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: • keep records in accordance with NPWS and organisational requirements.	12. Record keeping

Standard 4: Biology and behaviour of koalas

Objective: To ensure detailed knowledge of the koala is taught to learners. This is done by providing learners with the foundational tools to understand koala biology and behaviour and how these aspects inform interactions with koalas undergoing rehabilitation.

To be compliant with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

4.1   Explain features of koala biology including anatomy, physiology, social structure and habitat and relate them to koala rehabilitation.

4.2   Provide the tools and understanding required to identify normal behaviours in koalas.

4.3   Provide the tools and understanding required to recognise signs of abnormal behaviour in koalas.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the Code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: • relate koala biology and behaviour to koala rehabilitation • recognise signs of normal behaviour in koalas • recognise signs of abnormal behaviour in koalas.	All

Standard 5: Stress management in koalas

Objective: To communicate the importance of managing stress in koalas and to provide mechanisms for minimising this stress.

To be compliant with this standard, rehabilitation organisations must:

5.1   Explain the effects of stress on a koala at various stages of rescue and rehabilitation.

5.2   Provide the tools and understanding required to recognise signs of stress in a koala.

5.3   Discuss methods for minimising stress on a koala at stages of rescue and rehabilitation.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the Code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: • recognise signs of stress in koalas and its impact • apply methods for minimising stress on a koala.	3. Rescue 4. Transport 5. Euthanasia 6. Care procedures 7. Husbandry 8. Housing 10. Release considerations

Rescue of koalas

Standard 6: Rescue of koalas

Objective: To ensure learners have the skills to safely, efficiently and humanely rescue a koala.

To be compliant with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

6.1   Outline common reasons for koala rescue.

6.2   Detail how to plan a rescue, including the use of the decision tree in the Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Koalas, to establish the appropriate course of action.

6.3   Detail the correct method and equipment required to handle and rescue a koala, as suitable to common rescue situations, conditions and ages of a koala.

6.4   Demonstrate how to rescue a koala to humanely minimise pain, stress and potential injury.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the Code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: • list the common reasons why koalas require rescue • assess a rescue situation and plan the rescue of a koala • safely rescue a koala using correct equipment • determine the type of intervention required at a rescue site.	2. Case assessment 3. Rescue 4. Transport 5. Euthanasia

Standard 7: Transport of koalas

Objective: To ensure learners have the skills to safely, efficiently and humanely transport a koala.

To be compliant with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

7.1   Demonstrate how to appropriately contain a koala for transport based on different sizes, ages and conditions.

7.2   Outline how to secure the transport container to prevent escape and further injury.

7.3   Discuss the most suitable personnel or location that a koala should be transported to, based on different ages, conditions and organisational policies.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the Code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: • prepare a carrier for transport of a koala • understand the appropriate personnel or location to transport a koala to, based on different ages, conditions and organisational policies.	2. Case assessment 3. Rescue 4. Transport 5. Euthanasia

Standard 8: Assessment of koalas

Objective: To equip learners with the skills necessary to assess the health status of a koala.

To be compliant with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

8.1   Explain how to conduct an initial assessment of a koala.

8.2   Explain the requirements of a thorough assessment of a koala.

8.3   Emphasise the need to seek prompt advice and assistance for a koala from coordinator(s) or other relevant personnel, as appropriate to its condition.

8.4   Demonstrate use of body scoring to assess the condition of a koala.

8.5   Identify tooth wear as the primary method for determining the age of a koala.

8.6   Distinguish signs of and ways to determine common diseases and injuries affecting koalas.

8.7   Explain how to manage an injured or diseased koala based on the severity of its condition.

8.8   Outline criteria and approved methods for humane euthanasia.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the Code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: • conduct an initial assessment of a koala • assess the health status of a koala and recognise stages, symptoms and severity of common diseases and injuries • determine the appropriate course of action for a koala based on its condition • outline criteria for and approved methods of euthanasia	5. Euthanasia 6. Care procedures 7. Husbandry 8. Housing

Rehabilitation of koalas

Standard 9: Rehabilitation of adult koalas

Objective: To equip learners with the skills to provide high quality rehabilitative care of adult koalas at the relevant stage(s) of housing.

Note: This standard can be applied to a single stage of care, i.e. intensive care, intermediate care or pre-release care, depending on the role the learner will be expected to perform upon successful completion of the training.

To be compliant with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

9.1   Explain the importance of and process for quarantining individual koalas entering rehabilitation.

9.2 Specify stages of housing (intensive, intermediate and pre-release).

9.3 State the housing requirements and considerations relevant to stages of housing.

9.4 Describe appropriate equipment and furniture for stages of housing.

9.5 Explain how to appropriately provide food and water based on the condition of a koala.

9.6 Discuss how to monitor a koala in accordance with stages of housing and condition.

9.7 Demonstrate how to complete a husbandry plan.

9.8 Illustrate disease control and hygiene practices appropriate to stages of housing.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the Code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: • explain the requirements of housing for koalas • demonstrate correct set-up for housing koalas • provide food and water appropriate to age and condition of a koala • monitor a koala undergoing rehabilitation • complete a husbandry plan for an adult koala.	5. Euthanasia 6. Care procedures 7. Husbandry 8. Housing

Standard 10: Rehabilitation of koala joeys

Objective: To provide learners with the specialised knowledge required to rehabilitate a koala joey.

To be compliant with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

10.1 Specify key stages of joey development.

10.2 Describe appropriate housing for a koala joey based on stage of development.

10.3 Discuss appropriate food and feeding methods for a joey based on its stage of development.

10.4 Examine common conditions and diseases that affect koala joeys.

10.5 Illustrate disease control and hygiene practices appropriate to stage(s) of housing.

10.6 Demonstrate how to complete a husbandry plan for a koala joey.

10.7 Describe mechanisms to reduce stress and encourage natural behaviours in koala joeys.

10.8 Prepare a hand-raised koala for release.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the Code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: • outline the requirements for koala joey rehabilitation • identify stages of development for koala joeys and relate these to rehabilitation • apply hygiene and disease control processes to koala joey rehabilitation • reduce stress and encourage natural behaviours in koala joeys.	2. Case assessment 5. Euthanasia 6. Care procedures 7. Husbandry 8. Housing

Standard 11: Leaf identification and collection

Objective: To introduce learners to techniques for identifying and collecting leaf for koalas in rehabilitation.

To be compliant with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

11.1   Identify legislative requirements and best practice standards for harvesting leaf.

11.2   Discuss how to select leaf to maximise intake by koalas.

11.3   Describe how to collect, transport and store leaf to minimise contamination.

11.4   Discuss how to collect the appropriate volume of leaf.

11.5   Identify species of locally significant food trees.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the Code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: • collect leaf to promote health and sustainability of trees • select the most appropriate and correct amount of leaf for consumption by koalas • correctly identify locally significant primary and secondary food trees.	7. Husbandry

Standard 12: Release of koalas

Objective: To ensure learners understand suitability for release and criteria for releasing a koala.

To be compliant with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

12.1   Discuss release considerations for koalas including timing and site selection.

12.2   Explain how to determine a koala's suitability for release.

12.3   Detail the correct techniques and equipment for releasing a koala.

12.4   Explain the Australian Museum genetic sampling protocol.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the Code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: • assess a koala for release suitability • competently release a koala • outline the genetic sampling protocol for sending samples to the Australian Museum.	9. Suitability for release 10. Release considerations