

# NSW Code of Practice No 4 - Keeping and Trading of Birds

## Preface

This code is designed for everyone involved in the keeping, breeding, showing and trading of birds (other than domestic poultry). By adhering to the code, people involved in this industry demonstrate to the general community their concern for birds in their care.

The code is neither a complete manual of aviculture husbandry nor a static document. It may be revised to take account of advances in the understanding of bird physiology and behaviour, technological changes, changing industry standards and the community's attitudes and expectations about the welfare of birds.

Compliance with the code does not remove the need to abide by the requirements of any other laws and regulations, such as local government or National Parks and Wildlife Service legislation.

The code has been prepared by the Associated Birdkeepers of Australia (ABA) representing a large proportion of those in aviculture. It is not intended to apply to those premises licensed or approved under the Exhibited Animals Protection Act or by the Zoological Parks Board. This code has been endorsed by:

- The NSW Animal Welfare Advisory Council.
- The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- NSW Agriculture.
- Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council.
- Canary & Cage Bird Federation of Australia Inc.

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 This code recognises the following principals:

- (a) a primary concern for the welfare of birds
- (b) a realisation of the need for conservation
- (c) a concern for others in aviculture
- (d) compliance with legislative requirements

1.2 The importance of care and competence in the handling and keeping of birds cannot be over-emphasised. A sound knowledge of their husbandry requirements is essential. Appropriate expert advice and guidance should be sought whenever needed.

1.3 This code cannot replace the need for common sense and experience.

## 2. General requirements

2.1 The basic needs of aviary birds are:

- (a) ready access to proper and sufficient food and water adequate to maintain health and vigour
- (b) freedom of movement and ability to exercise or fly appropriate to the species
- (c) accommodation which provides protection and which neither harms nor causes distress
- (d) fresh air and exposure to suitable light
- (e) protection from predators, toxic substances and diseases
- (f) rapid identification and competent treatment of any injury, vice or disease.

## 3. Food

3.1 Adequate food suitable for the needs of the particular species of birds should be readily available. Most species of birds should have access to food at all times.

3.3 Food should not be mouldy or contaminated with harmful substances. It should be stored in a manner which best prevents its deterioration, refrigerated or prepared daily depending on the nature of its ingredients.

3.3 Food should be placed where it is least likely to be spoiled or contaminated. Open containers should not be located below perches.

3.4 Except where it is a species requirement, direct feeding on the ground should be avoided and suitable containers used to reduce the risk of disease.

3.5 Food containers should be checked frequently to ensure that food of suitable quality and quantity is available to the birds. Containers should be constructed and used in a manner which is not dangerous to the birds.

3.6 Most birds benefit from a regular supply of fruit, greens or seeding grasses. These should be fresh, preferably supplied daily and old or stale food removed. For most species grit and other supplements should be readily available, especially to breeding birds.

3.7 Care should be taken to avoid providing food that is contaminated with insecticides or other substances of toxic potential or food that is toxic.

## 4. Water

4.1 Clean cool water should be available at all times.

4.2 Water containers should be located to minimise contamination and exposure to the sun and rain. Placement below perches should be avoided.

4.3 Containers should be cleaned at least weekly, disinfected regularly. They should be designed by size, shape, depth, slope of sides or contents, so as to avoid drowning or causing distress to birds. Containers should be disinfected before being transferred to other cages.

- 4.4 Except for water birds continually wet areas may present health hazards and should be avoided as far as possible.
- 4.5 Bathing water should be available for many species.
- 4.6 It is totally unacceptable for birds to die from lack of food or water.

## 5. Accommodation

- 5.1 Each species should be accommodated according to its need, including:
- (a) protection from the extremes of climate
  - (b) safety from predators
  - (c) ability to escape from, or to avoid distress caused by other birds, animals and humans
  - (d) protection of food and water containers from contamination or from rain or direct sunlight
  - (e) sufficient space, perches, nesting areas and/or feed and water stations to meet the needs of all the birds in the cage or aviary
  - (f) nesting sites and materials appropriate for the species for breeding purposes where intended.
- 5.2 Cages and aviaries should be sited and constructed to minimise risks from flood or fire. Exits should allow for emergency evacuation.
- 5.3 In cold climates some insulation or heating may be needed for some species. Where birds are likely to be distressed by heat some cooling mechanism should be provided. Birds in small cages should not be left exposed in the hot sun without shelter.
- 5.4 Cages and aviaries should be designed and constructed so as to minimise the threat posed to birds by predators. Many species of birds, animals and reptiles are predators of or cause distress to aviary birds by day or by night. These include cats, dogs, foxes, birds of prey including owls, butcherbirds and currawongs, snakes and even children
- 5.5 Vermin and other pests should be rigidly controlled to prevent their entry to cages, aviaries or food storage areas. If vermin are observed, control measures should be taken promptly.
- 5.6 Bird enclosures or cages should be fitted with openings or doorways designed so as to avoid the risk of injury or escape.
- 5.7 Roosting sites, perches or hiding areas should be provided in the manner and positions most appropriate for the species, e.g. many aviary species require high perches in protected areas for roosting, and some ground dwelling species remain distressed if unable to use areas in which to hide. Perches should be of varied size and shape. Metal or plastic perches are not suitable. Natural branches are preferable.
- 5.8 Water birds given free range or swimming/wading areas, require protection from predators.
- 5.9 Unless compatible, different species should be confined separately.
- 5.10 Care should be taken with new equipment. New galvanised wire may be toxic, especially for parrots. The risk of "New Wire" disease can be reduced by allowing the wire to be weathered for 4-8 weeks or by washing with a mild acidic solution, e.g., vinegar, and rinsed.

## 6. Health and hygiene

6.1 Good animal husbandry, as for any animal species, is essential for the welfare of birds.

6.2 Newly acquired birds should be quarantined for a suitable time for treatment/observation before release into aviaries or cages.

6.3 Birds show ill health or stress in a great variety of ways, but careful observation may be needed as sick birds are able to suppress some signs when stimulated.

Signs requiring urgent attention include:

- changes in appearance of dropping
- changes in food or water consumption
- changes in attitude or behaviour e.g. inability to fly or to see
- changes in appearance or posture, ruffled feathers, tail pumping etc
- changes in weight
- enlargements or swelling
- vomiting, injury or bleeding
- discharge from nostrils, eyes or beak.

Other signs that should be noted include:

- excessive loss of feathers
- lameness or sores on feet
- overgrown beak or nails
- stains or scabs around feet, eyes or nostrils.

6.4 Sick or injured birds should be isolated to facilitate observation and treatment and to prevent further damage, and/or to restrict the spread of infection.

6.5 The provision of a heated hospital cage is a valuable adjunct. Hospital cage temperature should be 28°-35°C as appropriate to the species.

6.6 Cages and aviaries should be cleaned regularly; the floor and food and water containers in holding cages should be kept clean.

6.7 Birds should be inspected regularly, preferably daily, to ensure that adequate feed and water is available, to check on their state of health, and to identify and promptly remedy any problem that may develop. New, sick or young birds should be inspected more frequently.

6.8 Where treatment to restore health or to repair injury is not possible or is not successful, euthanasia should be performed by a competent person and in an appropriate and humane manner. Veterinary advice should be sought.

## 7. Trading

7.1 Sick, injured or aged birds should not be traded without the full knowledge of the purchaser of their condition.

7.2 Birds traded should not be misrepresented as to sex, age, origin, species or breeding history and soundness.

7.3 Juvenile birds unable to feed themselves should not be traded except for the purpose of hand rearing. The sale of fledglings unable to feed themselves must be restricted to persons competent in the procedures of hand rearing and they must be adequately informed of the nutritional and husbandry requirements of the species and the hygiene and management standards necessary.

7.4 A person trading to another should endeavour to ensure that the buyer understands the feeding and general husbandry requirements of the species being traded.

7.5 Birds known or suspected of being obtained illegally should not be traded.

## **8. Procedures**

### **8.1 Catching**

Catching aviary birds usually causes distress and some species are particularly susceptible. Birds should be caught by the least stressful method available and subjected to minimal handling.

### **8.2 Restraint**

Special care and knowledge is necessary in holding or restraining birds, and the most appropriate method should be used for each species.

### **8.3 Wings**

Pinioning of wings is an unacceptable practice and is defined as an act of cruelty. The clipping of wing feathers of small birds or nervous species is also unacceptable.

### **8.4 Rings**

The application of rings for identification purposes requires care for selection of the appropriate ring and its application. Some species, especially adult birds should not be ringed because of the risk of self-mutilation. Special care is needed should a ring require removal, for example, to attend to a leg injury.

### **8.5 Beak Trimming**

Overgrown beaks should be carefully trimmed. Unless due to curable disease or nutritional problem, birds with overgrown beaks should not be used for breeding.

### **8.6 Toe Trimming**

Excessively long nails should be trimmed without drawing blood, but toes should not be cut with the intent of preventing nail growth. Overgrown nails may be indicative of inadequate conditions, particularly in small cages.

## **9. Parasite control**

9.1 Worm control is necessary with most aviary birds.

9.2 Water or feed medication may be indicated in some circumstances, but is least efficient.

9.3 Individual dosing should be performed by competent operators.

9.4 Chemicals, e.g. insecticides should be selected and used carefully and in accordance with pesticide laws. For example, pest strips are ineffective except in enclosed areas.

## 10. Transport

10.1 Transport creates distress and therefore should be kept to the minimum necessary. Birds should not be left in parked vehicles in the sun or in hot weather.

10.2 Except for short journeys, feed should always be available during transport, especially for small or young birds, and water should be provided at intervals, especially in hot periods.

10.3 Transport cages should be spacious enough for the birds to move around but excessive space may predispose birds to injury and should be avoided.

10.4 For some species the roof of transport boxes should be padded to prevent head injuries. Other species may require transportation in bags. For some species, at least for shorter journeys or periods of time, cages should be darkened.

## 11. Trapping

Trapping of native birds is illegal except under licence issued by the National Parks and Wildlife Service for the trapping of pest species for damage mitigation purposes.

## 12. Birds on display

### 12.1 Shows and Exhibitions

Shows and exhibitions should be conducted over as short a period as possible and not more than 72 hours. Public access should be controlled. Birds exhibiting signs of distress, injury or disease must be removed from the display area for appropriate attention or treatment. Birds on display must be under competent supervision at all times. Food and water must be available and birds accommodated in accordance with this code. Cage sizes to be not less than the show standards for the particular species.

### 12.2 Markets and Auctions

These are stressful to birds and must be conducted over as short a period as possible and not more than 12 hours. Otherwise conditions as in 12.1 apply.

## 13. Recommended reading

- (a) The Bird Observers Club's 'Code of Ethics' for bird watchers.
- (b) The Australian Agricultural Council's "Code of Practice for The Welfare of Animals - No. 1, The Fowl" for those with poultry species.
- (c) The International Air Transport Association's (IATA) regulations for air transport of birds interstate or overseas.
- (d) There are many commercially available books which address husbandry of specific species, diseases and their treatment etc.

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