

## National Wildlife Rehabilitation and Rescue Conference 2010 paper

### **RSPCA and Wildlife past present and future plans**

- **Acting Deputy Chief Inspector Russell Jarman**

#### **Abstract:**

A brief reflection of how the RSPCA has been involved in wildlife care, rescue and rehabilitation in the past.

Standard rescue work and initial care and attention:- Birds stuck in trees  
HBC's and others etc

Possibly a few stats on wildlife related rescues by the RSPCA?

Large multi agency rescues:-

Torrens Diesel Spill  
Victorian Bush Fires

Future plans strategies:-

Cohesion of wildlife groups  
SAVEM  
A set of standards for wildlife carers

More wildlife investigations-

Emu's prosecution  
Wombats

#### **BIO:-**

Russell Jarman is currently the Acting Deputy Chief inspector with the RSPCA with many years of investigating alleged cruelty to animals in South Australia.

Prior to this Russell worked for the RSPCA in the UK based at the UK's largest Wildlife hospital which specialized in the rearing, rehabilitation and monitored release of all native wild animals and Oiled bird cleaning and rehabilitation.

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### **Legal Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Release**

- Jed Goodfellow BA / LLB (Hons), GDLP

#### **Abstract:**

Disputes frequently arise between wildlife carers as to what constitutes appropriate care for a particular species of animal. Such disputes often escalate to the point where law enforcement bodies such as National Parks and the RSPCA are requested to get involved. In the absence of definitive legal standards and guidelines it can be difficult for law enforcement bodies to deal with these disputes, particularly in cases where even the experts cannot agree. In these situations it is helpful to have definitive guidelines for law enforcement bodies to have regard to with a view to resolving the dispute in the best interests of the animals concerned.

This presentation aims to briefly:

- identify the current Codes of Practice, Standards, Guidelines or other instruments which have legal effect for the care of wildlife already operating in Australia;
- consider the legal status of such instruments; and
- to provide some brief comments and observations on the processes for developing such standards and issues with their enforcement.

#### **Bio:**

Jed Goodfellow is the Legal Officer for RSPCA SA where he is responsible for managing prosecutions under the Animal Welfare Act 1985 (SA) and contributing to the development of animal protection law and policy. Prior to this Jed worked for commercial law firm Clayton Utz and served as an animal cruelty inspector for RSPCA Qld.

Jed is an admitted legal practitioner of the Supreme Court of South Australia and the Supreme Court of Queensland. Jed graduated with Bachelors degrees in Arts and Laws with Honours from Griffith University in 2008 and a Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice from the Queensland University of Technology in 2009.

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### **RSPCA SA and Wildlife - past present and future plans Acting Deputy Chief Inspector Russell Jarman**

#### **History**

Until recent years the RSPCA's involvement with wildlife has been limited. We have been a point of reference for members of the public reporting injured, sick and orphaned wildlife to various agencies like Fauna Rescue or AMWRRO and also passing on sick, injured or orphaned wildlife to the same agencies if they come into the care of the RSPCA.

That said, the RSPCA in South Australia has been doing a fair degree of wildlife rescue and recovery work in recent times. We have a dedicated team of rescue officers and inspectors that cover a 24-hour roster so that if a wild animal needs assistance and if no other options are available the RSPCA will assist.

The RSPCA has taken part in various rescues, ranging from ducklings in drains to birds in trees, kangaroos hit by cars and other road casualties.

When injured or orphaned wildlife come into the care of the RSPCA either at our headquarters in Adelaide or at our shelter at Lonsdale these animals are assessed and if not suitable for rehabilitation they may be humanely euthanized. Those that are suitable are referred to other agencies better equipped to provide ongoing care.

We average in excess of 700 rescues involving wildlife every year and deal with a large number of wild casualties each year either rescued or brought to HQ by members of the public.

The RSPCA is also heavily involved when there are emergency situations involving wildlife from oil contamination through to bushfires. Examples of these would be the diesel spill on the River Torrens in Adelaide back in 2003 and the contamination of a number of birds at Bolivar from a substance called AGNIQUE. The RSPCA in conjunction with other agencies had rescued a large number of waterfowl and accommodated, cleaned and rehabilitated these animals with reasonable success.

When there have been bushfires the RSPCA is often in attendance and although historically our primary role has been to assist PIRSA, our field staff have had to deal with many wildlife casualties from echidnas to kangaroos. These responses have not been solely limited to South Australia. Both myself and a RSPCA rescue officer attended the Victorian bushfire where we were part of the recovery response group and assisted in the rescues and euthanasia of a number of wild animals.

#### **Future**

Having outlined our current role in relation to wildlife it is important to state that we believe there is more to be done and more that we can do. As many of the South Australia carers will know, the RSPCA had started working on trying to bring all of the wildlife groups together in the hope that we could work together in a more coherent way for wildlife casualties. Progress in this matter has stalled but the RSPCA would like to see the progress and efforts in this cause renewed.

The RSPCA have changed their after hours emergency phone line to '1300 ANIMAL' (1300 264625). This change was in part to contribute to the improved cohesion of services.

One of the issues that became apparent during the Victorian bushfire was the realisation that in SA under the Emergency Action Plan, there are no specific arrangements for the rescue and rehabilitation of injured wildlife after a bushfire.

In conjunction with the AVA, the RSPCA are working on a remedy for this situation. The AVA have taken the lead in putting together a package to present to the government. Called SAVEM, it is hoped that this body will become a recognised body under the Emergency Action Plan so that this gap is closed and wildlife casualties can receive the appropriate attention they deserve.

In more recent times the RSPCA has been active in investigating reports of cruelty to wild/native animals. These include:

- The deliberate filling in of wombat holes in the Cambrai / Sedan area. In conjunction with the Wombat Awareness group a number of days were spent digging and searching for any wombats that required rescuing and any physical evidence to support further action being taken against any offenders. Unfortunately in this instance we were unsuccessful in being able to prove any offence under the Animal Welfare Act 1985.
- The seizure of 3 yearling Emus from a property near Yalata that were being kept in what the RSPCA believes were inadequate living conditions. The area in which they were kept measured 10 x 6 meters, in contrast to the required 60 meters squared meters as per the Code of Management for the farming of Emus. Charges relate to the failure to provide adequate living conditions for 3 Emus, hindering an Inspector in the course of his duties, two counts of non-compliance with two animal welfare notices and finally the failure to have a permit for the Emus.
- The successful prosecution of a man who set Rabbit traps for the purpose of trapping possums in Mount Barker. He was trying to stop animals eating his fruit from the fruit trees in his backyard. He was fined \$210 and vet costs of \$50. The trap was also forfeited to crown.

The RSPCA would also like to see the introduction of a code of Practice which sets out minimum standards for wildlife carers. We believe it is important to ensure that all rescued wildlife receive the standard of care and attention they deserve. In particular that they are provided with living conditions and accommodation appropriate to the species.