



VETERINARY IRELAND

POLICY DOCUMENT

ON

CAPTIVE WILD ANIMALS

2018

AS RATIFIED BY
VETERINARY IRELAND NATIONAL COUNCIL
22ND NOVEMBER 2018



Veterinary Ireland Policy Document on Captive Wild Animals

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Veterinary Ireland Policy on Captive Wild Animals 2018

SUMMARY

Despite some recent positive developments, there remains a concern amongst the Irish Veterinary Profession about the health and welfare of captive wild animals – i.e. those animal species not normally considered to be domesticated, whether captured from their native environment or bred in captivity and kept by individuals or organisations in the State.

Accordingly, the Animal Welfare Committee of Veterinary Ireland has drawn up a Veterinary Ireland Policy on Captive Wild Animals. This outlines the areas of concern, and having drawn on international best practice, makes recommendations for the Irish Government and other stakeholders to implement, in order to improve the health and welfare of captive wild animals kept in Ireland.

This document highlights seven categories of premises where captive wild animals are kept and considers the elements of health and positive welfare of the animals in each category and, where relevant, outlines Veterinary Ireland recommendations, both centrally for the implementation of improved legislation and regulation, and at the point of captivity for the physical and mental well-being of the wild animals being held in captivity.

With regards to captive wild animals in Zoos and Wildlife Parks, the Policy highlights the “Five Domains” concept. This is a relatively new way of considering animal welfare that seeks to provide positive welfare experiences, rather than simply minimising negative welfare experiences, as per the Five Freedoms.

Whilst Veterinary Ireland welcomes the Irish Government’s decision to ban the use of wild animals in traveling circuses from January of 2018, and that the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is regulating the use of animals in theme and entertainment parks via current zoo legislation and the Irish Standards of Modern Zoo Practice, there remain concerns regarding privately held wild animals and the ability of individuals to provide necessary resources to meet the welfare needs of captive animals. Veterinary Ireland recommends a ban on the sale of primates in pet shops and a regulation of internet sales, the creation of welfare and enclosure standards and a licencing system involving microchipping and annual inspections, with welfare advice.

While Veterinary Ireland acknowledges that those who run wild animal sanctuaries and rehabilitation centres provide a vital resource and have animal well-being at their core, it must be recognised that wildlife care is a complex area. Veterinary Ireland recommends that, in order to maintain adequate standards, such establishments should be subject to licencing for all wild species, with a set of minimum standards and compulsory NPWS training for those wishing to run such establishments.

Veterinary Ireland has a particular concern regarding the welfare of animals in commercial fur farms and other similar operations, with current legislation relating primarily to anti-escape measures and humane slaughter. There is little reference to positive welfare for the duration of the animal’s life; a matter that concerns Veterinary Ireland greatly. At a minimum, Veterinary Ireland recommends the implementation of the WelFur welfare assessment programme, the creation of a set of required welfare standards, a statutory requirement for regular welfare-related inspections of fur farms and research on the welfare of animals kept in fur farms.

Veterinary Ireland is aware that presently there are no stated standards, no regulations and no competency requirements set for pet shops to sell animals. It urges the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to create a regulatory system for the proper licencing and inspection of such pet shops.

A summary of the Veterinary Ireland recommendations arising from this Policy on Captive Wild Animals can be found on page 7 of this document.

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INTRODUCTION

This document outlines Veterinary Ireland's policy position on wild animals held in captivity. 'Wild' in this context means animals from a species not normally considered to be domesticated, whether captured from their native environment or bred in captivity.

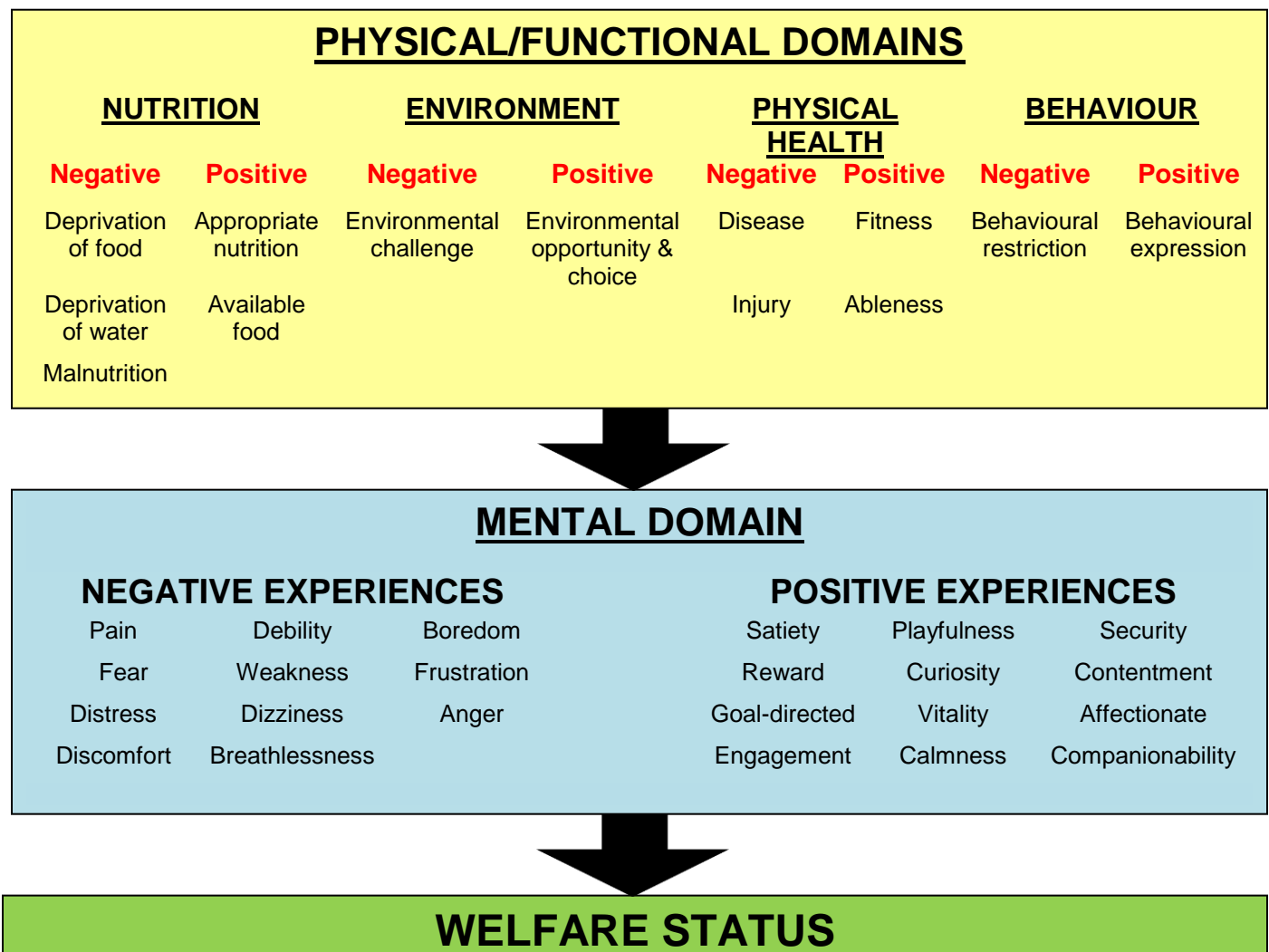
CATEGORIES OF CAPTIVE WILD ANIMALS

A. ZOO / WILDLIFE PARK ANIMALS

Veterinary Ireland recognises the part that well-run zoos and wildlife parks play in the conservation of endangered species and in public engagement and education about wildlife. However, the keeping of any animal in an enclosed, space-limited environment, away from that animal's natural habitat inevitably presents challenges and potential problems. Every achievable measure to mitigate potential harm and to allow for a maximal quality of life for all animals held in such circumstances must be taken and there should be a constant striving for improvement. Particular attention should be paid to the following: -

a) The Five Domains

The Five Domains is a welfare concept that seeks to provide positive welfare experiences, as opposed to simply minimising negative welfare experiences (the Five Freedoms).



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1. Nutrition – appropriate and adequate nutrition; ready access to fresh water.
2. Environment – environmental choice; shelter and a comfortable, species-appropriate resting area.
3. Physical Health – provision of an environment that enhances fitness and ability; rapid diagnosis and treatment of problems.
4. Behaviour – encouragement of full behavioural expression by providing sufficient space, proper facilities, environmental enrichment and company of the animal's own kind. There should be input from a qualified ethologist.
5. Mental Domain – a maximising of positive experiences (e.g. security & contentment, goal directed engagement and playfulness) and a minimising of negative experiences (e.g. pain, fear and frustration).

b) Licencing, accreditation and standards

Zoos and wildlife parks must be licenced with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and should be members of the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) or an equivalent organisation. Operators should be familiar with, and adhere to, the Irish Standards of Modern Zoo Practice – this is an excellent, practical, welfare-focused document.

c) Animal Training

Any training of animals should be species appropriate and have either the purpose of enriching the animal's day to day experience or of enabling the carrying out of necessary husbandry or veterinary practices.

d) Veterinary inspections and emergency cover

Veterinary inspection of all animals should be performed on a regular, scheduled basis. There should always be an on-call veterinarian available.

e) Training of personnel / Qualifications

All personnel (veterinarians, keepers, nursing staff, and ethologists) should be appropriately qualified and, if at all possible, hold specialist qualifications. They should undergo regular continuous professional development in the area.

f) Breeding

General breeding should be carefully managed to control numbers and to prevent inbreeding and also to control the production of surplus specimens which impact on the resources available. Breeding of endangered species should be done through the European Endangered Species Programmes (EEPs).

B. THEME / ENTERTAINMENT PARKS

Veterinary Ireland welcomes the fact that these are now being effectively dealt with by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) via current zoo legislation and the Irish Standards of Modern Zoo Practice.

C. CIRCUS ANIMALS

Veterinary Ireland is of the opinion that the physical and psychological needs of wild animals cannot be met in travelling circus environments and hence welcomes the Irish Government's decision to ban the use of wild animals in traveling circuses from January of 2018.

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D. PRIVATELY HELD WILD ANIMALS

Veterinary Ireland has particular concern in this regard. It is extremely challenging for private individuals to have the required level of knowledge, provide an environment and level of care in a manner that can fully provide for the physiological and behavioural needs of wild animals, that safeguards their health and that provides them with a positive welfare experience. Members of the public need to be aware of, and comply with, their obligations under the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013.

The EU Parliament has stated its intention to work towards establishing a positive list of exotic animals that can be kept as pets, as per the EU resolution adopted in plenary session on 15 September 2016. However, the vast majority of welfare issues involving wild animals are likely to affect animals that would be included on such a list. Consequently, Veterinary Ireland does not agree that establishing a positive list of exotic animals in the EU would significantly improve the welfare of wild animals. Rather, Veterinary Ireland urges that the Irish Government take action to ensure that any person keeping a wild animal takes all necessary steps to ensure that the animal is kept and treated in a manner that safeguards the health and welfare of the animal, as per Section 11 of the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013.

In particular Veterinary Ireland believes that, because of the longevity, intelligence and social complexity of primates, very few people can provide the necessary resources to meet their welfare needs. However, it recognises that an outright ban on the keeping of primates as pets could well have an adverse impact on the welfare of such animals and rather urges the following: -

- a) A ban on the sale of primates in pet shops and a regulation of internet sales.
- b) The creation of welfare and enclosure standards.
- c) A licencing system involving microchipping and annual inspections (with welfare advice).

E. WILD ANIMAL SANCTUARIES AND WILD ANIMAL REHABILITATORS

Veterinary Ireland acknowledges that those who run such operations have animal well-being at their core and that many provide a vital resource. However, wildlife care is a complex area and standards of such establishments vary greatly. Accordingly, such facilities should be subject to licencing for all wild species - not just for protected species, as is currently the case. This will require development of a set of minimum standards and additionally the provision of NPWS provided compulsory training courses for anyone wishing to run such an establishment. Veterinary Ireland urges the implementation of such a regime.

F. FARMING OF CAPTIVE WILD ANIMALS

Given the nature of the animal species involved, Veterinary Ireland has a particular concern as to the feasibility of catering for the welfare of animals in commercial fur farms and other similar operations. It notes with concern that legislation in the area relates primarily to anti-escape measures and to humane slaughter, with little reference to ensuring positive welfare for the duration of the animal's life. Accordingly, Veterinary Ireland has produced a policy specific to the area of Fur Farming – see the Veterinary Ireland Policy on Fur Farming of 22nd November 2018.

G. PET SHOPS

Veterinary Ireland is dismayed that at present there are no stated standards, no regulations and no competency requirements set for pet shops to sell animals. It is aware that the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine are currently producing a code of practice and a register but would rather urge creation of a regulatory system including proper licencing and charged inspections as, for example, is currently the case in the UK.

VETERINARY IRELAND RECOMMENDATIONS

ZOO / WILDLIFE PARK ANIMALS

- **Licencing, accreditation and standards:** Zoos and wildlife parks to be licenced with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and should be members of the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) or equivalent.
- Operators should be familiar with, and adhere to, the Irish Standards of Modern Zoo Practice.
- **Veterinary inspections and emergency cover:** Veterinary inspection of all animals should be performed on a regular, scheduled basis. There should always be an on-call veterinarian available.
- **Training of personnel / Qualifications:** All personnel (veterinarians, keepers, nursing staff, and ethologists) should be appropriately qualified and, if possible, hold specialist qualifications. They should undergo regular continuous professional development in the area.
- **Breeding:** General breeding should be carefully managed to control numbers and to prevent inbreeding and to control the production of surplus specimens which impact on the resources available.
- Breeding of endangered species should be done through the European Endangered Species Programmes (EEPs).

PRIVATELY HELD WILD ANIMALS

- That the Irish Government undertakes an education campaign to ensure that members of the public are aware of, and comply with, their obligations under the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013.
- That the Irish Government take action to ensure that any person keeping a wild animal takes all necessary steps to ensure that the animal is kept and treated in a manner that safeguards the health and welfare of the animal, as per Section 11 of the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013.
- That the Irish Government legislates to:
 - Implement a ban on the sale of primates in pet shops and a regulation of internet sales.
 - Create welfare and enclosure standards.
 - Create a licencing system involving microchipping and annual inspections (with welfare advice).

WILD ANIMAL SANCTUARIES AND WILD ANIMAL REHABILITATORS

- That such facilities should be subject to licencing for all wild species, not just for protected species.
- That a set of minimum standards be developed.
- The provision by National Parks and Wildlife Service of compulsory training courses for anyone wishing to run such an establishment.

PET SHOPS

- That the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine create a regulatory system for Pet Shops, including proper licencing and charged inspections.



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