



Sea turtle and sea snake 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This resource may contain images or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.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 of this tool

This sea turtle and sea snake rehabilitation assessment tool has been designed to help wildlife rehabilitation organisations monitor their level of compliance with the *Code of practice for injured, sick and orphaned sea turtles and sea snakes* (the code). Its primary purpose is to proactively help inform and guide improvements to their standards of care and optimise post-rehabilitation outcomes.

The tool is for use by facility managers or experienced marine reptile rehabilitators. The assessment aims to provide an objective snapshot of the organisation's application of the code. This tool can also inform future training and guide grant applications for replacement enclosures or other assets to meet code requirements.

Everyone authorised to interact with sea turtles and sea snakes is required to act in accordance with the code. It has been developed to protect the welfare of these rescued animals and support the conservation of wild 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 compliance assessments so they can be compared against previous assessments.

How to use this assessment tool

The tool has 5 sections:

1. Training
2. Records management
3. Facility inspection
4. Field observation
5. Assessment summary.

An inspection may target one or more sections of the tool. Sections 1 to 4 align with specific standards in the code. It is preferable to complete Sections 1, 2 and 3 together or Sections 1 and 4. Section 5 summarises the assessment results from each section.

Contents of each section

- A place to record the assessor's and group member's name, signature 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.
- Check boxes to record responses to the questions.
- Space to score and tally the results of the assessment.
- Space for notes about any observations you make during the inspection and to make specific recommendations.

Planning and what to take to the assessment

Before the site visit

- Contact the group, licensed facility or animal display establishment and arrange a mutually convenient meeting time.
- For internal assessments contact the volunteer and/or relevant supervisor.
- Consider if an observer should also attend with the assessor.
- Explain the purpose of the assessment before the site visit (and again at the start of the site visit).
- Ask if there are sea turtles or sea snakes onsite and at what stage of rehabilitation.
- Identify which standards you intend to assess. You do not need to assess them all at once.
- Pack a copy of the code of practice.
- Be familiar with the [data reporting template](#) and/or Elements database.
- Bring a mobile phone or camera and ask if you can take photos.
- Bring a tape measure, pen and clipboard or laptop.

Scoring each section and collating the results

Each question requires the assessor to select the appropriate answer, as shown in the example below. Only one answer can be selected. The answers can then be collated, scored and converted to a percentage. This sample exercise has 4 target questions.

Example assessment (facility inspection)

Code of practice standards: 9 Suitability for release

Pre-release assessment: Have all marine reptiles deemed ready for release been assessed according to the standards?

Prompt: Ask to see the marine reptiles that have been assessed as suitable for release. If none have been assessed as suitable for release, record 'N/A' in the notes.

Target questions. Select one response for each question:

1.	Has the release suitability of the marine reptiles (s) been confirmed by a veterinarian or experienced marine reptile rehabilitator?			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 50%	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50%	<input type="checkbox"/> None	
2.	Has the member correctly described why the animal is physically ready for release? (See standard 9.1.1 of the code.)			
<input type="checkbox"/> All	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> More than 50%	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50%	<input type="checkbox"/> None	
3.	Has the member correctly described why the animal is behaviourally ready for release? (See standard 9.1.2 of the code.)			
<input type="checkbox"/> All	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> More than 50%	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50%	<input type="checkbox"/> None	
4.	Can the sea turtles assessed as suitable for release recognise, forage and consume naturally available appropriate food (except green turtles that can be fed foods that mimic seagrass such as kale, lettuce or other leafy greens)?			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 50%	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50%	<input type="checkbox"/> None	

How to calculate an assessment score

Step 1: Tally the selected responses for each column

2/4	2/4	0/4	0/4
-----	-----	-----	-----

Step 2: Subtract the number of not applicable (N/A) answers from the total number of questions. There are none in this example.

2/4	2/4	0	0
-----	-----	---	---

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

50%	50%	0	0
-----	-----	---	---

In this example, 2 of the 4 questions were scored as 'All' and 2 question as 'More than 50%', The total assessment score is therefore 2/4 (50%) for 'All', 2/4 (50%) for 'More than 50%'. The score or percentage for responses 'All' (or 'Yes') is then recorded in the assessment summary (section 5).

1. 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.

Facility/Group name:

Member name:

Signature:

Date:

Assessor name:

Signature:

Date:

Code of practice standards: 11 Training

Training assessment: Are members trained to rescue and/or rehabilitate marine reptiles?

Prompts: Check the training register. Confirm what tasks members do with sea turtles and/or sea snakes.

Target questions. Select one response for each question:

1. Is the member authorised to work with sea turtles?

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. Is the member authorised to work with sea snakes?

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. Have members involved in rescue or rehabilitate completed specialist training in marine reptile rehabilitation?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. Is the member's training current (see standard 11.1.9 about refresher training)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. If the member/s handle sea snakes, have they undertaken a venomous snake handling course within the last 3 years?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Tally responses for each column and display the score as a fraction out of 5

Convert to a percentage (%)

Notes:

Recommendations:

2. Section 2: Records management

The purpose of this section is to assess the facility/member's marine reptile records, including decisions made about the fate of animals in care. It may help to review the previous year's records before starting the assessment.

Facility/Group name:

Member name:

Signature:

Date:

Assessor name:

Signature:

Date:

Section 2a: Records management

Code of practice standards: 12 Record keeping, 5.1 When to euthanase

Records management assessment 1: Is the facility/member's record sheet current, accurate and compliant with the standard?

Prompts: Check if the facility or member uses Elements or the report template. Download Elements records prior to visit. Request to see current record sheet if relevant.

Target questions. Select one response for each question:

1. How many sea turtles currently in care are listed in the record sheet or Elements?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None ☐ N/A

2. How many sea snakes currently in care are listed in the record sheet or Elements?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None ☐ N/A

3. How many sea turtles and sea snakes have their rescue date, location and encounter circumstance entered in the record sheet or Elements?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None ☐ N/A

4. How many sea turtles and sea snakes have their initial weight and morphometric data entered in the record sheet or Elements?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None ☐ N/A

5. How many dead or released sea turtles and sea snakes have had their fates entered?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None ☐ N/A

6. How many sea turtles and sea snakes transferred to, or from another facility have a dated identification record and location of transfer?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ 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:

Section 2b: Records management (euthanasia)

Records management assessment: Do decisions made about the euthanasia and permanent care of sea turtles and sea snakes accord with the standards?

Prompts: Check the fate details section in Elements or the record sheet. Be familiar with the 'When to euthanase' standards in the code. Check the list of permanent care animals in the organisations last submitted combined report.

Target questions. Select one response for each question:

1. How many sea turtles were euthanised in accordance with the criteria in the code? (List reasons in the notes)?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None ☐ N/A

2. How many sea snakes were euthanised in accordance with the criteria in the code? (List reasons in the notes)?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None ☐ N/A

3. How many of the sea turtles and sea snakes held in permanent care have written approval from NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ 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:

3. Section 3: Facility inspection

The purpose of this section is to assess the rehabilitation facility, including assessment, housing and rehabilitation care procedures. If the facility does not participate in the intensive care, intermediate care or pre-release of sea turtles and sea snakes, then move to another section and place N/A in the notes.

Facility/Group name:

Member name:

Signature:

Date:

Assessor name:

Signature:

Date:

Section 3a: Assessment and general care

Code of practice standards: 6.1 Assessment; 6.3 disease transmission, 7.2 Hygiene

General care assessment: Are the marine reptiles in the facility managed according to the standards?

Prompts: Observe the marine reptiles in care and confirm when they were admitted into care.

Ask to see records for those animals currently in care. If no records are kept ask how they document compliance with these standards below.

If an animal is not present, record 'N/A' in the notes.

Target questions. Select one response for each question:

1. Of the marine reptiles currently onsite, how many have undergone an assessment either by a veterinarian with marine reptile experience or by an experienced marine reptile rehabilitator under the supervision of a veterinarian with marine reptile experience?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

2. Of the marine reptiles currently onsite, how many were kept in isolation until their disease status was determined by a veterinarian or experienced wildlife rehabilitator?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

3. Of the sea turtles in care with a history of fibropapillomatosis, how many had a sample collected and sent to the Australian Registry of Wildlife Health?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None ☐ N/A

4. How many quarantine enclosures are maintained under strict quarantine conditions (e.g. individual tank filtration, appropriate disposal of water)?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

5. How many unoccupied enclosures (including enclosure furniture) are clean and disinfected?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None ☐ N/A

6. Are the rehabilitation facilities clean, for example, is uneaten food and faeces present in the enclosures?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

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 (%)

Target questions. Select one response for each question:

Notes:

Record 'N/A' here if there are no marine reptiles onsite

Recommendations:

Section 3b: Housing and rehabilitation – food and water

Code of practice standards: 7.1 Food and water, 7.3 General care

General care assessment: Are the marine reptiles in the facility managed according to the standards?

Prompts: Familiarise yourself with the relevant standards in the Code.

Target questions. Select one response for each question:

1. Are the marine reptiles currently in care provided with a balanced and complete diet appropriate for the species, stage of development and physiological status?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

2. Does each marine reptile in care have a husbandry plan?

☐ 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:

Record 'N/A' here if there are no sea turtles or sea snakes onsite

Recommendations:

Section 3c: Housing and rehabilitation – intensive care

Code of practice standards: 6.2 Monitoring, 8.2 Intensive care housing, 8 Housing

Intensive care assessment 1: Are intensive care housing enclosures (ICEs) constructed, positioned and maintained in accordance with the standards?

Prompts: Ask to see the intensive care enclosures.

Ask to see records for those currently in care. If no records are kept ask how they document compliance with these standards below. If an animal is not present, record 'N/A' in notes.

Answer only if sea turtles or sea snakes are present, otherwise record 'N/A' in the notes.

Target questions. Select one response for each question:

1. How many ICEs provide sufficient space for the sea turtle to maintain normal posture and to stretch its flippers and turn around?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

2. How many ICEs provide sufficient space for the sea snake to uncoil and stretch to their full length but not actively swim?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

3. How many ICEs are escape-proof?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

4. How many ICEs are free of hazards (see Standards 8.1.3 and 8.1.4)?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

5. How many ICEs provide a light dark cycle that replicates outside conditions?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

6. How many ICEs provide a constant temperature monitored at least once a day with a thermometer (e.g. marine reptiles need to be in water with temperature between 23–26C)?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

7. How many ICEs provide adequate ventilation without allowing excess drafts?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

8. How many sea turtles in intensive care have been monitored at least twice a day to observe their progress in wound healing and barnacle die-off (ask to see their records to verify)?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

9. How many sea snakes in intensive care have been monitored twice a day for normal behaviours. Verify how they define normal behaviour?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

Target questions. Select one response for each question:

10. How many sea snakes in ICEs have a clearly visible sign 'DANGER – venomous live sea snake' on the enclosure?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

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

Convert to a percentage (%)

Notes:

Record 'N/A' here if there are no marine reptiles in intensive care.

Recommendations:

Section 3d: Housing and rehabilitation – pre-release housing

Code of practice standards: 6.2 Monitoring, 8.3 Pre-release housing, 8 Housing

Pre-release assessment 1: Are pre-release housing enclosures (PREs) constructed, positioned and maintained in accordance with the standards?

Prompts: View the pre-release enclosures, if any. Ask to see records for those currently in care. If no records are kept, ask how they document compliance with the standards below. If an animal is not present, record 'N/A' in notes.

Answer only if sea turtles or sea snakes are present, otherwise record 'N/A' in the notes.

Target questions. Select one response for each question:

1. How many PREs provide sufficient space for the marine reptile to move about freely and express a range of natural behaviours (See standard 8.3.1 for enclosure specifications)?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

2. How many PREs provide areas where the marine reptile can gain exposure to prevailing weather conditions and where it can shelter?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

3. How many PREs contain habitat that enables the marine reptile to perform a range of natural behaviours (See standard 8.3.3. for examples)?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

4. How many PREs are escape-proof?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

5. How many PREs are free of hazards (see Standards 8.1.3 and 8.1.4)?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

6. How many sea turtles are monitored daily from a distance to determine if they are physically and behaviourally ready for release?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

7. How many sea snakes in pre-release are monitored twice a week and this will include monitoring for frequency of skin sloughing?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

8. How many sea snakes in PREs have a clearly visible sign 'DANGER – venomous live sea snake' on the enclosure?

☐ All ☐ More than 50% ☐ Less than 50% ☐ None

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

Convert to a percentage (%)

Target questions. Select one response for each question:

Notes:

Record 'N/A' here if there are no pre-release enclosures or animals in pre-release.

Recommendations:

Section 3e: Pre-release assessment

Code of practice standards: 9 Suitability for release

Pre-release assessment: Have all marine reptiles deemed ready for release been assessed according to the standards?

Prompt: Ask to see the marine reptiles that have been assessed as suitable for release, including husbandry plan. If none have been assessed as suitable for release, record 'N/A' in the notes.

Target questions. Select one response for each question:

1. Has the release suitability of the marine reptile/s been confirmed by a veterinarian or experienced marine reptile rehabilitator?

☐ All ☐ None ☐ Some

2. Has the member correctly described why the animals are physically ready for release? (See standard 9.1.1 of the code.)

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Some

3. Has the member correctly described why the animals are behaviourally ready for release? (See standard 9.1.2 of the code.)

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Some

4. Can the sea turtles assessed as suitable for release recognise, forage and consume naturally available appropriate food (except green turtles that can be fed foods that mimic seagrass such as kale, lettuce or other leafy greens)?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Some

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

Convert to a percentage (%)

Notes:

Record 'N/A' here if no marine reptiles are ready for release.

Recommendations:

4. Section 4: Field observation

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

Facility/Group name:

Member name:

Signature:

Date:

Assessor name:

Signature:

Date:

Section 4a: Rescue

Code of practice standards: 3 Rescue

Rescue assessment: Was the rescue of the marine reptile undertaken in accordance with the standards?

Prompts: Observe the method and conduct of the sea turtle or sea snake's physical rescue. Ask to see rescue equipment at the facility.

Target questions. Select one response for each question:

1. Did the rescuer assess how many people would be needed to handle the sea turtle, for example, for every 20 kg of sea turtle an extra rescuer is needed)?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

2. Did the rescuer use the correct rescue equipment to capture the sea turtle or sea snake?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

3. Did the rescuer use the correct method to capture the sea turtle and/or sea snake?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

4. If the sea turtle or sea snake was entangled in shark mesh equipment, did the rescuer contact the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development Fisheries Watch Phonenumber?

☐ 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 4b: Transport

Code of practice standards: 4 Transport

Transport assessment: Was the marine reptile transported in accordance with the standards?

Prompts: Observe the method and conduct of the sea turtle or sea snake's physical transport. Ask to see transport equipment at the facility.

Target questions. Select one response for each question:

1. Was the transport container appropriate for the species and size of the marine reptile?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. (Sea snake rescue) Was the transport container lined with a wet towel allowing a small pool of water (1-3 mm) to be trapped at one end for the sea snake to be kept moist but not able to drown

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Was the transport container lined to prevent injuries to the marine reptile, for example, floors were covered in a non-slip, non-ingestible, tangle free surface?

☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Was the transport container well-ventilated so air can circulate around the marine reptile?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Is the transport container escape-proof? (Sea snakes must be in a lockable container)

☐ Yes ☐ No

6. Was the marine reptile positioned so its breathing is not restricted?

☐ Yes ☐ No

7. If the animal rescued was a sea snake, did the container have a clearly visible label that says 'Danger – venomous live sea snake'?

☐ Yes ☐ No

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

Convert to a percentage (%)

Notes:

Recommendations:

Section 5: Assessment summary

There is no pass or fail associated with this assessment. Its purpose is to identify those standards where compliance with the code can be improved. Specific recommendations for improvement can be recorded below. A time frame 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' in the left-hand column for each section assessed.
- Record the total score as a fraction (i.e. X/Y) for answers with 'All' or 'Yes'.
- Record the percentage score (%) for answers with 'All' or 'Yes'.

Assessed	Section	Score (fraction) All/Yes	Percentage (%) All/Yes
Sections 1 and 2: Training and records management			
Yes	1 Training		
Yes	2a Records management		
Yes	2b Records management (euthanasia)		
Section 3: Facility inspection			
Yes	3a Assessment and general care		
Yes	3b Housing and rehabilitation – Food and water		
Yes	3c Housing and rehabilitation – intensive care		
Yes	3d Housing and rehabilitation – pre-release housing		
Yes	3e Pre-release assessment		
Section 4: Field observation			
Yes	4a Rescue		
Yes	4b Transport		
Recommendations:			

Appendix 1: Animals currently onsite

This species summary sheet should be completed before conducting an assessment. It will help the assessor reconcile the species and animals currently onsite with what is listed on the record sheet or Elements.

Assessors should ask the member or facility manager to confirm the taxonomic identification of each species.

[illegible]

Calculate the total number of animals onsite by adding together the number of animals in rehabilitation plus the number of animals in permanent care.

More information

DPE (Department of Planning and Environment) (2021) Code of practice for injured and sick sea turtles and sea snakes, DPE, accessed 2025.

DCCEEW (Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water) Wildlife rehabilitation reporting requirements and template for wildlife rehabilitation providers (data reporting template) DCCEEW, accessed 2025.