



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, INDUSTRY & ENVIRONMENT

Possum and Glider Rehabilitation Training Standards

for the Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector



© 2021 State of NSW and Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

With the exception of photographs, the State of NSW and Department of Planning, Industry and Environment are pleased to allow this material to be reproduced in whole or in part for educational and non-commercial use, provided the meaning is unchanged and its source, publisher and authorship are acknowledged. Specific permission is required for the reproduction of photographs.

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) has compiled this report in good faith, exercising all due care and attention. No representation is made about the accuracy, completeness or suitability of the information in this publication for any particular purpose. DPIE shall not be liable for any damage which may occur to any person or organisation taking action or not on the basis of this publication. Readers should seek appropriate advice when applying the information to their specific needs.

All content in this publication is owned by DPIE and is protected by Crown Copyright, unless credited otherwise. It is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International \(CC BY 4.0\)](#), subject to the exemptions contained in the licence. The legal code for the licence is available at [Creative Commons](#).

DPIE asserts the right to be attributed as author of the original material in the following manner: © State of New South Wales and Department of Planning, Industry and Environment 2021.

Cover photo: Juvenile squirrel glider (*Petaurus norfolcensis*). Cheryl Winner/FAWNA

Acknowledgments: We thank the following rehabilitation providers for their contribution to these standards: Native Animal Rescue Group Inc (NARG), Native Animal Trust Fund Inc (NATF), Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers Inc (NRWC), Wildcare Queanbeyan Inc, Wildlife Animal Rescue and Care Society Inc (Wildlife ARC).

Published by:

Environment, Energy and Science
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124
Phone: +61 2 9995 5000 (switchboard)
Phone: 1300 361 967 (Environment, Energy and Science enquiries)
TTY users: phone 133 677, then ask for 1300 361 967
Speak and listen users: phone 1300 555 727, then ask for 1300 361 967
Email: info@environment.nsw.gov.au
Website: www.environment.nsw.gov.au

Report pollution and environmental incidents
Environment Line: 131 555 (NSW only) or info@environment.nsw.gov.au
See also www.environment.nsw.gov.au

ISBN 978-1-922672-51-3
EES 2021/0313
August 2021

Find out more about your environment at:

www.environment.nsw.gov.au

Contents

Introduction	1
Structure of the standards	1
Prerequisites	2
Definitions	2
Possum and Glider rehabilitation standards: Core areas of training	3
Foundations of possum and glider rehabilitation	4
Standard 1: The framework for possum and glider rehabilitation in New South Wales	4
Standard 2: Work health and safety requirements of possum and glider rehabilitation	4
Standard 3: Record keeping	5
Standard 4: Biology and behaviour of possums and gliders	5
Standard 5: Stress management in possums and gliders	5
Rescue of possums and gliders	6
Standard 6: Rescue of possums and gliders	6
Standard 7: Transport of possums and gliders	6
Standard 8: Assessment of possums and gliders	7
Rehabilitation of possums and gliders	7
Standard 9: Rehabilitation of subadult and adult possums and gliders	7
Standard 10: Rehabilitation of possum and glider joeys	8
Standard 11: Browse identification and selection	9
Standard 12: Release of possums and gliders	9

Introduction

Wildlife rehabilitation organisations and their volunteers play a critical role in rescuing and rehabilitating sick, injured and orphaned possums and gliders in New South Wales. Each year about 13,000 possums and gliders, on average, are rescued. Volunteers participating in their care are trained to ensure animals are managed humanely and have the best chance of rehabilitation and release back into the wild.

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), has collaborated with leading possum and glider rehabilitation providers to prepare these *Possum and Glider Rehabilitation Training Standards* for use by trainers in the NSW 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 (DPIE 2020). This will give greater certainty about the quality of care afforded to possums and gliders in rehabilitation.

These standards must be used for delivering introductory training for possum and glider rehabilitation. They describe the skills and knowledge that such training must include to ensure volunteers meet the requirements of the NSW Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Possums and Gliders (the Possum and Glider Code). Any person with an authority to rescue, rehabilitate and release possums and gliders in New South Wales must be trained to these standards and be assessed as competent.

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, broken down to cover individual or multiple standards, or based on certain roles within possum and glider 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.

All training must be compliant with the Possum and Glider Code. It must have a written assessment component, be competency-based, and be accompanied by ongoing in-field support from experienced wildlife 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 Possum and Glider Rehabilitation Training Standards for the Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector: Trainers' Guide (DPIE 2021). The trainers' guide has been designed to support the sector develop their training in line with these standards.

Structure of the standards

There are 12 possum and glider 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 Possums and Gliders* that are applicable to each standard.

Prerequisites

As required by the Possum and Glider Code, new wildlife rehabilitators must undertake an introductory training course. For generalist groups, this could be in their induction training. For possum-specific and glider-specific groups, this can be completed as separate induction training or incorporated into Standard 1: The framework for possum and glider 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 Possums and Gliders* refresher training must be completed every three 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 Possums and Gliders* is the relevant code for possums and gliders.

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.

Gliders: are also known as gliding possums and belong to the *Petauroides*, *Petaurus* and *Acrobates* genera. They use their membrane flaps along their flank, which act like a sail when their limbs are extended, to dive from tree to tree. A list of NSW gliders is provided in Appendix 1 of the Possum and Glider Code.

Learning outcomes: a clear statement of what a learner is expected to be able to do, know about and 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.

Possums: are small tree-dwelling marsupials with a prehensile tail that belong to the *Burramys*, *Cercartetus*, *Pseudocheirus* and *Trichosurus* genera. A list of NSW possums is provided in Appendix 1 in the Possum and Glider Code.

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.

Possum and Glider rehabilitation standards: Core areas of training

There are 12 possum and glider rehabilitation standards organised into three core training areas.

Core training area	Relevant standard
Foundations of possum and glider rehabilitation	Standard 1: The framework for possum and glider rehabilitation in New South Wales
	Standard 2: Work health and safety requirements of possum and glider rehabilitation
	Standard 3: Record keeping
	Standard 4: Biology and behaviour of possums and gliders
	Standard 5: Stress management in possums and gliders
Rescue of possums and gliders	Standard 6: Rescue of possums and gliders
	Standard 7: Transport of possums and gliders
	Standard 8: Assessment of possums and gliders
Rehabilitation of possums and gliders	Standard 9: Rehabilitation of subadult and adult possums and gliders
	Standard 10: Rehabilitation of possum and glider joeys
	Standard 11: Browse identification and selection
	Standard 12: Release of possums and gliders

Foundations of possum and glider rehabilitation

Standard 1: The framework for possum and glider rehabilitation in New South Wales

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

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 1.1 Discuss the Possum and Glider Code.
- 1.2 Ensure organisational policies and procedures applicable to possum and glider rehabilitation are defined and understood by learners.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify and demonstrate understanding of the Possum and Glider Code • identify organisational policies and procedures for possum and glider rehabilitation • recognise the objectives of possum and glider rehabilitation. 	All

Standard 2: Work health and safety requirements of possum and glider rehabilitation

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

To comply 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 possums and gliders and how they can be minimised.
- 2.3 Discuss the WHS risks associated with zoonotic diseases relevant to possums and gliders and how they can be minimised.
- 2.4 Discuss rehabilitator wellbeing and the potential mental health impacts of wildlife rehabilitation.

Learning outcomes	Section in the code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify WHS risks associated with possum and glider rehabilitation • employ techniques to minimise the WHS risks to themselves and other people. 	3. Rescue 5. Euthanasia 6. Care procedures 7. Husbandry

Standard 3: Record keeping

Objective: To explain the record keeping requirements for possum and glider rehabilitation.

To comply 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep records in accordance with NPWS and organisational requirements. 	12. Record keeping

Standard 4: Biology and behaviour of possums and gliders

Objective: To ensure detailed knowledge of possums and gliders is taught to learners. This is done by providing learners with the foundational tools to understand possum and glider biology, ecology and behaviour and how these aspects inform interactions with possums and gliders undergoing rehabilitation.

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 4.1 Explain features of possum and glider biology, including anatomy, physiology, social structure, stages of development and relate them to possum and glider rehabilitation.
- 4.2 Provide a basic understanding of possum and glider ecology, including population dynamics, habitat selection, competition and predator–prey interactions.
- 4.3 Provide the tools and understanding required to identify different species of possums and gliders recorded in New South Wales.
- 4.4 Provide the tools and understanding required to identify normal behaviours in possums and gliders.
- 4.5 Provide the tools and understanding required to recognise signs of abnormal behaviour in possums and gliders.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relate possum and glider ecology, biology and behaviour to possum and glider rehabilitation • recognise signs of normal behaviour in possums and gliders • recognise signs of abnormal behaviour in possums and gliders. 	All

Standard 5: Stress management in possums and gliders

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

To comply with this standard, rehabilitation organisations must:

- 5.1 Explain the effects of stress on possums and gliders at various stages of rescue and rehabilitation.
- 5.2 Provide the tools and understanding required to recognise signs of stress in possums and gliders.

5.3 Discuss methods for minimising stress in possums and gliders at various stages of rescue and rehabilitation.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognise signs of stress in possums and gliders and its impact apply methods for minimising stress in possums and gliders. 	3. Rescue 4. Transport 5. Euthanasia 6. Care procedures 7. Husbandry 8. Housing 10. Release considerations

Rescue of possums and gliders

Standard 6: Rescue of possums and gliders

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

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 6.1 Outline common reasons for possum and glider rescue.
- 6.2 Detail how to perform a situational assessment, including the use of the decision tree in the Possum and Glider Code, to establish the appropriate course of action.
- 6.3 Detail the correct method and equipment required to capture, handle and rescue a possum and glider, as suitable to common rescue situations, species, age and condition of the possum or glider.
- 6.4 Detail how to rescue a possum and glider humanely to minimise pain, stress and potential injury.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> list the common reasons why possums and gliders require rescue assess a rescue situation and plan the rescue of a possum and glider safely rescue a possum and glider 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 possums and gliders

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

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 7.1 Demonstrate how to appropriately contain a possum and glider for transport based on species, size, age and condition.
- 7.2 Outline how to secure the transport container to prevent escape and further injury.
- 7.3 Detail suitable transport conditions, including ambient temperature, to safely transport a possum and glider.

- 7.4 Discuss the most suitable person or location that a possum and glider should be transported to, based on species, age, condition and organisational policies.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:	2. Case assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prepare a carrier for transport 	3. Rescue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outline the transport conditions required to safely transport a possum and glider 	4. Transport
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the appropriate person or location to transport a possum and glider to, based on species, age, condition and organisational policies. 	5. Euthanasia

Standard 8: Assessment of possums and gliders

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

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 8.1 Explain how to conduct an initial assessment of a possum and glider.
- 8.2 Explain the requirements of a thorough assessment of possums and gliders.
- 8.3 Provide the tools and understanding required to identify developmental stages in possum and glider joeys.
- 8.4 Emphasise the need to seek prompt advice and assistance for a possum and glider from a coordinator, veterinarian or other relevant person, as appropriate to its condition.
- 8.5 Distinguish signs of and ways to determine common diseases and injuries affecting possums and gliders.
- 8.6 Explain how to manage an injured or diseased possum and glider based on the severity of its condition.
- 8.7 Outline criteria and approved methods for humane euthanasia.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:	5. Euthanasia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct an initial assessment of a possum and glider 	6. Care procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assess the health status of possums and gliders and recognise stages, symptoms and severity of common diseases and injuries 	7. Husbandry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • determine the appropriate course of action for a possum and glider based on its age and condition 	8. Housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outline criteria for euthanasia and approved methods of euthanasia. 	

Rehabilitation of possums and gliders

Standard 9: Rehabilitation of subadult and adult possums and gliders

Objective: To provide learners with an understanding of the requirements for the rehabilitation of subadult and adult possums and gliders, and equip learners with the skills to provide quality rehabilitative care at the relevant stages of rehabilitation.

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 9.1 Explain the importance of and process for quarantining individual possums and gliders entering rehabilitation.
- 9.2 Discuss the effects of stress and the stress-mitigation techniques required to safely rehabilitate subadult and adult possums and gliders.
- 9.3 Detail the facilities required to safely rehabilitate subadult and adult possums and gliders, relevant to stages of housing (intensive, intermediate and pre-release).
- 9.4 Describe appropriate equipment and furniture for stages of housing.
- 9.5 Illustrate disease control and hygiene practices appropriate to stages of housing.
- 9.6 Explain how to appropriately provide food and water based on the species-specific diet requirements and condition of the possum and glider.
- 9.7 Detail common conditions and diseases that affect possums and gliders.
- 9.8 Discuss how to monitor a possum and glider based on species, condition and stages of housing.
- 9.9 Demonstrate how to complete a husbandry plan.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outline the requirements for subadult and adult possum and glider rehabilitation • demonstrate correct set-up for housing possums and gliders • provide food and water appropriate to the species and condition of a possum and glider • monitor a possum and glider undergoing rehabilitation • apply hygiene and disease control processes to possum and glider rehabilitation • complete a husbandry plan for a possum and glider. 	2. Case assessment 5. Euthanasia 6. Care procedures 7. Husbandry 8. Housing

Standard 10: Rehabilitation of possum and glider joeys

Objective: To provide learners with the specialised knowledge required to rehabilitate a possum and glider joey.

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 10.1 Explain the importance of and process for quarantining possum and glider joeys entering rehabilitation.
- 10.2 Specify key stages of joey development.
- 10.3 Describe appropriate housing for a possum and glider joey based on species, condition and stage of development.
- 10.4 Discuss appropriate food, feeding methods and monitoring protocols for a joey based on species and stage of development.
- 10.5 Explain the importance of maintaining records on growth, behaviour, feeding and toileting of joeys throughout the rehabilitation process.
- 10.6 Detail common conditions and diseases that affect possum and glider joeys.
- 10.7 Illustrate disease control and hygiene practices appropriate to stages of housing.
- 10.8 Demonstrate how to complete a husbandry plan for a possum and glider joey.

10.9 Describe mechanisms to reduce stress and encourage natural behaviours in possum and glider joeys.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:	2. Case assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> outline the requirements for possum and glider joey rehabilitation identify stages of development for possum and glider joeys and relate these to rehabilitation apply hygiene and disease control processes to possum and glider joey rehabilitation reduce stress and encourage natural behaviours in possum and glider joeys prepare a hand-raised possum and glider for release. 	5. Euthanasia 6. Care procedures 7. Husbandry 8. Housing

Standard 11: Browse identification and selection

Objective: To introduce learners to techniques for identifying, collecting and storing browse for possums and gliders in rehabilitation.

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 11.1 Identify legislative requirements and best practice standards for harvesting browse.
- 11.2 Discuss the requirements for browse relevant to species, age and condition of possums and gliders.
- 11.3 Provide the tools and understanding required to identify species of browse.
- 11.4 Discuss how to collect and store browse to minimise contamination.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:	7. Husbandry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> collect browse to promote health and sustainability of plants outline requirements for browse for possums and gliders based on species, age and condition correctly identify, collect and store browse for possums and gliders. 	8. Housing

Standard 12: Release of possums and gliders

Objective: To ensure learners understand suitability for release and criteria for releasing possums and gliders.

To comply with this standard, a rehabilitation organisation must:

- 12.1 Discuss release considerations for possums and gliders, including timing and site selection.
- 12.2 Explain how to determine a possum and glider's suitability for release.
- 12.3 Detail the correct techniques and equipment for releasing possums and gliders.

Learning outcomes	Sections in the code
Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:	9. Suitability for release
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assess a possum and glider for release suitability competently release a possum and glider. 	10. Release considerations