



Animal Care Australia

NEWSLETTER

The Animal Care Expert

Animal welfare by the experts - those who keep, care for and breed animals





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“Animal Care Australia acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we reside, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.”

Headline Article

2024 saw Animal Care Australia expand our reach and our influence across multiple reviews and amendments to animal-based legislation across the country. This included pets in strata and residential tenancies; dog ownership including so-called ‘puppy farm’ legislation; cat ownership including cat containment policies; animal industries including veterinary workforce shortages and the review of Standard Occupation Classifications; the shelter/rescue and pound industries and several attempts by local councils to limit how your pets can be kept, including restricting numbers with unrealistic and uneducated abandon.

So many aspects of our involvement highlighted an overwhelming lack of understanding of basic animal keeping needs, raising questions about the level of training and experience held by Animal Management Officers, Parks & Wildlife Officers, rescue/shelter operators and the most concerning - animal welfare

compliance and enforcement officers, particularly RSPCA Inspectorate.

This is really concerning given the levels of responsibilities off-loaded by respective Ministers responsible for the varying portfolios. It continues to remain clear around the country that those Ministers are happy to accept the accolade when a new initiative is announced and yet are still happy to free their conscience and that of their government by shedding the responsibility of the aspects that might tarnish their ‘look’ in the eyes of voters. It is easier to task charitable organisations to rescue and care for animals including pets and native wildlife – the latter being property of the Crown - and also the unenviable and yet necessary responsibility of dealing with animal welfare compliance and animal cruelty.

The last couple of years has seen a minor shift in some governments taking on more ownership of the approach to dealing with animal cruelty



A Statement from the President

however while they still continue to ‘contract’ that responsibility to an organisation that has been the subject of many Parliamentary Inquiries, major complaints and reported corruption and despite all of those findings is still allowed to self-govern without any real legislated powers for the government to intervene is gob-smacking astounding. The ability to access freedom of information or complain to an ombudsman does not equal accountability, especially when reporting to a Minister sees you sent back to the organisation you want to report against.

It is time for governments to own their responsibilities. It is time for each state and territory to have an Animal Welfare Commissioner and an Office of Animal Welfare overseen by that Commissioner.

In November 2024 I was re-elected as President for another three-year term, and responding to all of the above will be my priority.

In addition to all of the usual Reviews, proposed new Bills, Council Animal Management Plans and more, Animal Care Australia will continue to advocate for you and your pets and animals. Our priorities will include but are not limited to:

- Seeking the implementation of an Animal Welfare Commissioner – responsible for overseeing animal welfare improvements, outcomes, compliance, and enforcement. This means government funded compliance and enforcement officers who are held fully accountable by the government and the Parliament and therefore to society.

“...we look forward to advocating for you and protecting the ability of everyone to own a pet.”

Michael Donnelly, President.



- Ensuring the needs of companion animals and pets are adequately and responsibly included in animal welfare legislation at all levels of government including the federal government's Animal Welfare Strategy and National Standards.
- Regulating the rescue and shelter industries. Some of this industry are partly funded by government while all receive charitable funding with limited reporting requirements, and next to no accountability of their actions - that must change.
- Identifying, and clarifying the increasing influences of animal protection (nee: animal rights) ideologies to ensure only animal welfare and animal welfare science are maintained by government.

As President one of the more important roles is to be the government liaison person with Members of Parliament, their staff, and the respective departments. This is ongoing and I have to say was quite the learning curve (still learning) as each state has its own structures and equally so does each Party. This role is necessary in order to ensure that we have the ability to call out proposed amendments or matters that need to be addressed.

It does not always pay off as politics is a complicated beast that one can never truly know how it will play out. It is frustrating when a Shadow Government acknowledges the issues with a department need to be addressed and when they become Government then relies on the direction of that same department seemingly forgetting the issues.

Our Mission:

“Animal Care Australia (ACA) is the Peak Animal Welfare Body representing the keepers and breeders of pet and companion animals in Australia”.

ACA encourages continued development of animal welfare standards and Codes of Practice for animal husbandry, breeding, training, sale and sporting exhibitions for a wide range of animal species. Our goal is to promote and encourage high standards in all interactions with the animals in our care. To encourage responsible pet ownership, and the respectful treatment of all animals in our community ACA continues to promote welfare education over regulation

On the flip side it is great when I see our input built into legislation or a Member of Parliament seeks out our perspective or had no understanding of a topic but now has information they can utilise to hold an educated position.

The sad reality of this work is that it mostly goes unnoticed. It happens behind closed doors. Many of the conversations simply cannot be publicly announced in order to retain the trust and respect of the members and staff. We can announce much later that we contributed but the true extent of the workload, the debates, to and froing and time committed to each subject is only known by a select few.

I am honoured to be respected by the Animal Care Australia Committee to continue as President and for that I am deeply thankful to each and every member: Sam, Michelle, Sue, Joanne, Karri, Kylie, Michaela, Rachel, and Tracey. I want to thank our other volunteers within the STAT, Social Media and Fundraising & Sponsorship Teams who assisted throughout the year

My previous three-year term held so many surprises and frustrations and included state elections across the country. I am sure 2025 and beyond will bring many more. Regardless we look forward to advocating for you and protecting the ability of everyone to own a pet. Whether that be one pet or multiple. Animals and particularly pets bring so much into our lives and in return we have the responsibility to ensure their time with us is with a loving and caring home.

Michael Donnelly — President, Animal Care Australia

Our Objectives:

- To represent Animal Care Groups as the peak animal welfare body
- To engage and advise Government and legislators on welfare issues relating to pets and companion animals.
- To protect the rights of ethical hobbyists & animal keepers to breed and keep pets and companion animals.
- To clarify the difference between animal rights and animal welfare
- To promote higher animal welfare outcomes

If you have adopted a pet please check the microchip details TODAY

Adopted a pet from RSPCA QLD, or other rescues in Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria, NSW or as a retired greyhound? The microchip details are likely no longer able to be read when scanned.

HomesafeID, the company that these services registered their dogs and cats with has ceased to operate online.

If your pet goes missing or is found by someone, vets/councils/animal shelters will no longer be able to view your pet's ownership details listed on their microchip, making it difficult to reunite you!

This means that there are now potentially thousands of pets with no trackable microchips. PLEASE check your pets details and update them to another chip registry.

More info can be found on the RSPCA QLD website, including how to change to a new Registry: <https://www.rspcaqlld.org.au/news-and-events/news/homesafeid-pet-microchipping?>

More info relating to NSW, SA & Victorian pets: <https://www.petrescue.com.au/library/articles/important-update-homesafeid-microchip-registry-is-closing-here-s-what-you-need-to-do>

Tasmania: <https://pulsetasmania.com.au/news/thousands-of-cats-in-limbo-as-microchip-provider-ceases-operations/?>

HomeSafeID: <https://www.homesafeid.com/>

The Animal Care Expert



Watch out for our next issue in June 2025.

Click to read our [previous issues](#)



Education and Legislation: A Partner- ship for Animal Welfare in Australia

Australia has made significant strides in advancing animal welfare through legislative changes, reflecting society's growing commitment to protecting animals. However, legislation alone cannot achieve the best welfare outcomes. To bridge the gap between policy and practice, education must play a complementary role, fostering a culture of responsibility and compassion towards animals.

The Role of Legislation in Animal Welfare

Legislative changes provide the framework for ensuring animal welfare. From the introduction of animal welfare acts such as the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act to recent updates in regulations on farming practices, these laws set minimum standards of care and penalise violations. Legislative measures address critical issues such as factory farming, live animal exports, and domestic pet care. However, while these rules are essential, they often face challenges in enforcement and compliance.

Laws can mandate practices, but they cannot change attitudes. Without widespread understanding and acceptance of these regulations, enforcement becomes an uphill battle. This is where education becomes crucial, complementing legislation to create lasting change.

The Power of Education in Shaping Attitudes

Education empowers individuals to make informed decisions and adopt ethical practices. It builds awareness about the importance of animal welfare and helps people understand the reasoning behind legislative changes. In schools, animal welfare education can foster empathy and responsibility among

children, instilling values that will influence their behaviour as adults. Similarly, targeted programs for farmers, pet owners, and industry stakeholders can bridge knowledge gaps and ensure compliance with welfare standards.

Integrating Education with Legislative Efforts

To maximise the impact of legislative changes, educational initiatives should be integrated into policy implementation. This could include:

- ▶ **Public Awareness Campaigns:** National campaigns can highlight key aspects of new legislation, explaining its purpose and benefits.

Training for Industry Professionals: breeders, Petcare employees, veterinarians, and other stakeholders should receive practical training on compliance with new regulations. Workshops, online courses, and certification programs can help them adopt humane practices effectively.

- ▶ **School Curricula:** Introducing animal welfare topics into school curricula can shape the next generation's attitudes. Lessons on empathy, responsible pet ownership, and the role of animals in ecosystems can foster a deeper understanding of their value.
- ▶ **Community Outreach:** Local events, workshops, and collaborations with animal welfare organisations can engage communities and encourage grassroots participation in welfare initiatives.

Measuring the Impact

For education to be effective, its impact must be measurable. Surveys, compliance rates, and welfare



outcomes can provide insights into how well educational initiatives are working. Feedback from industry stakeholders and the public can also help refine programs to ensure they meet their objectives.

Conclusion

Legislation is a powerful tool for advancing animal welfare, but it cannot operate in isolation. Education is the key to ensuring that legislative changes translate into meaningful improvements on the ground. By fostering awareness, empathy, and ethical practices, education complements law and creates a culture where animal welfare is prioritised. In Australia, the synergy between legislation and education holds the promise of achieving the best outcomes for animals and society as a whole. While this message has been repeated in a number of government inquiries over the past few years, we are yet to see any real initiatives being developed.





Pets in Autumn

Here are a few things to remember to keep your pets happy and healthy throughout Autumn.

Arthritis & Joint Health

Cooler weather makes Arthritis and joint issues much more painful for your pets. If you have an older dog showing symptoms of these issues it is best to get it checked and managed before winter sets in.

Grapes

Grapes are in season in Autumn, however whilst they are nice for us to enjoy, they are toxic to dogs. If eaten, grapes can cause renal failure and make your dog very sick, so keep them away at all times.

Flea & Tick Control

Year-round flea and tick control is imperative to prevent outbreaks and keep you pet happy and healthy. Check them regularly and if your pet shows symptoms get vet checked.

Shrubbery/brush

Your aviary birds would appreciate fresh thick shrubbery (brush) added in order to help build nest sites and protect from the colder winds.

Brumation

Several species of reptile will start heralding into brumation over the coming months. (Brumation is a natural process that allows healthy reptiles to handle stressful environmental conditions such as cold temperatures, drought, and/or extended periods of extreme heat.)

Background image designed by starline / [Freepik](#)



Proposed Changes to NPWS Expo and Show Licensing:

**A Threat to Reptile Education
and Conservation Efforts**



Image: Rusty McCulloch

By: Joanne Payne - ACA Reptile & Amphibian Representative

In a move that could have far-reaching implications for shows and expos nationwide, the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is proposing significant changes to the conditions under which reptiles are housed at public events. These changes, if approved, could severely impact the ability to run these shows in their current form and restrict the public's access to crucial education on reptile conservation.

For years, expos and shows have provided an essential platform for reptile enthusiasts, conservationists, and the general public to engage with wildlife and learn about the conservation efforts required to protect various species. The events have served as important fundraisers for conservation projects, as well as a way to promote best practices in reptile care and responsible ownership. But the proposed changes by NPWS aim to tighten regulations on how reptiles are housed and displayed, which could make it impossible for these events to proceed as they do today.

One of the most significant proposed changes relates to the size and setup of the enclosures used to house reptiles at these events. The new conditions would require reptiles to be displayed in enclosures that adhere to specific code-of-practice standards regarding cage size, shelter, and water availability. While these conditions are no doubt well-intentioned, the practical reality of such a requirement presents serious challenges.

Currently, many of the reptiles on display at expos and shows are housed in enclosures that are sized appropriately for their needs in a setting. However, under the new rules, reptiles would be required to



be housed in cages that match the size of their permanent living arrangements, often requiring much larger enclosures than can reasonably be transported to and displayed at public events. For example, a keeper displaying a large carpet snake would be required to transport an enclosure measuring 1800mm in length—an enormous and impractical size for most events. Additionally, animals would have to have both shelter and water available in the display, potentially leading to increased humidity in smaller enclosures and resulting in respiratory issues for the animals.

These new requirements could drastically limit the number of reptiles that can be displayed at expos and shows. With fewer reptiles available for display, the educational value of these events would be significantly diminished. Shows that focus on educating the public about reptiles, their habitats, and the conservation work being done to protect them would no longer be able to offer the same diverse and hands-on experiences.

Beyond the immediate concerns for reptiles, these proposed changes raise broader questions about the licensing of such events. Keepers of reptiles are already required to be licensed, so the necessity of a separate licence to hold an expo or show seems redundant and counterproductive. The introduction of additional licensing regulations seems more like an attempt to impose further control over licensed individuals rather than a genuine attempt to improve animal welfare.



Expos help Reptile Associations raise important funding for conservation projects.

The implications of these changes could be felt beyond the reptile community. NPWS has already indicated that this is just the beginning, with plans to extend these regulations to other species in future, including those showcased at companion pet shows and agricultural fairs. If this trend continues, it could lead to widespread disruptions across a variety of animal-related shows and events.

Furthermore, the shift toward these restrictive conditions raises concerns about the influence of animal rights rhetoric on policy. While animal welfare is of course a critical consideration, the proposed changes seem to prioritize regulation over practical animal care. Reptile clubs, which have long promoted responsible husbandry and ethical practices, have worked with government representatives over the years to develop the existing conditions for reptile shows—conditions that have been in practice for the past eight years and have proven successful in balancing animal welfare with the educational goals of the events.

It is crucial that the reptile community, along with other stakeholders, come together to voice concerns over these proposed changes. These shows play a vital role in conservation efforts, providing much-needed funding and raising awareness about the threats facing many reptile species. The proposed regulations not only threaten the future of these events but also undermine the important work being done by conservationists and enthusiasts across the country.

Joanne Payne. Image: Syla Liber - [Illawarra Mercury](#)

In conclusion, the proposed changes to the NPWS expo and show licensing conditions have the potential to drastically alter the landscape of reptile education and conservation. If allowed to go through, these changes will severely limit the ability to display reptiles at shows, ultimately hindering public education and conservation funding. It is critical for the community to stand united in opposition to these proposals to ensure that reptile shows and expos can continue to thrive, serving as a vital tool for education and conservation.

Follow the link to [Change.org](#), and please sign to have your voice heard.





Are you training your horse, or is he/she training you?



By: Karri Nadazdy — ACA Horse & Livestock Representative

As prey animals, horses and ponies are very aware of their surroundings and are very quick learners.

Horses are learning from us all the time, whether we intend to be teaching them anything or not. It's very easy to teach them a bad habit without being aware that we have trained the habit at all! One day we notice our horse is doing something (not doing it) and that's not what we want.

A common example is the horse who walks off as soon as the rider gets on, but before the rider is ready. If we often cut corners at home and walk off before our feet are in the stirrups, but then expect our horse to be patient and stand still while we adjust the girth when we are at an event, we will only confuse and frustrate our horse in a situation where it's unsafe or dangerous to argue. It might sound tedious to ensure your horse stands still and waits for you to have your feet in the stirrups, and reins in hand before asking him to walk on every time you ride, but once that habit is in place, you can count on it, no matter where you go after that. Consistency and predictability are key, and it's reassuring to horses. They love routine, they don't even mind what the routine is, as long as it sticks, and any changes to it are made gradually.

If your horse always walks off without being asked, just ask him to stop, and wait one second, then move off again. Increase the time gradually over a few days (or even weeks if he's really impatient!). There's no need to be aggressive, loud or rough, just quietly and gently keep pausing for longer and longer until your horse relaxes. And then stay there a little while. Sing him a song.

No matter what animal you are training, positive reinforcement is the easiest, and usually quickest, method to get results. Some horses don't understand why you keep stopping, and can get frustrated when



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you first change the routine they are used to (no longer walking off as soon as you are even halfway in the saddle!). But if you make that pause a really GOOD place to be – by giving your horse a sliver of carrot every time he stands still – even just for a moment initially, well, that pretty quickly becomes a GREAT place to stand and wait! He stops worrying about the change of routine, because something even better happened. And, most importantly, nothing BAD happened. We want our horses to feel good about themselves when they are with us, and especially when we are training them.

But isn't that bribery? No – it isn't. Bribery is someone waggling a carrot in front of your horse to get him to stop in the first place! It's a valid technique in certain situations, and called Luring, but that's not what we are talking about here. Giving him a bit of carrot when he has already done what you asked (responded correctly to your cue) is a reward. "Being left alone" or releasing the rein is not a reward. Its relief. This is negative reinforcement – when you are taking away something

Positive Reinforcement

FREDDY IS HAPPY TO HAVE GOT SOMETHING NICE



Negative Punishment

FREDDY IS DISAPPOINTED TO HAVE LOST SOMETHING HE LIKES



FREDDY IS UPSET TO HAVE EXPERIENCED SOMETHING NASTY

Positive Punishment

FREDDY IS RELIEVED TO HAVE ESCAPED OR AVOIDED SOMETHING NASTY

Negative Reinforcement

www.fedupfred.com

the horse doesn't like. A reward is something the horse likes and he gets it after doing the right thing. It's saying YES to your horse.

What counts as a reward? Well, it's up to your individual horse. It's a reward for your horse, not what we think the horse should appreciate. Some horses are not very food oriented, but LOVE to be scratched. The horse chooses to be scratched, rather than fed a carrot. If the horse doesn't like carrots, they won't be a reward either, and you can offer something else. Whether you prefer to use positive or negative reinforcement for training, horses respond well to predictable humans (and other animals!). By being consistent in our own habits with our horses, we ensure that when it's important – such as while riding on the roads, when something spooky happens at an event, or if a dog comes running up barking at us, our horse knows how to respond the way we want, because we have reliably set up those habits in the months or years before surprises happen.

Another way we are training bad habits – or, in reality, that our horse is training us – is the case of tiptoeing around our horse, because we don't want to scare him. If you have ever found yourself making sure the rug is correctly folded to put it on your horse softly, and being ever so careful how you lift the tailgate on your horse float to keep your horse calm, you might be a victim of your horse training you!

Overdoing it is not helpful and can set a horse's training back by flooding them with negative emotions, and turning training sessions sour. But gradually increasing exposure to scary things helps your horse build confidence and be braver. We all want a safe horse when we are in a dangerous situation, but that takes conscious preparation on our part – and this comes from simply building

good habits and routines when with our horse. Getting your horse used to the occasional bang, such as dropping the tailgate a bit higher from the ground than we usually would, and allowing him to approach and investigate a flapping object rather than reprimanding him for reacting to it will help him learn that it's ok to stay calm and stay with you, even if he gets startled – you will keep him safe.

It's all in our habits! What habits have you taught your horse? Or is your horse teaching you?





Easter and Pets

Some things to think about:

- Is buying a pet rabbit or chicken really the right Easter gift for your child?
- Have you considered what could make your pet sick?
- Do you know when/if your regular vet clinic is open over the Easter period?
- Do you know where the after hours vets are located?

Easter Eggs & Egg Hunt

If you are planning an Easter egg hunt, make sure your pets do not have access and count to make sure all eggs are found before allowing your pet back into the hunt area.

Many pets will eat the hidden treasures and unfortunately the theobromine & caffeine found in chocolate can make your pet very sick.



Easter images: wallpaperflare.com

Foil Wrapping

Not only is the chocolate egg dangerous, the foil wrapping they come in can also pose a problem. Some pets may eat the wrapping, which can become a dangerous intestinal obstruction.

Hot Cross Buns

Hot Cross Buns are delicious and no Easter would be quite right without them. However, as they contain sultanas, avoid feeding them to your pets. Unfortunately Sultanas, Grapes and Raisins contain an unknown toxin that can cause kidney failure in some dogs. This fortunately has rarely been seen in Australia.

Easter Lily

These pretty flowers are often included in floral arrangements. The Easter lily can cause renal failure in cats if chewed or pollen is licked from their fur after brushing against the flowers (all parts of the plant are toxic).



Sugar Free Lollies

Xylitol the artificial sweetener found in many chewing gums and sugar free lollies is toxic even in small doses to companion pets. Ensure that you know the ingredients in any lollies around the house, and most importantly keep them out of your pet's reach.

Easter Grass

The paper or cellophane nesting material that comes in many Easter baskets poses a problem if swallowed. These could cause a linear foreign body, resulting in intestinal trauma or intestinal intussusception (a condition where the intestine telescopes in on itself).



When to see your vet

If your pet has chewed, swallowed or potentially chewed/swallowed any of the above, it is vital your pet is seen by a veterinarian immediately.

You should take your pet to the vet if he/she is unwell. Don't wait for your regular clinic to re-open as even a delay of 24 hours could put your pet's life at risk

We're excited to announce that [Petcover](#) is continuing their partnership with Animal Care Australia!

Animal Care Australia advocates for higher welfare standards for animals across Australia; including pets; companion animals; and animal keepers and breeders. With a dedicated Committee representing dogs, cats, birds, horses, insects, reptiles, small mammals, native species and more, they're working hard to ensure the well-being of animals across the country through community education and government consultation.

- Some of Animal Care Australia's recent work advocating for the community, their pets and animals is helping to positively influence:
- nationwide animal welfare legislation
- keeping of pets in strata and residential tenancies (rental properties)
- responsible dog ownership, including so-called 'puppy farm' & breeding legislation
- responsible cat ownership, including cat containment policies.

Commenting on the partnership, Animal Care Australia President, Michael Donnelly said: ***"We look forward to continuing to work with Petcover, as we focus on protecting the ability of everyone in the community to own a pet. Animals - and particularly pets - bring so much into our lives and in return we have the responsibility to ensure their time with us is with a loving and caring home."***

Petcover is proud to support this incredible work, and together we promote responsible pet ownership and ethical breeding practices.

We look forward to working with them again in 2025.

Article from [ABC News](#)



Snakes become 'very disoriented', lose weight & get sick when relocated



Years-long research project finds snakes become 'very disoriented', lose weight and get sick when relocated.

In short:

Hundreds of snakes are moved from backyards, inside homes and other urban areas into reserves and bushland each year.

Little is known about what happens to the snakes after they're released but a years-long research project, now in its final stages, is revealing alarming results.

What's next?

ANU researchers hope the project's findings result in a better understanding of how important snakes are to the ecosystem not just in Canberra, but across the whole country.

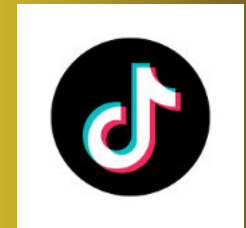
A soft beeping from a radio transmitter is getting louder — a sign one of Australia's most feared creatures is nearby.

The beeping reaches its loudest and a group of researchers stop at a log — the perfect refuge to seek shelter from the heat for Bandit, an eastern brown snake fitted with a tracking device.

Australian National University (ANU) Associate Professor Gavin Smith is unconcerned.

"The eastern brown is the snake that people really are afraid of and it has a very bad reputation," he said.

"I want to represent their story and tell a different story about their life."



That desire led Dr Smith to start the Canberra Snake Tracking Project in 2021, which has been investigating the effects translocation is having on snakes caught in urban areas.

The impact on the snakes after they are released has been unknown, but after years of gathering data, the project is in its final stages.

It's uncovered some alarming findings.

"We assume that they can adapt very quickly and they are resilient and they can make use of anywhere, but what we are really finding is that is not the case," Dr Smith said.

"Is this strategy of moving snakes really working? Is it serving the interests of the animal or is it just serving the interests of the homeowner?"

Snakes 'disoriented' and moving erratically

The project has tracked snakes that have been caught in homes and backyards in Canberra and then relocated into reserves, as well as snakes which already call those reserves home.

This approach allows the team to compare differences in movement activity and survivorship, and changes in body condition over time between individuals in the two groups.

The initial findings show the translocated snakes move in more erratic and unpredictable ways, and are exposed to a much higher burden of risk as a result of being moved out of their home ranges where they possess an acute awareness of the location of key resources.

ANU PhD student Hannah Gerke is involved in the project, and said they're finding translocated snakes are "very disoriented".

"It is just like what a human would do if they were lost, trying to figure out how to navigate this

unfamiliar place," she said.

"These snakes that are trying to figure out how to get home, they are moving around a lot more on the surface than they normally would."

"This exposes them to risks like predators; sometimes they will cross roads."

Ms Gerke said Canberra, with its growing urban area, was one of the best places in Australia to research human-snake conflict.

One snake that has been tracked is Titan, who was caught in the Canberra suburb of MacGregor and was moved into Ginninderry Conservation Corridor.

Over the course of 100 days, he travelled about five kilometres, through a new suburb development and all the way back to the general area near where he was originally captured.

He is the only translocated snake to attempt and complete such a journey, and the team are interested in what factors prompted him to navigate back and how he was able to do this.

In contrast, for a resident male snake named Kawase, researchers found his movement patterns to be stable and even fairly predictable over time, exclusively utilising key parts of his home range area.

The researchers are also finding the translocated snakes are losing significant body weight and condition over time, by moving more and



ANU Associate Professor Gavin Smith holding an eastern brown snake with a snake hook. (ABC News: Monte Bovill)

struggling to hunt as effectively, a key insight into the impacts of translocation.

"They come into the project real thick, real healthy and then by the end of it, they are really not looking good," Ms Gerke said.

"It's pretty sad to see this decline of what was a really healthy snake originally."

Much of the tracking takes place at the Ginninderry Conservation Corridor, and is supported by a group of volunteers.

John Shelton Agar has been a volunteer tracker for 18 months and said he enjoyed contributing to the project.

"It's actually not often you see them while you are tracking," he said.

"You might see other snakes that don't have trackers in them."

'The snakes belong here'

As Canberra and other Australian cities expand and become more populated, there will continue to be increased conflict between snakes and humans.

The researchers hope the findings from this project result in a better understanding of how important snakes are to the ecosystem, not just in Canberra, but across the whole country.

"As we spread more and more into their naturally occurring habitats, we have got to start learning more about how these animals are interacting with urban ecosystems and how we can best change our perceptions and behaviours to live more safely alongside them," Dr Smith said.

"It really is important to understand that although some of the snake species we share an environment with are highly venomous and potentially dangerous when interacted with, they are generally timid, sensitive and secretive animals that are keen to avoid adverse confrontations with us and our four-legged pets."

"It's about trying to tell the snake's story from their perspective, about them losing their homes to our homes and how we can make a bit more room for these guys in our lives."

For Ms Gerke, she described snakes as "underdogs".

"The snakes belong here. They have always been here and it's us humans coming in needing to learn how to live better with snakes," she said.

"They deserve our respect, not necessarily our fear, and I think we can reduce the fear by learning more about them."

The data gathered will be compiled over the coming months into findings to be published later this year.

ABC article by [Monte Bovill](#)

If a snake has found it's way onto your property — LEAVE IT ALONE!

Move away to a safe place/distance.

Ensure your children & pets are safe.



Pic Courtesy of Townsville Snake Catcher

A Spotlight on ... Karri Nadazdy.

Horse & Livestock Representative

You've been on the Committee of Animal Care Australia (ACA) since the organisation was established 7 years ago. How did that come about?

I first attended a Symposium on Animal Welfare back in 2018 which was the precursor to the formation of ACA. I was the Secretary of Bitless Inc, an Association representing higher welfare horse drivers, riders and handlers. We became a founding member of ACA. It has been so rewarding to have been part of the organisation as it has grown and developed over time.

Did you grow up with horses or has your love for them developed over the years?

As a child, I wanted a horse, but my parents wouldn't allow it. I've always had a love of wild horses in particular; and once I turned 19, I selected a miniature horse from a feral herd that needed a new home – he is now called 'Lorien'. My first experience with 5-month old Lorien was placing a halter on him, only to be dragged across the 60 acre paddock! I learned from that experience that animals will always find a way to put you back in your place. After that initiation, I went on to develop a strong bond with Lorien through patience and friendship - and he and his younger brother are still my pets today, 28 years on.

What other experience and roles have you had with horses over the years?

I studied horses at both TAFE and Charles Sturt University. I briefly worked in the racing industry, but discovered it was not for me. From there, I subsequently started my own business retraining problem horses and rehabbing injured horses using physical therapies like massage and exercise therapy. I left the industry in 2007 when it was decimated by the horse flu epidemic, but after that, I continued to compete and volunteer in horse clubs. My passion was competing in Combined Driving and Horse Agility with my ponies, and through that, I met other bitless drivers and riders. We then created Bitless Inc. Our goal was to promote high horse welfare in training and competition and raise the standards of the industry by normalising positive reinforcement training and horse friendly tack, such as bitless bridles, which wasn't common at the time - but certainly is now.

What have been the main highlights and challenges during your time at Animal Care Australia?

For me, working on the Inquiry into Vet Workforce shortages during 2023 was a real eye opener. In order to explore the issues closely and write our submission to the NSW government, I surveyed vets first-hand and gained a deeper understanding of the many challenges in the industry. These included high suicide rates amongst vets and the lack of affordability of vet services for many Australians. I have also been passionate about working



on a genuine solution to present to Government on the issue of Aerial Shooting of Wild Brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park, and this is still ongoing.

Last year I was involved in the Victorian Government's inquiry into the Impact of Road Safety Behaviours on Vulnerable Road users. We were concerned to see that initially horse riders and carriage drivers were not recognised as vulnerable road users within the Inquiry. However, as a result of ACA's submissions and testimony, the Inquiry Committee recommended that horse riders be included in the definition of vulnerable road users for the future. This achievement means that horse riders are now considered when policy is made that affects us.

What is your current focus at Animal Care Australia?

My main focus now is the ongoing development of a National Horse Traceability Register, which began in 2019. I am not opposed to ensuring that horses are counted, identified and traced in a managed way. However, I am concerned about the compounding effect of Local Council Animal Management Plans (which restrict the number of horses and other animals that households can own) on the proposed new National Traceability Register. I suspect these two initiatives will force people to surrender,



Karri with her miniature horses and friends, Tin Tin and Lorien

ethanise or hide horses, creating new and compounding welfare issues, when rescues are already facing a rehoming crisis today. What will happen to those horses? This is an issue which concerns me gravely and our horse members at ACA are working hard to balance.

What motivates you in your continued efforts for animal welfare?

Sometimes the legislative process can be slow and tedious; and a lot of time passes by waiting for the next stage.

At ACA we therefore tend to work on many issues at one time. After our appearance at the Victorian Inquiry into Vulnerable Road Users we were contacted by many others who were inspired to push for change in their own area - they were asking us for advice on how to proceed. This included New Zealanders. There's now a group called *Pass Wide & Slow NZ* who lobby the Government there and are making great progress to change laws and improve safety for everyone on the road, as well as horse welfare. This is hugely motivating to me, to see we are not alone, and that we've not just helped our own members, but a much wider community of animal lovers as well.



Make a
Difference

by donating today

You can donate via our website:

<https://www.animalcareaustralia.org.au/donate-to-aca/>

Want to join our team?

Position available:

Fish & Aquatic Species Representative

Experience:

Animal Care Australia is seeking a person who has reasonable advocacy experience and an understanding of the differences between animal rights and animal welfare.

Animal Care Australia is seeking a person who has reasonable experience in the keeping & breeding of fish – tropical, freshwater and marine.

Essential skills:

- Communication skills (oral & written)
- Time management
- Able to work as part of a Team

Desirable – but not essential:

The inclusion of cephalopods in animal welfare legislation will result in Codes of Practice needing to be examined and in some cases to be drafted. Knowledge of keeping these species will be of great benefit.

Having a membership of an Association for the keeping & breeding of fish species or contacts to groups.

If you would like to join the Animal Care Australia Team or you know someone who would be ideal for the position please apply via [SEEK Volunteer](#) or email us at:

aca@animalcareaustralia.org

[.au](#)



Responsibilities include:

- Represent all species specific member organisations to communicate current animal-related community and welfare issues.
- Undertake work including drafting of policy advice, project work of a specialist nature, research and analyse current legislation and policies and prepare associated reports for consideration by our Committee.
- Assist us to work with government, non-government & community stakeholders to ensure policy issues are coordinated and effectively communicated as per community and government expectations.
- Abide by and support Animal Care Australia's Code of Ethics, Mission Statement, Objects, Constitution, Communication Policy and Anti-discrimination & Harassment Policy.
- Other duties as necessary.

Animal Care Australia's GENERAL MEETINGS 2025

7.30 to 8.30pm

MARCH 10th

MAY 12th

JULY 14th

SEPTEMBER 8th

NOVEMBER 10th – AGM

Meetings in 2025 will continue via Zoom to ensure members nation-wide can attend.

Any member wishing to join a meeting will need to RSVP by no later than 5pm on that Monday via email:

aca@animalcareaustralia.org.au with your details. A link for the meeting will be emailed to you.

Supporting Pets Throughout Their Life Cycle:

Tess's Journey with Petcover



When Kathy and John welcomed Tess, an eight-week-old Border Collie, into their home in early 2023, they were already experienced dog owners. Their home also included Tess's sister, Abby, and senior Border Collie, Meggie. Raising a puppy came with its usual challenges—house training, transitioning to kibble, and integrating her into their family.

Everything was going smoothly until they noticed Tess limping. At just seven months old, in January 2024, she was diagnosed with a severe hip fracture requiring a total hip replacement. Unlike typical cases involving older dogs or hip dysplasia, Tess's situation was rare and required urgent decision-making.

Making the Difficult Decision

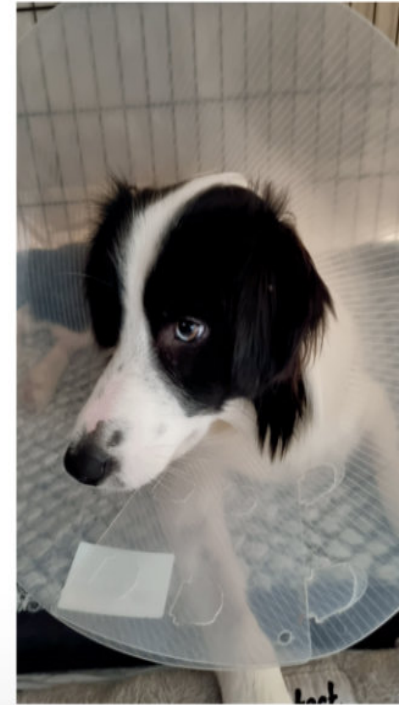
After consulting with veterinarians and reviewing radiology scans, Kathy and John decided to proceed with the surgery in February 2024. They had to consider multiple factors, including hospitalisation, anaesthesia, medication, and extensive aftercare.

Thankfully, their pet insurance covered Tess's medical expenses, totalling over \$12,000.

"We were devastated, fearing the worst-case scenario," Kathy shared. "But thanks to Petcover's support, we could focus on her recovery without financial stress."

The Role of Pet Insurance

Tess had been insured with Petcover since October 2023. Unsure if their claim would be approved, Kathy and John were relieved when Petcover covered the entire procedure. Their Petcover Superior dog insurance plan, with up to \$20,000 in eligible vet fees and no sub-limits, provided them with peace of mind.



Tess's Road to Recovery

Following surgery, Tess required strict crate rest, supervised toilet breaks with sling support, and regular vet check-ups. At the eight-week mark, X-rays confirmed her recovery was progressing well, allowing her to regain mobility under careful supervision.

"We are extremely grateful to the Team at Petcover Insurance for their ongoing caring support and financial assistance in helping to achieve such a great outcome for our Tess."

A Trusted Partner in Pet Care

John and Kathy have relied on Petcover for over a decade, insuring their beloved Golden Retriever, Bekky, and now Tess, Abby, and Meggie. Knowing they could count on their insurance provider during difficult times provided invaluable peace of mind.

"We have no hesitation in recommending Petcover and have done so many times," Kathy added.

The Value of Pet Insurance

Unexpected medical costs can be overwhelming, making pet insurance a crucial investment. Tess's journey highlights how Petcover offers not only financial security but also compassionate support for pet owners.

"John and I cannot thank you and your Team enough for your kind and caring support we have received during the years we have held pet insurance with Petcover" – Kathy

For more information on coverage options, call **1300 731 324** for an obligation-free quote today.

To read Tess's full story, visit our Petcover news [page](#).



Petcover®

petcovergroup.com/au | 1300 731 324

Scan to get a quote
on dog insurance



By: Rachel Sydenham — ACA Small Mammals Representative



Looking for a reputable
horse trainer.



It can be daunting to consider sending your horse away for training, as there are a lot of decisions and much preparation involved. If you make the wrong choices, the outcome can have serious consequences for you and more-so your horse.

I have a background of experience in various disciplines within the equine industry, so I have seen the good, the bad and the downright ugly. When it came time to make the decision on getting a professional to start my Kosciusko Brumby mare, Gypsy, I really wanted to have peace of mind about her welfare.

I originally wanted to start Gypsy under saddle myself and had got her to the point where she was taking the saddle and letting me on her. Unfortunately, I was under time constraints, working long hours with my full-time work and working weekends with my part time job, that my training just wasn't consistent enough to make any real progress. Thankfully, Brumbies are super smart and Gypsy would pick up things very quickly and remember everything she learnt.

I had spent time following various local trainers on social media, taking in the type of content they posted, watching their style of training and how they handled the horses in their videos. I did not want my horse started in the age-old traditional methods; I did not want my horse to be forced to accept a rider at any cost. I did not want a shell shocked shut down little pony that had to just accept defeat and comply.

Unfortunately, even with science-based evidence in horse behaviour and physiology proving that conventional training methods cause more harm than good, there are still many people in the equine

Photos of Rachel riding
Gypsy and Gypsy. Supplied
by Rachel.

industry who refuse to move past the old archaic practices. Even more daunting is that there are also high-profile horse trainers and riders that are enveloped in the use of training practices that are not in the best interest of horse welfare.

If I am to impart any advice from my own experience, it would be as follows;

Research a few trainers who have qualifications and experience in the area in which you want your horse trained. You want transparency first and foremost. A trainer who puts their work out there for others to see, and does not need to hide or make excuses for the equipment they use or how they handle/interact with the horses. Whether it is starting a horse, a dressage lesson or training a show jumper, you want your trainer to be qualified in area of your chosen discipline in which you are looking to have your horse trained. In the world of Google it is also fairly easy to check out the reputation of a trainer, but don't be afraid to ask other people in the industry their thoughts, doing this can give you insight to personal experiences they may have had with certain training situations.

When enquiring with trainers you need to ask them plenty of questions, having a pre written list of things you need to know before contacting potential trainers is very helpful and should cover the following; cost, what is involved in that cost, payment methods, frequency of payments, will there be updates and how often. Are you able to view training sessions and visit your horse on the property, are you encouraged to be part of the process where you have lessons, what things are not inclusive of the cost,



expected duration of the training service.

It is also important to give the trainer as much information about your horse as you can, such as age, education status, current status in dental and soundness, if you are barefooting your horse or need it shod, behavioural characteristics that may be problematic, diet, and most importantly, what your goal is for your horse and what outcome you are expecting from the trainer's service.

I am pleased to say that doing all of the above in my search for a trainer paid off. I found an amazing trainer that was not only qualified and experienced, but was very transparent and empathic in her methods and training style which aligned very much with my values and expectations in how I wanted my brumby started. In short, the trainer I chose was a very good match for my little mare. I was also encouraged to be part of the training process with as many training visits and lessons I could make. Any concerns my trainer had about my horse, she would contact me straight away to discuss. I received weekly updates along with videos of the training sessions and progress on her social media page. My trainer and I were able to form a good relationship and communication that revolved around the welfare and best possible outcomes for my brumby Gypsy.

Gypsy is now home from the trainers after 8 weeks, and I am enjoying continuing her education, I could not be any more happier with the outcome of my little mares training. I am looking forward to preparing my other brumby mare, Tilda to go to the same trainer in 12 months time.





Response to NSW Draft Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation 2025

December 2024: Animal Care Australia's response focused on:

- Clarifying an Animal Trade by including a definition of 'business' in order to separate actual commercial activities from hobbyists. This definition is equally vital as the Regulations provide enforcement officers unlimited ability to enter the property of an animal trade — which should not be permitted on private property without a warrant, permission or imminent risk to an animal.
- Adding further detailed reporting requirements for the approved charitable organisations including identifying specific species, why they were euthanised and breakdown of costs to seize, house and treat animals taken into their possession.

You can read our full response here:



ADVOCACY NEWS





Response to Improving Dog Welfare Outcomes in Tasmania

December 2024: Animal Care Australia’s response focused on:

The inclusion of Animals Australia on the Animal Welfare Advisory Council and the ongoing animal rights influence that RSPCA Australia maintains on its State Branches.

Calling out the level of unsupported ideological influence on the proposed changes.

Opposing banning e-collars. The correct use of these is supported by scientific evidence. ACA supports regulating the use of e-collars and other tools.

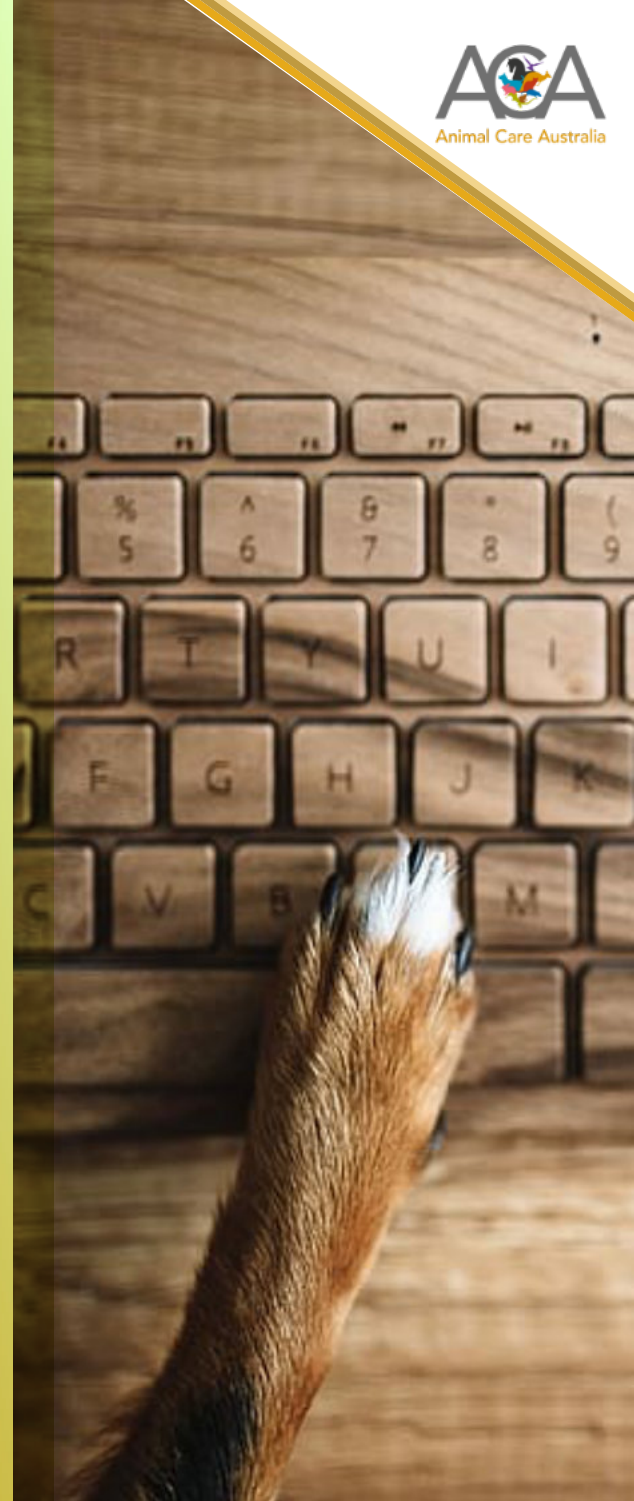
Opposing the sole use of reward only training methods and banning all other methods. This will lead to poorer animal welfare outcomes.

Supporting limiting of the number of litters a bitch should have in a lifetime

You can read all of our full submission here:



Advocacy News



Response to Introduction of mandatory enclosure sizes into Expo licensing.

January 2025: Animal Care Australia has responded to the ‘supposed’ consultation.

After several NSW Herpetological Societies received an email indicating licensing conditions for their Expos had been updated and were to be implemented from the beginning of 2025, the department was contacted to seek out why no consultation had been made. It was then announced it was a consultation—and yet to this date not even all of the remaining Herp Societies had been contacted advising of the consultation. The major point of concern within the changes is to mandate and require ALL enclosures and means of temporarily containing the reptiles and amphibians at the Expo are to be the same size as their permanent housing enclosures.

Within our lengthy response is:

- Animal Care Australia does not support the

inclusion of any mandatory enclosure sizes for the sale, transport or ‘Show’ of reptiles and amphibians during an Expo due to the animal welfare impacts that would have.

- Animal Care Australia does not support the implementation of a ‘license’ for an Expo as it is not required under the Biodiversity Conservation Act.
- Animal Care Australia recommends the department ratify the ‘Draft Code of Practice for Reptile & Amphibian Expos’ as it addresses all animal welfare requirements and has been informally adopted and implemented by most Herpetological Societies since 2019, and yet ignored by the department.

The above are just a small section of our response.

We are fully aware the implementation of these new conditions will likely result in Expos being too difficult to run and we question whether this is the ultimate aim.

You can read our full submission here:



ADVOCACY NEWS



Response to Uralla Shire Council (Draft) Keeping of Animals and Birds (Urban Areas) Local Policy 2024

January 2025: Animal Care Australia’s response to the Policy included:

- The numbers proposed are contradictory to the animal welfare needs of the species and will therefore lead to animal welfare issues which leads us to believe they have simply been ‘made up’ – likely based on personal bias rather than facts.
- The numbers proposed for dogs and cats contradicts those permitted by State laws, and the Policy does not provide for members of breeding associations to have exemptions.
- The policy is not permitting some species to be kept despite the fact it is legal to keep them in NSW.
- Policy does not permit uncastrated animals even if only one of these animals is being kept as a pet.

Called for Council to adopt initiatives that support the keeping of animals rather than the proposed restrictions

Our full submission can read here





Response to Shellharbour City Council Draft Keeping of Animals Policy

January 2025: Animal Care Australia's response to the Policy included:

- The numbers proposed are contradictory to the animal welfare needs of the species and will therefore lead to animal welfare issues which leads us to believe they have simply been 'made up' – likely based on personal bias rather than facts.
- The numbers proposed for dogs and cats contradicts those permitted by State laws, and the Policy does not provide for members of breeding associations to have exemptions.
- The policy allows for enforcement actions even in the absence of complaints,

creating uncertainty and potential stress for responsible pet owners who already comply with existing regulations.

- The policy is not permitting some species to be kept despite the fact it is legal to keep them in NSW.
- Called for Council to adopt initiatives that support the keeping of animals rather than the proposed restrictions.
- Acknowledged our meeting with Councillors and we welcome the opportunity to collaborate moving forward.

Our full submission can read here:



Further response to Cat Management Inquiry

January 2025: Animal Care Australia has provided requested feedback relating to the recommendations within the submission from Local Government NSW .

During the Inquiry a Question On Notice was received requesting Animal Care Australia review and provide feedback to the Committee.

While Animal Care Australia supports the 4 recommendations in principle, we do have some concerns relating to the lack of detail, and how the recommendations are to be implemented.

Our top points are:

- Animal Care Australia DOES NOT SUPPORT the definitions that describe the different types of cats as they are insufficient. Animal Care Australia provided an expanded set of definitions.
- Animal Care Australia DOES NOT SUPPORT Councils having carte blanche powers to implement policies at their whim. All policies must be consulted with community and key stakeholders.
- Animal Care Australia conditionally supports proposed provisions for Councils to deal with animal hoarders. It is our position that education and warnings are provided first where failure to improve is noticed. These should be before fines or restriction orders are utilised. Hoarding is a mental health issue and is not isolated to just cats and accordingly consideration for this and the welfare of the animals must be paramount.

Animal Care Australia provided additional feedback in our submission here:



Advocacy News

By: Joanne Payne, ACA Reptile & Amphibian Representative



Lets talk brumation



With Autumn comes the cooler nights, followed by the cooler, shorter days. It is a time of year that can bring dread and fear into every keeper's life. So many questions that need answering. Do I have to brumate my reptile? Is it safe to brumate my reptile? Are they old enough? And the all-important question, how do I brumate my reptile?

I will try to cover a few scenarios here.

Do you have to brumate your reptile? Well, that is completely up to you. Many keepers have kept both snakes and lizards "awake" during winter with no ill effects to their pet. What is important is to recognise that you will have to adjust your enclosures to ensure that they are kept at the correct temperature as the surrounding environment will contribute to lower temperatures in your enclosures.

This is a good time of the year to also change your UVB globes to ensure that your reptile is receiving the correct UVB levels as globes deteriorate over time.

The recommended time to change globes is around the 6-to-9-month mark. As the days get cooler, check your basking spot temperatures and adjust as needed to maintain correct temps. You may find you will need to up your wattage on globes. You can also cover the top of mesh tanks to promote heat retention. Even with maintaining hotspot temperatures, you may still find that your reptile will slow down and may go into brumation. This should generally be avoided for the first year of life or if the animal has not maintained a good weight through the summer feeding months.

Now we will get onto what to do if you do want to allow your animal to brumate. Brumation should only be attempted with animals that are of a healthy age and weight, any illness or weakness and this should be avoided. You will find animals will generally up their feeding at this time of year. As

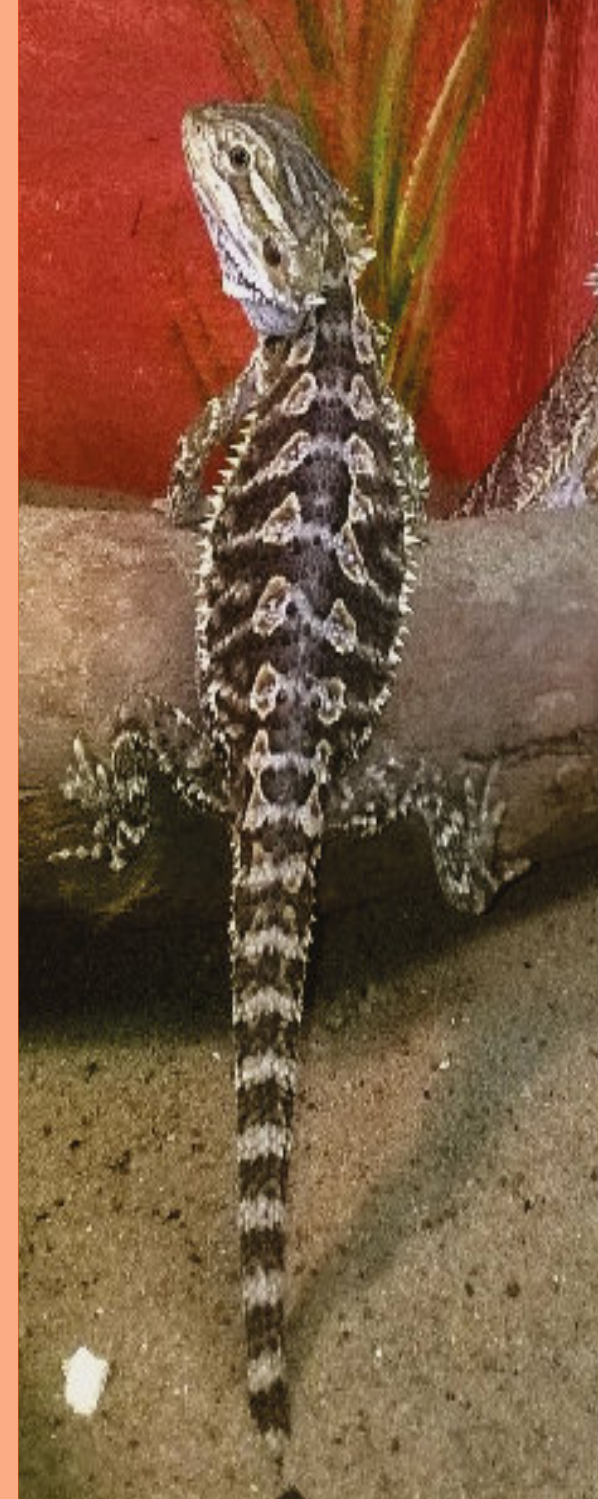


breeding occurs after brumation in wild animals, they need to bulk up for the slow feed time ahead and have good condition for the breeding season to come. As a rule of thumb, animals start slowing down in April if the weather conditions are close to normal and the nights are getting cooler faster. Once you notice this, slow down feed as they start to lose interest. After a couple of weeks, stop feeding altogether. This gives the animal time at the optimum temperature to digest any feed in the stomach and evacuate their bowels. After this has been achieved, you can regulate the temperatures down and turn the day light hours back. Depending on which area of Australia you live, will determine the hours of light and the temperatures that the animals can be kept at. This will also depend on the breed that you keep. Once in brumation, do not disturb the animal unless necessary. Do not offer food. Brumation is not like hibernation, on warm days, you may see your pet wake up and venture out, but it is important that you do not offer food even if they are up and about. Generally, brumation will last until the days start getting longer and warmer, in my experience, this will be around September. Done correctly, brumation can be good for both owner and pet and can be necessary for successful breeding ventures. If your animal is showing any sign of distress or illness during brumation, always consult a vet.

Reptile societies are a great source for information and there are several books written about how to successfully navigate brumation and if it is right for you and your pet. Always ask if in doubt, no question is a dumb question.

Hopefully by the end of this brumation, we will hear more on the proposed changes to the expo & show licensing in NSW!! Fingers crossed.

The Illawarra Herp Society will be holding their expo in April. I can't wait. Hope to see you there!





Pursuing veterinary studies

By: ACA STAT Team Representative currently studying in Australia

From a young age, I have been deeply interested in veterinary medicine. While many pursue this field to become veterinarians, my primary motivation extends beyond that — I aim to amplify the voices of animals.

My appreciation for animals stems from their impeccable nature and unique behaviours, which are often overlooked. Since animals cannot communicate in the same way humans do, they are sometimes misunderstood or undervalued. This realisation drove me to focus on their intrinsic nature—their physiology, instincts, and anatomy—rather than how they are perceived in society. To advocate for them effectively, I concluded that studying veterinary medicine would provide me with the crucial knowledge and credibility to make a meaningful impact.

Veterinary studies are rigorous and require dedication, but I find this challenge rewarding. The curriculum offers hands-on experience through placements and practicals, along with courses on animal welfare that reinforce both technical expertise and ethical considerations. This well-structured program not only equips students with essential skills but also fosters a deeper understanding of animal themselves.

Studying veterinary medicine lays a strong foundation for anyone passionate about working with animals. For those who seek to make a difference in this field, it is a path worth pursuing.

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Species Representatives



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CATS:
Michelle Grayson



DOGS:
Kylie Gilbert



EXHIBITED:
Tracey Dierikx



HORSES & LIVESTOCK:
Karri Nadazdy



INSECTS & ARACHNIDS:
Michaela Storen



NATIVE MAMMALS:
Michael Donnelly



REPTILE & AMPHIBIANS:
Joanne Payne



SMALL MAMMALS:
Rachel Sydenham



Michael Donnelly
President



Sam Davis
Vice-President



Michelle Grayson
Secretary/Public Officer



Sue Kowalczyk
Treasurer

Executive



LEST WE FORGET

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM