



National Centre for Reptile Welfare
Animal Care Policy 2018

Section A - Animal care

The NCRW will provide care for animals, specifically reptiles and amphibians, in need of rehoming to a high standard of animal welfare with the following objectives:

- To find the animals in the centre's care suitable homes for life
- To provide advice, support and guidance for pet owners
- To provide advice and support for those who have rehomed an animal
- To ensure potential owners have adequate facilities, equipment and means to provide for any rehomed animal
- To ensure numbers of animals of each species that can be accommodated and cared for with the resources available is not exceeded
- To maintain the standards outlined in the Animal Care Policy (below)

Animal care policy

The NCRW recognises that vertebrate animals are sentient beings and has the view that quality of life is more important than quantity of life. Animal health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely infirmity or the absence of disease.

It is recognised that all behaviour is a direct result of both physical and emotional states. While in the care of the NCRW all animals must be treated with respect, empathy and an understanding of their natural welfare needs and biological make-up in accordance with the principles of the 2006 Animal Welfare Act. These include the need:

- For a suitable environment (place to live)
- For a suitable diet
- To exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- To be housed with, or apart from, other animals (if applicable)
- To be protected from pain, injury, suffering and disease

All animals' current and future welfare will be safeguarded on both emotional and physical levels. They will be provided with a secure and protective environment, with or without a companion of their own species (as appropriate) and allowed the ability to express their natural coping mechanisms.

Animals will be afforded access to appropriate veterinary care to ensure physical well-being and freedom from pain and discomfort.

If, for any reason, it is not possible to safeguard the emotional and physical needs of an animal within the centre's care its quality of life will be assessed and reviewed, and appropriate action will be taken in a timely fashion.

Section B - Euthanasia

The NCRW recognises that the subject of euthanasia is an emotive issue which requires open and honest discussion to maintain transparency and objectivity.

The following guiding principles will be observed when euthanasia is under consideration:

- Only where quality of life (as defined by the Animals Welfare Act (2006)) is deemed unacceptable, should an animal be euthanised
- Euthanasia will be reserved for animals who are suffering physically, are terminally ill where palliative care is no longer a welfare option, or are considered dangerous to themselves, other animals and/or humans
- Euthanasia will not be considered for animals who are deformed or disabled, unless overridden by point 2 above
- Animals will be inspected by a suitably qualified veterinarian where appropriate
- Decisions to be made in a timely fashion to prevent sustained suffering

Factors for consideration

Factors contributing to the euthanasia of any animal include: quality of life and risk to the health and safety of other pets, people and the animal itself.

Euthanasia may, therefore, be considered in the following circumstances:

- Deteriorating medical or behavioural condition that is causing suffering to an animal
- Behaviours that are beyond management that are deemed unsafe to other pets, people, and to itself.

How the decision to euthanise an animal is reached

Each animal arriving at the NCRW will undergo an initial evaluation and will be regularly assessed for medical and behavioural conditions to help identify:

- Animals that are suffering mentally, emotionally or physically
- Animals with a poor prognosis, protracted painful recovery, incurable illness and/or are non-responsive to treatment
- Animals that are deemed to pose an unacceptable danger or threat to other animals, themselves or the public
- Animals that have a condition that, in isolation, may not necessitate euthanasia, but that contributes to escalating other conditions that, in total, warrant euthanasia

Euthanasia must only be carried out by a qualified veterinary surgeon using an approved humane method. The animal does not have to be taken to the veterinary surgery if it is deemed likely to cause additional distress or the animal is too ill to travel. In such cases a vet can be called out to carry out the procedure on site. Where possible a staff member should be present with the animal.

Any decision to euthanase, and the reasons for the decision including consideration of options, must be recorded on the animal's records.

All cadavers are stored appropriately (frozen) and used for veterinary research purposes.