



Position Statement on Working Animal Species

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Introduction

The Working Animal Foundation Australia (WAFA) accepts the use of diverse animal species as working animals, provided they are legally obtained, housed, and worked in accordance with local, state, and federal laws. These regulations ensure the protection of the animal's welfare, prevent ecological disruption, and adhere to ethical standards.

Legal Compliance

1. **Legally Obtained Animals:** All working animals must be sourced through legal channels, ensuring that they have been obtained ethically and in compliance with animal protection and wildlife regulations.
2. **Adherence to Local, State, and Federal Laws:** Working animals must be housed and worked in compliance with relevant local, state, and federal laws. This includes ensuring appropriate conditions and proper welfare standards for the animals.
3. **Exclusion of Native and Exotic Species:** Native species, as well as exotic species governed by international treaties such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), are excluded from being used as working animals. This protects wildlife populations and prevents the illegal trade and exploitation of endangered species.
4. **Exclusion of Fish, Reptiles and Amphibians:** Reptiles, fish, and amphibians are generally not considered working animals due to their specific biological and behavioural characteristics, which make them unsuitable for the roles typically required of working animals. These species typically lack the social structure, trainability, and physical capabilities necessary to perform tasks such as assistance, service, or therapy work. Additionally, their care needs, including habitat conditions, diet, and health management, often make it difficult to provide the level of support required for them to function effectively in working roles. While some reptiles, amphibians, and fish may serve as pets or in specific therapeutic contexts, they do not meet the practical and welfare standards expected of working animals in most circumstances.

Examples of restricted species include:

- **Native species:** Species such as native marsupials, reptiles, and birds, which are protected under state and federal conservation laws.
 - **Exotic species:** Any species that is listed under CITES, such as certain primates, big cats, and elephants, which are prohibited from use due to international trade restrictions.
5. **State/Territory-Specific Regulations:**
Different states and territories in Australia may have specific regulations regarding the use of certain species as working animals. It is crucial to carefully consider the legal implications, welfare needs, and ecological impact of any species before acquiring it. Regulations can vary significantly depending on the state or territory, and some species may be subject to restrictions or prohibitions due to conservation concerns, biosecurity risks, or their status as native or exotic species. It is important to ensure that any species chosen for use as a working animal is legally permitted, complies with local

Document Name:	PS-008-Working Animal Species	Page:	2
Working Animals Federation of Australia		Version	V1.0

animal welfare standards, and is suitable for the intended role. Prior to acquisition, prospective owners should thoroughly research relevant laws and seek advice from appropriate authorities to ensure compliance and responsible care for the animal. For example:

- Dingoes are restricted in many states or territories due to their status as a wild species and potential impact on local ecosystems.
- Rabbits are often considered a pest species and are subject to strict control laws in Queensland.
- Ferrets are restricted in the ACT due to concerns over their potential impact on native wildlife.

WAFA acknowledges a wide range of animal species that may be appropriate for use as working animals in varying contexts, provided they meet the criteria of legal compliance and animal welfare.

WAFA emphasises the importance of adhering to high animal welfare standards. All working animals must be provided with:

- Adequate nutrition, shelter, and exercise.
- Veterinary care and regular health checks.
- Opportunities for socialization and enrichment based on their species-specific needs.

We encourage responsible ownership and handling to ensure that all working animals are treated with dignity and respect, consistent with legal and ethical standards.

By adhering to these guidelines, WAFA ensures that the use of working animals is responsible, legal, and beneficial for both the animals and the communities they serve.

Document Control

Version	Date	Author	Change Description	Approved By
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Document Name:	PS-008-Working Animal Species	Page:	3
Working Animals Federation of Australia		Version	V1.0

Document Name:	PS-008-Working Animal Species	Page:	4
Working Animals Federation of Australia		Version	V1.0