



Professional Standard 13 – Environmental Sustainability and Responsible Resource Use
(Summary)

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1. Purpose

WAFA members are committed to implementing environmentally responsible practices that minimize ecological impact and promote sustainability throughout all aspects of working animal care and operations.

2. Scope

This standard applies to all WAFA members, including individuals and organisations involved in the training, care, handling, and management of working animals, as well as the operational activities and facilities associated with these services. It covers resource use, waste management, energy and water conservation, procurement, and environmental emergency preparedness.

3. Standard Statement

WAFA members shall actively adopt and maintain sustainable and responsible resource management practices that reduce waste, conserve energy and water, minimise carbon footprint, and support environmentally friendly procurement. Members will engage with community initiatives, report on environmental performance, and prepare for environmental emergencies to protect animals, people, and ecosystems. Compliance with all relevant environmental legislation and best practice guidelines is mandatory.

4. Definitions:

- **Sustainability:** Practices that meet current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own.
- **Carbon Footprint:** The total greenhouse gas emissions caused directly or indirectly by an individual, organisation, event, or product.
- **Renewable Energy:** Energy obtained from sources that naturally replenish, such as solar, wind, or hydropower.
- **Environmental Emergency:** An unexpected event causing significant harm or risk to the environment, such as chemical spills or extreme weather events.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Board:** Responsible for governance, setting strategic direction, risk management, financial oversight, and compliance with WAFA standards.
- **Senior Leadership:** Implements board policies and manages day-to-day operations.
- **Staff and Volunteers:** Support organisational objectives under leadership direction and adhere to governance policies.

6. Resource Efficiency and Waste Management

WAFA members must actively work to reduce their environmental footprint by implementing resource-efficient practices across all operations involving working animals. Waste minimisation is not only a matter of environmental responsibility but also of animal and human health, safety, and cost-effectiveness.

Organisations shall adopt and document clear strategies for waste reduction, reuse, and recycling. These strategies must be consistent with local environmental regulations, municipal waste management systems, and internationally recognised best practices in sustainable operations.

Key actions may include:

- **Inventory and Supply Management:** Implement careful stock control procedures to avoid over-purchasing or expiry of consumables. Preference should be given to bulk purchasing of essentials where this reduces packaging waste and unnecessary transport.
- **Reusables and Recyclables:** Replace single-use items with reusable alternatives where possible (e.g. washable cleaning cloths, refillable containers). Products made from recyclable or compostable materials should be selected wherever appropriate.
- **Waste Segregation:** Facilities must be equipped with clearly labelled bins for separating general waste, recyclables (e.g. paper, plastics, metals), organic waste, and hazardous materials (e.g. sharps, medical or chemical waste). Staff and volunteers must be trained in correct disposal procedures.
- **Environmentally Safe Cleaning Products:** All cleaning and sanitation products used in animal housing, equipment maintenance, and public-facing areas must be non-toxic and biodegradable. These products should be certified by an accredited environmental body wherever possible and safe for use around animals and humans.
- **Chemical Storage and Disposal:** Any chemicals or hazardous materials used in operations must be safely stored in designated areas with spill containment measures in place. Disposal must comply with local hazardous waste regulations and never be conducted via drains or natural environments.
- **Composting and Organic Waste:** Where facilities permit, composting systems for organic waste such as food scraps, animal bedding, or plant debris are encouraged. Compost must be managed safely and used in ways that do not compromise hygiene or animal welfare.
- **Monitoring and Continuous Improvement:** Members should regularly review their waste management systems and seek opportunities to improve efficiency and reduce environmental impact, such as engaging in audits or adopting new technologies.

These efforts reflect WAFA's commitment to protecting the natural environment while promoting the wellbeing of animals, workers, and the communities that support them.

6. Resource Efficiency and Waste Management

Members shall minimise waste generation through the adoption of reduction, reuse, and recycling strategies aligned with local regulations and environmental best practices. Efforts should be proactive, practical, and documented as part of routine operations.

This includes:

- **Inventory and Purchasing:** Manage stock carefully to avoid unnecessary purchasing, wastage, or expiry of supplies. Prioritise bulk-buying where it reduces packaging waste and transport emissions.
- **Reusables and Sustainable Materials:** Choose durable, reusable equipment and supplies where safe and appropriate (e.g. cloth towels, refillable containers). Where reusables aren't possible, select recyclable or compostable products with minimal packaging.
- **Waste Segregation:** Provide clearly labelled bins to separate general waste, recyclables (e.g. paper, cardboard, plastics, metals), organic waste, and hazardous materials. Staff and volunteers must be trained to use these systems correctly.
- **Eco-Friendly Cleaning Products:** Use cleaning products and disinfectants that are non-toxic, biodegradable, and approved for safe use around animals. Avoid harsh chemicals that pose risks to animal welfare or environmental health.
- **Safe Disposal of Hazardous Materials:** Store and dispose of chemicals, sharps, and veterinary waste according to local regulations. Ensure spill kits and containment procedures are in place where such materials are used.

These practices reduce environmental harm, support animal and human wellbeing, and demonstrate the organisation's commitment to responsible stewardship. Regular reviews should be undertaken to improve efficiency and reduce ecological impact wherever possible.

7. Energy and Water Conservation

Members are required to implement energy- and water-efficient practices across all facilities, transport, and daily operations. These efforts contribute to reducing environmental impact, lowering operational costs, and promoting long-term sustainability in working animal services.

7.1 Energy Conservation

- **Efficient Infrastructure:** Install energy-saving lighting (e.g., LED), high-efficiency appliances, and low-consumption heating and cooling systems. Select equipment and systems that meet or exceed current energy rating standards.
- **Operational Practices:** Adopt energy-conscious habits such as turning off unused equipment, using timers or motion sensors for lighting, and reducing standby power usage ("vampire" loads).
- **Renewable Energy Use:** Where feasible, invest in renewable energy systems such as solar panels, battery storage, or small-scale wind turbines. Organisations that lease facilities are encouraged to negotiate for green energy sources with property owners or suppliers.
- **Monitoring and Audits:** Conduct regular energy audits to monitor usage trends, identify inefficiencies, and plan upgrades or behavioural changes. Benchmarking consumption data over time supports transparent reporting and continuous improvement.

7.2 Water Conservation

- **Irrigation and Landscaping:** Use drip irrigation, mulch, drought-resistant native plants, and moisture sensors to reduce outdoor water use. Avoid watering during peak evaporation times.
- **Rainwater and Greywater:** Implement rainwater harvesting systems for use in cleaning, irrigation, or flushing toilets. Where permitted, greywater systems may also be used for non-potable applications.
- **Fixtures and Equipment:** Install water-saving fixtures (e.g., low-flow taps, dual-flush toilets) and use washing machines or animal bathing facilities that are water-efficient.
- **Behavioural Strategies:** Train staff and volunteers in water-saving practices (e.g., reporting leaks promptly, mindful hose use during animal care, using buckets instead of running hoses).
- **Leak Detection and Maintenance:** Conduct routine checks for leaks, dripping taps, or faulty irrigation, and repair issues promptly to prevent water loss.

By integrating these practices into their operations, WAFA members contribute to a more sustainable future while demonstrating leadership in environmental responsibility. These measures should be documented, reviewed periodically, and updated in line with evolving technologies and climate conditions.

8. Carbon Footprint Reduction

WAFA members must proactively work to reduce their carbon footprint by identifying, monitoring, and minimising greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across all operational areas, with a particular focus on transport, facility energy use, and procurement practices. These efforts support global climate goals and reflect the sector's responsibility to operate sustainably while caring for animals, people, and the planet.

8.1 Emissions Monitoring

Members are encouraged to:

- Conduct Baseline Assessments to understand their organisational carbon footprint using reputable tools or consultants.
- Track Emissions Sources, particularly from fuel consumption (vehicle and generator use), electricity usage, waste disposal, and material transport.
- Establish Reduction Targets aligned with sector benchmarks or local environmental policies.

8.2 Transport and Logistics

Transport is often a significant contributor to emissions in working animal services. Members should:

- Optimise Routes for travel to clients, events, or training locations to reduce distance and fuel use.

- Coordinate Shared Travel or carpooling between staff or volunteers where possible.
- Adopt Low-Emission Vehicles, including hybrid, plug-in hybrid, electric vehicles (EVs), or those with high fuel efficiency.
- Maintain Vehicles Regularly to ensure optimal performance and reduced emissions.
- Explore Non-Motorised Alternatives, such as walking or cycling for short trips when animals are not being transported.

8.3 Facility Emissions

- Upgrade to Energy-Efficient Infrastructure, such as insulation, smart climate control systems, and energy-efficient appliances.
- Transition to Green Energy Providers or install on-site renewable energy systems where possible.
- Minimise Heating and Cooling Waste, such as by sealing gaps, using ceiling fans, and zoning heating/cooling systems.

8.4 Carbon Offsetting and Remediation

For emissions that cannot yet be avoided, members should consider:

- Participate in Verified Offset Programs accredited by recognised standards such as Gold Standard or Verra.
- Invest in Local Initiatives, including reforestation, regenerative land practices, or wetland restoration projects with community or Indigenous involvement.
- Support Biodiversity Projects that both sequester carbon and protect native ecosystems.

By committing to meaningful carbon reduction strategies and accountability mechanisms, WAFA members contribute to climate resilience, environmental justice, and the health of future generations. These actions not only mitigate climate impact but also demonstrate sector leadership in ethical and sustainable animal services.

9. Sustainable Procurement and Supply Chain Management

Where possible WAFA members must apply environmentally responsible procurement principles when sourcing goods and services. Procurement decisions should prioritise suppliers with independently verified environmental credentials, such as ISO 14001 (Environmental Management), Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), or B Corp certifications, as well as those with transparent sustainability statements and track records.

Products and materials should be selected based on their full life-cycle impact, favouring options that are:

- Durable and long-lasting, reducing the need for frequent replacement.
- Made from recycled or upcycled content where safe and appropriate.
- Biodegradable or recyclable at end of life, with minimal reliance on single-use plastics.

- Packaged in minimal or recyclable materials to reduce waste burden.

Where feasible, members should also support local suppliers to reduce transport-related emissions and strengthen regional economies. Contracts and supplier arrangements should include sustainability clauses wherever appropriate, ensuring that animal welfare, environmental health, and ethical labour practices are upheld throughout the supply chain.

Sustainable procurement is not solely about environmental impact but must also consider human health, animal safety, value for money, and operational reliability. A documented procurement policy aligned with WAFA's environmental expectations is recommended for larger or higher-volume operations.

10. Community and Environmental Engagement

Members are strongly encouraged to build relationships with local environmental and conservation organisations to promote a shared commitment to sustainability. Engaging in collaborative environmental initiatives helps embed a culture of stewardship, education, and community solidarity.

Examples of activities include:

- Participating in or co-hosting landcare and clean-up events, especially in areas used for training, public demonstrations, or animal recreation.
- Supporting native species and habitat restoration projects, including tree planting, wildlife corridor establishment, and invasive species control.
- Partnering with schools, councils, or libraries to deliver environmental education, highlighting how assistance and working animals contribute to sustainable, inclusive communities.
- Collaborating with local Traditional Custodians to respect and incorporate First Nations environmental knowledge and land care practices.

Such partnerships amplify WAFA's visibility, promote mutual respect, and allow members to contribute meaningfully to environmental and social change.

11. Environmental Reporting and Accountability

All WAFA members are required to establish systems that monitor, evaluate, and document their environmental performance over time. This includes maintaining records related to:

- Energy and water usage
- Waste generation and disposal practices
- Use of non-toxic and biodegradable materials
- Sustainable procurement initiatives
- Environmental incidents or near misses
- Emissions tracking (e.g., transport, electricity)

Organisations are encouraged to develop annual environmental reports or sustainability statements summarising progress, key data, challenges, and planned improvements. These may be shared with WAFA, clients, funders, or the public, depending on size and capacity.

Larger organisations or those with higher environmental impact may be expected to conduct periodic internal audits or third-party reviews to verify environmental claims and identify performance gaps.

Transparency and honesty in reporting are essential. WAFA may request documentation as part of credentialing or compliance reviews.

12. Environmental Emergency Preparedness

Members must have a documented Environmental Emergency Response Plan (EERP) that outlines procedures for responding effectively to environmental hazards and disasters. This plan must address:

- Chemical spills (e.g., cleaning agents, fuel leaks, pesticide accidents)
- Waste disposal failures (e.g., bin overflow, sharps mismanagement)
- Natural disasters (e.g., bushfires, floods, extreme heat)
- Power or water outages affecting animal care and facility safety

The plan should clearly define roles and responsibilities, communication procedures, containment strategies, evacuation plans (where applicable), and recovery actions. Emergency kits and containment materials should be kept readily available and inspected regularly.

All staff, volunteers, and relevant contractors must be trained in emergency response protocols as part of their induction and through ongoing refresher training. Emergency drills should be conducted periodically to test preparedness and identify improvements.

Where incidents occur, members must document the event, notify WAFA if required, and undertake a formal review to identify corrective and preventative actions. Protection of animal welfare must remain the highest priority in all emergency response planning.

13. References

Members are expected to comply with all applicable legislation, regulations, and recognised standards relevant to environmental protection, sustainability, and workplace safety, including but not limited to:

- Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth and relevant states/territories)
- State and Territory Environmental Protection Acts
- National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007 (Cth)
- Australian/New Zealand Standard ISO 14001:2015 Environmental Management Systems
- Australian Packaging Covenant
- Local Government Waste Management Bylaws and Regulations

- Relevant Public Health Orders and Guidelines (e.g., for hygiene and infection control)
- WAFA Environmental Policy and Sustainability Guidelines

14. Review, Revision and Approvals

This policy will be reviewed annually by the steering committee to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Any revisions will require approval from the steering committee.

15. Implementation

WAFA members must integrate these standards into governance frameworks, operational policies, financial management, human resources, and client service delivery to maintain high standards of accountability and organisational integrity.

16. Enforcement

WAFA enforces these standards through its accreditation and audit processes. Non-compliance will lead to remedial actions and may impact ongoing WAFA membership and certification status.

17. Contact Information

For further information or assistance related to this standard, please contact the steering committee at the following email address: admin@workinganimals.com.au

Document Control

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V1.0	17/05/2025	V. Solomon	Initial	C.Williams