

Animal Handling

Business Name:		ABN:	
Business Address:			
Contact Person:	Phone:	Email:	

THIS RISK ASSESSMENT IS APPROVED BY THE PCBU ON THIS PROJECT

Under the Work Health and Safety Regulation (WHS Regulation), a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) is required to ensure that a RISK ASSESSMENT is prepared before the proposed work starts.

Full Name:		
Signature:	Title:	Date:

CLIENT OR PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR DETAILS

Client:	SCOPE OF WORKS
Project Name:	
Project Address:	
Project Manager:	
Contact Phone:	
Date Risk Assessment supplied to Project Manager:	



RISK MATRIX									
LIKELIHOOD	INSIGNIFICANT	MINOR	MODERATE	MAJOR	CATASTROPHIC	SCORE	ACTION	HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS	
ALMOST CERTAIN	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE			Elimination Remove the hazard.	
LIKELY	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4A ACUTE	DO NOT PROCEED	Substitution Replace the hazard.	
POSSIBLE	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	3H HIGH	Review before work starts.	Isolation Isolate People from the hazard	
UNLIKELY	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	2M MODERATE	Ensure control measures in place.	Engineering Isolate the hazard	
RARE	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	1L LOW	Monitor and keep records.	Administrative Change	
								PPE	

Risk Rating & Required Action:	
4A	Stop work. The risk is intolerable. Eliminate the hazard or redesign the activity before proceeding. A Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) or higher-level authorisation is required.
3H	Review and approve additional controls for the task parts. Senior supervisor sign-off needed.
2M	Ensure all nominated controls are in place and effective. Proceed with caution; monitor conditions.
1L	Proceed, following standard operating procedures. Monitor and keep records.

Consequence Scale:			
Consequence	People (injury/illness)	Project / Assets	Compliance / Reputation
Catastrophic	Fatality or permanent total disability	project shutdown	Significant regulator intervention; criminal prosecution
Major	Serious injury/illness (hospital > 5 days)	critical delay	Improvement notice; major media coverage
Moderate	Medical-treatment injury; lost-time > 1 day	moderate delay	Minor breach; adverse client comment
Minor	First-aid only, no lost time	negligible delay	Isolated non-conformance
Insignificant	No injury	no schedule impact	Deviation caught and corrected on site

Notes on Hierarchy of Controls:
Remember to apply controls in the preferred order shown by the coloured pyramid:

1. **Eliminate**
2. **Substitute**
3. **Isolate**
4. **Engineering**
5. **Administrative**
6. **PPE**

Always document **why** a lower-order control is accepted if elimination or substitution is not reasonably practicable.

aligned with Safe Work Australia's Managing the risk of fatigue at work (2023) and ISO 45001:2018 clauses 6–8.

JOB STEP	POTENTIAL HAZARDS	IR	CONTROL MEASURES	RR
SPECIFIC WORK STEPS	HAZARDS THAT MAY ARISE	INITIAL RISK	SPECIFIC MEASURES TO BE PUT IN PLACE TO ELIMINATE OR CONTROL THE RISKS	RESIDUAL RISK
1. Governance, Legal Compliance and WHS Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of clear organisational WHS governance for animal handling operations Failure to identify and comply with WHS Act 2011 and WHS Regulations requirements relating to animal handling, manual tasks, hazardous chemicals, remote or isolated work and emergency planning Ambiguous allocation of WHS duties between PCBU, officers, workers, contractors and volunteers involved in animal handling Inadequate consultation, coordination and cooperation with other duty holders (e.g. landowners, clients, transport providers, vets) Absence of a documented WHS management plan specifically addressing animal handling risks No systematic process for reviewing WHS performance and incident trends animal handling environment 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and document a WHS governance framework that explicitly includes animal handling operations, endorsed by senior management and communicated to all levels of the organisation Undertake and maintain a legal register identifying applicable WHS Act 2011, WHS Regulation and relevant Australian Standards and Codes of Practice for animal handling and related activities (e.g. manual tasks, noise, remote work, plant, hazardous chemicals) Define, document and communicate roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for officers, managers, supervisors, workers, contractors and volunteers involved in animal handling, including due diligence duties for officers Implement formal consultation and coordination arrangements with other PCBUs and stakeholders sharing animal handling risks, including written agreements, induction requirements and shared emergency protocols Develop a documented, organisation-wide WHS Management Plan for animal handling that covers risk management, training, consultation, incident management and continuous improvement Schedule periodic management reviews (e.g. quarterly) of WHS performance in animal handling, including review of incidents, near misses, audit findings and agreed corrective actions Ensure policies require that any change to animal species handled, scale of operations, facilities or equipment triggers a formal WHS risk review and update of relevant procedures 	Medium
2. Risk Management Systems and Planning for Animal Handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of a systematic risk management process specific to animal handling activities Failure to identify species-specific behavioural, zoonotic, ergonomic and environmental hazards at the planning stage Inconsistent or ad hoc risk assessments across different sites or animal programs Inadequate consideration of vulnerable workers (e.g. new workers, young workers, pregnant workers, immunocompromised workers) in risk assessments No linkage between risk assessments and procurement, roster design, facility design or emergency planning 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a formal WHS risk management procedure (identify, assess, control, review) tailored to animal handling settings, with templates and clear approval processes Require pre-activity risk assessments for new animal handling programs, new species, off-site work, public interaction sessions and research activities involving animals Develop and maintain a centralised register of animal handling risk assessments, accessible to supervisors and workers across all locations Incorporate consideration of vulnerable worker groups within the risk assessment process, including health and medical review where appropriate (e.g. zoonotic disease vulnerability, allergy risk) Ensure risk assessment outcomes are integrated into procurement decisions, facility layout, staffing levels, roster patterns, transport arrangements and emergency planning Mandate review and re-approval of risk assessments after incidents, near misses, significant hazard reports, or operational changes (e.g. new species, change in enclosure design, new restraint methods) Provide training and guidance for managers and supervisors on conducting and documenting suitable and sufficient risk assessments for animal handling tasks 	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk assessments not reviewed following incidents, introduction of new animals, equipment or changes to work practices 			
3. Competency, Induction and Training in Animal Handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers, contractors or volunteers handling animals without verified competency or appropriate experience Inadequate induction to site-specific hazards, animal species, enclosure systems and emergency procedures Lack of structured training in animal behaviour, low-stress handling techniques and restraint systems Failure to provide refresher training leading to skill fade and complacency No formal process to assess competency before allowing unsupervised animal handling Insufficient training in recognising early signs of animal stress, aggression or illness Limited training on zoonotic disease risks, hygiene protocols and biosecurity requirements 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a competency framework for all animal handling roles, specifying required knowledge, skills, qualifications and experience for each role and species Introduce a formal induction program for all workers, contractors and volunteers that includes WHS responsibilities, site rules, animal species profiles, facility layout, emergency response and reporting procedures Provide structured training in animal behaviour, safe handling, low-stress handling techniques, use of restraint equipment, and species-specific risk factors, delivered by competent trainers Establish a formal practical competency assessment process (e.g. observation, checklists, sign-off) before workers are permitted to handle animals without direct supervision Schedule mandatory refresher training at defined intervals or when procedures, equipment or species handled change, with attendance and competency recorded Include training on identification of early warning signs of stress, fear, pain or aggression in animals and the appropriate de-escalation and withdrawal strategies Provide training and information on zoonotic disease risks, required vaccinations, hygiene practices, PPE, biosecurity zones and waste handling procedures Ensure supervisors are trained in coaching, mentoring and monitoring safe animal handling practices and in intervening when unsafe behaviours are observed 	Medium
4. Animal Welfare, Behaviour and Selection for Handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selection of animals for handling programs that are unsuitable due to temperament, species, health or prior history Inadequate behavioural assessment before animals are introduced into close contact with workers or the public Poor animal welfare standards leading to stressed, fearful or aggressive animals Lack of systems to monitor and record animal behaviour incidents, near misses and triggers Insufficient veterinary oversight of health status, pain management and fitness for handling or transport 	High	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overuse or inappropriate scheduling of animals in programs leading to fatigue and increased reactivity 		[REDACTED]	
5. Facility, Enclosure and Environmental Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal handling conducted in facilities or yards that are poorly designed, overcrowded or not fit for purpose • Inadequate separation between animals and workers or members of the public, increasing risk of bites, kicks, crushing or entrapment • Slippery, uneven or contaminated floors contributing to slips, trips and falls for workers and animals • Insufficient lighting, ventilation, noise control or climate control affecting animal behaviour and worker safety • Inadequate escape routes, refuges or safe zones for workers during animal incidents • Poorly designed gates, races, crushes, pens or cages that increase handling strain and aggression 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
6. Equipment, Restraint Systems and Personal Protective Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of inappropriate, poorly maintained or improvised restraint and handling equipment • Lack of standardisation of equipment across sites leading to inconsistent practices and training gaps • Failure of gates, crushes, ropes, muzzles, halters or cages during handling or transport • Insufficient PPE availability, selection or fit for the types of animals handled and tasks performed • No documented procedures for safe inspection, cleaning, storage and 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> disposal of equipment contaminated with biological material • Reliance on high-risk manual restraint in the absence of engineered or administrative controls 		[REDACTED]	
7. Health Monitoring, Zoonoses and Biosecurity Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure of workers to zoonotic diseases through bites, scratches, aerosols, faeces, urine or other body fluids • Lack of immunisation or health screening programs for workers at elevated risk of zoonotic disease • Inadequate infection prevention and control systems (e.g. hand hygiene, sharps management, cleaning and disinfection) • Poorly controlled movement of animals, people and equipment between areas, leading to cross-contamination and disease spread • Insufficient procedures for managing sick, injured or quarantined animals from a WHS perspective • Lack of awareness of early symptoms of zoonotic disease and transmission pathways for workers 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
8. Fatigue, Workload, Rostering and Psychosocial Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive workload, long shifts or inadequate rest breaks for workers handling animals, increasing risk of error and injury • Emotional stress and psychological impacts associated with animal injuries, euthanasia, aggressive incidents or repeated exposure to animal suffering • Low staffing levels leading to workers handling animals alone or without adequate support 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poorly designed rosters contributing to fatigue, shift work disruption and reduced situational awareness Bullying, harassment or blame culture following animal-related incidents or near misses, discouraging reporting Insufficient organisational support for workers following traumatic animal events 		[REDACTED]	
9. Contractor, Volunteer and Public Interface Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contractors, students, volunteers or visitors interacting with animals without adequate WHS induction or supervision Inconsistent WHS standards between host organisation and third-party service providers involved in animal transport, veterinary services or demonstrations Public interaction programs (e.g. petting zoos, demonstrations, animal-assisted therapy) exposing untrained persons to animal-related hazards Lack of clear behaviour guidelines and exclusion criteria for members of the public in animal handling areas Inadequate communication of emergency procedures to external parties on site 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
10. Incident Reporting, Emergency Preparedness and Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of clear procedures for responding to animal-related emergencies such as escapes, severe bites, crush injuries, anaphylaxis or aggressive animal behaviour Inadequate first aid arrangements, including treatment for bites, scratches, crush injuries and allergic reactions Under-reporting of incidents, near misses and hazards related to animal handling, leading to missed learning opportunities 	High	[REDACTED]	Low

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor investigation quality and failure to identify root causes at a system and management level No structured process to monitor, review and continuously improve WHS controls in animal handling operations 		<div style="background-color: black; width: 100%; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; width: 100%; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; width: 100%; height: 15px;"></div>	

SAMPLE

EMERGENCY RESPONSE – CALL 000 FOR EMERGENCIES

Ensure to have an Emergency Management Plan in place as well as adequate numbers of trained first aid staff with easy access to fully stocked first aid kits, rescue equipment, material safety data sheets, adequate access to emergency communication equipment and fire-fighting equipment suitable for all classes of fire and ignition sources.

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND CODES OF PRACTICE. DELETE THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES FOR ANY STATE THAT ARE NOT APPLICABLE

Queensland & Australian Capital Territory

Work Health and Safety Act 2011
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011
 Legislation QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/work-health-and-safety-laws>
 Codes of Practice QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>
 Legislation ACT: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations>
 Codes of Practice ACT: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Victoria

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
 Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017
 Legislation VIC: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/occupational-health-and-safety-act-and-regulations>
 Codes of Practice VIC: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/compliance-codes-and-codes-practice>

New South Wales

Work Health and Safety Act 2011
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2025
 Legislation NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/legal-obligations/legislation>
 Codes of Practice NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/list-codes-of-practice>

Western Australia

Work Health and Safety Act 2020
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2022
 Legislation Western Australia: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/legislation>
 Codes of Practice WA: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/codes-practice>

Northern Territory

Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011
 Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulation 2011
 Legislation NT: <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/workplace-safety-laws>
 Codes of Practice NT: <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Safe Work Australia Links

Law and Regulation (All States): <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/law-and-regulation>
 Model Codes of Practice: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/resources-publications/model-codes-of-practice>

South Australia

Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA)
 Legislation for SA: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/resources/legislation>
 Codes of Practice for SA: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/workplaces/codes-of-practice#COPs>

Model Codes of Practice

- Managing noise and preventing hearing loss at work
- Confined spaces
- Labelling of workplace hazardous chemicals
- Managing risks of hazardous chemicals in the workplace
- Welding processes
- First aid in the workplace
- Managing the risk of falls at workplaces
- Hazardous manual tasks
- Managing the risk of falls in housing construction
- Managing electrical risks in the workplace
- Demolition work
- Excavation work
- Work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination
- Managing the work environment and facilities
- How to manage work health and safety risks
- Managing risks of plant in the workplace
- Construction work

Tasmania

Work Health and Safety Act 2012
 Work Health and Safety (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Act 2012
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012
 Work Health and Safety (Transitional) Regulations 2012
 Legislation for TAS: <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations>
 Codes of Practice for TAS: <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Details of permits, licenses or access required by regulatory bodies (add or delete as required):

- Permits from local council
- Authorisation to commence work
- Any required documents.