



Guide for Shelters Caring for Surrendered/Found Birds

Introduction

Providing appropriate care for surrendered or found birds in shelters requires a comprehensive approach that includes proper management, policies, training, and veterinary care. This guide outlines the key principles and protocols to ensure birds receive the best possible care while in shelter environments.

Management and Commitment to Care

Effective shelter management requires adequate resources, proper planning, and ongoing staff training to support the shelter's mission and goals. Clear authority and responsibility structures must be in place, ensuring supervision and accountability at all levels. Humane animal care and public safety depend on well-trained staff, and shelters must comply with all relevant licensing requirements for animal rehabilitation and sheltering.

Establishment of Policies and Protocols

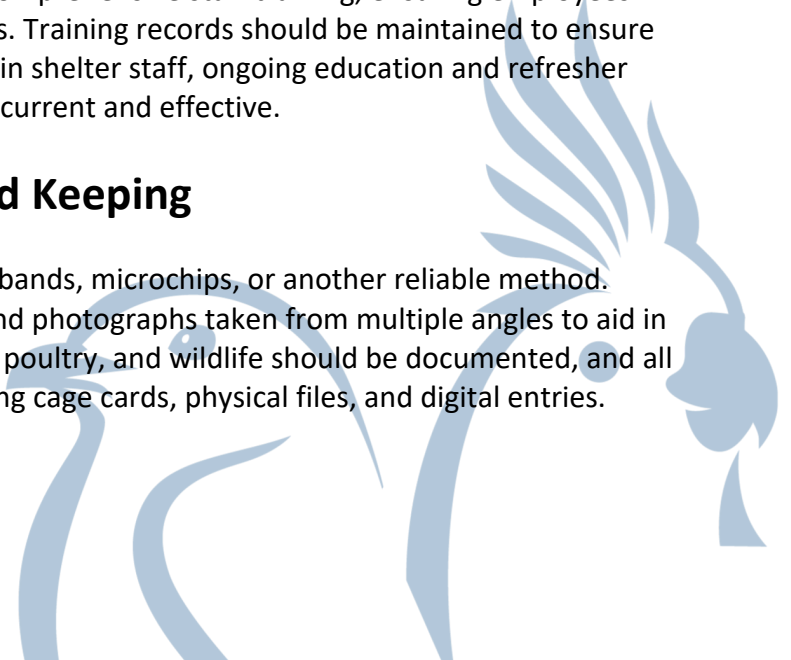
Shelters must have clear policies governing bird care, intake, fostering, adoption, and euthanasia. Staff should have access to these policies and be well-versed in their implementation. A veterinarian with avian expertise should be on staff or readily available for consultation. Special protocols should be in place for birds in protective custody, including contingency plans for large-scale intakes resulting from hoarding situations or confiscations. Additionally, specific guidelines should be established for handling gamecocks and conducting avian-related inspections at pet stores, expos, breeders, and flea markets.

Staff Training

Shelters should allocate time and resources for comprehensive staff training, ensuring employees demonstrate essential skills before handling birds. Training records should be maintained to ensure consistency and quality. Given the high turnover in shelter staff, ongoing education and refresher courses should be implemented to keep training current and effective.

Animal Identification and Record Keeping

Each bird should be properly identified using leg bands, microchips, or another reliable method. Shelter records should include the bird's name and photographs taken from multiple angles to aid in identification. Differentiation between pet birds, poultry, and wildlife should be documented, and all birds should have accompanying records, including cage cards, physical files, and digital entries.





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Facility Design and Environment

The shelter environment should be designed to maintain the health and well-being of birds, with appropriate enclosures that support their physical and psychological needs. Birds should be kept separate from mammalian patients in intake, examination, holding, adoption, isolation, and treatment areas. Proper ventilation, temperature control, and lighting should be provided, and sound levels should be managed to minimize stress. Cleaning protocols should avoid the use of aromatic chemicals that may be harmful to birds. Privacy considerations should also be taken into account, ensuring birds are not placed on public exhibit.

Transport and Field Capture

Shelter staff and officers must be trained extensively in the safe capture and restraint of avian species. Birds should be transported in clean, well-ventilated compartments with appropriate temperature control. Transport should be direct, with no unnecessary stops, to reduce stress. Because stress and capture injuries are common, all birds should be examined by a veterinarian upon intake to assess their condition.

Capacity for Care

Shelters must establish and adhere to a clearly defined maximum capacity to ensure that birds receive high-quality care. Maintaining best practices in avian husbandry and veterinary care should be a priority, and shelters should maintain a network of trusted and inspected off-site foster homes for additional capacity when needed.

Ensuring Adequate Care

Shelters must define standards of normal and expected care while identifying signs of inadequate conditions. Birds should be inspected daily or more frequently as needed, with prompt intervention when issues arise. A list of avian-experienced veterinarians should be readily available for consultation when specialized care is necessary.





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Sanitation and Disease Prevention

Proper sanitation is crucial to minimizing the spread of disease. Waste, including feces and leftover food, should be removed regularly. Disinfectants used in cleaning must be avian-safe to prevent exposure to toxic substances like bleach, ammonia, or scented cleaners. Measures should be in place to control fomites, including staff clothing, shoes, and feeding equipment. Additionally, vermin control strategies and the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) should be consistently implemented. Hazardous waste should be properly disposed of in accordance with regulatory guidelines.

Housing Considerations

Birds should be housed in appropriate enclosures, whether in cages, aviaries, or rehabilitation spaces. Facilities should be designed to provide ample space for exercise and flight when possible. Separate areas should be designated for treatment, isolation, and adoption to reduce stress and prevent disease transmission. Outdoor enclosures should be considered for species that require them.

Nutrition and Feeding

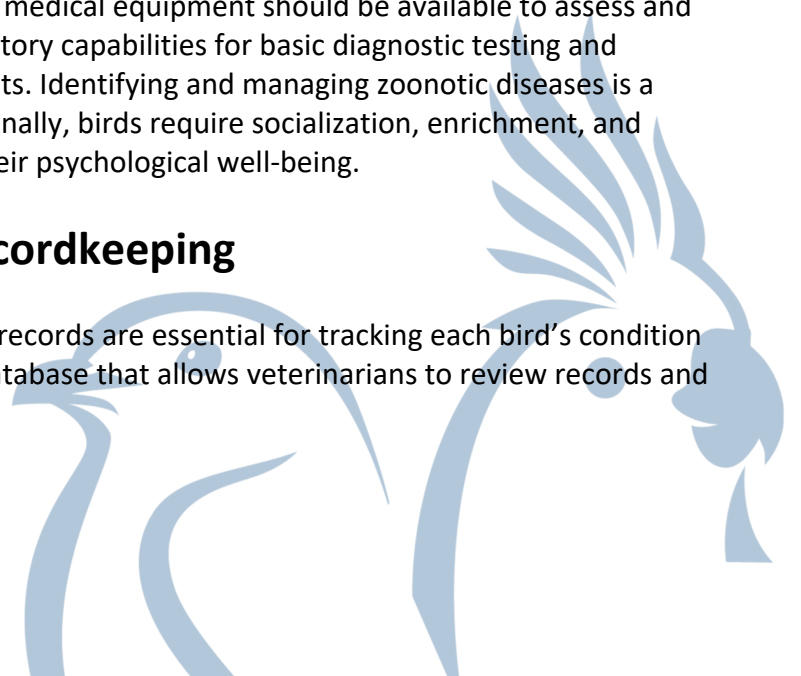
Shelters should maintain a stock of species-appropriate diets, ensuring that birds receive proper nutrition based on their classification as omnivores, piscivores, or carnivores. Staff should be knowledgeable about avian dietary requirements and provide fresh food and supplements as needed.

Health and Medical Well-being

Birds cannot be assessed using mammalian health standards, making it essential to have veterinary staff with avian expertise. Proper diagnostic and medical equipment should be available to assess and treat birds. Shelters should have in-house laboratory capabilities for basic diagnostic testing and comply with regional poultry testing requirements. Identifying and managing zoonotic diseases is a crucial component of shelter operations. Additionally, birds require socialization, enrichment, and species-specific accommodations to maintain their psychological well-being.

Veterinary Relationship and Recordkeeping

Accurate and accessible medical and behavioral records are essential for tracking each bird's condition and history. Shelters should maintain a digital database that allows veterinarians to review records and provide off-site consultations as needed.





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Veterinary Care and Assessments

All birds should receive thorough medical evaluations, with documentation of treatments, prognosis, and post-adoption recommendations. A list of trusted avian veterinarians should be provided to adopters to ensure continued care after placement.

Emergency Medical Care and Pain Management

Birds should be continuously monitored for health issues, with appropriate hydration and nutrition provided during illness. Emergency response plans should include access to avian veterinary specialists and clearly defined pain management protocols. Isolation and quarantine measures should be in place to contain disease outbreaks, along with biohazard control measures. Shelters should also maintain a list of state and federal public health resources for immediate consultation in crisis situations.

Intake and Stress Reduction

Minimizing stress during intake is essential to maintaining bird health. Intake procedures should include a thorough history, health assessment, and evaluation of behavioral needs. Birds should receive appropriate socialization and enrichment activities to improve their chances of successful placement. Regular positive interactions with humans can be beneficial, particularly for pet birds.

Safe Bird Handling and Restraint

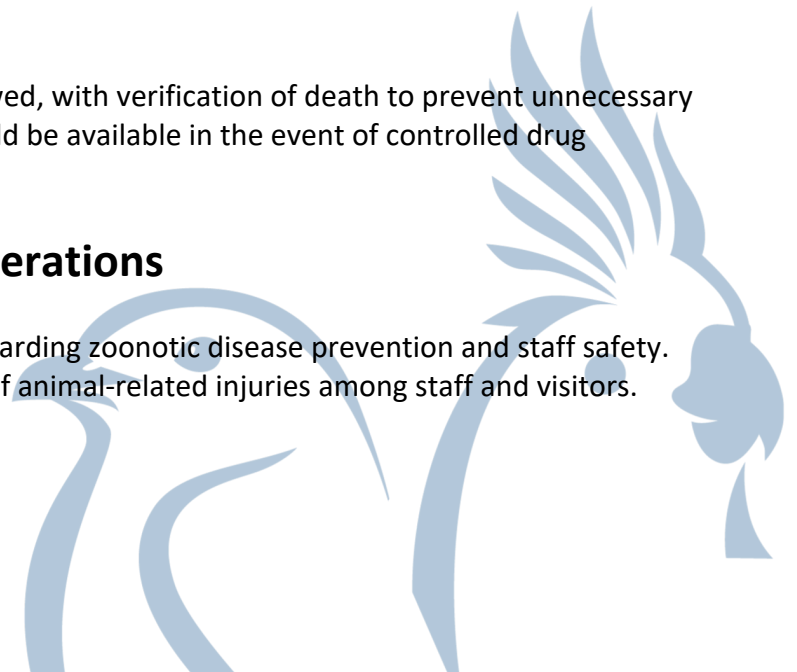
Staff should be trained in safe and effective avian restraint techniques to prevent injury during medical examinations and procedures.

Euthanasia Procedures

Humane euthanasia techniques should be followed, with verification of death to prevent unnecessary suffering. Alternative euthanasia protocols should be available in the event of controlled drug shortages.

Public Health and Safety Considerations

Shelters must comply with OSHA regulations regarding zoonotic disease prevention and staff safety. Measures should be taken to minimize the risk of animal-related injuries among staff and visitors.





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Adoption and Placement

Prospective adopters should receive education on avian care requirements before placement. Shelters should maintain a list of certified avian sanctuaries and vetted foster homes to ensure that birds are placed in suitable environments.

Disaster Preparedness for Sheltered Birds

Shelters should develop emergency plans for avian evacuation and crisis response, ensuring that birds are protected during natural disasters and other emergencies.

Resources

For additional guidance, please refer to:

<https://jsmcah.org/index.php/jasv/issue/view/2>

<http://www.avianwelfare.org/shelters/index.htm>

<https://www.phoenixlanding.org/adoption.html>

<https://www.aza.org/animal-care-manuals/>

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