



Wild Welfare Audit Process

1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this document is to provide a simple introduction to Wild Welfare’s methodology regarding the welfare auditing of captive animal facilities. The document includes the rationale behind Wild Welfare’s standard and auditing approach and how the organisation helps captive animal facilities improve the overall status of animal welfare within the facility.

2. Introduction

Throughout the world, and across various sectors, a tried and tested methodology for raising professional, industrial standards is the quantification of those standards and following this, the assessment (auditing) against these standards, either internally or by an external party.

In line with this approach, Wild Welfare has developed a third party, external audit process based upon an internationally-applicable Core Standard of Welfare Practice for Captive Animals (herein, referred to as “The Core Standard”). This provides a robust, evidence-based procedure for the systematic and forensic auditing of the welfare of animals in captivity, and thus encourages facility engagement in improving practices and promotes further development towards best practices.

The Wild Welfare Core Standard is derived from current and prevailing trends and published literature pertaining to animal welfare requirements in Zoos, Aquariums, Sanctuaries, Rescue Centres and Rehabilitation Centres.

This Core Standard is applicable to captive groups of animals held, in public and private facilities, *in and ex-situ*, on and off-exhibit, temporarily and permanently housed, or any other captive situation. In the Core Standard, “Captivity” is defined as a *“time-based state wherein animals are in a condition of confinement, both intentionally or by consequence with their day-to-day needs, welfare and wellbeing subject to the provision of direct human intervention and care”*.

In this regard, this Standard specifies the requirements for wild animal facilities to:

- demonstrate their ability to consistently provide compliance to the Wild Welfare Core Standard of Welfare Practice for Captive Animals and;
- to enhance animal welfare through effective application of the systems, including processes for continual improvement of the systems and the assurance of conformity to published norms and standards on captive wild animal welfare.

3. Methodology

The Wild Welfare Core Standard specifies the primary welfare requirements for the maintenance of wild animals’ dependent upon the provision of daily care by humans and the format adopted relates to the concept of the ‘Five Domains Model of Animal Welfare Compromise’.

The statements listed under Section One; Prescriptive Core Standard are the essential provisions of the Wild Welfare Standard and regarded as being mandatory in their requirements. They are fundamental to

animal wellbeing and clarify how something should be undertaken or provided. When being audited against this Standard, a facility must be able to demonstrate its operational compliance with these statements. All animals, either temporarily or permanently maintained in captivity, irrespective of the reason, are subject to all of the provisions of this Standard as detailed below. Some derogations to these provisions may be justifiable, but solely in the context of animal candidates for release to the wild.

Further supporting information describing the necessity for the listed requirements is provided under Section Two, Derivational Information. A glossary of terms used in the Standard is given in Appendix One.

In terms of these components the International Standards Organisation (ISO) defines, a “**standard**” as being “*a level of quality or attainment, and something used as a measure, norm or model in comparative evaluations*”.

Similarly, ISO defines an “**audit**” as *a systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining audit evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which Standard criteria are fulfilled*.

The Wild Welfare approach to facility animal welfare auditing follows the same procedure as developed by the International Standards Organisation (ISO) and is as follows:

- Pre-audit, advance copies of the Wild Welfare Core Standard are sent to the facility requesting the audit (the auditee facility). Management and staff of the facility are required to completely familiarise themselves with the provisions of the Standard and to perform a series of internal checks to assess the level of compliance with the relevant provisions. **Please note, familiarization with the Standard is absolutely essential and an audit by Wild Welfare cannot occur if this pre-requirement is not met.**
- In tandem with the Core Standard, the candidate facility is also furnished with a pre-audit checklist of required management documentation of practises, protocols and procedures to be provided to Wild Welfare in advance of the actual audit. **Please note, the onus of the demonstration of compliance with the Core Standard lies squarely upon the auditee facility.** The pre-audit provision of the required documentation is very much part of this process. The auditee facility should delegate dedicated audit liaison personnel to this task.
- In collaboration with the auditee facility, Wild Welfare will field a team of trained auditors to conduct the audit. The team typically comprises two general welfare auditors, a wildlife veterinarian and if required, one or two technical specialist auditors. Dependent upon the size and nature of the auditee facility, the audit is normally carried out over two days.
- The audit will start the morning of the first day, and will open with a meeting that should be attended by management and relevant personnel. At this meeting, the following will be covered:
 - Introductions
 - Confirmation that the Standard has been read and understood
 - Confirmation of the scope and objectives of the audit
 - Confirmation of audit timings (start and finish)
 - Confirmation of availability of required personnel
 - Verification that there are no extraordinary conditions prevailing
 - Confirmation of time, place and attendees for close-out meeting
- Following the Opening Meeting, the audit will begin.

- The audit concludes with a Close-out meeting led by the audit team and should include senior management and representatives of governance. At this meeting, the following will be discussed:
 - Verbal presentation of findings
 - Confirmation of findings with auditee
 - Recommendations for corrective action
 - Timelines for corrective action
 - Deadline for written report

- All findings and required corrective actions are then listed in a confidential written report by Wild Welfare. Please note, the corrective actions are recommendations. Although compliance with these recommendations is at the discretion of the auditee facility, the purpose of the whole audit exercise is compromised if these recommendations are not followed.

5. Operational and Managerial Benefits to an audit

There are a number of immediate benefits to an audit:

- The audit report represents a reliable source of objective, unbiased information for the auditee facilities' management for operational consideration;
- The pre-audit and audit processes opens up communication channels within the staff body of the auditee facility;
- Following a clear understanding of the Core Standard prior to the audit, and following the audit report, opportunities for improvement are created within the auditee facility;
- The complete audit process from pre-audit preparation through to the audit report can reinforce management confidence in their own internal processes within the auditee facility.

6. Potential Follow-up

Whilst the Wild Welfare audit process is discrete unto itself, the auditee facility may choose to request further services from Wild Welfare. These might be practical assistance in achieving the required corrective actions, with additional follow-up/ surveillance audits. Such additional servicing is available upon application to Wild Welfare.