

How GFAS Distinguishes between Legitimate and Pseudo-sanctuaries

All GFAS organizations must adhere to certain policies as set out in our standards, including but not limited to:

- ✓ *no commercial trade in animals or animal parts;*
- ✓ *no animals removed from enclosures for exhibition or other non-medical reasons;*
- ✓ *no direct contact between the public and animals (with some allowable exceptions, such as for some horses, and under carefully supervised circumstances);*
- ✓ *measures in place to prevent breeding, either through segregation of sex or through a program of humane contraception, unless the animals are part of a bona fide release program;*
- ✓ *open to the public only by way of a structured visitor program in which tours are guided and where there is a bona fide educational component to the visiting program.*

Pseudo-sanctuaries, on the other hand, often buy and sell animals, exhibit the animals on and off site, allow the public (for a price) to hold baby animals and have a photo taken, breed animals, and allow the public in on a regular basis without escort. And pseudo-sanctuaries can have subpar facilities and not be committed to humane and responsible care of the animals.

Evaluating Sanctuaries/Rescues/Rehabilitation Centers

Both accredited and verified facilities must be proven to provide excellent and humane care for their animals in a non-exploitive environment, and have ethical policies in place. Both accreditation and verification have an application process that includes:

- *Completing preliminary information forms (Forms "A" and "B") to give GFAS basic contact information, and information on the animals at the facility;*
- *Completing a more detailed application covering animal care and operations issues;*
- *Submitting certain required documents (such as copies of certain policies, leases, and proof of not-for-profit status);*
- *At least one site visit to the facility following receipt of the written application.*

Does An Organization Have to Be Perfect To Become Accredited or Verified?

The simple answer is “**No!**”

Being accredited or verified means compliance with an overwhelming *preponderance* of the standards required for either accreditation or verification, and with a plan, timeline, and budget (if applicable) for coming into compliance in any noted areas of noncompliance.

- *Sometimes an exception is granted to a particular standard, especially if the facility has discovered a different way of meeting the intent of the standard or if national or local law prohibits a facility from meeting a standard.*

Details on Verification:

GFAS has written standards of care for all animal groups except for domestic cats and dogs. For verification, a facility must meet certain standards in areas including:

- ✓ *Animal Housing*
- ✓ *Nutrition and Diet*
- ✓ *Physical Facilities*
- ✓ *Animal Well-Being and Handling Policies*
- ✓ *Staff Safety*
- ✓ *Veterinary Care*
- ✓ *Ethical practices in fundraising and at least minimal financial reserves*
- ✓ *Restrictions on research, limited to non-invasive projects that provide a health, welfare or conservation benefit to the individual animal and/or captive animal management and/or population conservation*

Details on Accreditation:

Accredited facilities have to meet the requirements for verification, and in addition examine areas of:

- ✓ *Governance*
- ✓ *Staffing*
- ✓ *Finance*
- ✓ *Education and outreach*
- ✓ *Existence of written policies*
- ✓ *Safety policies, protocols and training*

A separate site visit covering these topics may be required.

For accreditation, organizations are also required to submit documents including:

- ✓ *Copies of written policies and planning documents such as a strategic plan, succession plan, conflict of interest policy, and grievance procedure;*
- ✓ *Financial documents including a written long-term financial plan; the most recent annual operating budget; and a description of financial stability and plan for operating reserves;*
- ✓ *Information on the organization's (or its governing body's) Board of Directors/Trustees, including a list of members and one set of Board minutes;*
- ✓ *By-laws of the organization or its governing body.*

What If An Organization Doesn't Meet All of the Standards?

All of the GFAS written standards include the following language:

*"GFAS notes that there may be other acceptable ways of meeting the intent of each standard, aside from those detailed below, and that in some instances there may be legal, cultural or other significant barriers to meeting GFAS requirements. The standards are considered mandatory, but GFAS will consider specific exceptions to some of the listed requirements (e.g., exact enclosure size, manner of record keeping, legal requirements that impact a sanctuary's acquisition policy, etc.). **GFAS encourages sanctuaries to offer feedback on the standards and to explain any reasons why it believes it cannot meet a particular standard, or why the standard is not applicable and/or appropriate to its situation.** Sanctuaries are also welcome to indicate a timeline for meeting a standard if the standard is not yet met at the time of application for accreditation or for verification."*