

# **Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries**



## **Standards For Lagomorph, Rodent and Hyrax Sanctuaries**

**Version:**

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## ***Table of Contents***

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>GFAS PRINCIPLES .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>ANIMALS COVERED BY THESE STANDARDS .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>STANDARDS UPDATES.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>LAGOMORPH, RODENT AND HYRAX STANDARDS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>LAGOMORPH, RODENT AND HYRAX HOUSING.....</b>	<b>3</b>
H-1. Types of Space and Size .....	3
H-2. Containment .....	6
H-3. Ground and Plantings .....	8
H-4. Gates and Doors .....	9
H-5. Shelter.....	10
H-6. Enclosure Furniture .....	11
H-7. Sanitation.....	12
H-8. Temperature, Humidity, Ventilation, Lighting.....	14
<b>PHYSICAL FACILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION.....</b>	<b>16</b>
PF-1. Overall Safety of Facilities .....	16
PF-2. Water Drainage and Testing.....	16
PF-3. Life Support .....	16
PF-4. Hazardous Materials Handling .....	17
PF-5. Security: Lagomorph, Rodent and Hyrax Enclosures.....	17
PF-6. Perimeter Boundary and Inspections, and Maintenance .....	18
PF-7. Security: General Safety Monitoring .....	18
PF-8. Insect and Non-Resident Rodent Control .....	19
PF-9. Record Keeping.....	19
PF-10. Animal Transport .....	20
<b>NUTRITION REQUIREMENTS.....</b>	<b>21</b>
N-1. Water .....	21
N-2. Diet .....	21
N-3. Food Presentation and Feeding Techniques .....	24
N-4. Food Storage.....	25
N-5. Food Handling .....	25
<b>VETERINARY CARE .....</b>	<b>26</b>
V-1. General Medical Program and Staffing .....	26
V-2. On-Site and Off-Site Veterinary Facilities .....	26
V-3. Preventative Medicine Program .....	27
V-4. Clinical Pathology, Surgical, Treatment and Necropsy Facilities .....	27
V-5. Quarantine and Isolation of Lagomorphs, Rodents and Hyrax.....	29



V-6. Medical Records and Controlled Substances.....	30
V-7. Breeding/Contraception .....	31
V-8. Zoonotic Disease Program .....	32
<b>WELL-BEING AND HANDLING OF LAGOMORPHS, RODENTS AND HYRAX .....</b>	<b>32</b>
W-1. Physical Well-Being .....	32
W-2. Social Housing .....	33
W-3. Introduction of Unfamiliar Individuals .....	34
W-4. Behavioral/Psychological Well-Being.....	35
W-5. Lagomorph, Rodent,Hyrax-Caregiver Relationships .....	36
W-6. Handling and Restraint .....	36
<b>STAFFING .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>GENERAL STAFFING.....</b>	<b>37</b>
S-1. General Staffing Considerations .....	37
S-2. Security and Emergency Coverage .....	38
S-3. Volunteer and Internship Programs .....	38
S-4. Manuals .....	38
S-5. Employee Training and Continuing Education .....	40
<b>SAFETY POLICIES, PROTOCOLS AND TRAINING .....</b>	<b>40</b>
S-6. General Staff Safety .....	40
S-7. Communication System .....	40
S-8. Emergency Response Plans and Protocols.....	40
S-9. Escaped Lagomorph, Rodent and Hyrax Protocol .....	41
S-10. Emergency Training .....	41
S-11. Firearm Policy .....	42
S-12. Firearm Training.....	42
S-13. Chemical Restraint .....	42
S-14. First Aid and Zoonotic Disease Training, and Staff First Aid .....	43
<b>GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>GOVERNING AUTHORITY .....</b>	<b>43</b>
G-1. Nonprofit/ Non-Commercial Status .....	43
G-2. Ownership of Sanctuary Property and Contingency Planning .....	44
G-3. Succession Planning .....	44
G-4. Board of Directors/Trustees .....	45
G-5. Ethics and Grievance Procedures.....	45
G-6. Required Licenses and Permits .....	46
G-7. Strategic Planning.....	46
<b>FINANCIAL RECORDS AND STABILITY.....</b>	<b>46</b>
F-1. Budget and Financial Plan .....	46
F-2. Financial Reports .....	47
F-3. Financial Stability .....	47
F-4. Banking Responsibilities and Financial Transactions.....	47
F-5. Fundraising Activities and Disclosures .....	48
F-6. Insurance and Waivers.....	48



<b>EDUCATION AND OUTREACH</b> .....	<b>50</b>
E-1. Education Programs.....	50
E-2. Tours .....	50
E-3. Outreach.....	50
<b>POLICIES</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>POLICIES: ACQUISITION AND DISPOSITION OF LAGOMORPHS, RODENTS AND HYRAX</b> .....	<b>50</b>
P-1. Acquisition Ethics and Commercial Trade Prohibition .....	50
P-2. Acquisition Recordkeeping and Monetary Exchange.....	51
P-3. Disposition Ethics and Responsibility .....	51
P-4. Disposition of Live Lagomorphs, Rodents and Hyrax .....	53
P-5. Euthanasia .....	53
<b>POLICIES: PUBLIC CONTACT AND RESTRICTIONS ON USE AND HANDLING OF LAGOMORPHS, RODENTS AND HYRAX</b> .....	<b>54</b>
P-6. Public Contact.....	54
P-7. Removal from Sanctuary or Enclosures/Habitats for Non-Medical Reasons .....	54
P-8. Public Viewing of Human/Animal Interaction.....	55
P-9. Non-Portrayal of Lagomorphs, Rodents and Hyrax as Tractable .....	55
P-10. Non-Harmful, Non-Exploitive Fundraising .....	55
P-11. Ethics in Research .....	57
<b>LAGOMORPHS, RODENTS AND HYRAX BEING RELEASED TO THE WILD</b> .....	<b>57</b>
R-1. General Considerations .....	58
R-2. Rescue Of Lagomorphs, Rodents and Hyrax.....	59
R-3. Evaluation Of Suitability For Release.....	59
R-4. Quarantine And Prerelease Housing .....	60
R-5. Diet, Nutrition And Foraging Skills .....	62
R-6. Husbandry And Health.....	62
R-7. Health And Safety Of Caregivers Working With Releasable Lagomorphs, Rodents and Hyrax .....	63
R-8. Assessment of Health and Skills .....	63
R-9. Determining Appropriate Release Sites .....	64
R-10. The Release Process And Post Release Monitoring .....	64
<b>APPENDIX 1</b> .....	<b>66</b>



## INTRODUCTION

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### GFAS PRINCIPLES

The Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) will designate an organization as “verified” or “accredited” based upon its substantial compliance with the standards listed below. GFAS recognizes that some organizations under consideration will operate valid rescue and rehabilitation programs with a goal of releasing wildlife to the wild pursuant to IUCN and/or other international or national standards. For those animals, lifetime sanctuary care may not be part of the organization’s mission. While the care for these animals may be provided on an interim basis only, the organization is still expected to meet the standards below with regard to all animals in its care and for purposes of these standards it will be identified as a “sanctuary.”

Consistent with GFAS’ philosophy and the standards below, it is expected that a sanctuary does not adopt policy positions that are in opposition to the welfare of the species of animals in the care of the sanctuary (for example, while it is not required that a primate sanctuary affirmatively promote a policy against laboratory research using primates, it should not promote a policy in favor of such research).

Note: Several standards make reference to a sanctuary’s “Director.” GFAS recognizes that a sanctuary may use a different title, and the term “Director” is intended to reference the sanctuary’s Sanctuary Director, who may be called an Executive Director or Chief Executive Officer, etc.

GFAS also recognizes that sanctuaries may rely on volunteers for certain functions, including some aspects of animal care (such as food preparation). Standards referencing “staff” may take into account appropriately qualified and trained volunteers as well as employees.

Appendix I of this document provides further guidance/suggestions on facility design and lagomorph/rodent/hyrax care. These are not requirements but rather provide sanctuaries with access to knowledge gained from experience at other sanctuaries/lagomorph, rodent and hyrax care facilities.

### ANIMALS COVERED BY THESE STANDARDS

#### Family / Genus/Common Names

- a. Family: *Abrocomidae*, *Anomaluridae*, *Aplodontiidae*, *Bathyergidae*, *Calomyscidae*, *Capromyidae*, *Castoridae*, *Caviidae*, *Chinchillidae*, *Cricetidae*, *Cuniculidae*, *Ctenomyidae*, *Dasyproctidae*, *Dipodidae*, *Dinomyidae*, *Echimyidae*, *Erethizontidae*, *Geomyidae*, *Gliridae*, *Heteromyidae*, *Hystriidae*, *Leporidae*, *Ochotodontidae*, *Pedetidae*, *Petromuridae*, *Muridae*, *Myocastoridae*, *Nesomyidae*, *Plantacanthomyidae*, *Procaviidae*, *Sciuridae*, *Spalacidae*, *Thryonomyidae*,
- b. Genus: *Abditomys*, *Abeomelomys*, *Abrawaomys*, *Abrocoma*, *Abrothrix*, *Acomys*, *Aconaemys*, *Aegialomys*, *Aepeomys*, *Aeretes*, *Aeromys*, *Aethomys*, *Akodon*, *Allactaga*, *Allactodipus*, *Allocricetulus*, *Alticola*, *Ammodillus*, *Ammospermophilus*, *Andalgalomys*, *Andinomys*, *Anisomys*, *Anomalurus*, *Anotomys*, *Aplodontia*, *Apodemus*, *Apomys*, *Arborimus*, *Archboldomys*, *Arvicanthus*, *Arvicola*, *Artherurus*, *Atlantoxerus*, *Auliscomys*, *Baiyankamys*, *Balomys*, *Bandicota*, *Bathyergus*, *Batomys*, *Beamys*, *Belomys*, *Berylmys*, *Bibimys*, *Biswamoyopterus*, *Blandfordimys*, *Blarinomys*, *Boromys*, *Brachiones*, *Brachylagus*, *Brachytarsomys*, *Brachyuromys*, *Brucepattersonius*, *Bullimus*, *Bunolagus*, *Bunyomys*, *Callistomys*, *Callosciurus*, *Calomys*, *Calomyscus*, *Cannomys*, *Caprolagus*, *Capromys*, *Cardiocranius*, *Carpomys*, *Caterodon*, *Caryomys*, *Castor*, *Cavia*, *Cerradomys*, *Chaetodipus*, *Chaetomys*, *Chelemys*, *Chibchanomys*, *Chilomys*, *Chinchilla*, *Chionomys*, *Chiropodomys*, *Chiruromys*, *Chrotomys*, *Clyomys*, *Coccymys*, *Coendou*, *Conilurus*, *Crateromys*, *Cratogeomys*, *Cricetulus*, *Cricetus*, *Crunomys*, *Cryptomys*, *Ctenomys*, *Cuniculus*, *Cynomys*, *Dactylomys*, *Dasymys*, *Dasyprocta*, *Delomys*, *Dendrohyrax*, *Dendromus*, *Desmodillus*, *Dicrostonyx*,



*Dipodomys, Dolichotis, Dremomys, Dryomys, Echimys, Echinoprocta, Eligmodontia, Eliomys, Eliurus, Ellobius, Elagurus, Eothenomys, Euneomys, Euryoryzomys, Exilisciurus, Funambululus, Funisciurus, Galea, Geomys, Gerbilliscus, Gerbillus, Glaucomys, Grammoys, Graomys, Graphiurus, Habromys, Haeromys, Handleyomys, Heliosciurus, Heterohyrax, Heteromys, Hybomys, Hydrochoerus, Hydromys, Hylaeomys, Hylomyscus, Hylopetes, Hyperacris, Hystrix, Ichthyomys, Idiurus, Isolobodon, Isothrix, Jaculus, Kerodon, Lariscus, Lemmus, Lemniscomys, Leopoldamys, Lepus, Liomys, Lophuromys, Makalata, Malacomys, Marmota, Mastomys, Maxomys, Melanomys, Melomys, Meriones, Mesocapromys, Mesocricetus, Mesomys, Microcavia, Microsciurus, Microtus, Millardia, Mus, Myocaster, Myodes, Myoprocta, Mysopalax, Neacomys, Necromys, Nectomys, Neodon, Neotoma, Nephelomys, Nesolagus, Nesoryzomys, Niviventer, Notomys, Ochotona, Octodon, Oecomys, Oligoryzomys, Onychomys, Oreoryzomys, Orthogeomys, Oryzomys, Otomys, Oxymycterus, Paramelomys, Paraxerus, Pedetes, Pelomys, Pentalagus, Perognathus, Peromyscus, Petaurillus, Petaurista, Petinomys, Phodopus, Phyllomys, Phyllotis, Pithecheir, Plagiodontia, Podomys, Poelagus, Pogonomelomys, Pogonomys, Praomys, Procavia, Proechimys, Pronolagus, Prosciurillus, Protoxerus, Pseudohydromys, Psuedomys, Pteromys, Pteromyscus, Pygeretmus, Rattus, Ratufa, Reithrodontomys, Rhagomys, Rheomys, Rhipidomys, Rhizomys, Romerolagus, Salpingotus, Sciurillus, Sciurotamias, Sciurus, Scolomys, Sicista, Sigmodon, Solomys, Spalax, Spermophilus, Sphiggurus, Steatomys, Stenocephalemys, Stylodipus, Sundamys, Sundasciurus, Tachyoryctes, Taeromys, Tamias, Tamiasciurus, Tamiops, Tarsomys, Tatera, Taterillus, Thallomys, Thalpomys, Thamnomys, Thomasomys, Thomomys, Thryonomys, Tokudaia, Transandinomys, Trinomys, Tylomys, Uromys, Vandeleuria, Voalavo, Volemys, Wiedomys, Xerus, Zapus, Zygodontomys, Zyzomys*

- c. Common names: acouchi, aepeomys, agouti, akodont, ammodile, antelope squirrel, apomys, arvicanthis, bamboo rat, bandicoot rat, batomys, beaver, big-eared mouse, brush rabbit, brush-tailed mouse, brush-tailed porcupine, bullimus, bunyomys, bush hyrax, capybara, cave rat, cavy, chinchilla, chipmunk, chrotomys, climbing mouse, colilargo, coney, cottontail, coypu, crateromys, degu, deer mouse, dormouse, dwarf hamster, echiothrix, field mouse, flying squirrel, forest rat, gerbil, gerbil mouse, giant rat, gramyomys, grass mouse, grass rat, groundhog, ground squirrel, guiara, guinea pig, gundi, hadromys, haeromys, hamster, hare, hocicudo, hogger, hydromyine, hylomyscus, hyrax, hutia, ichthyomyine, jackrabbit, jerboa, jird, juliomys, kangaroo rat, komodomys, lemming, lenomys, lenothrix, leopoldamys, leptomys, mammelomys, mara, margaretamys, marmot, mastomys, maxomys, melomys, metad, mole rat, mole vole, mouse, mouse-like hamster, muskrat, myomyscus, niviventer, paca, papagomys, paramelomys, pectinator, pericote, phloeomys, pogonomelomys, pika, pilorie, pithecheir, pithecheirops, pocket gopher, pocket mouse, porcupine, prairie dog, praomys, protochromys, pygmy mouse, pygmy squirrel, rabbit, rat, red-backed vole, rhipidomys, rhycomys, rice rat, rock, dassie, rock hyrax, rock mouse, rock rat, scaly-tailed squirrel, shrew-mouse, shrew-rat, sigmodontomys, snow vole, spiny mouse, spring-hare, squirrel, stenocephalemys, sun squirrel, sundamys, swamp rat, taeromys, tapeti, tarsomys, tateril, thicket rat, tree dassie, tree hyrax, tree mouse, tree rat, tuco-tuco, uromys, vesper mouse, viscacha, vlei rat, voalavo, vole, water mouse, water rat, water vole, woodchuck, wood mouse, woodrat, yellow-spotted rock hyrax, zokor

#### **Version Updates:**

New and Updated content released on February 2015

- G-1 Nonprofit/ Non-Commercial Status, P-3 Disposition Ethics and Responsibility, P-4 Disposition of Live Lagomorphs, Rodents, and Hyrax, P-5 Euthanasia.

New and Changed content released on July 2015

- V-7 Breeding/Contraception – section a.



## LAGOMORPH, RODENT AND HYRAX STANDARDS

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.

The exceeding of the standards is encouraged. In addition to meeting these standards, an organization is expected to comply with all applicable international, national, state/province, and local laws and regulations.

## LAGOMORPH, RODENT AND HYRAX HOUSING

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### H-1. Types of Space and Size

**Unless otherwise directed by a veterinarian, lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are provided sufficient opportunity and space to move about freely and rapidly, and to exercise choice in location so as to reduce stress and maintain good physical condition.**

#### General

- a. The habitat and living conditions are species appropriate and replicate, in as much as possible, the lagomorph, rodent and hyraxes' wild habitat with a balance between hygiene and the species' physiological and psychological needs. This includes adequate space, both vertical and horizontal, and appropriate space, in terms of diversity and complexity.
- b. The physical space provides varied opportunities for the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax to interact with the environment and key elements are changed often, resulting in a dynamic living space.
- c. Facility design takes into account caregiver-lagomorph, rodent and hyrax safety and ease of maintaining a positive relationship.
- d. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are provided access to as many areas of the enclosures as possible, except during staff maintenance activities, unless security concerns dictate otherwise. All enclosures interconnect without creating 'dead ends' to allow for freedom of movement of subordinate individuals.
- e. Outdoor enclosures are either covered, with minimum height to allow for natural behaviors, or open roofed, with cantilever angle or sufficient height to prevent escape (see Housing Dimensions for appropriate measurements).
- f. The habitat provides appropriate visual, olfactory, and acoustic barriers.
- g. The habitat provides security from predators and unauthorized human access.



### **Open Space Settings**

- h. Open space enclosures, which may be indoor or outdoor units, are designed to provide the maximum possible freedom and complexity for enclosure residents. The enclosures have sufficient area per animal to accommodate natural individual and group activities. While it may not be possible to monitor every animal in an Open Space enclosure on a daily basis, design allows for regular inspection of animals and facility maintenance as needed.
- i. Where open space settings are the primary enclosure, the following are also provided:
- Shelter which can serve as night housing and/or secure space during inclement and extreme weather.
  - Space for use while the primary enclosure is serviced and/or for animal management needs including introduction of new individuals to a group, or temporary separation for health or social reasons. (Note: This space might also be night housing, lockout, shift yard, transfer tunnels, etc.)
  - Alternate housing for sick or injured individuals.

### **Controlled access settings**

- j. Controlled access enclosures, which may be indoor or outdoor units, provide sufficient space for natural activities but are also designed to allow caregivers to monitor each individual animal on a daily basis, to easily shift individuals, pairs or small groups as needed and to isolate animals for individual care. As with Open Space enclosures, design also includes:
- Shelter which can serve as night housing and/or secure space during inclement and extreme weather.
  - Space for use while the primary enclosure is serviced and/or for animal management needs including introduction of new individuals to a group, or temporary separation for health or social reasons. (Note: This space might also be night housing, lockout, shift yard, transfer tunnels, etc.)
  - Alternate housing for sick or injured individuals.

### **Indoor Housing**

- k. Indoor housing provides year-round protection from the elements. For sanctuaries located in colder climates (where freezing temperatures occur regularly during any part of the year and temperate or tropical species are housed), indoor space is insulated and is large enough to allow for all forms of species-specific behavior (running, climbing, swimming, digging, playing, etc.).

### **Dimensions**

- l. Many factors influence the minimum space required for a group of lagomorphs rodents and hyrax, including, but not limited to: group size, group composition, and enclosure complexity. The following guidelines are minimum recommendations. Facilities should provide as much space as is possible and/or practical.
- m. Sanctuaries meeting only the minimum requirements for enclosure space employ additional environmental enrichment, focusing on physical and mental exercise rather than food, to compensate for reduced space and complexity.
- The use of a rotation system, which allows groups and/or individual lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax to regularly spend time in a larger or different space, is strongly encouraged in these circumstances to increase enrichment and encourage activity.
  - Outdoor enclosures for lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax - Enclosure shape may be variable to take in natural features in the landscape such as rock formations, hills and trees. Particular attention is paid to providing hiding places, including access to indoor space, burrows, nests and plantings for security from predators. Space includes a minimum of one (1) animal transfer door leading to indoor shelter.



Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries – Standards for Lagomorph, Rodent and Hyrax Sanctuaries

- Minimum 2 sq. ft. (0.19 sq. m) for 2 rats, gerbils, hamsters or 4-5 mice, dwarf hamsters, voles and lemmings.
  - An additional 0.5 sq. ft. (0.05 sq. m) for each additional individual.
  - Minimum of 108 sq. ft. (10 sq. m) for 2-5 squirrels or pair of coypu, maras, porcupines, agoutis, acouchies, pacas and vizcachas.
  - Minimum of 215 sq. ft. (20 sq. m) for 1-2 muskrats and hyrax.
  - An additional 8 sq. ft. (0.75 sq. m) for each additional individual.
  - Minimum of 431 sq. ft. (40 sq. m) per pair of beavers, lagomorphs or for 10 prairie dogs.
    - An additional 22 sq. ft. (2 sq. m) per additional animal.
    - Note: aggression in prairie dogs
  - Minimum of 1,600 sq. ft. (150 sq. m) per 1-2 capybara or marmots.
    - An additional 108 sq. ft. (10 sq. m) per additional animal.
  - Minimum vertical dimension of 4 ft. (1.2 m) for arboreal species.
    - 6-9 ft. (1.8-2.4 m) recommended.
    - Enclosures are roofed or covered in wire mesh sufficient to prevent predator access.
  - Includes water features for aquatic and semi-aquatic species:
    - 71 cu. ft. (2 cu. m) recommended for coypu and water vole
    - 212 cu. ft (6 cu. m) recommended for beaver, muskrat and capybara.
      - Recommended pool depth for capybara is 6 ft. (1.8 m).
    - Beaver, muskrat and water vole enclosures are designed to allow for these species to spend most of their time in or near water.
- n. Indoor enclosures/shift yards for lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax - A minimum of two indoor areas per compatible group of lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax. Room dimension is dependent on intended purpose and/or duration of confinement. Space includes pool or other water feature for aquatic or semi-aquatic species being housed long term.
- Includes one room with a minimum of 8 sq. ft. (0.75 sq. m) for pair of compatible lagomorphs, prairie dogs, muskrats and hyrax or group of 4-6 small rodents.
  - An additional 2 sq. ft. (0.19 sq. m) per additional animal.
  - Includes one room with a minimum of 15 sq. ft. (1.4 sq. m) per pair of marmot, coypu, mara or capybara.
  - An additional 3 sq. ft. (0.28 m) per additional animal.
  - Minimum vertical height of 6 ft. (1.8 m) for arboreal species.
  - Shift yards are roofed or covered in wire mesh sufficient to prevent predator access.
  - Shift yards include a water feature where aquatic/semi-aquatic species are housed long term.
  - Rooms and shift yards interconnect without creating 'dead ends' to allow for freedom of movement for subordinate individuals and include a minimum of two transfer doors per room/shift yard to the main outdoor enclosure.
  - Where animals are housed indoors long term, e.g. in northern climates where freezing temperatures occur regularly, indoor space is large enough to accommodate all forms of species specific behavior (running, jumping, hopping, burrowing, wading, swimming, climbing, etc.)



- Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax may be familiarized with rooms and shift yards through routine feeding in or transfer through, or by being allowed continuous access.
  - Whenever possible and species appropriate, separated animals have visual and tactile access to group members to facilitate reintroduction.
- o. Mixed species housing
- Where multiple species share an outdoor enclosure, the total dimension is adjusted to reflect the minimum spatial requirements of each species housed.
  - Minimum indoor dimensions remain unchanged for each species.
  - Each species has a dedicated transfer door between indoor and outdoor enclosures.
  - Mixed species groupings are appropriately researched to ensure compatibility and to avoid unnecessary stress for all species.
  - Guinea pigs are not housed with rabbits to prevent exposing the guinea pigs to bordetella, which rabbits may carry.

## **H-2. Containment**

**Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are safely contained.**

### **General**

- a. Other than when being transported or for medical reasons, lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are kept at all times in secure enclosures or other appropriate areas.
- b. Enclosures are designed to allow for animals' normal defense reactions and appropriate 'flight' or escape distances.
- c. All enclosures are designed, constructed and maintained to securely contain lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax and to present no likelihood of harm to them.
- d. Distance or barriers between animals and between enclosures and personnel is sufficient to minimize stress to the animals, as well as reduce the risk of disease transmission.
- e. Enclosures are designed to allow for proper, safe cleaning and drainage.
- f. Materials are appropriate for their particular application and are maintained in good repair.

### **Outdoor Enclosures**

- g. Perimeter containment of outdoor areas is constructed so as to prevent digging under the barrier by native wildlife, domestic species and the enclosure residents.
- h. Fences and enclosures are inspected daily for signs of digging. Where fencing meets hard surfaces such as rock or concrete, the fencing is securely anchored in place.
- i. Design takes into account climbing, digging, and other natural behaviors of species housed.

### **Fencing**

- j. Barbed or razor wire are not used to contain lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax.
- k. The supporting posts for fences are firmly fixed into the ground.
- l. Fence material is sufficiently secured to supporting posts in such a way that the weight of the lagomorphs, rodents or hyrax could not detach it from the support nor dislodge the supporting posts.



- m. Gates and doors are at least as strong, and as effective, in containing the animals as the rest of the enclosure barriers. In particular gates and doors are designed and maintained so as to prevent animals from lifting them from their hinges or unfastening the securing device.
- All containment barriers have a mechanism to prevent lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax from gaining access to dig under gates.
- n. Dimensions
- Hardware cloth is recommended for enclosure sides.
  - Where wire mesh is used for flooring to prevent predator access, it is covered in sufficient substrate to prevent foot injury to lagomorphs, rodents, and hyrax.
  - Minimum vertical dimension of 4 ft. (1.2m).
    - 6 ft. (1.8 m) for arboreal species.
    - Roofed or mesh covered enclosures recommended for most species to prevent predator access.
    - For larger species (capybara, coypu, beaver, marmot, etc.), less at risk from aerial predators, 6 ft. (1.8 m) recommended for enclosures which do not include a non-climbable surface or a 45° overhang to prevent escape.

### **Electric Fencing**

- o. Electric fence is not used to confine lagomorphs, rodents or hyrax but may be used as perimeter fencing to discourage predators.

### **Solid Barriers.**

- p. Solid barriers such as concrete block, poured concrete and artificial rock can be used as the sole method of containment or in conjunction with other types of barrier.
- q. Walls are secured in appropriate footings to ensure wall stability, and are of sufficient strength to anchor caging and furniture.
- r. Care is taken, especially with artificial rock, to ensure that contours in the rock do not provide escape routes from the enclosure.
- s. Height of the wall is the same as that for fences.
- t. Design of areas using solid walls allows for sufficient air flow throughout an enclosure.

### **Moats**

- u. Moats are not recommended for containment of lagomorphs, rodents or hyrax.

### **Indoor Enclosures and Shift Yards**

- v. Hardware cloth or solid walls recommended.
- w. Shift yards are topped with mesh or roofing due to their small size, which increases the possibility of escapes.
- x. Walls are of sufficient strength to anchor caging and furniture.



### **H-3. Ground and Plantings**

**Ground cover indoors and out is healthy for lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax. Plantings are appropriate and safe.**

#### **Vegetation**

- a. Any vegetation capable of harming lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax is kept out of reach.
- b. Trees within or near animal enclosures are regularly inspected, trimmed or felled as necessary to avoid animals being harmed by falling branches, toxicity, or trauma.
- c. Trees and climbing plants are pruned to prevent their aiding animal escape.
- d. Access to very tall trees which are useful for shade limited by electric wires, barriers etc. to prevent their aiding animal escape.
- e. Any natural materials (e.g., plants and their products, such as seeds or fruit) are assessed for toxicity to the species held before use.

#### **Outdoor enclosures**

- f. All outdoor enclosures have a natural substrate consistent with the needs of the species.
  - The substrate provides easy to clean, dry areas for ground feeding and digging.
  - The substrate can be amended with organic materials, including but not limited to soils, sand, leaf litter, bark mulch, grasses, straw and hay.
  - The substrate drains well.
- g. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are provided with species appropriate environments to accommodate an array of locomotory and foraging behaviors, as well as appropriate sleeping and resting areas, including nesting and bedding materials.
  - Grazing species are provided with fresh cut grasses and hays where natural substrate does not include grassy areas.
- h. Suitable substrates for digging and rooting, nesting and bedding materials, are provided as species appropriate. Enclosures are regularly inspected for digging damage.
  - Digging risks (e.g. soil collapse, flooding and caregiver access to animals are taken into account in enclosure design.
- i. Aquatic and semi-aquatic species are provided with appropriate water sources and water quality is monitored where water sources are not 'dump and fill'.
- j. Where natural topography of an enclosure is not varied, it is created through the addition of natural and placed elements.
  - Horizontal and vertical jump or 'flying' distance is considered when developing enclosure topography.
  - Vantage points at/near burrows are provided for prairie dogs where natural burrowing/ coterie construction is not possible.

#### **Indoor enclosures**

- k. Indoor enclosures have a non-slip concrete floor and, provided adequate septic service is present, the floor is sloped to a drain. Natural substrate, which is routinely replaced may be used as species appropriate.



- I. For new construction, the indoor area is designed to accommodate a deep litter substrate.
  - Deep litter enclosures are designed to allow appropriate litter depth and drainage for proper functioning.
  - Litter is properly spot-cleaned and maintained to prevent health concerns but enclosure maintenance also takes into account the olfactory aspect of social relationships in many of these species.
- m. Existing construction ensures that all floors are sealed.
- n. Bedding materials are provided in sufficient amount/depth to prevent contact with the concrete.
  - Bedding material suitable for use includes, but is not limited to, bark mulch, leaf litter, wood wool, straw hay, shredded paper and wood shavings. Cedar shavings and other highly aromatic bedding is not used where species reliant on scents as part of their social relationships.
- o. Aquatic and semi-aquatic species are provided with water sources when climate requires them to be housed indoors for extended periods.
- p. All animals are observed regularly for signs of illness that may be related to ingestion of foreign objects, including wood shavings, bark mulch or other materials that may pose a hazard.

#### **Shift yards**

- q. All outdoor shift yards have a minimum of 50% of the surface area in natural substrate. The remaining 50% may be concrete as appropriate for drainage, sanitation and structural needs.
- r. The substrate can be amended with organic materials including, but not limited to, soils, sand, leaf litter, bark mulch, grasses, straw and hay. The substrate drains well.
- s. Bedding materials are provided in sufficient amount/depth to prevent direct contact with any concrete surfaces.
- t. Shift yards are secured with buried fencing or a poured concrete pad or apron.
- u. Shift yards which house aquatic and semi-aquatic species for extended periods include a species appropriate water features.

#### **H-4. Gates and Doors**

**Lagomorph, rodent and hyrax enclosure gates and doors are appropriately designed to ensure both animal and human health and safety.**

#### **General**

- a. Animal gates and doors are a key element of facility design.
- b. Doors are designed to allow transport crates to safely attach to them.
  - Transport crates should be able to be moved in and out of the enclosure through the transfer doors.
- c. Transfer doors are designed to remain functional under all circumstances, are maintained in good working order and free from any encumbrances that may prevent opening and closing.
- d. Doors are designed to allow caregiver view of enclosures while operating the doors.
- e. Minimum dimensions of transfer doors are such that the largest animals in the enclosure can maintain normal posture when passing through the opening.



- f. Doors are designed such that people are out of view when animals are being shifted. If not, no eye contact is made with the animals going through the doors.
- g. Doors and door hardware are properly maintained to ensure proper functioning.

### **Security**

- h. Transfer doors and their frames are constructed of materials similar in strength to those used in the primary enclosure.
- i. Doors are lockable in both the open and closed positions.
- j. For pneumatic or hydraulic doors, pneumatic or hydraulic pressure is sufficient for keeping doors in the open position. A mechanical lock is, however, in place to lock the door in the closed position.
- k. Particular attention is given to preventing hay/shavings from affecting door mechanisms.

### **Animal Safety**

- l. Doors operated via remote control are visible from the control area.
- m. Guillotine doors are not recommended due to risk of animal injury. If used, a backup system should be in place to prevent door from free falling due to mechanical failure or operator error.
- n. Hydraulic systems use peanut or other food-grade oils to prevent risks to the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax in the event of leakage.
- o. Hydraulic and pneumatic door systems include backup systems to allow for door usage in the event of equipment failure.

### **User Safety**

- p. If door handles or locking mechanisms are in close proximity to the enclosure, a solid barrier is present to protect the user.
- q. Double door systems may be used to prevent lagomorph, rodent or hyrax escape from holding areas.

## **H-5. Shelter**

**Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax have access to man-made shelter that provides each individual with protection from extreme weather (including, but not limited to, prevailing wind, snow, sleet, rain, sun, and temperature extremes).**

- a. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax have space to seek refuge from sun, wind, inclement weather and enclosure mates.
- b. Shelter does not create or result in 'dead ends' in which individuals can be trapped by other group members.
- c. Shade and shelter are provided in multiple locations within enclosures to ensure that all animals have access throughout the day.
- d. Shade and shelter can be created through natural and artificial means including hollow logs, rock overhangs, underground dens, shade trees and shade fabric.
- e. Shelter areas provide dry space during wet weather, as well as protection from wind.
- f. Shelter design does not result in dead ends in which subordinate individuals can be trapped by dominant animals.



## H-6. Enclosure Furniture

**Lagomorphs, rodents, and hyrax are provided with an appropriately complex and rich habitat to explore, to ensure the animals' physical, nutritional and stimulation needs are met.**

### General

- a. Enclosures are equipped in accordance with the needs of the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax with bedding material, water features, dens/nesting or hide boxes, tunnels, appropriate substrate, vegetation and other enrichment materials designed to aid and encourage normal behavior patterns and minimize any abnormal behavior.
- b. Appropriate complexity is provided through the use of various natural and artificial materials in the enclosure, using a combination of items including, but not limited to, those listed above.
- c. The date that items are placed in an enclosure is noted, and items are removed when they become soiled, damaged or novelty has diminished.
- d. Climbing species are provided access to the vertical space available within the enclosures.
- e. Ground dwelling species have access to areas for digging and/or are provided with artificial dens or nest/hide boxes.
- f. Aquatic species have access to species appropriate water features.

### Outdoor Enclosures

- g. Visual barriers can be used to avoid confrontation or aggression, and include climbing structures, fallen logs, natural or artificial tunnels, walls, shade structures, topography and large enrichment items.
  - Logs are placed and secured in a manner that prevents rolling or falling onto animals.
  - Nest boxes and/or other hiding places are provided, as species appropriate.
- h. Areas for digging are provided as species appropriate. Dens/tunnels dug by enclosure residents are monitored for potential collapse and/or flooding.
- i. Burrowing/tunneling sites are provided, as species appropriate, along with suitable nesting materials.
  - Where this is not possible, artificial tunnels of pvc pipe or similar are provided.
- j. Climbing structures accommodate natural locomotion patterns where species appropriate natural climbing opportunities are not present. When multiple species are housed together, climbing structures created specifically for each species' unique needs are provided. Metal pipe is not used to construct climbers as it becomes dangerously hot in summer sun and can damage skin during cold weather. Climbing structures should be accessible by staff for routine sanitation, repairs and updates and should include:
  - horizontal and vertical elements
  - locations and/or mechanisms to provide enrichment above ground level;
  - resting platforms
  - soft substrate such as soil, bedding material, mulch or leaf litter is installed below climbers to minimize risk of injuries from falls, especially to youngsters and older individuals.
- k. Water sources such as pools, streams or ponds are provided as species appropriate. Permanent pool structures, where present, have an adequate filtration system to maintain institutional water quality



parameters or are designed to allow easy draining, cleaning and refilling at suitable intervals to ensure water remains potable.

- Roots, trees and stumps on shore and in the water provide additional enrichment for aquatic/semi-aquatic species.
- Water features in coypu and muskrate enclosures include access to natural banks for burrowing where possible. Where this is not possible, artificial burrows are provided adjacent to the water feature.
  - Branchwork is available near muskrat water features to allow for natural nest construction.
- Water features for beaver include a lodge or burrow, either by providing access to appropriate habitat for the animals to construct their own or by providing a manmade lodge.
- A deep pool -6 ft. (1.8 m) deep with sloping sides is recommended for all capybara enclosures.
- While not required, paca enclosures are enhanced by the inclusion of a water feature to
- In excessive heat, fountains and misters may also be used to cool the air.

### **Indoor Enclosures/Shift Yards**

- i. To the greatest extent possible, all visual barriers, digging/tunneling spaces, nest boxes, water features and climbing structures meet outdoor enclosure criteria, particularly where lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax must be housed in these limited spaces for extended periods of time.
- m. Indoor furniture is constructed of materials that can be sanitized or easily replaced when they become overly soiled. Furniture is accessible to staff for routine cleaning and repair.
- n. Benches and other structures allow for climbing and for sleeping above ground level as species appropriate.
- o. Dens and water features are provided, as species appropriate.

## **H-7. Sanitation**

**Proper sanitation is practiced to reduce pathogen transmission.**

### **General**

- a. Local, county, state laws regarding proper waste removal are observed.
- b. Where possible, lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are transferred from enclosures prior to cleaning, disinfection and/or sanitizing.
- c. Enclosures are designed to promote sanitation and maintenance as appropriate for the health and well-being of the animals housed, without resulting in undue disturbance or stress.
- d. As fomites (shoes, clothing, etc. which carry infectious materials) may be a source of zoonotic disease, all who may come in contact with such materials are made aware of these risks and trained accordingly. (See also Standard V-8, "Zoonotic Disease Program").
- e. Uneaten perishable food is removed within a timeframe appropriate for the type of foodstuff and size of enclosure, prior to molding or contamination.

### **Removal of Animal Waste**

- f. Animal waste is removed from the habitat as often as necessary to prevent contamination of the animals contained therein, to minimize disease hazards and to reduce odors. This also enables caregivers to collect fecal samples in a timely manner.



- Lagomorphs and vizcachas are allowed access to fresh feces for normal dietary needs.
- g. Soiled bedding material and substrate are removed and replaced with fresh materials daily, or as needed to prevent buildup. If odorous, bedding is changed regardless of how long in place, taking into account the social aspects of olfactory cues where species appropriate.
- h. Damaged and soiled enrichment items are removed regularly.
- i. Efforts are made to prevent native wildlife getting access to waste.

### **Tools**

- j. Each enclosure has dedicated tools to prevent cross contamination between enclosures. When resources restrict the ability to have dedicated tools, tools are disinfected between enclosures to prevent the spread of parasites and disease.
- k. Tools are labeled when use is restricted to specific areas.
- l. Sanitation tools or equipment, including wheelbarrows, are not used for transport or storage of foodstuffs or bedding.

### **Cleaning and Disinfection**

- m. Feeding areas, automatic water devices, water and food containers are cleaned and disinfected daily.
- n. Care is taken to minimize overspray of waste, directly or via aerosolizing, into adjacent cages during cleaning.
- o. Animals are not present in enclosures being cleaned using power hoses. Care is taken to prevent accidental spraying of animals in adjacent enclosures when power hoses are used for cleaning.
- p. Concrete floored enclosures are dried with a squeegee, and as needed fans, to ensure floors are dry before bedding material is replaced.
- q. All hard surfaces including walls, floors, ceiling, benches, climbing structures, cage mesh and caregiver work areas are sanitized regularly to the extent possible. Note that in large outside enclosures with plenty of exposure to sunshine and rain, there may not be a need for scrubbing and cleaning but areas must be monitored for potential sanitation problems.
- r. Cleaning and Disinfection Standard Operating Procedures are developed and followed to address:
  - safe disinfectant use to prevent hazards to the animals, caregivers and the environment;
  - cleaning and disinfecting protocols for food preparation and veterinary care areas using more powerful disinfectants on hard surfaces;
  - daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly cleaning schedules for all hard surfaces including walls, floors, ceiling, benches, cage mesh and staff work areas designed to minimize the risk of disease transmission;
  - disinfectants and other cleaning products stored separately from foodstuffs.
- s. A Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) or equivalent is readily available for all cleaning products in use and all containers are properly labeled as to contents.



## **H-8. Temperature, Humidity, Ventilation, Lighting**

**Temperature, humidity, ventilation, and lighting are appropriately addressed.**

### **Temperature**

- a. The temperature is within an acceptable range for the species housed.
  - Weather is considered in addition to temperature.
  - Allowance is made to accommodate individual animals not able to tolerate temperatures above or below the usual range of comfort for the species.
- b. For outdoor enclosures and shift yards, in general, lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax have access to heated or cooled areas when ambient temperature falls below 60°F (15.5°C), adjusted for wind chill, or rises above 85°F (29.4°C) and are provided with dry, well-bedded den space. Great caution is taken with elderly, infant and disabled animals.
  - Capybara can tolerate temperatures as low as 10°F (-12°C) when provided with heated shelter and sufficient bedding.
    - When temperatures reach 90°F (32°C) capybara have access to shade or water for cooling.
    - Beaver and muskrats can tolerate freezing air/water temperatures provided their lodge/burrow can be maintained at temperatures above 40°F (4.4°C).
      - The number of animals in the lodge/burrow affects the ability to maintain appropriate temperatures.
    - Tropical porcupine species are maintained at temperatures between 70°F (21°C) and 85°F (29.5°C).
      - 55°F (12.8°C) to 80°F (26.7°C) for crested porcupines.
      - 32°F (0°C) to 90°F (32°C) for North American porcupines.
      - All porcupines have access to cooling (mistifiers, air conditioning or fans) and heat sources and/or shelter when temperatures fall outside these ranges.
    - Hyrax are protected from rain and extremes of temperature as they have limited ability to control their body temperature, reacting more like reptiles to temperature gradients.
    - Coypu are protected from freezing conditions and excess heat by providing access to water sources and heated shelter, as needed.
  - Windbreaks are sufficient in number to accommodate all animals simultaneously with consideration for social structure and relationships in a group.
  - Shade is available throughout the day in a number of areas and adequate size space to accommodate all animals simultaneously with consideration for social structure and relationships within a group.
  - Care is taken to prevent direct animal contact with heat sources. Note: Infrared bulbs or 'heat lamps' are not recommended as heat sources due to risks associated with bulb breakage and tissue damage to animals.
    - Heating blocks/panels, if used, are installed and used so as to ensure they pose no risk to the animals.
- c. For indoor enclosures, an average ambient temperature range of 60°F (15.5°C) and 70°F (21°C) is recommended for most lagomorphs, guinea pigs and hyrax, and 45°F (7°C) to 75°F (24°C) for most



rodents. For temperatures outside this range heat can be provided by forced air or hydronic heating systems and cool air by refrigerant air conditioning, “swamp coolers”, fans, or misters;

- Providing animals with opportunities to choose temperature ranges within an enclosure is preferred. This can be achieved by access to areas near heat vents, skylights, or hog warmers for example.
- Even when ambient temperatures are ‘warm’, bare concrete floors, especially damp floors, are too cold for many individuals and are not considered suitable substrate or housing for lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax.
- Den/nest areas are provided for all animals in indoor enclosures.
- Any climate control systems include back-up power in case of equipment or power failure.

### **Humidity**

- d. Optimal indoor humidity is between 40% and 70%. Humidity should not be kept above 80% in controlled environments to prevent fungal and mold growth. High humidity can be mitigated through proper ventilation or dehumidifier systems.
- Lower humidity is well tolerated by hyrax and capybara.
  - Neo-tropical porcupines do best at humidity levels between 45 and 60%, with 35% being their lowest level of tolerance.

### **Ventilation**

- e. Proper ventilation of indoor enclosures is critical.
- In these areas, Heat Recovery Ventilators and Energy Recovery Ventilators can provide fresh outdoor air with minimal heat loss.
- f. Indoor enclosures ideally have a negative air pressure, with regular exchange of non-re-circulated air.
- A minimum of one complete air exchange per hour is recommended.
  - Where negative air pressure is not used, HEPA filters may be installed to maintain re-circulated air quality.
- g. To the extent possible, separate air handling systems are maintained between animal areas to prevent disease transmission.
- h. Proper window and door placement can ensure sufficient cross-ventilation in warm climates.

### **Lighting**

- i. Light, natural and artificial, is appropriate for the species housed in terms of intensity, spectrum and duration.
- j. Indoor enclosures - Natural lighting is optimal and can be obtained using skylights, windows, roll-up doors and other means. Glass bricks may be considered, taking into account the fact that light intensity will be less than with clear glass.
- Supplemental lighting is provided to ensure adequate light, both day and night, for caregivers to observe animals, clean enclosures and perform related animal care tasks.
  - When animals are confined indoors overnight, sufficient lighting is used to extend the daylight period to a natural diurnal rhythm for the species housed to allow animals time to eat and select sleeping sites.
  - For nocturnal species, attention is paid to ensuring sufficient hours without artificial illumination.
- k. Outdoor enclosures and shift yards - Supplemental lighting is available for use in outdoor areas in event of an emergency.



## **PHYSICAL FACILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION**

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### **PF-1. Overall Safety of Facilities**

**The premises, tools, equipment, animal care records, and hazardous materials are appropriately kept clean and safe.**

- a. The sanctuary is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy environment for all employees, volunteers, visitors and animals, and conforms to health and safety practices as outlined under applicable national and state/province laws and regulations (e.g., the Occupational Health and Safety Administration [“OSHA”] in the United States or an equivalent international/national occupational safety organization/agency).
- b. Premises (buildings and grounds) are kept clean and in good repair in order to protect employees, volunteers, visitors and animals from injury and to facilitate appropriate animal care.
- c. Materials and equipment are safely stored when not in use, and there is an effective system in place for regular inspection and maintenance of tools and equipment.

### **PF-2. Water Drainage and Testing**

**Water drainage is rapid and complies with all regulations, and soil and water are tested annually.**

- a. A suitable method is provided to rapidly eliminate excess water.
- b. The sanctuary’s method of drainage complies with applicable national, state/province, and local laws and regulations relating to pollution control or the protection of the environment.
- c. Enclosures are checked annually for potential water contamination and soil contaminants.

### **PF-3. Life Support**

**There are adequate and reliable utilities, with back up.**

- a. Adequate and reliable electric power, potable water, water supplies and plumbing are available on the premises.
- b. An emergency power system, such as a generator, is in place in the event of a power outage.



#### **PF-4. Hazardous Materials Handling**

**Hazardous materials are appropriately handled according to applicable regulations and laws, protective clothing and other equipment in isolation units are not used elsewhere, and waste is taken care of appropriately.**

- a. The method for disposal of sewage, toxic/hazardous materials, garbage, and lagomorph, rodent or hyrax wastes follows all guidelines for hazardous materials. All national, state/province and local legal and regulatory requirements are met.
- b. All hazardous materials are labeled with the name of the contents, appropriate hazard warnings, and the name and address of the manufacturer as provided on the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS Sheets) or equivalent, if used in the country in which the sanctuary is based.
- c. If applicable, Material Safety Data Sheets for each hazardous material to which employees may be exposed, are kept in the area where the materials are stored. Employees are made aware of, have access to and understand how to interpret the MSDS Sheets.
- d. All employees, and volunteers where appropriate, utilizing hazardous materials are appropriately trained in the use of, and made aware of the potential hazards of using these materials.
- e. Protective equipment and clothing is utilized where required, such as working with hazardous chemicals and potentially infectious animals.
- f. Accumulations of trash is placed in designated areas and cleared as necessary to protect the health of the animals, staff, volunteers, visitors and the surrounding environment.
- g. The sanctuary considers the potential risks of releasing parasites, diseases or non-native plants through effluent water and other routes.
- h. Provision is made for the safe and legal removal and disposal of lagomorph, rodent and hyrax waste and food wastes, bedding, dead animals, trash and debris.
- i. Disposal facilities are so provided and operated to minimize non-resident rodent and insect infestation, odors, and disease hazards while complying with applicable international, national, state/province, and local laws and regulations relating to pollution control or the protection of the environment.

#### **PF-5. Security: Lagomorph, Rodent and Hyrax Enclosures**

**Proper security measures are in place to safely contain lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax at all times, and there is a 24-hour security system in place.**

- a. Entry and exit to animal enclosures is through a system of double gates and/or doors, with sufficient space between to allow each gate to be securely closed prior to opening the other.
- b. For very large enclosures into which vehicles enter, the double gates and/or doors are located far enough apart to allow the vehicle to be completely enclosed into the area with both gates secured before entering the enclosure.
- c. The sanctuary has 24-hour systems in place to minimize the risks of theft, malicious damage or release of animals by intruders entering the grounds.



- d. The sanctuary has a key control system designed to ensure that only qualified staff are allowed into certain areas of the sanctuary, such as animal enclosures. Gates and doors to enclosures are securely locked so as to prevent unauthorized openings.
- e. An adequate number of clearly visible safety signs, providing warning by means of a symbol, words or a combination of symbol and words, are displayed at each enclosure as needed.

## **PF-6. Perimeter Boundary and Inspections, and Maintenance**

**The perimeter boundary is designed to discourage unauthorized entry, with suitable exits, and any enclosures in need of repairs is immediately repaired or replaced, or lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are relocated.**

- a. The perimeter boundary, including access points, is designed, constructed, and maintained to discourage unauthorized entry and as an aid to the safe confinement of all the animals within the sanctuary.
- b. Exits through any perimeter fence are suitably located and adequately designated and secured.
- c. Each exit from the sanctuary is kept clear and is capable of being easily opened from the inside to allow the release of staff.
- d. All such gates are capable of being closed and secured to prevent the escape of resident animals and entry of unauthorized animals and visitors.
- e. Safety signs on any electrified section of the perimeter fence or enclosures are easily visible.
- f. A regular program of sanctuary maintenance is in place.
- g. Any enclosure in need of repair, or any defect likely to cause harm to lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax, is immediately repaired or replaced, or the animal(s) are relocated to a secure enclosure.

## **PF-7. Security: General Safety Monitoring**

**Appropriate fire extinguishers and alarms are in place and in working order, weather is monitored, and all physical features of the sanctuary are designed and maintained to ensure the safety of the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax.**

- a. Adequate fire extinguishers and alarms are installed, regularly tested, maintained in good working order and the staff is trained in their use. Fire alarms can automatically be heard from the permanent residence.
- b. The sanctuary has a system in place to provide early warning of severe temperature extremes and weather patterns. This is communicated directly to the sanctuary Director in case of emergency.
- c. Steps have been taken to protect lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax as much as possible from fire, flood, and other natural hazards. This includes not storing more than a small amount of bedding/forage in the same building in which animals are housed.
- d. All plant and fixed equipment, including electrical and heating apparatus, are installed and maintained in such a way that they do not present a hazard to lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax, and their safe operation cannot be disrupted by the animals.
- e. Tools and other portable equipment are not left unattended in places where they could cause animals harm.



## **PF-8. Insect and Non-Resident Rodent Control**

**An appropriate, effective, humane and safe pest control program is in place as needed. Insects are safely controlled as needed.**

- a. An insect and humane non-resident rodent control program is in place, supervised by a veterinarian to determine the degree of toxicity that products in use may pose to resident animals, native wildlife and staff.
- b. Insect and non-resident rodent control is implemented in all appropriate areas of the sanctuary, including storage areas for food items.
- c. Any pesticides are used in accordance with government regulations. Whenever possible, less toxic or non-toxic agents such as silica gel, diatomaceous earth or insect growth regulator products are given preference.

## **PF-9. Record Keeping**

**Records are maintained appropriately as required by local, state and national regulations and as necessary for good husbandry, management and veterinary care.**

- a. Detailed individual and group records are necessary for good husbandry, management and veterinary care. All nationally required records are kept, as well as records required by GFAS to meet other standards in this document (e.g. Standard P-2 “Acquisition Recordkeeping and Monetary Exchange”).
- b. Records that, if not required by law, are recommended by GFAS include but are not limited to:
  - Individual animal records showing origin, age, species, gender, microchip number, tattoo, photo, bio, etc.;
  - Individual veterinary record;
  - Reproductive history, if known;
  - Weight, current diet and record of diet changes;
  - Food consumption and preferred food items;
  - Where applicable and appropriate, any positive reinforcement training records showing completed objectives and those in development;
  - For species not housed in large groups, current and historic enclosure mates, social groups and partners, including response to various phases of introduction and response to other individuals;
  - Acquisition documents (*see Standard P-2, “Acquisition Recordkeeping and Monetary Exchange”*);
  - Welfare assessment for the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax as a whole including measures of: disease prevalence, morbidity and mortality rates, and activity levels;
  - Inspection Reports, as applicable, from international, national, state/province and local agencies, as well as accrediting organizations;
  - Other animal documentation, as applicable, such as complaints or police reports pertaining to specific animal, and animal escape reports.



## **PF-10. Animal Transport**

**Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are appropriately transported to maximize safety and minimize stress and in accordance with all local, state/province, national, international requirements and laws.**

### **General**

- a. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are transported only when necessary, such as when being transported to the Sanctuary, to a medical facility for care or to another accredited Sanctuary for reasons as described in acquisition standards.
- b. Pre-transport health examinations ideally include a complete physical exam with attention to parasite checks, necessary vaccinations, and completion of any tests required by regulations of the receiving state/province or country.
- c. Health certificates and any required transport permits accompany the lagomorph, rodent or hyrax when being transported interstate or internationally. All transport abides by local, state/province, federal and international law. A veterinarian is responsible for preparing and signing the health certificate.
- d. Prior to transport, the sanctuary ensures that adequate facilities are available at the receiving end and food items that are familiar to the animal are available.
- e. Where possible and appropriate, animals are acclimated to shipping container prior to transport. Capture, restraint, and transportation methods consider the animal's temperament and behavior in order to minimize injury, and distress.
- f. At a minimum, transport enclosures meet appropriate animal welfare standards (e.g., IATA, US Animal Welfare Act Transportation Standards or similar).
- g. Transport containers and vehicles are in good condition and meet federal and/or international standards. Equipment suitable for lifting, crating and transportation of animals kept within the sanctuary is readily available.
- h. Transport containers:
  - have impervious surfaces, which are cleaned and disinfected after use.
  - are designed to permit safe transfer into a secondary enclosure.
  - are placed within a secondary container or closed compartment on the transport vehicle.
- i. Any lagomorph, rodent or hyrax taken outside the sanctuary, for an approved reason such as medical treatment or transfer to a more appropriate sanctuary, is in the personal possession of the sanctuary director, or of competent persons acting on his/her behalf and adequate provision is made for the safety and well-being of the animal and public safety.
- j. All animals taken outside the sanctuary are kept securely at all times. Animals are managed outside the sanctuary in such a way that the animal is under control and not likely to suffer distress, cause injury or transmit or contract disease.
- k. Complete medical records, diet and husbandry information, and identifying papers (e.g., describing tattoos, or other identification methods) accompany all transported lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax.



## **NUTRITION REQUIREMENTS**

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### **N-1. Water**

**Fresh clean water is available in sufficient quantity.**

#### **Quantity**

- a. Fresh clean water is available at all times to all individuals.
- b. Multiple water sources are available for group-housed lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax to ensure high-ranking individuals do not dominate water sources.

#### **Quality**

- c. Water quality parameters are maintained at a generally acceptable level for lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax in terms of turbidity, salts, etc.
- d. Potable water sources are tested for contaminants annually.
- e. All water sources (including water bowls and lixits) are cleaned at least daily, and more often if needed.
- f. If automatic water devices are not used in hot climates, water sources are shaded or changed multiple times to avoid overly hot water.
  - If water buckets are used for capybara, the buckets are placed high enough to ensure the animals cannot defecate in them.
- g. If automatic water devices are not used, care is taken to ensure bowls are secured such that the animals cannot tip them over, play with them or hide them from view and that water is available at all times.

#### **Automatic Water Devices**

- h. Devices are tested daily to ensure water is available.
- i. Devices are easily disabled when animals must be fasted for medical purposes.
- j. When monitoring of water consumption is required, an alternative means of providing water is devised.
- k. In colder climates, steps are taken (such as installation of heat sources) to ensure water consumption does not decrease with lower ambient air temperatures.

### **N-2. Diet**

**A properly balanced and healthy diet is provided appropriately based on the needs of each lagomorph, rodent and hyrax following veterinary instructions for special needs.**

#### **General**

- a. A veterinarian or qualified nutritionist periodically reviews all aspects of lagomorph, rodent and hyrax diet at the sanctuary.



- b. Diets of individual animals (including vitamin supplementation) are of a quality, quantity and variety to match the physiological and psychological state of the individual as it changes over time, with consideration for the age, life stage, species, condition, and size of the individual.
- c. Food is wholesome, palatable, free from contamination and of sufficient quantity and nutritive value to maintain all lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax in good health.
- d. The sanctuary utilizes a feeding regimen that ensures each individual receives adequate nutrition regardless of status in social group.
- e. Where possible and appropriate, each animal's daily dietary needs are documented and made available to animal care staff.
- f. In open space enclosures, routine observation of feeding activity ensures all animals are able to access sufficient food.
- g. Other than commercial diets prepared specifically for lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax, only food "fit for human consumption" is fed.

#### **Commercially Prepared Kibble/Dry Food**

- h. While the basic nutritional needs of most lagomorph, rodent and hyrax species are met by the use of a high quality commercially prepared complete feed, most species' behavioral and foraging needs are not met using such diets alone. When combined with fruits, vegetables, browse and other whole foods, these diets can help ensure balanced nutrition.
  - Porcupines may be fed a combination of monkey, rodent and leafeater complete feeds in additions to fresh fruits, vegetables and browse.
  - Capybara may be fed rodent chow in addition to a primary diet of hay and vegetables.
  - Lemmings may be fed an alfalfa based guinea pig complete feed but are not fed molasses based hamster or gerbil feeds as the sugar content is too high.
  - Muskrats may be fed commercial rodent pellets as a portion of their diet.
  - Commercial rabbit pellets developed for the meat and fur industry are fed sparingly, if at all, as shorter life spans and concurrent health problems have been noted in animals fed this diet long term.
    - Guinea pigs are not fed rabbit complete feeds as the Vitamin D levels are too high for these species.

#### **Animal Protein**

- i. Limited amounts of meats and cheese may be offered as treats for rats, mice, hamsters and gerbils.
- j. Muskrats may be fed small amounts of crayfish, mussels, fish and insects as part of their regular diet.
- k. Commercially available insects including crickets, mealworms and waxworms can be offered occasionally with the diet of insect eating species.
  - Animals in outdoor enclosures on natural substrate may consume naturally occurring insects as well.
    - The use of pesticides near enclosures takes this into account.

#### **Vegetables and Fruits**

- l. A variety of leafy greens, vegetables and fruit provide a portion of many lagomorph, rodent and hyrax diets.
  - Rabbits benefit from having a variety of fresh greens daily.
  - Chinchillas are also given fresh greens although they are only likely to consume small quantities.



- Fruits and leafy greens are limited to approximately 10% of the diet of rats, mice, gerbils and hamsters.
- Guinea pigs require high levels of Vitamin C, thus dark, leafy greens are an important part of their balanced diet.
  - Vitamin C in commercial feeds breaks down very quickly and is often unavailable nutritionally.
- Capybaras and porcupines are fed a variety of fruit and vegetables, including dark greens.
- Paca diet includes a variety of fruits.
- Fruits, vegetables and grains make up the majority of vizcacha diets.
- Prairie dogs may be supplemented with greens, green beans, fresh corn and grass, dandelions, sweet potato and an occasional piece of apple or melon.
  - Apple and melon quantities are limited and no other fruits are fed as prairie dogs cannot properly digest large amounts of sugar.
- Lemmings and voles may be fed limited amounts of fresh vegetables that are low in sugar.
- Small amounts of fruits and vegetables may be included in muskrat diets.
- Fresh fruit may be fed complete, including peels, cores and seeds, which increase fiber intake.

### **Nuts and Seeds**

- m. Are fed sparingly due to their high fat content. When fed they are scattered throughout the enclosure to increase enrichment and natural foraging behavior/
  - Paca may consume seeds as part of their regular diet
    - Small quantities of millet and other lower fat seeds may be added to the diet of lemmings and voles, if obesity is not a concern.

### **Browse**

- n. Freshly grasses and hay form a large portion of the diet of marmots, some rodent species and most lagomorphs. Rabbits, guinea pigs, mara and chinchillas are fed primarily high fiber grass hay as legume hays may be too calorie rich and result in digestive and weight problems. Alfalfa, timothy or orchard grass is the main component of capybara diets. Timothy, oat and orchard grass hays make up the bulk of prairie dog diets. Alfalfa is not fed to prairie dogs. Timothy based food pellets may also be offered.
- o. Muskrats, water vole and coypu are fed fresh grasses and whole aquatic plants.
- p. Browse for lemmings and voles includes grasses, sedges, plant bulbs, roots and tubers.
- q. Browse for beaver includes sedges, whole aquatic plants and branches of willow, beech, alder and black cherry.
- r. Browse for porcupines includes bark, roots, tubers, rhizomes, bulbs and leaves.
- s. Seedlings, leaves and roots are the primary browse of the paca
- t. Browse, including bark, leaves, twigs and bulbs, make up the majority of the diet for all hyrax species.
  - Where available yellow-spotted hyraxes preferentially feed on bitter yam leaves.

### **Special considerations for rabbits and vizcachas**

- u. Consumption of night feces, which are largely composed of cecal secretions which are rich in B vitamins is normal and necessary for some lagomorph and rodent species.
- v. Rabbits fed on high fat and/or starch diets tend to develop health problems including obesity and digestive disease



- Grains, beans, peas, breads, refined sugar products, nuts and seeds are not fed to these animals.

#### **Vitamins/Supplements**

- w. Prior to offering supplemental vitamins, the health and condition of the individual animal, as well as the diet, is reviewed by a nutritionist experienced in lagomorph, rodent and hyrax care and/or the attending veterinarian.

#### **Treats/Enrichment items**

- x. Preferred food items from the basic diet can be reserved for enrichment.
- y. The calories in foods used as enrichment are considered when planning the overall diet.

### **N-3. Food Presentation and Feeding Techniques**

**Food is prepared and presented in a safe and appropriate manner to meet lagomorph, rodent, and hyrax health and social needs.**

#### **General**

- a. Feeding and drinking receptacles are placed in positions that minimize the risks of contamination from soiling by the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax themselves, wild birds, non-resident rodents and other potentially invasive species.
- b. Food receptacles, where used, are appropriate for the species housed in terms of number, size and placement, and are cleaned daily.
- c. Receptacles for animal food and water are designed to minimize spillage and are not used for any other purpose.
- d. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are offered food a minimum of once daily during the active feeding time of the species housed. For most species, at least two feedings are recommended.
- If fed once daily, items are of sufficient quantity and quality to ensure that animals have the opportunity to feed several times throughout the day.
    - Nocturnal species are fed late in the day to ensure freshness of food during normal feeding hours.
    - Single feeding regimens are carefully monitored and reviewed frequently to ensure they meet the nutritional and psychological needs of the species housed.

#### **Feeding Techniques**

- e. Food is provisioned at multiple feeding sites throughout enclosures to ensure all animals have access and to reduce or eliminate aggression that results from competition for food resources, especially preferred items.
- f. Food may be offered in shift yards and indoor areas to increase lagomorph, rodent and hyrax comfort with those areas and improve reliability in transferring from one area to another.

#### **Diet Changes, Increases or Decreases**

- g. Adjustments made to an already formulated and nutritionally balanced diet are made to the entire diet to ensure continued nutritional balance.
- h. Considerations for diet increase include weight and condition of the animal, food consumption, season, activity level and other medical or behavioral considerations.



- i. Diet increases or decreases are made in modest increments with animal response to the change assessed for a minimum period before additional changes are made.
- j. Underweight individuals experiencing health or behavioral problems may be separated for supplemental feeding as needed to avoid undesirable weight gain in conspecifics.

#### **N-4. Food Storage**

**Food is stored appropriately.**

##### **General**

- a. Separate and secure facilities are provided for proper and hygienic storage of food.
- b. Dry goods are stored in clean, dry storage areas in sealed containers or on pallets. Products are dated and rotated to use oldest stock first, and expired food, as well as bags damaged by pests, are discarded.
- c. Perishable foods are kept under refrigeration.
- d. Items frozen for use are dated and labeled, and no frozen items are thawed and refrozen. Items that are not fed frozen are thawed in a refrigerator to minimize risk of spoilage. Fish may be thawed in cold water.

#### **N-5. Food Handling**

**Food is handled and prepared in an appropriate manner to retain nutritional value, freshness, and freedom from spoilage, invasive species or other forms of contamination.**

##### **General**

- a. Food is protected against dampness, deterioration, mold, and/or contamination by insects, birds, rodents or other animals.
- b. No food that is spoiled or otherwise contaminated is served.
- c. Diets are prepared in a safe and hygienic manner to reduce the possibility of contamination or spoilage.
- d. Separate cutting boards, utensils and food preparation surfaces are used when meats, fish and produce diets are prepared in a common kitchen area.
- e. Food preparation techniques meet all local, state/province, and national regulations.
- f. Food preparation surfaces are thoroughly cleaned after use.
- g. Staff and volunteers wash hands thoroughly prior to handling food, and wearing gloves during food preparation is recommended.



## **VETERINARY CARE**

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### **V-1. General Medical Program and Staffing**

**There is a written veterinary medical program, overseen by a veterinarian, with adequate support staff at the Sanctuary, with 24/7 veterinary care available on call.**

- a. The sanctuary has a written veterinary medical program, including long term preventative medical protocols and disease surveillance and containment procedures, that is developed and carried out under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian – the attending veterinarian - who has training or experience in providing medical care for the lagomorphs, rodents, hyrax, and other species housed at the sanctuary, and who is aware of specific health concerns regarding the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax at the sanctuary.
- b. One or more full-time veterinarians specifically concerned with the veterinary medical program is highly recommended for sanctuaries whose budget will support the salaries of such trained personnel. Sanctuaries unable to employ a full-time veterinarian have access to a part-time veterinarian, under a contractual or other similar arrangement, with training and appropriate experience with the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax housed at the sanctuary.
- c. Veterinary care is available 7 days per week and 24 hours per day for the sanctuary on an on-call basis when a veterinarian is not physically on grounds. When the primary veterinarian is unavailable, there are other suitably experienced veterinarians on call.
- d. There are support staff to carry out the following roles: (1) Husbandry (lagomorph, rodent and hyrax caregivers), (2) Technical (medical technologists, veterinary nurses, or individuals trained at the sanctuary), and (3) Clerical. The sanctuary has available properly trained and qualified professional and supporting personnel as necessary to implement these roles.
- e. A staff member is trained to serve as a medical program director, dealing with emergencies until a veterinarian arrives or is reached. He or she is able to direct any restraint of the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax, be responsible for administration of post-surgical care, and be skilled in maintaining appropriate medical records.
- f. Medications are stored appropriately on site, according to label directions. Medications requiring refrigeration are stored separately from food items.

### **V-2. On-Site and Off-Site Veterinary Facilities**

**Veterinary facilities are appropriately located, designed and equipped.**

- a. Any on-site veterinary facility at the sanctuary meets all local and state/province building regulations
- b. Surfaces in the on-site veterinary facility with which lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax can come in contact are non-toxic and can be readily disinfected.
- c. The on-site facility is located away from areas of heavy public use to minimize the noise levels for hospitalized lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax.
- d. The on-site facility has separate areas for any of the following veterinary functions performed on-site: physical examinations and medical treatments, enclosures for hospitalized animals, sterile surgery, necropsy, medical quarantine, laboratory, radiology and pharmaceuticals storage which includes,



when necessary, a safe for narcotics that meets the standards set by applicable regulations (e.g., the Drug Enforcement Administration [DEA] in the United States).

- Food preparation areas, storage areas and staff locker room/housing with showers are separate from the medical facility.
- e. If the sanctuary does not have an on-site veterinary facility, or only a partially outfitted veterinary facility it has a contract or similar arrangement with a nearby veterinary hospital for off-site treatment as needed. The hospital should have a sterile surgical facility with anesthetic equipment to include radiology equipment, a laboratory, and pharmaceutical storage. If necropsies are performed at the hospital, there is a separate area for necropsies and a separate storage refrigerator for storage of carcasses.
- f. See also Standard V-4 “Clinical Pathology, Surgical, Treatment and Necropsy Facilities.”

### **V-3. Preventative Medicine Program**

**The sanctuary has a complete preventative medicine program.**

- a. Appropriate preventative medicine programs are in place to manage all lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax, with special attention paid to geriatric animals.
- b. The preventative medicine program includes quarantine procedures, parasite surveillance and control, immunization, contraception, infectious diseases screening, dental prophylaxis, and periodic reviews of diets, husbandry techniques and invasive species control.
- c. When circumstances permit, and as appropriate for the individual animal, an overall examination is performed annually, blood is collected, serum banked as a baseline control and the results are recorded. The attending veterinarian, in consultation with the sanctuary director, determines any schedule for routine physical examinations, including ocular, dental and musculoskeletal assessment, and implements any necessary treatment.
- d. A veterinarian, veterinary technician, or other trained person performs regular fecal examinations to look for parasites and other pathogens (random enclosure sampling is adequate for group-housed lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax). Results are recorded. Fecal examinations are repeated following treatment to evaluate efficacy.
- e. All lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are immunized as recommended by the attending veterinarian, using currently recommended procedures and products as appropriate for the country, species and individual. Where possible, killed vaccines are utilized to minimize the potential for adverse reactions. Schedules and products are dictated by the disease status of domestic and wild animals in the area surrounding the sanctuary and relevant local and national laws.
- f. When lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are immunized, the type, serial number, and source of product are recorded in the individual animal's medical record.

### **V-4. Clinical Pathology, Surgical, Treatment and Necropsy Facilities**

**Clinical pathology, surgical facilities and services, medical treatment for sanctuary lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax and necropsy are all high quality, humane, professional, legal, and safe.**



### **Clinical Pathology**

- a. Diagnostic laboratory services are available on- or off-site to assist with the examination of lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax and the diagnosis of disease.
- b. Diagnostic capabilities include radiology, cytology, microbiology, parasitology, complete blood count, blood chemistry, urinalysis, serology and other appropriate laboratory procedures.

### **Surgical**

- c. The sanctuary has access to surgical facilities (either on-site or at a nearby veterinary hospital) that are clean, free from excessive noise and unnecessary pedestrian traffic, have adequate lighting, ventilation, and temperature controls, and that can be easily cleaned and disinfected. For sanctuaries utilizing off-site aseptic surgical facilities, an on-site area that can be adapted for occasional or emergency aseptic surgical use is available.
- d. Surgical facilities have access to appropriate anesthetics including injectable and inhalant anesthetics, reversal agents, etc. Where gas anesthetic equipment, including scavenger units, is used equipment is cleaned and calibrated and filters are replaced, annually at a minimum. Gas cylinders are safely stored and replaced regularly.
- e. Facilities have sterilized surgical packs, surgical preparation solutions, intravenous fluids, fluid administration equipment, pulse oximetry, heart monitoring equipment (e.g. electrocardiogram, stethoscope), and emergency drugs on-site with appropriate maintenance and/or replacement schedules for each.
- f. If on-site, the sanctuary ensures that surgical equipment is maintained in good working order and is on a program of routine preventive maintenance.
- g. Only a licensed veterinarian performs surgery, using standard operating procedures. (Note: A veterinary technician appropriately trained by a veterinarian in states or provinces where such action is permitted by veterinary practice acts can perform surgical first aid.)
- h. The veterinarian uses aseptic surgical procedures whenever applicable.
- i. Veterinarians and support personnel are compassionate and knowledgeable about the humane aspects of lagomorph, rodent and hyrax treatment, including the proper use of anesthetics, analgesics, and tranquilizers.
- j. Surgical incisions are observed daily, or as frequently as possible while minimizing stress to the animals, for signs of dehiscence or infection. Analgesics are administered post-operatively when appropriate.

### **Treatment**

- k. Medications are maintained and used in accordance with local, state/province, and national laws and regulations and are administered in accordance with the state veterinary practice act, or equivalent outside the US.
- l. The sanctuary has a pharmacy on-site where routinely used drugs, such as emergency resuscitative medications, antibiotics, anthelmintics, fluids, anesthetics, analgesics, tranquilizers, etc. are maintained.
- m. All medications are purchased, prescribed and administered under the guidance of the veterinarian.
- n. When distributed to animal caregivers, medications are properly labeled and packaged, with the contents identified and instructions for the amount, frequency and duration of administration as well as the name and identification of the animal to receive the medication, the expiration date of the medication, prescribing doctor and number of refills if any.
- o. All medical treatments and drug prescriptions are documented in the lagomorph, rodent or hyrax's medical record.



- p. Basic physical capture and restraint equipment to facilitate medical treatment is available at the sanctuary.

#### **Necropsy**

- q. Whenever possible, there is an isolated area on the grounds for performing necropsies, or appropriate storage facilities until the deceased lagomorph, rodent or hyrax can be transported to a facility for a postmortem examination, as soon as possible, understanding that necropsies performed longer than 24 hours after death be of limited value due to autolysis. (Note: Any refrigerated area for holding dead animals is physically separate from live animal holding, treatment, and surgery areas and from food supply storage or preparation areas.)
- r. Disposition of dead lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax and their parts meet all legal restrictions.
- s. Dead specimens not used are incinerated or disposed of as deemed suitable by the veterinarian in accordance with local, state/province and national regulations.

### **V-5. Quarantine and Isolation of Lagomorphs, Rodents and Hyrax**

**Appropriate quarantine and isolation policies and accommodations are in place and utilized.**

- a. Upon arrival, all lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax undergo quarantine for a minimum of 30 days or according to the protocol established by the attending veterinarian, or for a greater period if required by applicable law. The quarantine period should be longer (at least 60-90 days) for those animals that have received minimal screening prior to arrival, such as animals from the wild. Animals previously housed together may be quarantined together.
- b. If the sanctuary does not have an adequate quarantine facility, steps should be taken to have lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax undergo quarantine under these guidelines prior to their arrival.
- c. Local, state/province, or national regulations regarding quarantine of newly arrived lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are followed.
- d. All utensils and outer clothing used in quarantine are restricted to that area.
- e. Protective clothing, boots and footbaths are used by all staff entering the quarantine area or areas containing quarantined animals. Quarantine clothing is not removed from the quarantine area, except in a sealed container for cleaning.
- f. Caregivers wear protective gloves and masks when cleaning or handling anything with which the quarantine animals come into contact.
- g. Where possible, staff working in quarantine areas does not work with other sanctuary animals. If this is not possible, work is done in the quarantine areas last.
- h. Quarantine staff cares for newly admitted animals in their quarantine area before caring for sick animals, which are housed in separate isolation enclosures.
- i. The quarantine area allows for daily cleaning and sanitation, either with removable catch trays or a drainage system that allows fecal matter to flush into a septic system; waste is otherwise removed and disposed of properly.
- j. In enclosures housing animals carrying infectious or transmissible diseases, to the extent possible, all surfaces of the enclosure are properly sanitized.
- k. Quarantine areas have adequate ventilation, heat and air conditioning, which are used to ensure optimum conditions, particularly in the case of young, elderly or sick lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax who may be more sensitive to environmental changes.



- I. Quarantine animal waste is handled separately from all other manure or compost at the facility. Because of the risk of disease transmission, quarantine waste is not spread on pastures or composted.

## **V-6. Medical Records and Controlled Substances**

**Complete medical records are maintained, appropriate statistics maintained, lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax have permanent identification, and controlled substances are prescribed and stored legally.**

### **Medical Records**

- a. Complete medical records are maintained on all lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax.
- b. Medical records are dated, legible and indicate examination findings, treatments (types of medication, dosage, duration), surgical procedures, anesthetic procedures (type of agent, dosage, effect), results of all laboratory tests (parasitologic, hematologic, bacteriologic, etc.) pathology reports, plus immunization records with all relevant dates, animal identification and nutrition/diet information, and, where applicable, necropsy reports.
- c. Copies of medical records accompany any animal who is transferred to another sanctuary.
- d. Medical records are maintained under the direction of the veterinarian or trained lagomorph, rodent or hyrax caregiver. Where possible, duplicate record sets are stored at another site, or in a fire proof or theft proof safe on site or an online storage system.
- e. Statistics are tabulated regularly on the rates and nature of illness and mortality in the sanctuary.

### **Controlled Substances**

- f. Only a licensed veterinarian prescribes controlled substances used at the sanctuary, and all such substances are secured in accordance with any applicable laws.
- g. The sanctuary maintains appropriate records and logs for all controlled drugs used. All drug logs are kept up to date and comply with any national or other legal requirements (such as the Drug Enforcement Agency in the U.S.).
- h. Expired drugs are marked as such and stored separately.
- i. When disposing of drugs, they are discarded in accordance with applicable national, state, and local law and regulations (such as the USDA and DEA in the United States).



## V-7. Breeding/Contraception

**No intentional propagation of lagomorphs, rodents or hyrax occurs, and sound practices are in place and implemented to prevent propagation and to properly care for infants born at the sanctuary.**

- a. Although GFAS recognizes the importance of appropriate “conservation breeding” programs, they fall outside the mandate of GFAS Accreditation programs unless they adhere to the following guidelines:
  - Animals are not brought into captivity for the purpose of breeding. Animals that are allowed to breed should enter a wildlife facility as a result of normal acquisition protocols such as surrender or government confiscation and be considered an endangered or threatened species with available release sites within the state/province, conducted with specific conservation goals, in accordance with local, state/province, national, and international law and regulations.
  - Breeding should not be forced – that is, not the result of artificial insemination or being placed in enclosures of insufficient size or otherwise not in keeping with GFAS standards.
  - Breeders – that is, the parent animals – should be released into the wild with their young. If breeding animals are deemed unreleasable, there should be documented evidence from a qualified professional that the animals cannot be released because of a physical condition or other reason that would make them unable to survive in the wild. Offspring of unreleasable parents should not be released until an age of species-specific maturity for survivability.
  - Unreleasable breeding animals should receive the care required of all animals under the GFAS standards and should not be maintained for the purpose of breeding if they have incurable or unmanageable pain or suffering and do not have an acceptable quality of life.
  - The facility should have an identified release site for the breeding animals and offspring, with any necessary permits or memoranda of understanding in place. While GFAS may consider whether a definite plan (such as ongoing surveys of land for potential release sites and a timeline for releasing animals) is sufficient, it will not be sufficient for a facility to simply say that it hopes or plans to be able to release the animals one day. Thus, a facility may not breed any animals in captivity, even highly endangered animals in order to create a sustainable population, without a definite release plan in place.
- b. The sanctuary has species-appropriate contraceptive programs in place with the method of contraception used based on current best practice and attending veterinarian recommendations. (*See Appendix 1 for further information on contraception methods for lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax*).
- c. If females arrive at the facility pregnant, the sanctuary provides necessary care and the female is allowed to deliver unless there are valid health reasons for terminating the pregnancy, or unless the attending veterinarian feels the pregnancy is in such an early stage that aborting the fetus is an option, if so desired by the sanctuary. After delivery, reproductive control methods are applied after allowing adequate time for weaning as appropriate for that animal, provided there is no further opportunity for breeding during this period of time.



- d. Infants born at the sanctuary remain with the mother as appropriate for natural rearing, provided there is no further opportunity for breeding during this period of time. Infants are only removed from females for hand-rearing if there is a threat to the life of the infant or the mother.

## **V-8. Zoonotic Disease Program**

**The staff and sanctuary veterinarian are knowledgeable about zoonotic diseases that may affect lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax at the sanctuary, and implement appropriate policies and procedures as needed to mitigate risk and deal with any exposures that occur.**

- a. The sanctuary's veterinarian is knowledgeable about zoonotic diseases that may affect lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax at the sanctuary. All potential or emerging diseases have emergency procedures and a defined process to avoid transmission of diseases through bites, scratches, body fluids, direct contact with animals and other means. (Note: Additional precautions may be necessary for staff classified as increased risk of disease, including those who are immune-compromised.)
- b. A physician with expertise in infectious diseases is consulted whenever an employee contracts an unusual illness or is exposed to a lagomorph, rodent or hyrax diagnosed with a zoonotic disease.
- c. When a reportable disease is identified, all appropriate local, state/province, and national regulatory officials are contacted.
- d. All areas in which the staff has direct contact with lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax have hand-washing facilities available in the immediate vicinity (or an equivalent; e.g., bactericidal hand-wipes)
- e. Human food consumption by the staff does not occur in the immediate area of animal contact.
- f. Rabies testing and vaccination protocols vary by location. Federal, state or province and local rabies prevention protocols supersede recommendations made in this document.
- g. See also Standard S-8 (" First Aid and Zoonotic Disease Training, and Staff First Aid ").

## **WELL-BEING AND HANDLING OF LAGOMORPHS, RODENTS AND HYRAX**

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### **W-1. Physical Well-Being**

**All lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are routinely monitored to ensure their physical well-being. All aspects of husbandry, including veterinary care, environmental enrichment and diet are designed to optimize the animals' physical well-being.**

- a. The welfare of each individual lagomorph, rodent and hyrax is the overriding consideration in all sanctuary actions.
- b. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are able to enjoy lives that are as close as possible to that of their wild counterparts as regards stimulation and interest. This is achieved by adopting husbandry and management procedures, including appropriate housing and enclosure design, environmental enrichment programs, positive reinforcement training programs and a balanced diet to meet nutritional requirements.



- c. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are provided with species appropriate opportunities to dig, climb, bathe, forage for food, and play by providing species-appropriate climbing structures, tunnels/burrowing/digging areas, water features, a variety of plants, logs and substrates and other enclosure enhancements and there are places to hide and rest in comfort.
- d. Regular assessments are performed in an effort to quantify and measure the welfare of individual animals through monitoring of nutritional, physical and social conditions. Qualified personnel conduct daily observations of each lagomorph, rodent and hyrax to monitor for signs of physical abnormalities. Any unusual activities are recorded in a log at each inspection. Sudden changes in food consumption and other behaviors are immediately brought to the attention of supervisory staff. Note: In open space enclosures, it may not be possible to observe each animal on a daily basis. In such habitats, it is important to get an accurate count and to spend time observing all animals on a weekly basis.
- e. Where possible and appropriate, records of individual lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are kept to provide both behavioral and veterinary history.
- f. Where possible and appropriate, each animal is weighed annually, either during a routine physical or through the use of a built-in scale, to monitor for signs of illness and to determine dosages for chemical anesthetics.
- g. Positive reinforcement training may be appropriate for lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax who enjoy interacting with people, to provide additional enrichment, to reduce the need for chemical immobilization and to reduce stress during medical intervention.

## **W-2. Social Housing**

**Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are grouped appropriately with the safety of animals and staff in mind.**

### **General**

- a. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax housed together are compatible and all animals have ample space to retreat and hide as needed while social tensions are resolved.
- b. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are not housed near animals that interfere with their health or cause them physical or psychological discomfort.
- c. Habitats are of sufficient size to allow appropriate space between individuals in social groupings and to allow for temporary isolation from conspecifics.
- d. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are housed so that no individual endures constant harassment or suffers physical injury, and so social behaviors do not prevent any individual from maintaining proper nutrition and hydration.
- e. Close attention is paid to lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax in social housing, with age, species, and sex of animals housed together taken into account.

### **Social Housing**

- f. The individual development and history of each lagomorph, rodent and hyrax is taken into account when determining social groups.
- g. Capybara group size is highly dependent on the size and design of the enclosures with larger spaces allowing for animals to hide from conspecifics as needed.
- h. Sanctuaries caring for predator species ensure that there is visual, acoustic and olfactory separation of lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax from these species.



### **Solitary Housing**

- i. Is generally temporary and reserved for situations including but not limited to quarantine, medical assessment or care, lack of appropriate social partners, or social tension resulting in disruption to the main group or physical aggression leading to injuries.
  - As possible and appropriate, lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax housed alone temporarily are given visual, olfactory and auditory contact with their social group.
  - Solitary species may be housed alone provided they are regularly monitored for behavioral issues.

### **Mixed Species Housing**

- j. Compatible species of lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax may be housed together provided that each animal and species is given adequate space and visual and acoustic barriers for the comfort of all species involved.
- k. Rabbits and guinea pigs are not housed together.

## **W-3. Introduction of Unfamiliar Individuals**

**Introduction of any new lagomorphs, rodents, and hyrax to a social group is done according to techniques appropriate for each species, with staff safety ensured.**

### **General**

- a. Introduction of unfamiliar lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are monitored closely for tension, aggression, etc.
  - Prairie dog introductions are approached with great caution as aggression toward new animals is common.
- b. Food and water consumption is monitored carefully to ensure that all animals are able to access food/water. Staff ensures lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are not hiding, unable to approach/access food and water.
- c. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax have access to separate shelter, ample room to move away from each other and no opportunities for an animal to be cornered.
- d. As needed and possible, information listed below is gathered for the introduction planning process:
  - A list of individual animals to be introduced, including all that the sanctuary ultimately hopes to integrate into a group.
  - Background of each individual, including but not limited to: age and gender; social experience with other lagomorphs, rodents or hyrax; rearing history (hand-reared, parent reared, time spent with mother and siblings).
- e. As appropriate or needed, benchmarks or desired outcomes are identified for each step in the process. Examples include:
  - physical location of animals during initial contact period;
  - behavioral goals of initial contact period;
  - benchmarks for proceeding to physical introduction;
  - space and enclosures to be used for physical introduction;



- reasons location selected: neutral space, ample run around, visual barriers, doors that can be closed to protect animals in trouble etc.;
  - set-up for physical introduction, enrichment etc.;
  - emergency equipment that might be needed;
  - time frame necessary to acclimate animals to presence of equipment;
  - criteria for separating animals if physical introduction does not proceed safely;
  - post introduction management and husbandry protocols.
- f. The plan is developed with involvement of all staff involved with care of the species and details a series of steps that will be taken to integrate the individual animals involved. Necessary modifications to enclosures are identified and completed prior to beginning the process.
- g. The plan establishes behavioral goals for introductions and is not driven by schedules, and is open to modification as introduction/integration develops and evolves.
- h. Only normally scheduled caregivers and animal managers are present to directly observe. Individuals who are not routinely present in the animal area, including veterinary and management staff, observe via remote video or receive reports from staff.
- i. All caregivers have a clear understanding of the plan including contingencies for problems that might occur, and are empowered to take appropriate action in the event of perceived emergency.
- j. If the introduction is not successful, no attempt is made to reunite the individuals until housing or social circumstances can be changed or other factors that may have contributed to the problems, such as breeding season, have been resolved.

#### **W-4. Behavioral/Psychological Well-Being**

**The behavioral/psychological well-being of each lagomorph, rodent and hyrax is evaluated and addressed, and a welfare plan and report is part of each animal's file.**

##### **General**

- a. There is a formal, written enrichment program that promotes species-appropriate behavioral opportunities and ensures the captive animals' psychological well-being. A complete environmental enrichment program includes the following:
- Structural enrichment - Enclosure design and furniture that add complexity to the environment and promote species-specific behavior.
  - Object enrichment – Objects that encourage inspection, manipulation and problem solving, and promote species-specific behavior.
  - Food enrichment - Varying food choices and food presentation.
  - Social enrichment - Affiliative interactions between caregivers and lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax may be appropriate in some instances. The decision to include social enrichment with caregivers should be made on an individual basis, considering only the social needs of the animal, such as solitary animals, particularly those hand reared by humans with no conspecific contact or neonatal and juvenile animals in situations where appropriate.
- b. All lagomorph, rodent and hyrax care staff are trained to recognize abnormal behavior and clinical signs of illness. Measures of well-being that are assessed include:
- species appropriate behavior and interaction with other animals;



- the animal's ability to respond appropriately to variable environmental conditions, physiological states, developmental stages, and social situations as well as adverse stimuli.
- c. Stereotypic behavior, self-injurious behavior, and inappropriate responses to various stimuli not previously documented or witnessed may be evidence of compromised well-being and are investigated. A welfare plan to address the concerns is developed.
- d. Where possible and appropriate, a behavioral/psychological profile is maintained for each individual/pair or group of lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax and updated annually and a copy is kept in the individual/pair/group's permanent file.

## **W-5. Lagomorph, Rodent, Hyrax-Caregiver Relationships**

**Positive relationships between lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax and caregivers are maintained. Animals are not fearful or aggressive in response to human presence or routine care procedures.**

### **General**

- a. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax arrive at sanctuaries with a variety of previous experience with caregivers, which caregivers take into account in their interactions with these species.
- b. Facility design plays a key role in caregiver-animal safety and the ability to maintain a positive relationship.
- c. A protocol for introducing animals to new caregiver staff has been developed.
- d. A positive relationship between the animals and regular caregivers, animal managers and veterinary staff is one in which the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are given the freedom to integrate with their conspecific social group with minimal human interference or to interact regularly with caregivers if they choose.
- e. Where possible and appropriate, animals become familiar with the veterinary staff, allowing close observation. Individual animal preference for interaction with caregivers, animal managers and veterinary staff is taken into account.
- f. The animals do not become fearful or overly aggressive in response to human presence or routine care procedures.
- g. Interactions with lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax do not cause overheating, excessive cooling, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort, and minimizes physical and psychological stress or trauma as much as possible.
- h. Negative interactions are avoided. However, when they occur, efforts are made to recover trust and a positive relationship if the animal enjoys regular interaction with people
- i. Physical abuse, deprivation of food or water, aversive spraying with a hose, and other forms of negative reinforcement or punishment-based training are never used to train, shift or otherwise handle lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax. Note: This does not preclude the use of hoses or other watering devices in caring for the animals who enjoy this form of enrichment.

## **W-6. Handling and Restraint**

**Any necessary handling and restraint is done safely and appropriately, with minimal distress to lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax, and staff are trained in species-specific safe handling techniques/practices.**



## **General**

- a. Handling for veterinary care is done as expeditiously and carefully as possible in a manner that does not cause trauma, overheating, excessive cooling, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort, and minimizes physical and psychological stress as much as possible.
- b. Where possible and appropriate, Positive Reinforcement Training is used to minimize the need for chemical immobilization and to reduce stress during procedures.
  - With appropriate training, many procedures can be performed cooperatively and without anesthesia, such as examination of body parts, treatment of superficial injury, heart rate monitoring, injection administration, etc.
- c. Care is taken to support the hindquarters of rabbits and hares to reduce the risk of kicking and back injury. Rabbits and hares are never lifted by their ears.
- d. If physical restraint or drug delivery systems must be used, the lightest and least stressful methods that are appropriate are chosen, bearing in mind the safety of staff and animal.
- e. Chemical immobilization is performed only by a licensed veterinarian or by trained staff under the guidance of a licensed veterinarian, or other qualified individuals authorized by the sanctuary director or veterinarian, following the laws and regulations of country where the animals are housed. Specific anesthetic protocols, including record-keeping, are followed.
- f. Chemical restraint is not used when multiple animals are in an enclosure except in an emergency situation. In such cases, all possible precautions are taken to prevent threats to the handlers and the animal being sedated.

## **STAFFING**

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### **GENERAL STAFFING**

#### **S-1. General Staffing Considerations**

**The sanctuary has a sufficient number of staff and volunteers, adequately supervised, to provide humane care, with clear job duties and equitable compensation.**

- a. The sanctuary employs or enlists a sufficient number of qualified employees or volunteers to provide the appropriate level of care for the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax and to ensure adequate supervision of all employees and volunteers. (Note: Staff-to-animal ratio will vary greatly given the nature of the facility and the type of lagomorphs, rodents, hyrax and other animals at the sanctuary.)
- b. As described in Standard G-3 (Succession Planning), there is a written job description for the sanctuary director and other senior management positions at the sanctuary, providing a clear description of their duties and responsibilities.
- c. A list is maintained of all staff/volunteers authorized to work with lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax; indicating lines of responsibility. Staff receives fair compensation commensurate with their skills. At a minimum, each salary complies with generally accepted standards of compensation for employees of the sanctuary.
- d. There is a clear management structure within the sanctuary, which is communicated to all employees, and to volunteers as appropriate.



## **S-2. Security and Emergency Coverage**

**Staff is available at all times to respond to emergencies.**

- a. A qualified senior staff member or the sanctuary director should live on the sanctuary grounds. If no one lives on sanctuary grounds, then at least one trained and qualified staff member or trained volunteer is on the sanctuary grounds at all times, and a staff member is immediately reachable via telephone, radio or pager, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- b. The director is generally available to the sanctuary on a full-time basis (40 hours per week); when the director is not available due to vacation or another reason, there is a designated back-up from among the senior staff. Staff has various means to contact the director at all times in case of emergency.
- c. A qualified veterinarian trained in the care of the species housed is available in person or via phone at all times in case of emergency.

## **S-3. Volunteer and Internship Programs**

**Volunteers and Interns are appropriately supervised, and those playing an integral role in the sanctuary receive the manuals, training and safety protocols.**

- a. Any volunteers/interns and community workers have a specific employee/staff member assigned with directing their recruitment, training and supervision.
- b. Any volunteers/interns and community service workers allowed to work with or around lagomorph, rodents and hyrax do so only under the appropriate level of supervision of a fully trained lagomorph, rodent or hyrax caregiver.
- c. Volunteers/interns who play an integral role in the sanctuary are treated as an employee would be treated, regarding the provision of manuals, training, and safety.

## **S-4. Manuals**

**The sanctuary has a current employee manual, standard operating procedure manual, and, if applicable, manuals for volunteer and internship programs. Manuals are reviewed and updated regularly.**

- a. The sanctuary has a written employee manual that includes information pertaining to topics including: personnel practices, employee benefits, leave of absence, sick leave, personal appearance and conduct, environmental concerns, filing complaints, and performance evaluation. The employee manual is given to all new employees.
- b. A standard operating procedure (SOP) manual is available on the premises and in a location accessible to the staff at all times. The manual contains a detailed outline of all daily procedures, as well as emergency protocols and other policies relating to the care and safety of the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax.



- c. Care procedures for each lagomorph, rodent and hyrax species at the sanctuary, as well as other animals at the sanctuary, are written down (either in the SOP manual or elsewhere) and include detailed information specific to that species or individual.
- d. If the sanctuary has a volunteer and/or intern program, it has prepared manuals outlining volunteer and/or intern responsibilities. Copies of the manuals are given to all new volunteers and/or interns.
- e. All manuals are reviewed at least annually and updated as necessary, and employees, volunteers and interns are advised of any changes.

## **S-5. Employee Training and Continuing Education**

**Training and supervision are carried out in a manner to ensure the highest and safest level of care for the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax, including during unforeseen changes in personnel.**

- a. New employees participate in a probationary training period suitable to the species in question and under the strict supervision of a fully trained senior staff member before working directly with lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax at the sanctuary.
- b. At least one staff member and backup are trained in all aspects of lagomorph, rodent and hyrax care for all species housed at the sanctuary to ensure that an experienced caregiver is always available to care for all animals in case of personnel changes; and that staff member and backup are noted in writing.
- c. The sanctuary Director ensures that plans for continuing education to improve lagomorph, rodent and hyrax care and management techniques are in place.
- d. Continuous in-house staff training and development (including availability of relevant literature) is offered to employees, and volunteers as appropriate, including such topics as: lagomorph, rodent and hyrax husbandry, lagomorph, rodent and hyrax welfare, health and safety, first aid, action in emergencies or escapes or illness, safety procedures, emergency euthanasia, basic sampling for health monitoring and diagnosis, food hygiene, disease prevention.

## **SAFETY POLICIES, PROTOCOLS AND TRAINING**

### **S-6. General Staff Safety**

**Lagomorph, rodent and hyrax caregivers have a thorough understanding of the potential risks of working with the animals and are appropriately trained in safety**

- a. All sanctuaries housing lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax have a thorough understanding of the potential risks of working with these species.
- b. Protocols involving potential risk (e.g., unlocking enclosures, shifting animals to previously unlocked areas) include redundancies to reduce the risk of equipment failure and human error.
- c. All staff working with or near lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax maintain verbal contact. Radios, cell phones, etc. are used as needed to ensure contact is maintained.
- d. All slides, doors and gates in lagomorph, rodent and hyrax areas are kept closed and securely fastened at all times unless needed for animal access.



- Ideally a double-gated system is in place with an escape route for staff in the event of a animal escape into human areas.
- e. Designated senior members of staff are responsible for holding keys to animal areas and supervising staff in those areas.
- f. Locks and the security of slides, gates and doors are double-checked after each use and inspected regularly to ensure proper functioning.
- g. All personnel working with lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are trained to recognize and respond appropriately to threat displays and other behaviors that could signal an impending attack, scratch or bite.
- h. Caregivers have established a predictable protocol for servicing enclosures to minimize stress for the enclosure occupants. In as much as possible the cages are serviced from outside.
- i. Staff are encouraged to maintain their work clothes separate from their everyday clothing.

### **S-7. Communication System**

**The sanctuary has a reliable communication system in place.**

- a. A reliable communication system, with back ups such as pagers, 2-way radios, cell phones, intercoms, or other electronic devices is in place, with a back-up system.

### **S-8. Emergency Response Plans and Protocols**

**The sanctuary has appropriate written disaster preparedness plans in place, needed information is posted, and appropriate coordination takes place with community emergency services.**

- a. The sanctuary has a written disaster preparedness plan in place to cover emergency procedures in the event of a natural disaster, fire, injury, etc. The plan has taken into account all necessary lagomorph, rodent and hyrax handling under situations of extreme stress.
- b. The written plan is provided to staff and, where appropriate, volunteers.
- c. Emergency information is posted throughout the sanctuary indicating emergency contacts and phone numbers including the local police department, fire department, attending veterinarian, sanctuary director, supervising staff members, location of nearest hospital and other important information.
- d. A detailed outline of communication lines, procedures and locations of all exits and entrances to the sanctuary are clearly defined and known by the entire staff. This information is reviewed for needed updates periodically. Maps are posted throughout the sanctuary indicating the best evacuation route.
- e. All emergency plans are coordinated with local community emergency services as appropriate including fire, police, hospitals, and ambulance services. Appropriate community personnel and agencies are aware that lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are housed at the sanctuary.
- f. The location of the sanctuary does not pose any undue hazards and minimizes risk from natural disasters (e.g. flood zone, riverbed). If such risks are present, the sanctuary has addressed this in the written disaster plan.



- g. The sanctuary is located in an area that is removed from heavily developed areas to the extent possible. If the sanctuary is near heavily developed areas, it has taken steps to address problems this may cause for the surrounding community or the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax.
- h. A secure location is identified where animal records (i.e., acquisition, transport, medical, welfare assessment reports) are protected from fire, flood, and other hazards. (Note: Backed up offsite storage and web-based storage of electronic records is one method.) Governance documents, financial records, and permits and licenses are also stored securely.
- i. Provisions are made for long-term archiving in a secure format. A regularly backed-up copy should be stored in a separate location or online.

## **S-9. Escaped Lagomorph, Rodent and Hyrax Protocol**

**A detailed and appropriate written escaped lagomorph, rodent and hyrax protocol is in place and understood by staff and local emergency services; and any escapes are detailed in reports.**

- a. A detailed written escaped lagomorph, rodent and hyrax protocol is in place addressing situations in which lagomorphs, rodents or hyrax escape from their enclosures, regardless of whether the animals have escaped sanctuary property, and is reviewed and understood by all staff, and volunteers as appropriate.
- b. The protocol is shared with local emergency services such as the fire and police departments.
- c. The protocol includes the following:
  - A clearly defined chain of command in an emergency situation;
  - A notification hierarchy, indicating who to contact first, second, third and so on in case of an escape;
  - Possible animal escapes occurring during off-hours, when staff may not be immediately available.
  - A communication system allowing for clear communication with sanctuary staff of all pertinent lagomorph, rodent or hyrax information including the type of escaped by species, age, sex and location;
- d. Clear plans and routes for personnel safety are plotted and displayed throughout the sanctuary.
- e. All escapes are recorded and detailed reports made.

## **S-10. Emergency Training**

**Staff participates in ongoing training for emergency response, and drills are conducted regularly.**

- a. All staff, and volunteers where appropriate, participates in ongoing training on all emergency, escape, and disaster preparedness procedures consistent with the sanctuary's written protocols, with drills held at a minimum of every 6 months.
- b. Records of training are maintained, including a list of those staff and volunteers who participated in training. Drills are evaluated to ensure that procedures are being followed, that the sanctuary's communication system is effective, that staff training is effective, and that improvements to protocols are made where appropriate.



## **S-11. Firearm Policy**

**The sanctuary has a written firearm policy, including identified personnel, and covering proper care and storage of firearms.**

*(Note: Not applicable for sanctuaries that do not need or use firearms.)*

- a. A written firearm policy exists in compliance with all applicable laws; and personnel qualified to use firearms are identified and made known to sanctuary staff.
- b. Firearms, ammunition, where provided, are available for immediate use, used by licensed and trained operators only, cleaned and maintained and tested as recommended by the manufacturer, and kept securely under lock and key when not in use or under maintenance.

## **S-12. Firearm Training**

**If the sanctuary has firearms, appropriate staff are identified for weapons training, and receive documented and up-to-date training.**

*(Note: This standard may be waived when firearms are not needed or used at the sanctuary.)*

- a. All staff qualified and licensed to use firearms undergo training and periodic refresher training and practice, including a review of current sanctuary protocols and policies. Such training is recorded.

## **S-13. Chemical Restraint**

**The sanctuary has a written chemical restraint policy, which covers appropriate use, maintenance and storage of chemical restraint equipment and attendant drugs.**

- a. A written policy for the humane chemical restraint and safe capture of lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax housed at the sanctuary is in place and in compliance with the Drug Enforcement Agency (or comparable agency outside the United States), to include:
  - Training and certification in the equipment, humane chemical restraint, immobilization process, and the use of drugs for veterinary purposes or emergencies;
  - Procedures listing at a minimum those persons authorized to administer animal drugs, situations in which they are to be utilized, location of animal drugs in a safe and secure place, and those persons with access to them, and an emergency procedure in the event of accidental human exposure.
- b. The sanctuary's policy provides for qualified personnel to partake in appropriate training programs on the safe and humane use of chemical restraint and immobilization equipment.
- c. All chemical restraint equipment is cleaned after each use, maintained in good working order and tested on a regular basis.



## **S-14. First Aid and Zoonotic Disease Training, and Staff First Aid**

**An appropriate written first-aid plan is in place, staff (and volunteers where appropriate) is informed when a zoonotic disease occurs at the sanctuary, and training is provided to staff and, as appropriate, volunteers.**

- a. The sanctuary has a written first-aid plan that is accessible to all staff on the premises, and to volunteers as appropriate.
- b. Staff, and volunteers as appropriate, are trained in basic first aid.
- c. Written instructions are provided for staff (and volunteers as appropriate) on the provision of emergency health care and the procedures to be followed in the event of an incident involving any lagomorph, rodent or hyrax and a visitor, volunteer or staff member, including (when appropriate) handouts with any special information that any attendant health care professional, on site or off, should know to help the victim and/or keep health care attendants safe from potential zoonotic diseases. First-aid stations that are readily and easily accessible and are located throughout the sanctuary.
- d. Employees, and volunteers where appropriate, have adequate training to understand the potential risk of disease transmission, including potential sources of disease, modes of disease transmission, and clinical signs associated with disease. Each signs a form that clearly states that he/she has been fully trained in these procedures. Training and attendance are logged.
- e. All staff and active volunteers are informed when a zoonotic disease occurs at the sanctuary.
- f. See also Standard V-8, Zoonotic Disease Program.

## **GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE**

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### **GOVERNING AUTHORITY**

*Note: The term “Board of Directors” is used in this section to reference the governing authority for the sanctuary. In some instances, another term may be used (e.g., “Trustees”).*

**The sanctuary and/or its governing organization has a national legal nonprofit status, or is operated as a non-commercial entity by a national or local government.**

### **G-1. Nonprofit/ Non-Commercial Status**

- a. A facility and/or its governing body (if the facility is a program of one or more organizations) satisfies one of the following:
  - A sanctuary, or its governing organization has obtained national nonprofit status in the country of governance or operation. For example, sanctuaries located in or operated by organizations in the United States or its territories should have 501(c)(3) status, and sanctuaries located in or operated by organizations in the United Kingdom should have registered charity status.



- A facility (such as a wildlife rescue center) is operated as a non-commercial entity by a national or local government.
- b. An exception to this standard will be made if non-profit registration is not available in the country of governance or operation.

## **G-2. Ownership of Sanctuary Property and Contingency Planning**

**Sustainability of the sanctuary is promoted by ownership of the sanctuary property or a proper written lease agreement.**

- a. All property on which the sanctuary sits is held in the name of the sanctuary (or its governing organization) as either owner or lessee.
- b. The sanctuary's governing body has confirmed that the sanctuary is located on property for which it is allowable (by law or regulation, such as zoning laws) to operate the facility and the activities conducted by the organization.
- c. If the sanctuary is on another person's property [e.g., housed in someone's home or on their land, including government land], there needs to be a written lease agreement between the property owner and the sanctuary (or its governing organization).
- d. If property is leased, a long-term (ten years or longer) contractual lease is in place, with a termination clause requiring sufficient notice (a minimum of a year) to allow the sanctuary to relocate or transfer its animals to another appropriate facility that has committed to providing their lifetime care.
- e. If property is leased, the sanctuary should have a written contingency plan describing the steps to take to relocate or transfer its animals to another appropriate facility at the end of the lease, or upon an unexpected termination of the lease.

## **G-3. Succession Planning**

**The sanctuary has a written succession plan for its continuance should the director or other key management be unable to continue in their positions.**

- a. The sanctuary has a written plan outlining succession scenarios for key positions within the sanctuary, covering at a minimum the sanctuary director. Depending on the structure of the sanctuary management, this may also cover the assistant director, director of operations, director of finance, etc.
- b. For the director position as well as other key management, written job descriptions should exist outlining the primary functions and responsibilities of each position.
- c. The succession plan should include an emergency plan outlining who will carry out the key responsibilities in the event of a sudden and unexpected absence by the director or other key management in both short- and long-term scenarios.
- d. A succession plan should also define the role of the Board of Directors/Trustees in overseeing transition in the event of a planned departure of the sanctuary's director, including functions such as hiring and oversight of an interim director, determining salary ranges, re-assignment of responsibilities, and the appointment of a transition committee.



#### **G-4. Board of Directors/Trustees**

**The Board of Directors/Trustees organizes itself and carries out its duties in an appropriate, legal and responsible manner, and has appropriate relationships with staff and volunteers.**

- a. A Board of Directors/Trustees is in place with a minimum of three (3) members, or a greater number if required by law, where at least one board member is not a family member.
- b. The Board of Directors/Trustees has organized itself in a manner that allows its duties to be carried out in a timely and responsible manner and in accordance with all relevant non-profit regulations.
- c. Bylaws, in accordance with applicable law, have been developed and adopted as the general policies and rules that govern the sanctuary and define the Board's composition and structure.
- d. The Board of Directors/Trustees has regularly scheduled meetings, and minutes are kept. The Board has a written position description describing the responsibilities of its members, and members are knowledgeable of their legal obligations and accept responsibility for self-regulation, accountability, ethical practice of the sanctuary, and sound financial management and oversight.
- e. The Board is supportive of the sanctuary abiding by GFAS standards.

#### **G-5. Ethics and Grievance Procedures**

**The sanctuary's policies and actions of the Board and staff reflect adherence to a high code of professionalism and ethics.**

- a. Business and related activities, including outreach and interactions with other sanctuaries, are conducted in a professional manner, with honesty, integrity, compassion and commitment, realizing that an individual's behavior reflects on the sanctuary and greater humane communities as a whole. A code of ethics/conduct for the sanctuary has been adopted by the Board of Directors/Trustees.
  - The code of ethics/conduct addresses the core values of: integrity, openness, accountability, service and charity, and reinforces standards of professional behavior. (Note: In recognition that some animals are used for food, and sanctuaries are in the business of protecting animals, all sanctuaries should ensure that their sanctuary events are conducted in a manner that is consistent with their mission.)
  - All personnel associated with the sanctuary, including volunteers, have been provided with access to the code of ethics/conduct and have agreed to adhere to it.
- b. The sanctuary has a written Conflict of Interest policy prohibiting any Board member, Director, or key employee from approving or voting on a transaction in which he or she has a monetary or other interest. Members of the Board of Directors and the Director, as well as key employees as appropriate, are asked to sign written acknowledgements of receipt of the policy and have disclosed potential conflicts of interest.
- c. The sanctuary has a written anti-discrimination policy, specifically referring to any protected class under law.
- d. There is a written grievance process that is clearly communicated to the staff and volunteers to communicate the procedure for reporting a concern regarding workplace-related issues, including ethics complaints; includes an alternate pathway if the normal person to whom one should take



concerns is non-responsive or the focus of the concern; and allows for fair, prompt and meaningful resolution.

## **G-6. Required Licenses and Permits**

**The Sanctuary has all legally required licenses and permits (or other necessary government approval) to operate as a sanctuary and to house each animal.**

- a. The sanctuary obtains and maintains all permits and licenses required under city, county, state/province, country and international laws and statutes for each animal housed at the sanctuary.

## **G-7. Strategic Planning**

**The sanctuary has at least a three-year strategic plan in writing, to provide a structure upon which to base the fundamental actions that guide and shape operations.**

- a. The sanctuary has a written strategic plan in place, developed by the Board of Directors and Director, with input from other sanctuary management and staff where appropriate, that provides a structure within which fundamental actions of the sanctuary are based to shape and guide sanctuary operation. The strategic plan addresses at a minimum three years.

# **FINANCIAL RECORDS AND STABILITY**

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## **F-1. Budget and Financial Plan**

**The sanctuary maintains an annual operating budget and a long-term financial plan.**

- a. An annual operating budget exists and reflects estimated future expenditures. The budget includes expenses related to staffing salaries and benefits, overhead expenses, supplies, capital improvements, ongoing maintenance, etc. The budget is approved by the Board of Directors/Trustees.
- b. Periodically during the year, the estimated budget is compared to the actual expenses of the sanctuary and where necessary, appropriate adjustments are reflected in future estimated expenditures.
- c. The sanctuary has a long-term (minimum of three years) financial plan that projects future revenue and expenses, consistent with priorities set out in the strategic plan. The plan builds in protection for the care of the animals (such as creating a “bare bones” budget; seeking endowments for lifetime care of animals; building up increased operating reserves; entering into written agreements with other facilities to take animals in the event of closure of the sanctuary; or other such “safety nets”) in the event that significant decreases in operating income occur.



## **F-2. Financial Reports**

**The sanctuary keeps accurate and complete financial records.**

- a. Detailed, accurate periodic financial reports are kept on file. The sanctuary produces on a regular basis (at least annually) the following financial statements:
  - A Statement of Financial Position (also known as the Balance Sheet);
  - A Statement of Activities (also known as the Statement of Revenues and Expenses, or Operating Statement, or Income Statement, or Profit and Loss Statement); and
  - A Statement of Cash Flows.
- b. Other pertinent information, such as loan amortization schedules and lease commitments, are also maintained and updated at least annually.
- c. Copies of IRS Forms 990 (or comparable documents required to be filed to maintain non-profit status outside of the United States) and other tax documents, such as exempt status determination letters, are kept on file with other sanctuary documents and are available for public review, as required by law.

## **F-3. Financial Stability**

**The sanctuary has a strategy in place for securing and maintaining at least minimal financial reserves.**

- a. The sanctuary has a strategy in place, as reflected in strategic and financial plans, to maintain reserves equal to at least three months (or one month to achieve GFAS verification) of those operating costs essential to the proper care and welfare of the sanctuary animals.
- b. Consideration may also be given to cash equivalents as well as advance purchases of food, supplies, etc.
- c. See also Standard F-1(c).

## **F-4. Banking Responsibilities and Financial Transactions**

**The sanctuary maintains a bank account, keeps personal and sanctuary business separate, and properly records all contributions, petty cash transactions, and loans to the sanctuary.**

- a. There is a checking account registered in the sanctuary's name that is used only for sanctuary financial transactions.
- b. Personal business is kept completely separate from the sanctuary's business (e.g., staff and Board members cannot use sanctuary funds to pay for personal expenses or take loans from sanctuary funds).
- c. If the sanctuary is being funded through personal loans, loan documents are signed and maintained in the accounting record. Repayment schedules are developed and followed.



- d. All contributions from donors are properly documented and promptly deposited. Donors are provided with receipts as required in accordance with applicable laws or regulations.
- e. If petty cash is kept on hand, transactions are documented and receipts are kept on file substantiating the related expenditures.

## **F-5. Fundraising Activities and Disclosures**

**Fundraising is conducted in a legal, ethical and transparent manner.**

- a. Fundraising techniques conform to applicable tax regulations for maintaining non-profit status (e.g., sec. 501(c)(3) status in the United States) and conform to the spirit as well as the letter of all applicable laws and regulations.
- b. Fundraising activities are conducted with honesty and integrity, and put the charitable mission of the sanctuary above personal gain.
- c. All fundraising and soliciting materials are accurate, do not exaggerate financial needs nor incorrectly claim sole credit for joint efforts, correctly reflect the sanctuary's mission and use of solicited funds, and do not threaten to betray the mission by making misleading and unprofessional statements (e.g., claiming animals will have to be euthanized if donations are not received immediately).
- d. The sanctuary ensures proper stewardship of charitable contributions, including timely reports (e.g., tax filings, annual reports, reports required by funders) on the use and management of funds. Restricted funds are expended in accordance with donor's intentions. Explicit consent by the donor is obtained before altering restrictions or conditions of a gift.
- e. Fundraising expenses are reasonable, and total fundraising expense is disclosed on financial reports and any required tax filings.
- f. Fundraisers for the sanctuary ensure that all information provided to donors is accurate and complete. Any statements about the taxable nature of donations indicate that all or part of the donation may be tax deductible as a charitable contribution under applicable law.

## **F-6. Insurance and Waivers**

**The sanctuary has adequate insurance coverage and secures signed waivers from visitors and volunteers who enter the sanctuary property.**

- a. Insurance policies, where available, are in place that protect the financial resources of the sanctuary and staff, as well as protect the community from harm that the sanctuary might cause. The amount of coverage is commensurate with the size of the sanctuary and the implied risk associated with the animals housed at the sanctuary. Where available, this includes General Liability insurance and a management liability policy (often called Directors & Officers or "D & O").
- b. Visitors and volunteers sign waivers that acknowledge the potential risks of being on sanctuary property.



## EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

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### E-1. Education Programs

**Education programs are thoughtfully designed and overseen to promote a humane ethic, with careful respect and protection of all aspects of the individual welfare of the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax involved, and ensuring public safety.**

*(Note: Not applicable for sanctuaries that do not have an education program.)*

- a. Any education program is designed to promote awareness, empathy, and respect for all life through education and advocacy insofar as resources permit, and portray the issues surrounding why individual lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax reside at the sanctuary, the species' natural history and conservation status, and how the highest welfare of each individual lagomorph, rodent and hyrax is ensured.
- b. An education program is conducted in accordance with a written Education and Outreach Policy that articulates and evaluates program benefits, under the direction of qualified staff and/or volunteers.
- c. The education program is evaluated periodically for effectiveness and content, ideally on an annual basis, by the Director.
- d. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are not taken out of enclosures/habitats or off the grounds of the sanctuary for incorporation into the education program. Animals may be incorporated into education programs utilizing non-invasive educational methods/tools, such as audio-visual presentations, webcasts, or other forms of multi-media. In such cases, they are treated in a respectful, safe manner that does not misrepresent or degrade them, does not cause them distress, and does not put animals or humans at risk.
- e. See also Standards P-8 and P-9.

### E-2. Tours

**Any tours are monitored and conducted in a careful manner that minimizes the impact on the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax and their environment, does not cause them stress, and gives them the ability to seek undisturbed privacy and quiet.**

- a. Non-guided tours are prohibited in wild lagomorph, rodent and hyrax sanctuaries, and tour groups are of a size that allows for close monitoring and vary based on the size and staff of the sanctuary. In domestic lagomorph or rodent sanctuary/rescues, unescorted public visitation may be allowed if the visitors are outside the primary enclosure and the interaction is safe and does not cause distress for the animals. Visitors are evaluated by rescue/sanctuary caregivers in these cases.
- b. Tours, if allowed, are for an educational purpose consistent with the sanctuary's education policy and not used for entertainment (see E-1).
- c. All tours are conducted to minimize the impact on the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax and their environment.



- d. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are confined within a secure environment and provided the opportunity to escape from public view. Animals are not in enclosures or habitats specifically designed to minimize their privacy and all animals have the ability to seek undisturbed privacy and quiet.
- e. Lagomorph, rodents and hyrax that are easily stressed are excluded from tours.
- f. Physical contact between domestic lagomorph or rodents and the public ensures such interactions do not cause distress and are safe for both animals and humans. Contact is supervised. All tours prohibit the public from any physical contact with wild animals residing at the sanctuary.
- g. Public feeding of domestic animals may occur under the guidance and supervision of qualified, trained caregivers. Any feed given must be nutritious and be considered as part of the daily requirements for the animals. Members of the public cannot feed wild animals during tours.

### **E-3. Outreach**

**Sanctuary staff are appropriate advocates for lagomorph, rodent and hyrax protection and welfare, and work cooperatively with other sanctuaries and the community.**

- a. The sanctuary works cooperatively with other sanctuaries as applicable, keeping the animals' welfare as the first priority. (For instance, best practices are shared, sanctuaries collaborate to arrange best placements for animals, etc.).
- b. Any community outreach is conducted in an ethical and professional manner.
- c. The sanctuary does not adopt policies in opposition to the welfare of lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax (e.g., endorsing the use of animals for entertainment)

## **POLICIES**

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### **POLICIES: ACQUISITION AND DISPOSITION OF LAGOMORPHS, RODENTS AND HYRAX**

#### **P-1. Acquisition Ethics and Commercial Trade Prohibition**

**Acquisition of lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax by the sanctuary is legal and ethical.**

- a. The sanctuary has relevant legal documentation (including any required permits and licenses) for, and is in legal possession of, all animals in its care.
- b. The sanctuary has a written policy governing its acquisition of lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax, including the following provisions:
  - Animals are only accepted if the sanctuary has the financial resources to provide appropriate professional care.
  - Animals are only accepted if they will not jeopardize the health, quality of care or maintenance of lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax currently housed at the sanctuary.



- All acquisitions of animals by the sanctuary are consistent with its mission and in the best interest of the individual animals.
  - Acquisition of lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax occurs through donation or rescue. No commercial trade in sanctuary animals occurs (included, but not limited to, the sale of animals, animal parts, by-products, or offspring), and the sanctuary does not knowingly engage a third party to purchase an animal on its behalf. (*Note: if animals have been purchased, or if the sanctuary has a policy in place that allows purchase under certain circumstances, the sanctuary must provide GFAS with this information, indicating why such purchases are consistent with the sanctuary's mission and why they do not sustain or promote the commercial exploitation of the species.*)
  - No acquisition results from the intentional breeding of animals for or at the sanctuary. An exception may be made for rehabilitation and release centers engaged in a bona fide breeding-for-release-program of endangered species with available release sites within the state/province, conducted with specific conservation goals, in accordance with local, state/province, national, and international law and regulations.
- c. Safe and humane transport is used for all acquisitions.

## **P-2. Acquisition Recordkeeping and Monetary Exchange**

**Acquisition contracts are clear, with ultimate responsibility for acquisitions clearly**

- a. An acquisition contract is in place that clearly identifies the sanctuary as the "responsible party" for the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax and when such responsibility takes effect; whenever possible, the contract includes information on the "surrendering party" as well as any intermediary parties (rescue groups, zoos, etc.). This written contract is kept as part of the permanent record for each animal entering and housed at the sanctuary.
- b. Financial expenses associated with acquisition of a lagomorph, rodent or hyrax may be received in order to enable the sanctuary to be able to responsibly take in the animal and may include medical testing, behavioral assessment, crate construction costs, quarantine costs, shipping and transport costs. Lifetime care costs may be factored in as appropriate.

## **P-3. Disposition Ethics and Responsibility**

**The sanctuary assumes lifelong responsibility for the sanctuary lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax, with some noted exceptions, with ultimate responsibility for dispositions clearly defined.**

- a. The sanctuary assumes lifelong responsibility for the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax acquired and only in very rare circumstances does an animal permanently or semi-permanently leave the sanctuary, with the exception of releasable wildlife reintroduction.
- A rehabilitation center assumes responsibility (in accordance with national and local law) for the appropriate disposition of animals it acquires, with the goal or reintroducing native wildlife, where possible, to its natural habitat.
- b. Acceptable reasons for disposition, when movement of lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax to another sanctuary does not compromise the welfare of that individual or the other animal(s) with which s/he will be housed, include:



Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries – Standards for Lagomorph, Rodent and Hyrax Sanctuaries

- health concerns that cannot be adequately addressed by the sanctuary, where another accredited sanctuary or comparable facility is better equipped to provide care for the lagomorph, rodent or hyrax.
  - another accredited sanctuary or comparable sanctuary can provide a better long-term environment (such as creating a suitable social group of conspecifics).
- c. Other reasons for disposition include: financial insolvency or closure of the sanctuary, return of confiscated wildlife to its country of origin, or death of the animal.
- d. Detailed records of lagomorph, rodent or hyrax disposition are logged and maintained, including the details of all body parts.



#### **P-4. Disposition of Live Lagomorphs, Rodents and Hyrax**

**Responsible steps are taken to ensure that any disposition of a live lagomorph, rodent or hyrax is in the life-long best interests of that animal.**

- a. The sanctuary has a written disposition policy that adopts substantially the language of this standard.
- b. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are not transferred to individuals, nor are they transferred to sanctuaries or other facilities that lack the appropriate expertise and/or resources and/or facilities to care for them appropriately. Before transfers, the sanctuary is convinced that the recipient has the expertise, records management capabilities, financial stability and facilities required to properly care for the animals. Animals are not “loaned” to other facilities.
- c. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are not disposed of at auctions or to breeders, dealers, brokers, “kill buyers”, slaughterhouses or private pet owners.
- d. For sanctuaries engaged in rescue, rehabilitation and release of lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax, subject to all pertinent regulations and laws, animals are released within native ranges, in accordance with local, state, national and international regulations.
- e. If a lagomorph, rodent or hyrax, especially one housed individually (to be avoided whenever possible except for naturally solitary species), shows signs of self-mutilation and/or apathy, is uncontrollable, has a highly aggressive disposition, and/or is suffering physically or psychologically, and if the sanctuary cannot remedy the situation, then, if possible, the animal is transferred to another accredited sanctuary or other appropriate facility, if it appears that environment will better suit the animal.
- f. See also Standard P-5 “Euthanasia” below.

#### **P-5. Euthanasia**

**Euthanasia is governed by an ethical humane euthanasia policy, and deceased lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are handled appropriately.**

- a. The sanctuary has and maintains a written humane euthanasia policy (as part of the disposition policy) for lagomorphs, rodents, hyrax and other animals at the sanctuary, and in compliance with any national or local law, administered under the strict supervision of a licensed veterinarian.
- b. Euthanasia is only be used as a final option. Euthanasia is not used as management tool (such as a means to create space for more animals).
- c. Examples of cases where euthanasia may be accepted are:
  - Incurable disease/injury that is likely to cause unmanageable pain or suffering;
  - Disease/injury where treatment is likely to cause unreasonable pain or suffering;
  - Disease/injury where treatment will not be effective in restoring the animal to an acceptable quality of life;
  - Disease/injury where treatment is beyond the normal community standards of monetary expenditure and would cause an excessive burden on the sanctuary resources, and no other sanctuary can step in, after reasonable efforts to locate such a sanctuary;
  - The process of aging has resulted in an unacceptable quality of life;



- In the event of presenting an infectious disease risk to some or all of the residents
  - For facilities engaged in the rehabilitation and reintroduction of wildlife, it is determined in accordance with an appropriate protocol or other “decision tree” analysis that an animal cannot be reintroduced to its natural habitat and there is no appropriate (consistent with these standards) long-term care option.
- d. A licensed veterinarian or his/her authorized representative, or a trained staff member who is knowledgeable and skilled in performing euthanasia in a compassionate and professional manner and ideally with an established relationship with the sanctuary and the lagomorph, rodent or hyrax, recommends and performs humane euthanasia. However, in extreme circumstances of animal suffering when a veterinarian is unable to reach the sanctuary in a timely manner, a method such as the use of a firearm to euthanize an animal may be required and is performed by a trained and qualified staff member when no other humane option is available.
- e. Euthanasia is performed so that it avoids distress to the lagomorph, rodent or hyrax, and unless impossible, is performed out of view of other animals.
- f. With regard to deceased lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax:
- Personnel conduct themselves in such a manner that is respectful during disposition activities;
  - Body parts are never sold, traded or donated (see exception at Standard P-11 “Ethics in Research”);
  - Disposition of deceased animals meets the requirements of all acceptable practices along with applicable local, state, national, and international regulations and laws.
- g. The species and ecosystems are carefully considered during disposition activities.

## **POLICIES: PUBLIC CONTACT AND RESTRICTIONS ON USE AND HANDLING OF LAGOMORPHS, RODENTS AND HYRAX**

### **P-6. Public Contact**

**Contact between wild lagomorphs, rodents or hyrax and the public is not allowed.  
Contact between domestic lagomorphs or rodents is restricted appropriately.**

- a. Where wild lagomorphs, rodents or hyrax reside, no unescorted public visitation occurs. This is not to exclude discrete, nonintrusive observation by a carefully evaluated person as allowed by the appropriate decision-making body of the sanctuary.
- b. No direct contact between the public and wild lagomorphs, rodents or hyrax occurs.
- c. See also Standard E-3 “Tours.”

### **P-7. Removal from Sanctuary or Enclosures/Habitats for Non-Medical Reasons**

**Wild lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax at the sanctuary are not removed from the sanctuary or enclosures/habitats for non-medical reasons.**



- a. Wild lagomorphs, rodents and hryax are not taken from the sanctuary or enclosures/habitats for exhibition, education, or research purposes. Suitable domestic lagomorphs and rodents may be removed for non-medical purposes approved by the appropriate decision making body of the rescue/sanctuary, if the activities are deemed to be safe and not to be distressing to the lagomorphs or rodents.

### **P-8. Public Viewing of Human/Animal Interaction**

**Human contact with domestic lagomorphs or rodents occurring within public view must be safe and appropriate for handler and lagomorphs or rodents. With few exceptions, the sanctuary does not allow unprotected contact between humans and wild lagomorphs, rodents or hyrax to occur within public view.**

- a. Handling of wild lagomorphs, rodents or hyrax in public view is not allowed. Handling of domestic lagomorphs or rodents within public view must be safe and appropriate. Where possible, visitors are educated regarding appropriate interactions with lagomorphs or rodents during this time.
- b. Handling of lagomorphs, rodents and hryax for purposes of providing medical care is performed out of public view, except in cases of emergency.

### **P-9. Appropriate Portrayal of Lagomorphs, Rodents and Hyrax and Tractability**

**The rescue/sanctuary portrays all lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax appropriately in any text, photos, video, or other media. With few exceptions, the sanctuary rarely portrays wild lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax as tractable in text, photos, video, or other media.**

- a. The rescue/sanctuary does not publish material that portrays lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax inappropriately
- b. The sanctuary rarely publishes material that portrays wild lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax as tractable. In situations where text, photos, video or other media are published portraying, wild lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax as tractable, steps should be taken to add text to the publication (website, brochure, etc.) that explains the reason for the contact and discouraging the idea that the animals would make suitable pets.

### **P-10. Non-Harmful, Non-Exploitive Fundraising**

**Fundraising activities are not distressing or negatively disruptive to lagomorphs, rodents or hyrax, nor do the activities involve improper use of lagomorphs, rodents or hyrax.**

- a. Fundraising activities approved by an appropriate decision-making body of your sanctuary are allowed provided the following:
  - The activities do not violate any of the other GFAS Standards, including those regarding contact with the public, handling of animals, and removal from the sanctuary or enclosures/habitats;



Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries – Standards for Lagomorph, Rodent and Hyrax Sanctuaries

- The activities are deemed to not be distressing or in any way negatively disruptive to the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax and their normal routine, nor are normal routines designed specifically for fundraising needs;
- Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are not in enclosures or habitats specifically designed to minimize their privacy, and all animals have the ability to seek undisturbed privacy and quiet;
- Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are not being used as entertainment, which includes the performance of “tricks” for public display;
- Animals are not raffled or sold.



## **P-11. Ethics in Research**

**Any research conducted is devoted to benefiting the health and welfare of the individual lagomorph, rodent or hyrax involved, and does not cause pain or distress.**

- a. No resident lagomorphs, rodents or hyrax are made available for participation in research studies unless the studies are strictly observational and do not interfere with the normal daily activities of the individual animals. Interventions that cause pain or distress are not acceptable.
- b. An exception may be made, with approval of an appropriate decision-making body of the sanctuary, if:
  - It is determined that the health and welfare interests of the individual animal are best served by participating in a new treatment study;
  - There is reason to believe that outcome of the study will be a tangible benefit for the individual animal involved;
  - The study does not prevent normal activities of daily living.
- c. An exception may also be made for research involving biological sampling if it will have a demonstrable health, conservation, or genetic benefit to captive lagomorph, rodent or hyrax management and/or wild species population conservation. In such cases, samples are only to be taken during routine examinations of the lagomorph, rodent or hyrax (which are otherwise needed for the welfare of the individual) or routine cleanings of enclosures, or during a necropsy that does not violate any other GFAS standards. Sanctuaries should ensure that any biological samples are used ethically by the receiving institution or laboratory, and that any applicable CITES regulations are followed.

## **LAGOMORPHS, RODENTS AND HYRAX BEING RELEASED TO THE WILD**

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GFAS strongly supports the efforts of wildlife rehabilitators and sanctuary managers to return wildlife to its natural environment, provided appropriate steps are taken to ensure that the animals released are likely to survive in the wild.

Facilities releasing lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax to the wild must also make every effort to reduce risk of their having a damaging impact on ecological resources, including other animal species, found naturally in the release area. Examples of risk factors include but are not limited to:

- Displacement of indigenous animals;
- Transmission of novel pathogens;
- Disruption of local human communities, including damage to dwellings and injury to local inhabitants;
- Alterations to the environment that disrupt the ecological niche of other species.

For a more detailed discussion of the potential risks, as well as time and financial commitment involved in creating a quality re-introduction project, see the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Species Survival Commission (IUCN/SSC) Reintroduction Specialist Group's "Guidelines for Re-Introductions".



## R-1. General Considerations

**The sanctuary has policies, agreements and plans in place to optimize the chances for successful re-introduction of lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax into the natural environment.**

- a. The facility has a written policy regarding the handling of any potential problems involving released animals. The policy should include but is not limited to:
  - a plan to minimize the risk to human life and property in the area of release;
  - a plan for compensation for or mitigation of damages incurred by the released animals;
  - a deterrent plan to discourage inappropriate activities, *i.e.*, crop raiding, spending time around human habitation.
  - a plan for management or removal of animals who fail to integrate appropriately or who become habitual 'problem animals.'
- b. In as much as possible, using the latest available information on potential health concerns regarding other species found in the area of release, animals are tested and treated for pathogens that might pose a threat to other wildlife.
- c. The facility has agreements in place with any and all appropriate authorities to allow the release process to proceed as smoothly as possible.
- d. Ideally, permissions, any necessary documentation, site determination, etc. begin as soon as it is determined that there are animals in care that are likely to be suitable for release.
  - In particular, facilities obtain any permits or other forms of authorization needed to proceed with the release.
  - Potential release sites are identified and evaluated as early in this process as possible.
- e. Cooperative agreements are in place prior to animals being released which may include, but are not limited to:
  - veterinary and scientific involvement in post-release monitoring;
  - community acceptance of the project and involvement in habitat protection and awareness raising;
  - landowner agreements enabling release, including the addressing of specific permissions and permits;
  - involvement of NGOs with similar or conflicting interests that may impact (positively or negatively) the project.



## **R-2. Rescue Of Lagomorphs, Rodents and Hyrax**

**The sanctuary has developed guidelines for rescue work, taking into account staff and animal safety, contingencies for caring for the animal once rescued, and any local, state or national regulations or agency cooperation required.**

- a. Facilities accepting lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax from the illegal trade have policies and procedures (ideally in writing) in place with the appropriate authorities that allow for rapid transfer of the animals to the sanctuary or rescue center. These policies and procedures are designed to reduce the risk of:
  - disease transmission;
  - habituation;
  - Inappropriate or inhumane treatment, due to lack of knowledge, by personnel involved in seizure of wildlife from the illegal trade.
- b. In as much as possible, while respecting local or national cultural/religious tenets, a euthanasia policy is in place to address situations where the animal's prognosis for survival is too low to warrant attempting treatment.
  - In situations where field euthanasia is being considered, where possible and appropriate (e.g., the animal is reasonably safe from further human interference and the stress of capture would outweigh the benefit of humane euthanasia), the option of leaving the animal in situ may be considered.
  - See also Standard V-5, "Euthanasia."

## **R-3. Evaluation Of Suitability For Release**

**Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax admitted into sanctuary are evaluated for their potential suitability for release.**

- a. The sanctuary has a protocol in place (ideally in writing) to evaluate potential release candidates and to determine which animals are given priority for potential release.
  - Animals who have spent little time in captivity and/or who have had little human contact are given priority for potential release.
  - Animals found to be free of diseases and/or parasites of potential concern to the health of the population, particularly in the intended release area, are given priority for potential release.
- b. All lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are treated as potential release candidates, particularly those who have not been kept long term as pets. If animals admitted into sanctuary are determined to be potential release candidates, every effort is made to protect them from exposure to human disease and to keep them as wild as possible.



## R-4. Quarantine And Prerelease Housing

**The sanctuary has appropriate quarantine facilities and prerelease housing for lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax, with consideration given to sick and injured animals.**

*(See also Standards H-1 to H-9, “Lagomorph, Rodent and Hyrax Housing,” and V-5, “Quarantine and Isolation of Lagomorphs, Rodents and Hyrax”)*

### General

- a. Non-quarantine housing for lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax being considered for release provides as close to natural a setting as possible. The space allows for foraging, digging, climbing, nesting/tunneling, swimming and other actions naturally performed in the wild.
- b. Quarantine facilities and prerelease housing for lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax intended for release are situated a minimum of 66 ft. (20m), giving consideration to factors such as wind direction, from resident lagomorph, rodent and hyrax populations to protect them from exposure to pathogens present in the sanctuary population that could compromise their return to the wild. A wall surrounding the quarantine area reduces pathogen transfer risk and aids in restricting access to authorized personnel.
  - Where this is not possible, sanctuary residents are screened for potential pathogens of concern, and pathogen-free animals are housed closest to the animals intended for release to the wild.
- c. Where possible and appropriate, sanctuaries follow National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association guidelines (<http://www.nrawildlife.org/content/minimum-standards>) in dividing housing into three types:
  - Restricted activity/mobility – for the initial stages of rehabilitation where the illness or injury requires the animal be treated and/or prevented from activities that would slow the rehabilitation process. At a minimum, the animal is able to maintain normal upright/alert posture and to stretch the body.
  - Limited activity/mobility – for the recovery stage of rehabilitation where the animal is regaining mobility and building strength, and staff does not need access to the animal on a daily basis. The animal is able to move short distances and perform some climbing and perching activities.
  - Unlimited/Prerelease – the final stages of rehabilitation where the main concern is ensuring that the animal is fit for release. In this phase, the enclosure provides the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax with opportunities to demonstrate the skills necessary for survival in the wild.

### Quarantine Housing

- d. Sick or injured wildlife is quarantined in such a way that the rehabilitation process is begun during the quarantine phase.
- e. Quarantine facilities have appropriate housing for the treatment of injured or ill lagomorphs, rodents, and hyrax.
- f. Quarantine facilities are designed to allow for monitoring and, as needed, modification of behavior of animals intended for release.
- g. Healthy lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax admitted to quarantine have as large an enclosure as possible to help maintain natural locomotion and foraging behaviors.
- h. Upon arrival, animals are quarantined for an adequate number of days, ideally for a minimum of 60 days. In some situations a longer quarantine may be advisable.



- i. The attending veterinarian works closely with regional, national and international experts and authorities to determine appropriate quarantine timing based on health risks to which the newly admitted lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax may have been exposed.
- j. Orphaned lagomorphs rodents and hyrax, particularly those who have been kept as pets and potentially exposed to human pathogens, are isolated until any potential health risks are evaluated.

#### **Initial Housing for Orphaned, Ill or Injured Lagomorphs Rodents and Hyrax**

- k. Animals admitted requiring treatment for illness or injury are housed in enclosures that allow for ease of care. These initial care enclosures can be smaller than that which is acceptable for long-term care.
  - Dependent on illness or injury, either Restricted or Limited activity/mobility housing may be utilized.
- l. Enclosures provide visual and acoustic barriers to minimize stress.
- m. Orphaned lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are housed in nursery units, preferably with conspecifics, as species appropriate.

#### **Intermediate Housing for Orphaned Lagomorphs, Rodents and Hyrax**

- n. As soon as the orphaned animals have been weaned, they are moved to intermediate housing, where human contact is decreased and interaction with conspecifics, as species appropriate, is increased. Where possible, the animals are moved to the release site and cared for in a soft release enclosure.
- o. Animals are provided with adequate opportunity for climbing, nesting, swimming, digging and foraging, as species appropriate.
- p. Intermediate housing is isolated from resident animal areas, ideally within a natural habitat which allows the orphans to adjust to a more wild environment.

#### **Intermediate and Prerelease Housing for Sick or Injured Lagomorphs, Rodents and Hyrax**

***Note: Adult and independent subadult animals, dependent on their admitting condition, may not require intermediate housing.***

- q. Lagomorphs, rodents and hryax suffering from injuries that may affect their suitability for release are moved to intermediate housing while regaining strength. Animals are regularly evaluated to determine whether they are likely to be releasable. Once the animals are deemed fit, they are moved to prerelease housing.
- r. Independent animals brought in for rehabilitation who can be released back into the environment from which they came are returned as soon as it is determined that the animal has recovered sufficiently to resume its presence in its former area.
- s. Consideration is given to social and territorial issues that may affect safe return to the original habitat.
- t. Prerelease housing for adult and independent subadult animals is ideally situated at the intended release site, allowing the animals to acclimate to their new environment before release.
- u. In both intermediate and prerelease housing, sufficient vertical as well as horizontal space is provided, as species appropriate, to allow the animals to develop strength and display normal wild behaviors.



## **R-5. Diet, Nutrition And Foraging Skills**

**Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are fed an appropriate diet that approximates that which will be found in the habitat to which they are released, and foraging behavior is encouraged.**

- a. As early in the rehabilitation process as possible, lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are exposed to the types of foods found naturally within the environment where they will be released and assessed for their ability to find appropriate foods and avoid inedible or poisonous foods.
- b. Release candidates are fed in such a way as to encourage natural foraging behaviors.
- c. Rescued animals admitted in poor physical condition may require specialized diets to recover their health. Nutritional deficiencies are assessed and diets modified to address those deficiencies. Once the animals are back on a normal nutritional plane, any foods not found in their planned release area are no longer fed.

## **R-6. Husbandry And Health**

**All aspects of care, including caregiver-animal relationships, introduction to social groups and overall health evaluation, are focused on preparing the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax for return to the wild.**

- a. Once a lagomorph, rodent or hyrax has been evaluated as a potential release candidate, all aspects of care are focused on preparing the animal for the wild.
  - Human activities and noises are minimized in areas housing animals being prepared for reintroduction.
  - Human interaction with lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax being prepared for release to the wild is restricted to those activities that will enhance the animals' ability to live in the wild.
- b. The animal is placed in an appropriate social group or paired with a compatible conspecific, depending on species. Dependent young may be reared by human caregivers using approved best practices for the species housed.
  - Care is taken to balance the need to nurture these young animals with their need to develop appropriate survival skills as well as intraspecific social behaviors.
  - Animals are integrated into an appropriate social group, ideally comprised of other conspecifics intended for release, as quickly as possible.
- c. Introductions follow Standard W-3 "Introduction of Unfamiliar Individuals."
- d. Opportunities to explore, climb, dig, forage and learn skills in the natural environment are provided.
- e. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax admitted into care from the wild at the stage where they are already independent, with recoverable illness or injury problems, are treated and released as quickly as possible, taking into account the potential for the animal not being accepted back into its previous social group or territory.
- f. Caregiver-animal relationships for animals intended for release to the wild, while ensuring the animals' psychological well-being is met, focus on:
  - avoiding any types of interaction that may compromise the animals' chances for release;



- encouraging the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax to develop appropriate relationships with conspecifics for their social needs.
- g. Veterinary staff evaluate overall health including:
  - recovery from the initial cause for admission to the facility;
  - pathogen surveillance to ensure the animal does not present a risk to the wild population as a result of exposure during the rehabilitation process.
    - In as much as possible, using the latest available information from the OIE-World Organization for Animal Health ([www.oie.int](http://www.oie.int)) and the IUCN's Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (<http://www.cbsg.org>), animals are monitored for human pathogens not found in the wild population.
- h. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax being cared for in sanctuary for later release back to the wild are managed in such a way as to optimize their chances for successful return to the natural environment.

## **R-7. Health And Safety Of Caregivers Working With Releasable Lagomorphs, Rodents and Hyrax**

**No caregiver begins work with releasable lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax until routine testing has indicated he or she poses no risk to the animals' release to the wild.**

*(See also Standard V-8, "Zoonotic Disease Program")*

- a. Caregivers working with animals intended for release to the wild are routinely monitored for potential anthroponoses (diseases that have potential to be transmitted to the animals).
- b. Testing, vaccinations and fecal cultures for pathogens may be utilized, as appropriate for the region, to ensure the health of both the lagomorphs, rodents, hyrax and their caregivers. New caregivers should not have contact with the animals for the first two weeks of employment.
- c. Provision of adequate nutrition for staff is considered as a possible contribution to the continued well-being of both staff and animals.

## **R-8. Assessment of Health and Skills**

**Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are fully assessed for health and appropriate skills prior to release.**

- a. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax who have completed the rehabilitation process and have been successfully integrated into a social group or pair, as is species appropriate, are further evaluated for release, with attention to health and the skills attained.
- b. Each animal's skills (e.g. foraging, nesting, appropriate interaction or avoidance behaviors in the presence of conspecifics, avoidance of dangers including poisonous foods or predators) are evaluated.
- c. A complete health assessment is performed including:
  - Overall fitness as relates to being able to survive in the wild, keep up with a conspecific group, avoid predators, etc.



- Injuries and limitations that originally caused the animal to be brought into care are resolved, either completely, or to the extent that the animal has a reasonable chance for long-term survival.
- d. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax have been tested, and found free of pathogens that have potential to harm the wild population in the planned release area, based on the latest current knowledge.
- e. Genetic assessment has been done to ensure that the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax being released are of an appropriate subspecies/population/subpopulation for the release site if their origin is not known.
- f. Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are exposed to post-release monitoring equipment prior to release to allow them to acclimate to its presence.

## **R-9. Determining Appropriate Release Sites**

**Release sites are evaluated for health and other threats and for appropriateness for the species.**

- a. The potential release site is evaluated for the presence of appropriate and adequate food sources.
- b. The area is evaluated for potential health concerns.
- c. The potential release site is surveyed to ascertain whether any wild lagomorphs, rodents or hyrax are present, either permanently or seasonally.
- d. The area is evaluated to establish carrying capacity for lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax to be released. This includes taking into consideration others releases that may have already taken place and issues of territoriality. Animals are released in an appropriate habitat where carrying capacity for the species has not been reached.
- e. The area is evaluated for instances of potential human-wildlife conflict.
- f. IUCN guidelines are, in as much as possible, followed when determining release sites for rehabilitated lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax.
- g. Animals are released away from areas where there is potential for or has been a history of human-animal conflict.

## **R-10. The Release Process And Post Release Monitoring**

**Lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are supported as needed to adapt in their new environment and are monitored post release.**

- a. Once it is determined that the lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax have the basic skills for foraging in their new environment, supplemental care is discontinued.
- b. A post-release monitoring program is in place to ensure the rehabilitation program is providing the animals with the skills necessary to survive, that the habitat is adequate and that, as is species appropriate, animal have integrated into the wild.
  - Use of radio and satellite telemetry is recommended whenever possible and species appropriate.
- c. Ideally, lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are returned to the wild using a soft release process wherein they are housed in an enclosure within the release area or spend time with caregivers in the release



area where supplemental food may be provided as needed and observation of their acclimatization may be observed.

- d. Post release monitoring, in conjunction with outside veterinary and scientific personnel, continues for a minimum of one year.
  - Level of monitoring may decrease over time as lagomorphs, rodents and hyrax are determined to be acclimating to the environment.
  - Longer term monitoring of the animals and their impact on the habitat is preferred.
  - Practices used and results obtained, both positive and negative, are shared both within the facility and with others involved in lagomorph, rodent and hyrax reintroduction to aid in the continued improvement of the program.



## Appendix 1

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### General

Lagomorphs were once considered members of the Order Rodentia but were later separated based on their unique dental structure. Although many species of lagomorph and rodent are ground dwelling and burrowing, tree and flying squirrels require arboreal habits and some rats and mice enjoying climbing.

Hares, Pikas and Rabbits Wild lagomorphs are often considered pests, but many species are listed as Threatened, and in some cases even Critically Endangered. Rabbits bred as domestic pets or for food and laboratory use may be the most common species in sanctuary.

Chinchillas, Hutias, Capybaras, Cavies, Coypu/Nutria, Agoutis, Acouchies, Pacas Popular in the meat and fur trades, as well as for pets, these animals are likely to be found in sanctuary. Note: although the names cavy and guinea pig are often used interchangeably, the cavies make up several separate species of Caviidae. Coypu and nutria are different names for the same animal.

Porcupines, Muskrats and Beavers While the majority of these animals will come from non-releasable rehabilitation animals, muskrats and some porcupine species are kept as pets.

Rats, Mice, Pocket Gophers, Kangaroo Rats and Mice, Guinea pigs, Gerbils and Hamsters Both pet and laboratory production of these species results in many animals requiring sanctuary care.

Lemmings and Voles These species are less likely to be found in captivity, with the exception of steppe lemmings which have become a favorite of some pocket pet owners and are increasingly used in the laboratory setting. Many lemming species have proven difficult to maintain under captive conditions.

Squirrels, Prairie dogs, Chipmunks and Marmots Sanctuaries are most likely to acquire squirrels, prairie dogs and chipmunks from well-intended rescuers and pet owners who find themselves ill equipped to care for active, often destructive adults who bite. The marmots (woodchucks, also known as groundhogs or whistle-pigs, are members of the marmot genus) would most likely come into sanctuary as non-releasable rescued wildlife.

Hyrax These unique animals, although more closely related to elephants and dugongs, have housing and care needs which are similar to those of the lagomorphs and rodents. They are, therefore, included in this document.

Muskrat, beaver, coypu, water vole and capybara will benefit greatly from attention paid to creating species appropriate water features, with attention paid to maintaining water quality.

Many rodent, lagomorph and hyrax species are highly susceptible to stress, particularly when they feel exposed to predator species. Sanctuaries ensure that the animals in their care are provided with visual and sound barriers in addition to physical protection from predator species.

### Housing

Aggression in prairie dogs may be significantly reduced by providing the largest possible enclosure.

### Temperature

In addition to providing fans or other cooling sources, rats, mice and lemmings may be given small bowls of water to walk in to cool the feet and tail in hot weather.

Frozen vegetables or ice cubes may also be offered to aid in cooling.



### **Nutrition**

Many species of lagomorph and rodent adapt well to ball valve feeder bottles which help keep the enclosures dry and prevent the animals from dirtying the water.

Prairie dogs are prone to diabetes when fed diets too high in sugars. Minimal fruit is fed to these animals.

Obesity, liver disease and digestive problems are a concern when lagomorphs, rodents and hyraxes are maintained on commercial pellets and grains or fed human high fat, high sugar 'treats'. Food selections and quantities are managed as much as possible to maintain healthy weight with attention paid to fat and sugar content.

Imaginative presentation of enrichment foods in puzzle feeders or ice-blocks will enhance enrichment and foraging value. Items may also be buried, hung from trees or climbing structures or smeared onto toys or browse.

### **Contraception Information**

Single sex housing may be the simplest option for hyraxes and many rodent species. Castration and spaying are also options but castration does not significantly reduce aggression in hyrax species.

Castration of male rabbits is recommended as it reduces aggression in addition to its contraceptive value.

Spaying of female rabbits is recommended for both reproductive and health reasons. There is a high incidence of uterine adenocarcinoma in adult female rabbits.