

# Easy Reference Sheet

January 2019

## Non-native and Hybrid Species

### Introduction

As a rescue/rehabilitation organisation, WILDCARE is licensed to rescue and rehabilitate native wild animals. Whilst the group's core focus is on the protection of native species, it is not uncommon for volunteer rescuers to take possession of a non-native or hybrid species through the usual course of attending wildlife rescues.

If the animal is sick or unwell, it should be taken to your local vet or wildlife hospital for veterinary treatment in the same timeframe you would take any animal (i.e. critical injuries must be taken immediately). The animal will be admitted to the vet/hospital in the same manner as any wildlife.

### What is a non-native species?

A non-native species is one which is not endemic to Australia (an introduced species). The most common non-native species found in South-east Queensland include;

- Spotted Turtle Dove - *Streptopelia chinensis*
- Rock Pigeon - *Columba livia*
- Ship Rat – *Rattus rattus*
- Indian Mynah - *Acridotheres tristis*
- European Hare - *Lepus europaeus*
- European Red Fox - *Vulpes vulpes*
- Deer - *Cervus elaphus*
- Cane toad - *Rhinella marina*

### What is a Hybrid?

A hybrid is the prodigy of two different species. This includes the breeding of two native, two non-native or a combination of native and non-native species. Some examples of combinations of hybrid species occasionally found in South-east Queensland include;

- Rainbow and Scaly-breasted Lorikeets
- Galah and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos
- Pacific Black Ducks and non-native ducks (such as Mallards)

### Why shouldn't non-native wildlife be treated and released?

Habitat for wildlife is shrinking rapidly in South-east Queensland, and non-native wildlife often out-competes native animals for nesting sites and food. In some cases, for example with the Indian Mynah, non-native species aggressively bully and kill native species to establish their dominance.

Many non-native species are also restricted invasive animals, and heavy penalties apply for releasing a restricted invasive animal into the wild.

### Why shouldn't hybrid species be treated and released?

Section 92 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* states that hybrids of protected species (i.e. native animals) must not be released into the wild. Heavy penalties apply for releasing a hybrid of a protected species into the wild.

## Can I keep non-native wildlife as a pet?

Although non-native wild animals are not protected, not all can be kept as pets. Biosecurity Queensland can advise on which species are prohibited from being kept. Keeping a non-native wild animal as a pet should not be a decision made lightly. Will the animal adjust to spending the rest of its life in captivity? Will you be able to provide for it through its entire life? What will happen to the animal if you can no longer care for it? Are you prepared to pay for any veterinary expenses should it require treatment?

## Can I keep hybrid species as a pet?

A hybrid of a native species (partly or wholly) must not be kept as a pet without prior permission from the Department of Environment and Science (DES). Gaining permission is not a given, as the Department may view the animal as any other unreleasable native animal.

If permission were granted, Section 92 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* prevents further breeding with ANY domestic or native animal. Allowing a hybrid of a protected animal to free range could be considered as having been released into the wild, in which case heavy penalties may apply.

A hybrid of a non-native species may be kept as a pet but restrictions may apply. The animal must be kept in a way that prohibits contact (and potential breeding) with native animals i.e., hybrid ducks must not be kept on a dam where they could breed with native ducks.

## Who is responsible for any non-native or hybrid species I keep?

You are solely responsible for any non-native or hybrid species you choose to keep. This includes ensuring appropriate permits are in place and that you can meet any appropriate veterinary expenses throughout its life.

**WILDCARE TAKES NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR MEMBERS WHO CHOOSE TO KEEP NON-NATIVE OR HYBRID SPECIES. WILDCARE-FUNDED RESOURCES (INCLUDING EQUIPMENT AND FOOD) MUST NOT BE USED FOR ANY PET, NON-NATIVE OR HYBRID SPECIES.**

## Quarantine

It is imperative that strict quarantine procedures are adopted to ensure the protection of the animal in question along with any other animals that you may have now or in the future.

The animal should be kept separated from all other wildlife and domestic pets. This includes equipment used to house, handle or feed the animal. We recommend the use of disposable equipment that can be discarded safely once the animal is relinquished (e.g. cardboard box etc.).

## Contact Numbers:

RSPCA Queensland	1300 264 625
Dept of Environment & Science (DES)	1300 130 372
Biosecurity Queensland	13 25 23