



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

ACMSPE311A Provide basic care of non-venomous reptiles

Revision Number: 1

ACMSPE311A Provide basic care of non-venomous reptiles

Modification History

Not applicable.

Unit Descriptor

Unit descriptor	This unit of competency covers the process of identifying reptiles and their behavioural and physical needs, providing daily care requirements for non-venomous reptiles as well as assisting with behavioural requirements and preventative health measures. Licensing, legislative, regulatory or certification requirements may apply to this unit in relation to the protection of native reptiles. Therefore, it will be necessary to check with the relevant state or territory regulators for current licensing, legislative or regulatory requirements before undertaking this unit.
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Application of the Unit

Application of the unit	The unit is applicable to those working in animal care industry sectors where it may be necessary to care for commonly available non-venomous reptiles. This may include animal shelters or rehabilitation organisations, zoos or similar workplaces. In some cases, animals may have been rescued from the wild and successful rehabilitation is required to restore animal health and well-being before releasing back to their natural environment. In addition to legal and ethical responsibilities, all units of competency in the ACM10 Animal Care and Management Training Package have the requirement for animals to be handled gently and calmly. The individual is required to exhibit appropriate care for animals so that stress and discomfort is minimised.
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Licensing/Regulatory Information

Not applicable.

Pre-Requisites

Prerequisite units		

Employability Skills Information

Employability skills	This unit contains employability skills.
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Elements and Performance Criteria Pre-Content

Elements describe the essential outcomes of a unit of competency.	Performance criteria describe the performance needed to demonstrate achievement of the element. Where bold italicised text is used, further information is detailed in the required skills and knowledge section and the range statement. Assessment of performance is to be consistent with the evidence guide.
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Elements and Performance Criteria

ELEMENT	PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
1. Identify commonly available reptiles	1.1. Profile of non-venomous reptiles commonly held in facility, including habitat, nutrition, health and behavioural characteristics, is defined. 1.2. External features are described using industry terminology. 1.3. Reptiles are classified using industry specific terminology. 1.4. Colours, markings and other identifying features are defined, interpreted and documented.
2. Identify and evaluate behavioural and housing needs	2.1. Water quality is monitored and adjustments made as required to maintain optimum water quality, if required for the species being housed, as directed by supervisor. 2.2. Indicators of animal comfort and normal behaviour are identified and signs of distressed reptiles are recognised and reported to supervisor. 2.3. Industry standards and guidelines for housing design, environmental factors and appropriate stocking densities are identified. 2.4. Enrichment needs are identified and evaluated for specific animal species. 2.5. Current animal housing design is evaluated in relation to the welfare of animals kept and legislation requirements.
3. Approach and handle reptiles	3.1. Occupational health and safety (OHS) risks associated with handling and restraining reptiles are identified and methods used to minimise risks are demonstrated. 3.2. Equipment used to catch, handle and restrain non-venomous reptiles is prepared and evaluated. 3.3. Reptiles are approached and caught while minimising risks to animal and others. 3.4. Reptiles are restrained using a range of approved animal welfare management procedures.
4. Assist with health care needs	4.1. Signs of good health are identified and recorded in animal health and treatment records. 4.2. Common health issues are identified and signs of disease or other conditions are reported to supervisor. 4.3. General health maintenance and preventative treatment procedures are identified and implemented

ELEMENT	PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
	in accordance with level of job responsibility, regulatory requirements and supervisor guidance. 4.4. Options for activity and enrichment are identified, evaluated for impact on reptile health and implemented as directed by supervisor.
5. Feed and water reptiles	5.1. <i>Digestive system features</i> are identified and related to reptile-specific feeding routines and diets. 5.2. Preferred <i>food sources</i> are identified and food samples are assessed for quality and suitability. 5.3. Potential <i>feeding hazards</i> are identified and risk control options defined. 5.4. Feed is prepared in accordance with dietary needs. 5.5. Feed is distributed and consumption, including abnormalities, is reported in accordance with workplace routines.
6. Maintain records	6.1. <i>Documentation</i> on the care and management of non-venomous reptiles is completed in accordance with workplace procedures and legislation requirements.

Required Skills and Knowledge

REQUIRED SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

This section describes the skills and knowledge required for this unit.

Required skills

- complete relevant work-related documents and maintain accurate animal records
- comply with OHS, animal care, ethics and industry codes of conduct, regulations and legislations
- employ safe and environmentally responsible organisational systems and procedures when working with, restraining and handling non-venomous reptiles
- maintain the highest standards of personal and workplace hygiene and infection control at all times to reduce the risk of infection and cross-infection
- measure, interpret and record reptile weight, length and other relevant objective indicators of change in physiological status
- monitor reptile health, condition and behaviour and recognise normal and abnormal signs
- monitor water quality parameters using physical and chemical assessments and tests
- prepare doses for treatments as directed and verified by supervisor
- provide basic first aid to reptiles as required under supervision
- use equipment and materials correctly and in accordance with manufacturers' specifications
- literacy skills to read and follow organisational policies and procedures, including OHS and animal welfare; follow sequenced written instructions; and record information accurately and legibly
- oral communication skills/language to fulfil the job role as specified by the organisation, including questioning, active listening, asking for clarification and seeking advice from supervisor
- numeracy skills to estimate, calculate and record routine workplace measures
- interpersonal skills to work with others and relate to people from a range of cultural, social and religious backgrounds and with a range of physical and mental abilities
- problem-solving skills to assess appropriate practices and prioritise daily tasks
- use safe manual handling techniques and/or equipment
- use safe waste handling and disposal procedures.

Required knowledge

- anatomical and physiological terminology and glossary of terms
- anatomical structures and physiological features related to basic care requirements for reptiles
- awareness of natural reptile behaviour relating to the characteristics of the species, age, health and reproductive status, behavioural and social needs and the signs of distress, illness and undesirable behaviours

REQUIRED SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

- basic reptile care and hygiene principles
- basic reptile first aid techniques
- basic water chemistry parameters and physical indicators of water quality relevant to care and husbandry of reptiles
- common aeration and filtration systems
- housing, social and activity needs of reptiles and environmental impacts on health and wellbeing
- methods of transmission of disease and infection
- organisational policies and procedures regarding the care and health maintenance of reptiles
- personal protective clothing and equipment and when and how it should be used
- physical conditions and vital signs of reptiles
- potential hazards and risks to animals and staff during feeding and cleaning of housing
- relevant legislation, regulations and codes of practice, including OHS, animal welfare and ethics
- safe reptile handling techniques and procedures, potential hazards and control measures
- terminology and language variations used by workplace staff and the public to describe reptiles, their behaviour, status, health and treatments
- terminology used to describe and document health and behavioural signs, including desirable and undesirable features
- types of food and food supplements and their role in reptile diets, including natural dietary requirements for specific species
- types of information that has to be reported and recorded in animal care workplaces
- workplace hygiene standards, disinfectants, cleaning agents, cleaning techniques and cleaning equipment and materials.

Evidence Guide

EVIDENCE GUIDE

The Evidence Guide provides advice on assessment and must be read in conjunction with the performance criteria, required skills and knowledge, range statement and the Assessment Guidelines for the Training Package.

Overview of assessment

Critical aspects for assessment and evidence required to demonstrate competency in this unit

The evidence required to demonstrate competence in this unit must be relevant to workplace operations and satisfy all of the requirements of the performance criteria, required skills and knowledge and the range statement of this unit. Assessors should ensure that candidates can:

- identify the specific characteristics and needs of reptiles and apply these to the best practice industry standard of housing, socialising, feeding and health management
- classify and identify reptiles by age, sex, reproductive status, condition, colours, markings and other identifying features using industry terminology
- safely and humanely catch, handle and restrain non-venomous reptiles
- assess water quality for suitability for maintained species
- report and document treatments, behaviours and other information on individual animals in accordance with animal welfare regulations, industry standards and workplace protocols and procedures.

The skills and knowledge required to provide basic care of non-venomous reptiles must be transferable to a range of work environments and contexts and include the ability to deal with unplanned events.

Context of and specific resources for assessment

Assessment of this unit is to be practical in nature and will most appropriately be assessed against the types of processes required in the industry sector in which candidates are working or in a situation that reproduces normal work conditions. Workplaces can include animal shelters or rehabilitation organisations, zoos and wildlife parks or similar workplaces.

There must be access to a range of non-venomous reptiles as well as relevant information, equipment and/or

EVIDENCE GUIDE	
	resources to enable one to demonstrate competence. Assessment must cover a minimum of three commonly available non-venomous reptile species.
Method of assessment	To ensure consistency in one's performance, competency should be demonstrated, to industry defined standards, on more than one occasion over a period of time in order to cover a variety of circumstances and responsibilities and where possible, over a number of assessment activities. The assessment strategy must include practical skills assessment. Suggested strategies for this unit are: • written and/or oral assessment of candidate's required knowledge • observed, documented and first-hand testimonial evidence of candidate's application of practical tasks • simulation exercises that reproduce normal work conditions • third-party evidence • workplace documentation • portfolio. This unit may be assessed in a holistic way with other units of competency relevant to the industry sector, workplace and job role.
Guidance information for assessment	Assessment methods should reflect workplace demands (e.g. literacy and numeracy demands) and the needs of particular target groups (e.g. people with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women, people with a language background other than English, youth and people from low socioeconomic backgrounds).

Range Statement

RANGE STATEMENT

The range statement relates to the unit of competency as a whole. It allows for different work environments and situations that may affect performance. Bold italicised wording, if used in the performance criteria, is detailed below. Essential operating conditions that may be present with training and assessment (depending on the work situation, needs of the candidate, accessibility of the item, and local industry and regional contexts) may also be included.

Commonly available <i>non-venomous reptiles</i> may include:	• lizards • monitors and goannas • non-venomous snakes • tortoises and turtles.
<i>Behavioural characteristics</i> may include:	• behaviour characteristics can vary according to: • the breeding season • the species, breed, age and sex of the animals • the time of day or night • behaviour characteristics associated with different species: • activity levels at certain times of day or night • feeding and foraging • fight or flight • reproductive behaviours • social interaction • feeding behaviours • defensive behaviour: • defending territory, other animals or food • hiding or retreating.
<i>Colours, markings and other identifying features</i> may include:	• age, sex and size • coat or skin colours and texture • eye colour • markings, patterns and permanent scars • microchip, ear tags, tattoos and markings and leg bands.
Indicators of poor <i>water quality</i> may include:	• colour • odour • unsuitable water chemistry parameters.
Water quality <i>adjustments</i> may involve:	• correcting chemical imbalances • partial water change • raising or lowering pH or hardness.

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Indicators of <i>animal comfort and normal behaviour</i> may be identified through:	• daily observation and visual examination is the best way to establish the appearance of a healthy reptile and at the same time allows detection of changes from normal. These observations will include: • posture and attitude in and out of water • activity level in and out of water • response to stimuli including handling • withdrawal reflex and ability to right itself • assessment of body condition • assessment of state of hydration • appetite and dietary history • observing faecal matter for any abnormalities.
<i>Housing design and environmental factors</i> may include:	• environmental: • aeration rates and supply • biological control of waste • cleaning routines and methods • correct humidity levels • day/night cycle lighting • drainage and weather protection • electrical safety • filtration requirements to maintain the water quality and optimal environmental conditions for target species • general animal housing security • housing furniture and compatible plants • out of direct sunlight • ventilation, temperature, heating and cooling requirements • housing design: • housing options: • indoor • outdoor • vivarium • housing requirements: • compatibility of species housed together • food and water distribution • location considerations • longevity and sturdiness of materials

RANGE STATEMENT	
	• maintains ambient temperature conditions for the specific species • provides continuous access to water free of ammonia or chlorine • provides generous ventilation and is safe from fumes and vapours: • insecticides • cleaning agents • required floor area, vertical and/or horizontal space for specific species • security considerations • species-specific options for animals to hide or rest • substrate appropriate to the specific species • designs that allow for enrichment activities or species-specific activity, feeding or socialising • social options: • solitary • pairs • single sexed groups • polyandrous/polygynous groups • mixed species.
Enrichment needs may include:	• food or food-related enrichment: • giving animals opportunities to forage for food by hiding it in substrates or hunt by movement • physical enrichment items: • basking/perching sites • burrowing substrate, if applicable • plants and foliage • retreats • rocks or artificial rocks • shredded paper or leaf litter • social enrichment: • animals housed with same to encourage species-specific behaviours • mixed species exhibits to encourage positive inter-species interactions.

RANGE STATEMENT	
Welfare of animals requirements may include:	- adequate housing, nutrition and stock levels - compliance to appropriate state or territory legislation and regulations - enrichment opportunities - the absence of predators, pests and vermin - the compatibility of species and breeds.
OHS risks when working with animals may include:	- animal bites, envenomation, kicks, scratches and crush injuries - biological hazardous waste and sharps disposal - electrical hazards enhanced by the presence of water - handling of chemicals and medicines - gas leakage - inhalation of aerosol particles - intraocular contamination - manual handling, including carrying, lifting and shifting - needle pricks and cuts from other sharps - release of infective agents (animal and human) - slippery or uneven work surfaces - zoonoses.
Equipment used to catch, handle and restrain non-venomous reptiles may include:	- bags - gloves - noose-type devices for large reptiles.
Methods used to approach and catch reptiles may include:	- approaching and handling as quietly as possible with the following considerations: - small reptiles should be supported by the palm of the hand with the other hand placed over its shoulders to prevent escape - darkened conditions tend to calm the animals and reduce stress reactions - standard hygiene procedures should be followed, including the use of gloves - handling of reptiles should always be kept to a minimum to ensure the animal is not stressed or accidentally injured.
Common health issues may include:	- behavioural disorders - environmental hazards: - contamination of the water due to presence of

RANGE STATEMENT	
	- toxins • exposure to extremes of water quality • exposure to the elements • inadequate activity • temperature extremes • ventilation • infectious diseases caused by: • bacteria, virus, fungus and protozoe • internal and external parasites • non-infection diseases: • chemical toxicities and allergies • genetic disorders • metabolic • neoplastic • nutritional imbalances and disruptions • physical traumas • zoonotic diseases.
General health maintenance and preventative treatment may include:	• routine health check-up • control of parasites • immunisation/vaccinations as required • insect control • temperature, heat and light requirements for specific species • quarantine and isolation procedures • routine observation of waste elimination and faecal examination • water quality.
Digestive system features may include:	• anatomical features: • mouth structures • digestive chemicals and bacteria • alimentary canal and stomach • intestines, rectum and anus • physiological features: • eating processes • nutrient requirements, absorption and storage methods • waste elimination • feeding patterns and natural dietary requirements for the species

RANGE STATEMENT	
	• potential digestive system malfunctions or problems • water needs.
Food source considerations include:	• captive diets must be similar to the natural diet of the species to: • minimise the impact of captivity • stimulate normal digestive function • maximise development of natural survival techniques • food sources: • dietary supplements • live food.
Feeding hazards may include:	• animal movement and handling • shelf life of foodstuffs • manual handling and general food preparation, storage and distribution equipment • contamination of foodstuffs from vermin, bacteria, fungus, virus and other sources • organic and other dusts • excessive noise • possibility of zoonotic infection.
Documentation on the care and management of reptiles may include:	• accident and incident records • chemical and veterinary supplies register • detailed and accurate records for each animal: • species and sex of animal • identification and history • feeding, health and treatment records • diary, rosters and task completion and timeframe records • equipment use, damage and repair register • OHS safe work method statements, material safety data sheets (MSDS) and other records • provisions records of current stock and items used and items required • stock control records • water chemistry and quality records • water change frequencies and amounts.

Unit Sector(s)

Unit sector	Species specific
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Competency field

Competency field	
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Co-requisite units

Co-requisite units		