

CAVERSHAM WILDLIFE PARK

POSITION STATEMENT – Assistance Animal Access

BACKGROUND

Caversham Wildlife Park aims to provide visitors with the opportunity to encounter Australia's native wildlife.

Caversham Wildlife Park has a duty of care to ensure the welfare of the biological collection.

Caversham Wildlife Park (CWP) proudly promotes equal opportunity and access for visitors with disabilities.

In Australia, disability access is protected by the Australian Human Rights Commission, under the Disability Discrimination Act (1992).

Assistance Animals, such as Guide Dogs or Service Dogs, provide assistance to individuals, by providing them with independence and safer mobility, and assistance to alleviate the effect of the disability.

Therapy Dogs and Companion Animals are considered a pet, and are therefore prohibited from entering CWP.

THE POSITION

In order to protect the health and wellbeing of the animals in our care, Assistance Animals are restricted to the entrance area of the park, which includes the souvenir shop, kiosk, picnic area and toilet blocks. Assistance Animals are prohibited from all other areas of CWP.

The option to restrict the access of Assistance Animals from entering our grounds, or part of, is based on biosecurity and animal welfare risks. The Disability Discrimination Act (1992) Section s54a (Amendment Act 2008) states:

“it does not render it unlawful for a person (the discriminator) to discriminate against the person with the disability on the ground of the disability, if:

- (a) the discriminator reasonably suspects that the assistance animal has an infectious disease; and
- (b) the discrimination is reasonably necessary to protect public health or the health of other animals.”

Wildlife is vulnerable to the disturbance of, and potential predation of, domestic animals. A close encounter with a domestic animal, especially a dog, can cause Stress Myopathy, which is when the muscle fibres cease function resulting in muscular weakness. The damaged muscle tissues then break down, ultimately resulting in kidney failure (this process is known as Rhabdomyolysis). Myopathy presents along a spectrum over a period of time, varying from sudden onset resulting in collapse and death within hours, to 2-4 weeks of heart muscle necrosis, kidney failure, paralysis and eventual death. Treatment of myopathy is not usually successful – prevention is the only responsible resolution.

Stress Myopathy (also known as Capture Myopathy) is common in mammals, birds and hoofed animals. Just some examples (there are many more) of our concern of Stress Myopathy are; the commonly ground-dwelling bird species such as Black Swans, Pelicans, Stilts, Bustards, Magpie Geese and Cape Barren Geese who would be eye-to eye with Guide/Service Dogs as they walk along main pathways. Macropods (the kangaroo and wallaby group of animals) are particularly susceptible to Myopathy; there are approx.15 Macropod species housed in various locations around the park, and they are present at some encounter areas. And Dingoes and Foxes would sense Guide/Service Dogs as a threat.

This article can provide more information https://www.fourthcrossingwildlife.com/CaptureMyopathy_redirect.htm

ALTERNATIVE SUPPORT

Assistance Animal owners, who choose to proceed with a visit to CWP, are asked to note the following considerations carefully:

- A guide or volunteer can be made available, in place of the Assistance Animal, to accompany the visitor and assist them to enjoy their visit
- A secure holding area can be provided for an Assistance Animal for the duration of its owners visit around the park
- When an Assistance Animal is brought into the restricted area of the park, it is expected that:
 - ✓ The animal is adequately trained to meet standards of behaviour and hygiene that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.
 - ✓ The animal remains under the control of their approved handler at all times
 - ✓ The animal is 'dressed' in their relevant coat and/or harness
- The normal entry fee applies
- It is appreciated when prior notice of the visit is provided to CWP