



# Preparing a Wildlife Management Plan

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLAN GUIDE AND CHECKLIST

CONSERVATION  
REGULATOR VICTORIA

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## WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLAN GUIDE AND CHECKLIST

### Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices. We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.



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A wildlife management plan is a strategic plan developed to address a wildlife issue in a holistic way. It describes the species causing the issue, the location and site of the problem, and the management actions required to manage the problem.

Wildlife management plans may include actions that require approval from the Conservation Regulator under the *Wildlife Act 1975* (Wildlife Act). Wildlife management plans must outline all proposed activities, both those that would require regulatory approval and less intrusive measures.

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## When is a management plan required?

A wildlife management plan may be required by the Conservation Regulator to support an Authority to Control Wildlife (ATCW) or other Wildlife Act authorisation application (such as management or conservation authorisations).

A wildlife management plan may also be a requirement of approvals under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. All enquiries in relation to wildlife management plans required under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* should be directed to the responsible authority (e.g. local government).

This guidance outlines the core requirements for wildlife management plans when they are required by the Conservation Regulator. However, it may also be used as a guide in preparation of wildlife management plans for other purposes.



### **Authority to Control Wildlife (ATCW)**

[vic.gov.au/wildlife-management-and-control-authorisations](https://vic.gov.au/wildlife-management-and-control-authorisations)

## Who prepares a wildlife management plan when required under the Wildlife Act?

The responsibility to prepare a wildlife management plan sits with the landholder or land manager intending to undertake actions that impact wildlife.

The plan itself must be prepared by a qualified ecologist or by the landholder in consultation with an appropriately qualified person.





## Process for a wildlife management plan required under the Wildlife Act

When a wildlife management plan is required under the Wildlife Act, there are six steps in the process.

Preparing wildlife management plans can take some time due to the complex nature of the wildlife issues involved – it is recommended that land holders/managers start early and allow plenty of time.

<b>1 Requirement</b>	Deciding whether a wildlife management plan is required (which could be informed by advice from the Conservation Regulator, or based on an assessment by the landholder/manager).
<b>2 Preparation</b>	Preparation of a wildlife management plan by an ecologist or other appropriately qualified person
<b>3 Submission</b>	Submission of a wildlife management plan and application to the Conservation Regulator.
<b>4 Assessment</b>	Assessment by the Conservation Regulator. The Conservation Regulator may ask for further information or clarification from the applicant to inform the assessment.
<b>5 Decision</b>	The Conservation Regulator makes a decision about issuing or not issuing an authorisation under the Wildlife Act and communicates that decision to the applicant. Where an authorisation is issued, it will include conditions that the applicant must comply with.
<b>6 Monitoring</b>	The Conservation Regulator may undertake monitoring activities to ensure the conditions in the authorisation are being met.



## What should a wildlife management plan required under the Wildlife Act include?

The following content is provided as a guide for the minimum required information. Each wildlife management situation is unique and therefore additional information may be required to support the approvals requested under the Wildlife Act.

### 1 Introduction

The introduction serves as an executive summary. The introduction must be written in such a way that a person relatively unfamiliar with the land and the proposed management can become acquainted with the background of the site, neighbouring land uses, the problems at the site resultant from wildlife species, the objectives of the plan and any proposed activities, how these objectives are proposed to be achieved, and the major risks and limitations of the proposed management.

### 2 Management purpose and clear objectives

This section should clearly define the purpose of a wildlife management plan, the objective of managing wildlife at the site, and success indicators.

Defining an appropriate purpose means:

- Clearly articulating the problem with wildlife on the subject land.
- Gathering information on how and when the problem occurs, including any relevant historic data.
- Evaluating from this information why the problem occurs and the severity of the problem if applicable.
- Orienting the plan towards addressing the problem to prevent re-occurrence.
- Anticipating and addressing any barriers or limitations to problem reduction.

The objective must consider the long-term viability or management of the wildlife population.

The purpose must be an accurate reflection of what the plan is trying to achieve overall for wildlife at the site. For example, the purpose may be to reduce or completely exclude wildlife populations, or to maintain the welfare of wildlife at the site.

When defining wildlife management plan objectives, ensure they are specific, measurable, and realistically achievable.



### 3 Site information

Information on the location of the wildlife issue and proposed activities is required to contextualise the proposed management actions.

This includes size and location of the land, current and proposed future land use, and surrounding land use. Aerial maps and photographs must be included, as well as ground level photographs providing evidence of the need for management and pertinent landscape features.

This section should identify the proximity of the subject land to apparent wildlife corridors, conservation areas, and areas of remnant vegetation. It may also include relevant land zoning and overlays under the Local Government Planning Scheme or conservation covenants that might be on the property.

### 4 Species information

The wildlife management plan must provide an overview of the species the plan relates to.

This may require consultation with additional persons experienced in the biology, behaviour, and management of the target species.

A species overview is intended to provide an analysis of the species in the context of proposed management. Appropriate survey methods must be used to determine species presence and abundance at the subject site.

An overview of the physiological and behavioural characteristics of the species must be included, as these may influence which management actions are appropriate. This can include considering species dispersal, recruitment rate, home range fidelity, and tolerance of humans may assist in the informed prediction of the long-term effectiveness of the proposed management.

A reasonable prediction of the effects of the proposed management on the species population locally and on at a landscape scale must be provided, with reference to the species abundance, conservation status and the context of the site in landscape and habitat connectivity.

The conservation status of the species proposed for management at state and federal level must be included. If the species proposed for management is listed under the Victorian *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, it may have an Action Statement to provide guidance that should inform the wildlife management plan. Any proposed management should address the threats to the species within the Action Statement and avoid identified key threats.

If the species is listed under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that any federal permissions required for management are obtained and conditions are adhered to.



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## 5 Options analysis

The wildlife management plan needs to demonstrate that all available wildlife management methods have been fully considered. This must include non-lethal management options, and a 'do nothing' option.

The analysis must clearly outline: the detail of each management option; an evidence-based explanation of the benefits and challenges of the option; and an assessment of its feasibility for the site, circumstances, and objective of the plan.

When considering the viability of a management option, the applicant should consider and explicitly state the predicted timeframes and the resources required to undertake the management. The applicant should explore the legal and social barriers to the management occurring, including the need for planning permits under the applicable local government planning scheme and where there is a known probability of community dissent and interference with the proposed management.

Animal welfare must be considered under all potential management options.

Additionally, the options analysis should state in brief the predictable impacts of the management option on:

- Human health and safety
- Population impacts on the target species
- Wildlife habitat connectivity
- Impacts to neighbouring properties or other wildlife populations
- If translocation or other wildlife movement is proposed, ongoing management risks at origin and release site
- Financial viability may be included where it is a factor in the preference for a management option.

The Conservation Regulator requires applicants to legitimately explore non-lethal management options as the desired management method and demonstrate why these options are not suitable in comparison to lethal options. Applicants must demonstrate they have exhausted non-lethal, low interference methods of wildlife management before an application for lethal control of wildlife will be issued or than non-lethal methods are not reasonably practicable. It is important for landholders to consider a mix of both non-lethal and lethal management measures for complex wildlife issues.

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## 6 Proposed management

Drawing on the options analysis, this section needs to present in detail the applicant's proposed management/disturbance method(s).

This must clearly describe the proposed method and explain why this option was chosen based on the options analysis.

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## 7 Risk management

The wildlife management plan should include the identification of the risks involved in implementing the proposed management actions, and mitigations for those risks.

Risks include those relating to human health and safety (e.g. increases in car strikes) and animal welfare (e.g. macropod deaths from myopathy).

When identifying risk, the applicant should state the risk, the likelihood of occurrence, the likely consequences and mitigations for the risk.

The section should also consider the potential impact of the proposed management on non-target species, particularly any species listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* that have been detected at the site.



## 8 Engagement and communications

If there is community or stakeholder interest in the wildlife at the site, the plan should include information about: engagement that has occurred; key views of interested stakeholders; and plans for future communications or engagement.

This can include engagement with neighbours, other government organisations, industry body, or non-government organisations.

A land manager may determine that engagement should be undertaken with local community and stakeholders as they develop their wildlife management plan. It may be appropriate to engage the local community early about possible management options so that they can understand the situation. However, engagement may not be suitable for all sites for a range of reasons. Applicants may wish to discuss their engagement approach with the Conservation Regulator during plan development.

This section should also outline the communications and engagement action plan such as any letterbox drops, engagement sessions, proactive media and signage. Key messages and prepared Questions and Answers that can be used for media and other enquiries may also be provided here.

## 9 Operational plan

Complex and high-risk applications for Authorities to Control Wildlife supported by a wildlife management plan must also include a proposed operational plan.

The Conservation Regulator will inform applicants if an operational plan is required when assessing an application.

The operational plan should set out detail about how the management actions will be safely implemented if the ATCW or other authority is granted, including:

- The actions that will be taken and their timing, duration, tools required and triggers for cessation of the action prior to completion.
- This may include, for example, fencing, installation of cameras or other hardware, monitoring, or management action.
- The person, company, or organisation responsible for completing the actions. Where relevant, the competency of personnel must be provided. This may include qualifications, appropriate licences, and any other mandatory site training.
- Any site briefing to be provided to the persons carrying out the proposed management.
- Any monitoring requirements, and how that monitoring will occur.
- Contingency plans, in the case that an action does not or cannot occur; the timeline is not complied with; or an action occurs and is ineffective.

The description of the actions to be completed must include specific reference to any related risk and mitigation measures where present.

The timeline, where possible, should be defined by 'time post approval' rather than defined time periods i.e., calendar months. This allows flexibility of the operational plan if there is any delay in the assessment of the ATCW application.

For example:

"Contractors to be confirmed within a month of ATCW approval"

"Fencing to occur in the spring post-ATCW approval"

"Monitoring to occur for 12 months post control".



## 10 Monitoring and adaptive management

Indicators of success should be defined prior to any management action to enable monitoring and reporting on whether the objectives of the plan are being met.

These success indicators must be specific and measurable, and a monitoring plan should be established pre-management, during management and post management to allow reporting and determination of success.

Monitoring and evaluation of management actions not only provides an indicator of the effectiveness of the management; it is considered best-practice and facilitates adaptive management in the face of uncertainties about wildlife behaviour and appropriate management measures.

Implementing a monitoring program can provide a balance between improving the control approach in the long-term and allowing actions to achieve the wildlife management plan purpose in the short term. Additionally, if the proposed control as per the wildlife management plan is partially or completely ineffective in addressing the wildlife issue, monitoring data can better inform future planning and subsequent actions.

## 11 Review of a regulatory wildlife management plan

An updated wildlife management plan is required if another ATCW application or authority application is submitted in the future.

The updated plan should include an assessment of the control actions and whether or not they were effective.





# Wildlife Management Plan checklist



## COMPLETING A WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLAN REQUIRED UNDER THE WILDLIFE ACT

### Prior to developing the wildlife management plan

- ☐ Consider the wildlife issue and clearly determine the problem, reason for control, and how the control will resolve the problem
- ☐ Consult with the Conservation Regulator to determine whether an Authority to Control Wildlife and a wildlife management plan is necessary for your purpose
- ☐ Consult an ecologist or other suitably qualified professional to assist with plan development, expert advice, and surveys where required

### Preparing the wildlife management plan

- ☐ The reason for management is clearly articulated
- ☐ The objectives of the plan are clearly described
- ☐ The wildlife problem is stated and supporting evidence provided
- ☐ Animal welfare is considered throughout the plan and supported by the actions proposed
- ☐ The species information provided demonstrates understanding of the species physiology and behaviour that may complicate the plan's delivery
- ☐ Survey data for the species is provided, giving a recent site population estimate
- ☐ The site of proposed management is described, the landscape context of the site considered, and photographs of the site are provided
- ☐ The provided options analysis is comprehensive, including non-lethal and 'do nothing' options, with a clear recommendation on the proposed management method/s
- ☐ The provided operational plan (if required) is complete, with timelines estimated and responsibilities for actions set
- ☐ Relevant contingency plans are identified in the event of the operational plan being unsuccessful for the proposed management of wildlife
- ☐ Likely risks are identified in the plan and mitigation measures described
- ☐ Engagement information is provided where applicable
- ☐ A monitoring and reporting framework has been considered

### Submitting the wildlife management plan

- ☐ An ATCW application form is filled in and submitted with the plan
- ☐ All required evidence is annexed to the plan
- ☐ Plan is submitted by email to the relevant regional Conservation Regulator team for assessment