

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

SAFETY Everyone. Everywhere. Every day

FLORA AND FAUNA

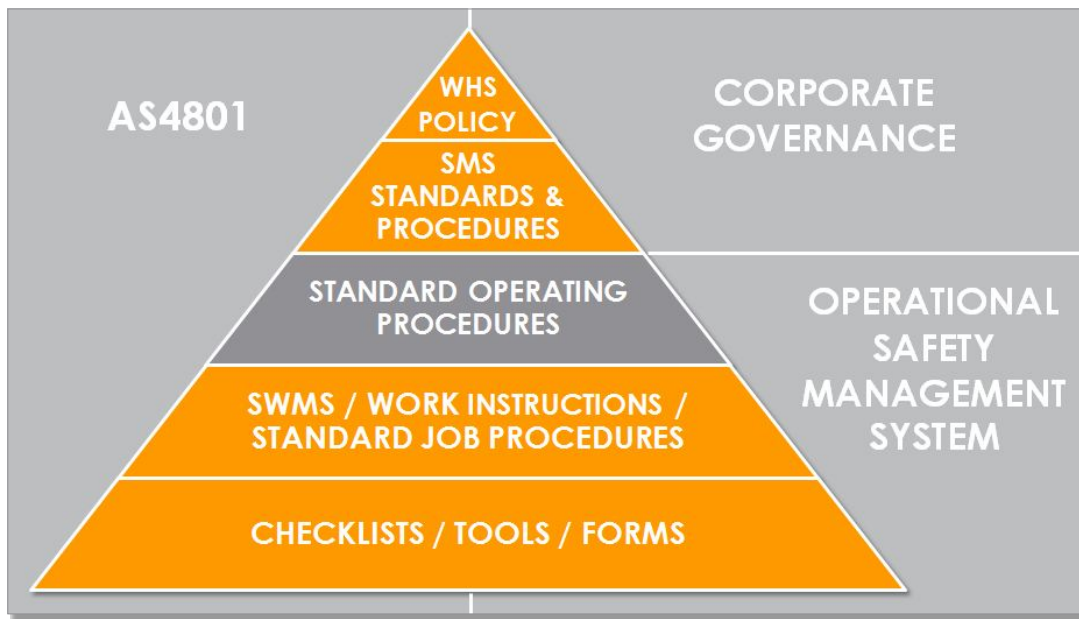
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1. SMS DOCUMENT HIERARCHY



2. PURPOSE

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) documents Queensland Urban Utilities (QUU) approach to the management of risks associated with exposure of workers to animals and noxious plants (flora and fauna).

The overall purpose of this procedure is to ensure that risks associated with flora and fauna are adequately managed in order to minimise the risk of injury or harm to workers.

3. SCOPE

This procedure applies to all QUU staff, including contractors and other persons on QUU-controlled worksites.

4. DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Domestic animals: animals that have been tamed and made fit for a human environment (e.g. dogs or cats).

Fire Ants: Key characteristics are:

- Fire ants come in an unusual variety of sizes within one nest.
- Fire ants are small (ranging from 2-6 mm).
- Fire ants are copper-brown in colour, with a darker abdomen.
- Fire ants inflict a fiery sting and are usually aggressive.
- Fire ant nests usually have no obvious entry hole.
- The inside of a fire ant nest has a honeycomb structure.
- A mature nest is often dome-shaped if in an open area but can also be found under logs, rocks or garden materials.

Introduced species: non-native animals or plants that are living outside their native distributional range as a result of human activity (either deliberate or accidental).

Livestock: domesticated animals raised in an agricultural setting to produce commodities such as food, fibre or labour (e.g. cattle, sheep, etc.).

Manager: as per QUU naming conventions, the Manager who has direct responsibility for the activity being performed or the area the activity is occurring in.

PPE: acronym for Personal Protective Equipment.

Supervisor: term used for any QUU employee who acts or is appointed as a Supervisor, Coordinator or Team Leader within QUU.

SMS: acronym used for QUU's Safety Management System.

WH&S: acronym used for Work Health and Safety.

Worker: employees, contractors, subcontractors, outworkers, apprentices and trainees, work experience students, volunteers and PCBUs who are individuals if they perform work for the business.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Outlined below are responsibilities specific to flora and fauna requirements at all QUU workplaces and controlled sites.

5.1 QUU EXECUTIVE

QUU Executive and Senior Management (CEO, ELT, General Managers – Officer and Non-Officer Appointed) are responsible for overseeing and ensuring the implementation of the requirements of this SOP and related procedures within their respective functional areas. This includes ensuring all sites are suitably risk assessed and have appropriate facilities, services and resources to ensure that risks associated with flora and fauna are adequately managed to minimise the risk of injury or harm to workers.

5.2 MANAGERS

Managers in all operational areas and QUU worksites are responsible for ensuring the review and management of risks associated with flora and fauna. This includes:

- Providing access to relevant and current immunisations for workers identified as being at risk of obtaining infectious disease from animals;
- Providing adequate resources to conduct training on how to assess locations for the presence of animals or plants that may present a risk to their safety and on common animals and plants that may be encountered in service areas; and

5.3 SUPERVISORS

Supervisors and Team Leaders in all operational areas and QUU worksites are responsible for ensuring that risks associated with flora and fauna are managed including:

- Incorporating animal and plant awareness in any site inductions where animal or plant risks exist;
- Identifying pests as a potential risk and implementing adequate controls;
- Ensuring all workers and contractors are familiarised with the relevant parts of this SOP; and
- Providing appropriate training, instruction and supervisions for workers.

5.4 WORKERS

All workers shall ensure that they:

- Follow the guidelines of this Flora and Fauna SOP and related procedures;
- Wear provided PPE in the manner instructed;
- Obtain any required immunisations;
- Report any related incidents to their supervisor and:
 - Follow the injury management procedure; and
 - Complete a QUU WHS Incident Report form in accordance with QUU WHS incident reporting procedures.

5.5 CONTRACTORS

At all times when performing work on a QUU site or for/on behalf of QUU, contractors must meet or exceed this or other related procedures. This includes:

- Satisfying the roles and responsibilities detailed in this section (i.e. as a worker); and
- Complying with this SOP and all relevant legislation, codes of practice, standards and licensing requirements that apply to their respective scope of work.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- WHS Hazard and Risk Management Procedure (PRO363)
- WHS Incident Reporting, Investigation and Escalation Procedure (PRO364)
- First Aid Standard Operating Procedure (PRO384)
- Infection Control Standard Operating Procedure (PRO534)
- Personal Protective Equipment Standard Operating Procedure (PRO424)
- Ground Disturbance Standard Operating Procedure (PRO419)

7. PROCEDURE

7.1 RISK ASSESSEMENT

Risks associated with flora and fauna vary at each QUU workplace or controlled site and depend on a number of factors such as the nature of work and the location of the site. QUU will undertake a risk management to determine required controls for flora and fauna risks. This will involve:

- Identifying hazards that could result in work-related injury or illness;
- Assessing the type, severity and likelihood of injuries and illnesses;
- Providing appropriate equipment, facilities and training; and
- Reviewing controls on a regular basis or as circumstances change.

A Risk Assessment must be undertaken for each task that may lead to persons coming into contact with animals or plants that pose a risk of injury or harm. Examples include:

- Dogs and cats (domestic and wild);
- Other mammals or marsupials (e.g. kangaroos, possums etc.);
- Spiders;
- Snakes;
- Fire ants;
- Other biting or stinging pests;
- Any animals that could be potentially carrying and capable of transmitting rabies or other infectious disease (e.g. bats, dead animals/birds etc.);
- Plants known to be toxic to humans;
- Plants known to cause eye irritation, rashes or discomfort; and
- Noxious weeds.

Refer to the **WHS Hazard and Risk Management Procedure (PRO363)** for further guidance on QUU's risk management process that must be applied.

7.1.1 CONTROL MEASURES

Control measures must be based on where employees are likely to work (e.g. bush), and the type of animal or plant species they are likely to encounter. As the required approach differs for each animal and plant species, it is essential to seek advice from the Qld Department of Environment and Heritage on the best control strategies.

General control measures include:

- **Elimination** (where possible) – for example having animals such as snakes, possums etc. removed from work areas by trained wildlife service personnel; and
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** – for example boots, long pants, long-sleeved shirts etc.

7.2 GENERAL GUIDELINES REGARDING FLORA AND FAUNA

QUU will ensure that the following actions are undertaken in relation to flora and fauna:

- Before entering a property and commencing work on a new site, employees must conduct a visual inspection for animals and plants that may pose a potential risk in the work area (e.g. snakes or spiders);
- Employees must be provided with appropriate PPE where required (e.g. gators, gloves etc.);
- First aid kits must be supplied to sites. Supervisors/First Aid Officers must check the contents of kits regularly to ensure that the appropriate stock is available for workers operating in particular areas (e.g. snake bite kits);
- Toolbox talks must incorporate animal and plant awareness where required to ensure employees and other persons on QUU worksites are adequately informed;
- Animal and plant control processes must be evaluated and reviewed during internal WH&S audits, with outcomes reported to management.

Employees must:

- Not intentionally encourage wild animals with food or shelter;
- Avoid contact with animals and not provoke any animals in any way;
- Wear provided PPE and insect repellent where required;
- Not intentionally remove or relocate plant substances from one location to another;
- No not ingest any plant material; and
- Inform their Supervisor if wildlife or potentially toxic/noxious plants are encountered, as each individual situation needs to be assessed and have appropriate action taken that considers the safety of all employees and the general public.

7.3 BASIC PREVENTATIVE GUIDELINES

- Still bodies of water (e.g. buckets, used tyres, equipment etc.) must not be left onsite, as this may encourage the breeding of mosquitos;
- Trees, bushes and grass must be trimmed and maintained;
- Litter and waste build-up on site must be prevented;
- A Snake Bite Kit must be readily available when working on sites known to have snakes present; and
- Regular plant/animal/insect awareness training must be conducted.

7.4 IMMUNISATIONS

Immunisations may be required by field employees, as identified through consultation with the Health Management Team and Qld Health. Refer to the Immunisation Matrix for further information.

7.5 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT ANIMALS, PESTS & WILDLIFE

Most Australian wildlife is protected under the *Qld Nature Conservation Act 1992* and the *Qld Nature Conservation Regulation 2006*. Where necessary, wildlife should only be removed by Qld Parks and Wildlife Service or by a wildlife professional who is trained in the handling of a particular species.

7.5.1 INTERACTION WITH DOGS

QUU employees and contractors may encounter dogs while conducting work. Example situations include:

- While reading water meters;

- While undertaking asset inspections;
- On suburban streets; and
- In remote service areas.

Before entering premises, workers must:

- Observe the property for signs of residence of a dog, such as bowls, chains, toys, bones or chewed up articles;
- Check if there is a warning on a property of a 'Dangerous Dog', and not enter without the permission of the owner and confirmation that the dog has been safely secured away from the work area; and
- Make sure that they are not being challenged by a dog at the gate (in which case they must not enter).

While on premises containing dogs, workers must ensure that they do not:

- Approach dogs that are tied up;
- Try to pat or grab hold of dogs; and
- Turn their back to dogs that are not tied up or whose restraints allow them to reach the worker.

If attacked or bitten by a dog, workers must:

- Not strike or hit the dog;
- Shout for help and wait until the dog moves away;
- Calmly and silently check to see if the dog has gone far enough away before seeking help;
- Stay where they are (if the dog is still around) until it is safe to move; and
- Report all incidents to their supervisor immediately and complete the appropriate QUU Incident Notification Reports.

7.5.2 INSECTS AND SPIDERS

There are many infectious diseases as well as stinging and inflammatory bites that can be caused by insects, spiders and other biting pests. Examples of insects, spiders and pests that can cause harm include:

- Funnel web spiders;
- Redback spiders;
- Ticks;
- Bees and wasps;
- Ants (including fire ants);
- Mosquitoes (can transmit Ross River Fever, Dengue Fever or Barmah Forest Virus);
- Caterpillars, centipedes and millipedes; and
- Cane toads.

QUU field workers must be issued with insect repellent in areas where there is a risk of being bitten by insects. This must be applied by workers prior to undertaking works.

Appropriate long trousers and long sleeved clothing and PPE such as gloves should be worn in addition to the application of repellents if required.

Care must always be taken when moving or handling material or items that are located in QUU-controlled workplaces, as there is always risk of spiders and other stinging or biting insects and pests nesting in these items.

For further information on first aid for bites and stings, please refer to the **First Aid SOP (PRO384)**.

7.5.3 FIRE ANTS

Fire ants are a declared pest in Australia, and to stop the spread of fire ants, the Queensland Government has established 'Fire Ant Restricted Areas' and associated movement controls in certain areas throughout Queensland. In these restricted areas, controls apply to the movement of certain items (such as soil, mulch, bark, gravel, turf etc.) Further information on restricted areas is available via the Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's website.

There are some 'Fire Ant Restricted Areas' within QUU's area of service. QUU must ensure that workers are given instruction on these locations and on the precautions to be taken when operating within these areas. QUU has an Approved Risk Management Plan (ARMP) for works undertaken in these areas.

7.5.4 SNAKES

There are a number of potentially dangerous species of snake in Queensland. It is important to assume that all snakes are venomous if they are encountered while on a worksite. Snakes must never be approached or handled. In addition, employees must:

- Wear boots, approved gators and trousers when on a QUU worksite (as per QUU uniform requirements);
- Be aware of where they are placing their hands and feet;
- Not place hands or feet in or under logs, rocks, hollows, crevices or debris without checking first that there is no snake present;
- Use a torch when walking on worksites at night;
- Not interfere with a snake; and
- Not handle snakes.

For further information on first aid for snake bites, refer to the **First Aid SOP (PRO384)**.

7.5.5 BATS

Bats and flying foxes may carry bacteria and viruses which can be harmful to humans. Transmission of the virus from bats to humans is usually through a bite, scratch or exposure to bat saliva through the eyes, nose or mouth.

QUU personnel must avoid handling bats. If a sick, injured or orphaned bat is found, it must not be touched. Their sighting must be reported to a Supervisor, and RSPCA Qld must be contacted (Phone: 1300 264 625) who can arrange for a wildlife rescuer trained to handle and care for wildlife to remove the bat. For further information on first aid following a bat scratch or bite, refer to the **First Aid SOP (PRO384)**.

7.5.6 HORSES

Horses may transmit the potentially lethal Hendra virus to humans. As such, workers must avoid touching horses, especially in areas where flying foxes are roosting or known to feed. Horses appearing weak or uncoordinated must also be avoided, and their sighting should be reported to a Supervisor, who in turn has a legal obligation to immediately contact:

- Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 (during business hours); or
- Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888 (24 Hour Hotline).

7.6 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT PLANTS

7.6.1 TOXIC/POISONOUS PLANTS AND FUNGI

There are a number of species of plants in Australia that are known to be toxic to humans and animals, and plenty more cause skin and eye irritation, rashes or discomfort. For a list of toxic/poisonous plants and fungi found in Queensland, access the Queensland Poisons Information Centre website.

Common symptoms of poisoning from plants may include:

- Skin allergies;
- Stinging around the mouth;

- Vomiting;
- Stomach cramps;
- Irregular heart beat;
- Burning to the mouth; and
- Convulsions (fits).

The type and severity of symptoms will vary according to the type of plant eaten, the amount swallowed and the size of the person affected.

If it has been identified that there are potentially poisonous plants on a QUU worksite, workers must be provided information on this at site induction/toolbox talks. Workers must avoid any plant that is identified as a potential risk to their safety.

For information on first aid for poisonings by plants or fungi, refer to the **First Aid SOP (PRO384)**.

7.6.2 PEST PLANTS/WEEDS

Highly invasive weeds have significant impacts on primary industries, natural ecosystems, and human and animal health across Australia. A number of weed species have been declared as pest plants in Queensland under the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*. For a current list, access the Qld Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's website.

It is important that action is taken to prevent the potential spread of established pest plants into new areas.

Potential controls to prevent weed spreading include:

- Any instructions provided in site Induction/Toolbox Talks regarding potential weeds on site and required actions must be adhered to.
- Designated roads and tracks must be stuck to, and weed-infested areas must be avoided.
- Equipment, boots, clothing, vehicles and machinery must be cleaned before leaving known weed-infested areas. Special attention should be focused on the undercarriage and tyres.
- Off-road vehicles must be cleaned by blowing, vacuuming or washing off dirt and seeds.
- Weeds or plant waste must not be dumped in any area outside the weed-infested site. Waste must be disposed of appropriately by transporting it safely to a waste disposal facility.

At QUU, the responsibility of controlling weeds rests with each individual site. For further information, refer to your site's Work Instructions.

7.7 TRAINING AND COMPETENCY

QUU personnel and other persons on QUU worksites must be provided with instruction and training on:

- How to assess locations for the presence of animals or plants that may provide a risk to safety; and
- Common wildlife and plants that may be encountered in service areas, such as parks, gardens, roads, storage areas etc.

In addition, QUU personnel and other persons on QUU worksites must be provided with animal and plant awareness at site inductions where animal or plant risks have been identified to ensure that all personnel feel confident in dealing with animal/plant risks.

8. REFERENCES

The following references contain information used in the preparation and development of this Flora and Fauna SOP:

- Queensland Work Health and Safety Act 2011.
- Queensland Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011.
- Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992.
- Queensland Nature Conservation Regulations 2006.

- Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002.
- Queensland Department of Health.
- Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection.
- Queensland Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing.
- Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.
- Queensland Poisons Information Centre.
- Australian Venom Research Unit.

9. REVIEW

The Flora and Fauna SOP is to be reviewed every 3 years or earlier if:

- There is an identified risk to business
- A significant safety or serious injury event occurs
- Incident investigation or audit results show that application of the standard fails to deliver the required outcomes
- There are changes in associated legislation
- There is evidence that the standard is not having a positive impact on safety-related KPIs.

10. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information, contact your Health and Safety Representative or the QUU Safety Team.