



**Nontraditional
Companion Animal and Aquatic
Certification Standards**

Pet Provider Locations

10/17/22

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| American Humane Certification Program..... | 3 |
| Environment..... | 6 |
| Appearance & Behavior..... | 13 |
| Nutrition..... | 15 |
| Health..... | 18 |
| Staff Training..... | 20 |
| Safety & Sanitation..... | 20 |
| Suppliers & Receiving..... | 22 |

PALM BEACH, FL
(561) 537-5887

WASHINGTON, DC
1400 16th Street NW, Suite 360
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 841-6080

LOS ANGELES, CA
(818) 501-0123

www.AmericanHumane.org



American Humane Certification Program

As the nation's voice for the protection of animals, American Humane reaches millions of people daily via groundbreaking research, education, training, and services that span a wide network of organizations, agencies and businesses. From its beginning, the historic American Humane has been at the forefront of every major advancement in protecting animals from abuse and neglect as well as promoting the human-animal bond.

American Humane Nontraditional Companion Animal and Aquatic Certification Program

To be eligible for certification, a pet provider's locations and suppliers must be audited and found to be in compliance with the certification standards. American Humane's Certification program audit is focused on assessing the condition, well-being, and welfare of small mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates and aquatic life at pet provider locations. On-site audit questions focus on housing/enclosures, veterinary care, behavior, nutrition and safety. Core principles set the stage for a set of detailed questions aimed at confirming that the animals are not only in good condition physically but have overall good welfare.

A pet provider will not be awarded certification if any location or animal supplier has failed an audit unless and until the cause of the failure is resolved to American Humane's satisfaction. If an animal supplier of a Certified pet provider fails an audit, or otherwise is found to have fallen out of compliance, American Humane has the right to require the pet provider to cease shipments from that supplier to its retail outlets until the cause of failure is resolved to American Humane's satisfaction. If a pet provider location fails an audit or otherwise is found to have fallen out of compliance, American Humane has the right to require a pet provider to remove all animals from a location until it has taken corrective action to resolve the cause of the failure to American Humane's satisfaction.

Core Principles

These principles represent criteria that are essential as indicative of an animal's welfare. They are animal-centric with the goal of confirming that good welfare and humane treatment of all nontraditional companion animals and aquatics is provided at a facility. These core principles must be met in order to pass the certification audit. They underlie the entire audit and are not simply assessed once at the start of an audit but can be reviewed at any time during an audit. Failure of these non-negotiable requirements will result in failure of the audit.

1) No Animal Abuse or Neglect Observed During Audit

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(561) 537-5887

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1400 16th Street NW, Suite 360
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 841-6080

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No observations of willful acts or unintentional signs of abuse or neglect by any person at the pet provider location are acceptable. Observation of such acts will automatically result in failure of the audit.

Animal Abuse
 PASS
 FAIL

2) Appropriate Veterinary Care Plan

The audit will identify whether a facility has a relationship and plan in effect regarding sick/injured animals with a qualified and licensed veterinarian. Review of the plan (if a physical document exists) and discussion with staff that such a plan exists is required. Failure to provide confirmation of a veterinary care plan will result in failure of the audit.

Approved Plan
 PASS
 FAIL

3) Staff Conduct that Promotes Animal Welfare

Staff/Leader on duty must be aware of the facility's protocols and procedures as well as conduct themselves in a manner that promotes animal welfare.

Staff Conduct
 PASS
 FAIL

Failure to do so, or observations of blatant abuse (see #1 above) will result in failure of the audit.

Welfare Indicators Checklist

Welfare indicators for the American Humane Certification audit are presented generally with respect to direct and indirect information. Direct information includes aspects of welfare that are observable for the animals being assessed by an auditor while indirect information includes information obtained from staff (e.g., maintenance, feeding procedures, isolation area/procedures).

In addition to the three pass/fail core principles, items related to housing/environment, appearance/behavior, nutrition, health/veterinary care and cleaning/sanitation will be reviewed and documented. Records and staff knowledge/training will be reviewed during an on-site assessment.

In order for a pet provider location to pass the American Humane Certification audit, they must meet the requirements of the three core principles and comply with all items on the audit checklist or provide an approved Corrective Action Plan on how the location has complied and/or will comply with missed audit items from the checklist.

Non-Compliance Issues

Any checklist items that do not meet American Humane Standards during an on-site audit will be described in an Audit Summary Report made available within 10 days of completion of the

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Washington, DC 20036
(202) 841-6080

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on-site audit. A Corrective Action Plan must be submitted to American Humane within 14 days of the Audit Summary Report date. The Corrective Action Plan describes the missed checklist items identified through the audit process and the corrective actions that will be completed by the pet provider location with a proposed timeline and including any supporting documentation (e.g., photos, documents detailing compliance acts, etc.).

The Corrective Action Plan must be approved by American Humane. The Corrective Action Plan is to be completed within the timeline that was outlined in the plan by the pet provider location and approved by American Humane. The pet provider location is subject to a re-audit at the discretion of American Humane after plan completion. Variances are permitted through written submission to American Humane and upon prior written approval. Pet provider locations are encouraged to report their progress on corrective actions throughout the correction period.

Maintaining Certification

Pet provider locations and supplier of certified pet providers are expected to maintain high welfare standards throughout the term of certification. **American Humane will continue to audit pet provider suppliers and locations and reserves the right to perform spot checks at any time during the certification period with reasonable notice. American Humane may suspend or revoke certification at any time if the requirements of the certification program are not being met by the pet provider.**

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WASHINGTON, DC
1400 16th Street NW, Suite 360
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 841-6080

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Nontraditional Companion Animal & Aquatic Standards – Pet Provider Locations

Environment

Housing - General

- The primary enclosure shall have a label attached, visible to the public, which shall include the species and a description of the animal.
- All animals must be housed under conditions that provide sufficient space as well as supplementary structures and resources required to meet physical, physiologic, and behavioral needs.
- The primary enclosure must provide a secure environment that does not permit animal escape and must be made of durable, nontoxic materials that resist corrosion, withstand the rigors of cleaning and regular handling, and are not detrimental to the health of the animals.
- The enclosure must be designed and manufactured to prevent accidental entrapment of animals or their appendages and must be free of sharp edges or projections that could cause injury to the animals or personnel.
- The enclosure must have smooth, impervious surfaces with minimal ledges, angles, corners, and overlapping surfaces so that accumulation of dirt, debris, and moisture is minimized, and cleaning and disinfecting are not impaired.
- All enclosures must be kept in good repair to prevent escape of or injury to animals, promote physical comfort, and facilitate sanitation and servicing.
- Animals must be housed in appropriate numbers to prevent overcrowding.
 - Animals housed in numbers exceeding American Humane space guidelines must meet all performance standards (e.g. bedding clean, no stress, no disease or behavior issues)
- Socially housed animals must have sufficient space and structural complexity to allow them to escape aggression or hide from other animals in the pair or group.
- Predator species must not be housed within sight of prey species
 - Predator species must not be housed in a habitat separated by a removable divider even if the divider is opaque.
- Temperature and humidity must be species appropriate and follow American Humane guidelines.
- Facility lighting must be sufficient to allow adequate cleaning and inspections.
- Lighting cycles for areas that have animals must support the animal's (mammals, birds, reptiles and aquatic life) normal circadian rhythm.
- Animal receiving and acclimation protocols must be species-appropriate to reduce the stress associated with introduction into new habitats.

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- Animal receiving and acclimation protocols must ensure diseases are not transferred from the new animals into the existing habitats.

Environmental Enrichment – General

- Enrichment can reduce stress and stereotypic behavior and therefore enhance captive animal welfare.
 - Enrichment should be provided in all habitats (hay/straw, fine sand for bathing, perches, toys, puzzle boxes, etc.)

Housing – Small Mammals

- Mammals must be separated by species in enclosures.
- Mammals must be separated by sex in their enclosures
 - This does not apply to animals used for breeding.
- Appropriate enrichment items must be present in each habitat (e.g., exercise wheels, chew toys, huts, nesting material, etc.). Nesting material is suggested for habitats holding male mice.
- Chinchillas must have dust baths offered to them a minimum of once weekly.

Substrate – Small Mammals

- Animals must have adequate bedding substrate and/or structures for resting and sleeping which is appropriate for the needs of the species.
 - Bedding must be used in amounts sufficient to keep animals dry between cage changes and must be kept from coming into contact with sipper tubes as such contact could cause leakage of water into the cage.
- In addition to standard bedding, it is recommended that nesting material be provided to all mice, rats, gerbils and hamster species. Nesting material can be any product that allows rodents to build nests (e.g., shredded paper, hay, etc.)
 - Corncob and cedar shavings must not be used as a substrate for any animal.
 - Hardwood shavings such as aspen are preferred over softwood shavings such as pine.

Housing – Avian

- Enclosures must enable birds to spread their wings and turn around while perched without touching the enclosure ceiling, floor or walls with their head, tail or wings.
- To facilitate flight for birds such as canaries and finches, habitats must be of sufficient length (and width) to accommodate airborne movement.
- For socially housed birds, sufficient perch space must be provided to allow the birds to perch communally.
- Reasonable attempts must be made to house individual birds so they can see other birds in the room.

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- Favorable perch traits include:
 - Good grip texture and suitable diameter to ensure secure footing
 - Flexibility to stimulate balance and exercise
 - Varying diameter to promote foot health
 - Chewable for environmental enrichment
 - Non-slip and not cold (in contrast to metal bars)
 - Nonabrasive (a single perch designed to safely wear down beaks and nails located at an appropriate location in the habitat is acceptable).
 - Nontoxic
- Perches must be able to be disinfected or discarded before new groups of birds are introduced.
- There must be a minimum of two separate perches in each enclosure.
- There must be enough perch space to accommodate 20% more birds than are in the enclosure to allow birds to choose appropriate perching sites.
- For general guidance:
 - 3” perch length for each bird budgerigar size and smaller
 - 4” perch length for each cockatiel size bird
 - 6” perch length for each small parrot/conure sized bird
 - 8” perch length for each medium parrot sized bird
 - 10” perch length for each larger parrot
 - 12” perch length for each large Macaw sized bird
- Perches must be located in the enclosure to minimize soiling of food and water dishes.
- Climbing opportunities must be provided in each habitat.
- Enclosures placed in racks that allow stacking vertically must ensure that food, waste and water from the enclosure above cannot enter the lower enclosure.
- It is recommended that rooms/habitats holding avian species have air handling systems designed to provide negative air pressure with exhaust directly outside and no air recirculation.
 - This configuration ensures potentially contaminated air or contagious organisms from inside the room/habitat will not flow into public areas.

Temperature and Humidity – Avian

- The bird housing areas must be at the appropriate temperature (min 60 degrees F and max 80 degrees F).
- Birds housed in outdoor enclosures must be placed in enclosures with plenty of time to acclimate to seasonal outdoor temperature variations.
 - Birds in outdoor enclosures must have access to areas where they can safely protect themselves from direct sunlight, wind, rain, cold and other extreme weather conditions.

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Housing – Reptile

- The habitat must meet the needs of the species.
- Sufficient height must be provided for species that climb or perch (e.g., iguanas, anoles, etc.)
- Species that climb must have the ability to climb above the substrate.
- The animals must be of similar size to inhibit interspecies aggression/food guarding.
- Enclosures for secretive species must be provided with refuges or visual barriers for animals to hide from view.
- Clear walls on all sides may cause reptiles to damage their rostrum.
 - If rostrum damage is present on animals, the enclosure must be changed to prevent this from happening.
- Most species of juvenile reptiles can be housed in groups.
- Habitats housing aquatic and semiaquatic reptiles must include a water area for swimming.
 - The water must be deep enough for the animal to right itself if it becomes turned over and include a haul-out area for basking/drying.
- Lids do not need to be provided for habitats housing non-climbing species, provided that the habitat sides are high enough to prevent escape.

Temperature, Humidity and Lighting – Reptile

- Reptiles must be provided with an environment that allows them to behaviorally thermoregulate.
- The temperature must be monitored.
- Habitat humidity levels must be between 30%–90%.
 - Care must be taken to ensure microenvironments for reptiles requiring low humidity allow the animals to maintain proper hydration.
- Many reptiles require exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light in the range of 290–320 nm as a necessary component of proper vitamin D and calcium metabolism.
 - UVB light must not pass through any materials that absorb critical wavelengths such as glass or plastic.
 - UVB light sources must be placed within 18 inches of animals and changed as needed to remain effective.
 - A minimum of 13 microwatts of UVB at the basking site is required for reptiles needing UVB radiation.
 - Optimal exposure time for animals in need of UVB radiation is 30 to 60 minutes twice daily
- Animal facilities housing reptiles must have backup emergency power to ensure temperature stability.

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Substrate – Reptile

- Substrates for enclosures may include paper, hardwood shavings, indoor–outdoor carpet, or more natural substances as determined by the needs of the species and limit ingestion by the animals in the enclosure.
 - Corncob and cedar shavings must not be used as a substrate.
 - Hardwood shavings such as aspen are preferred over softwood shavings such as pine.

Housing – Amphibian

- The primary enclosure must be sized and contain the necessary substrates to provide comfort and safety, while allowing for species-typical behaviors.
- Habitats housing aquatic and semiaquatic amphibians must include a water area for swimming/soaking.
- Enclosures must be escape-proof.
- Species that climb must have branches or ledges on which to perch.
- Clear walls on all sides may cause amphibians to damage their rostrum.
 - If rostrum damage is present on animals, the enclosure must be changed to prevent this from happening.

Temperature, Humidity and Lighting – Amphibian

- Amphibians must be provided with an environment that allows them to behaviorally thermoregulate.
- The humidity in the habitat must match the natural environment of the species, and most require levels >70%.
- It is best to provide humidity gradients in the enclosure to allow the animals to find their desired microenvironment.
- Some amphibians can be housed using standard lighting conditions.
- Some amphibians require exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light in the range of 290–320 nm as a necessary component of proper vitamin D and calcium metabolism.
 - UVB light must not pass through any materials that absorb critical wavelengths such as glass or plastic.
 - UVB light sources must be placed within 18 inches of animals and changed as needed to remain effective.
 - A minimum of 13 microwatts of UVB at the basking site is required for amphibians needing UVB radiation.
 - Optimal exposure time for animals in need of UVB radiation is 30 to 60 minutes twice daily
- Amphibian species that are predominantly nocturnal may require a low level of light at night to ensure that they can detect prey.

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Substrate – Amphibian

- Substrates for enclosures must be appropriate for the species and limit ingestion by the animals in the enclosure.
 - Corncob and cedar shavings must not be used for any species.
 - Hardwood shavings such as aspen are preferred over softwood shavings such as pine.

Housing – Aquatic

- All aquatic animals must be housed in life support/filtration systems with populations of the same health status.
 - Aquatic life in ill health must be maintained in a holding system that does not share the same water life support/filtration system as healthy aquatic life.
- All aquatic animals must go through an acclimation process when received that is appropriate for the species.
- All aquatic life must be eating readily available commercial diets and acclimated before being sold.
- The use of nets must be minimized, and protocols designed to reduce the chance of disruptions of aquatic life slime layers.
- Water quality/parameters must be suitable for the specific species housed in each separate aquatic system.
- Water quality/parameters in each aquatic system must be monitored regularly (minimum of twice weekly) and documented.
- Betta fish must be housed on racks or shelves that have opaque dividers, so the fish do not see each other.
 - Betta fish not housed on racks or shelves with dividers must have their holding cups physically separated by a minimum of 4 inches horizontally.
- Outdoor water pond water quality parameters may be monitored on a weekly basis.
- Water quality testing may include the following parameters:
 - Temperature
 - pH
 - Ammonia (NH₃)
 - Nitrite (NO₂)
 - Nitrate (NO₃)
 - Chlorine (Cl)
 - Salinity approximations (Marine and Brackish systems)
 - Refractometer: Specific Gravity – SG, concentration in parts per thousand – ppt
 - Hydrometer: concentration in parts per thousand – ppt, Specific Gravity – SG

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- Electrical Conductivity - $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$
- Total Dissolved Solids - ppm (mg/L)
- Backup equipment must be available for all life support/filtration system equipment and emergency power must be available to power the equipment during a power outage.
- Facilities that use outdoor ponds for producing or holding aquatic life must have methods to manage the ponds during extreme weather conditions.
 - Outdoor ponds/aquatic life must not be able to enter or flow into local surface water

Cleaning and Sanitation Standards - General

- Animal enclosures must be spot cleaned daily as needed to remove waste and perishable food.
- Enclosures must be cleaned and disinfected as needed:
 - An animal enclosure must have no more than 20% of the bedding/substrate soiled/dirty at any time.
 - Ambient ammonia (NH_3) levels in the enclosures/facility must not exceed 10 ppm.
- Food and water containers must be sanitized regularly as needed.
- Water lines must be opaque, and a program must be developed to ensure water in all automated watering systems are in compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act.
<https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-safe-drinking-water-act>
- All cleaning and disinfecting products must be appropriate for staff and animals.
- Special care must be taken when cleaning habitats to reduce cross contamination between habitats.
- Safety data sheets must be readily available for all chemicals used in the facility.
- Facility must always be kept neat and clean.
- During thorough cleaning and disinfecting, animals must be removed and placed in temporary habitats for animals' safety and to allow for thorough disinfecting of the enclosure.
- Habitats must be cleaned and disinfected before new animals are placed in the environment.
- Employees must be properly trained on how to safely and effectively clean and disinfect enclosures.
- All habitat furniture must be able to be cleaned and fully disinfected.

Cleaning and Sanitation Standards – Avian

- Avian species in breeding situations must have their habitats cleaned as often as necessary to maintain the health of the breeding birds and babies.

Cleaning and Sanitation Standards – Reptile and Amphibian

- Phenolics (e.g., Meytol, Dettol, etc.) are toxic to reptiles and amphibians and must not be used to sanitize habitats or rooms.

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- Cleaning frequency will vary depending on species.
 - Many reptiles and amphibians eat and defecate less frequently than mammals; therefore, cage cleaning intervals, especially if spot cleaning is implemented, can be less frequent.
 - In general, snake and lizard cages can be cleaned/disinfected at 1- to 2-week intervals, depending on need.
 - Aquatic and semiaquatic species of turtles and crocodilians and amphibians may require more frequent cleaning.

Cleaning and Sanitation Standards – Aquatic

- Excess food must be removed and discarded as quickly as possible to help maintain appropriate water quality.
- Aquatic life housed in systems without filtration must have the water in the system changed and holding container cleaned/disinfected as needed to maintain appropriate water quality.
- Aquatic life support/filter systems must be cleaned and maintained as needed to produce and maintain appropriate water quality for aquatic life in the system.
- Aquatic life nets and capture cups, etc. must be cleaned and disinfected between each use.

Appearance & Behavior

Health Appearance – Small Mammal

- Appropriate size and weight for the animal's age
- Smooth fur with no bald patches; no scabs or visible wounds
- Eyes bright and fully open, not cloudy; no discharge
- Nose free of discharge; no labored breathing
- Ears free of discharge; no cuts or scabs
- No external parasites
- No evidence of diarrhea/wet tail
- Alert and active with no evidence of lameness and no head tilt

Health Appearance – Avian

- Appropriate size and weight for the bird's age
- Normal respiratory rate with no tail bobbing
- Eyes and nares clear with no discharge
- Vent/cloacal area with no droppings
- Feathers and skin are smooth, not fluffed, have no bare spots, scabs, or wounds and not excessively soiled
- Some birds may require a day after transportation to groom feathers
 - Feathers are not soiled or ruffled 24 hours after transport

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- Feet, legs, and wings are symmetrical
- Birds may favor one foot while sleeping
- No signs of feather picking
- Few missing or broken feathers
- Long term goal:
 - Birds raised by humans (HF cockatiels, conures, parrots, etc.) may be encouraged to learn to fly prior to offering for sale.

Health Appearance – Reptile and Amphibian

- Appropriate size and weight for the animal's age
- Smooth skin/scales with no bald patches, scabs or visible wounds
- Eyes bright and fully open, not cloudy; no discharge
- Nose free of discharge; no labored breathing
- Auditory openings free of discharge; no cuts or scabs
- No external parasites
- No evidence of diarrhea/loose stool
- Alert and active with no evidence of lameness

Health Appearance – Aquatic

- Appropriate size and weight for age
- Active, alert with normal behavior; freely and evenly swimming
- Gills rise and fall rhythmically
- Eyes bright and clear
- Fins intact, with no tears, splits, spots, or streaks of blood; held away from the body, not drooping or folded.
- Scales have vibrant coloration and show no injury or fungal/bacterial growth
- Vent is clean and without stringy feces
- No signs of external parasites

Animal Behavior - General

- No evidence of aggression
- Appear to be appropriately socialized with other animals in their enclosure
- Exhibiting “normal” behavior for the species
- Enrichment opportunities are available
- Animals are handled safely
- Animals appear to be free from stress

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Nutrition

Food, Feedings and Water – General

- Food must be palatable, wholesome, nutritious, species specific and available as appropriate for each species.
 - All food shall be provided in sufficient quantity and frequency to meet the normal daily requirements each species.
 - Frozen food that has been thawed and not used must be discarded.
- Special care must be taken when feeding animals in separate habitats to reduce cross contamination between habitats.
- Employees must track feeding schedules.
- Feedings must only be done by adequately trained employees.
- Food/water containers must be cleaned/disinfected regularly as needed.
- Fresh water must always be available to animals as appropriate for each species.
- Water provided by bottles must be checked daily and refilled as needed.
- All automated watering systems must be designed to prevent animals in enclosures from drowning if the watering system leaks.

Food and Feedings – Small Mammal

- Food must be provided in sufficient quantity and frequency to ensure the health of the animals.
- Fruit and vegetable supplements, if provided, must be species specific.
- Grass hay/alfalfa and other supplements to the standard diet must be provided to each species as needed.
- Grass hay/alfalfa is a staple and the primary part of the diet for rabbits, chinchillas and guinea pigs and must be available at all times.
 - It can be a supplement for rats and smaller rodents.
- Tooth wear is primarily caused by the teeth (incisors and molars) rubbing against each other, not against items being chewed.
 - All rodents must be provided with products designed to be chewed to keep the animals chewing enough to maintain proper tooth length.
 - This can be in the form of manufactured food, chew products (e.g. chew sticks or wooden branches) or natural food such as grass hay or alfalfa.
- Juvenile ferrets must be provided with appropriate wet food to reduce the instance of rectal prolapse.

Food and Feedings – Avian

- Food must be provided in sufficient quantity and frequency to ensure the health of the animals.

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- Food must be offered to birds in a food receptacle such as a gravity feeder or bowl
 - Food placed directly on bottom of enclosure must be located so perching birds do not soil the food containers.
- Granivorous psittacine birds such as budgerigars and cockatiels must be fed a diet consisting of a minimum of 50% commercial pellets.
- Other psittacine species such as conures, small, medium and large parrots and macaws must be fed a diet consisting of greater than 50% commercial pellets with a goal of exceeding 70% commercial pellets.
- Pellet and seed must be mixed in food receptacle provided to birds
 - Psittacine birds with specialized diets are exempt from pellet requirements (e.g., Lorikeets)
- Canaries, finches, dove and quail may be fed an all-seed diet
- Fresh fruit and/or vegetables may be offered as appropriate
- Hand feeding birds:
 - Birds being hand-fed must be housed in appropriate enclosures suitable in size for the number of birds
 - Hand-fed birds must be given formula mixed fresh before every feeding
 - The formula temperature, when fed, must be within the range of 102-105 degrees F
 - All feeding utensils must be clutch specific and cleaned after every feeding
- Locations are encouraged to provide foraging toys in all avian habitats.

Food and Feedings – Reptile

- Food must be provided in sufficient quantity and frequency to ensure the health of the animals.
- The dietary needs of reptiles vary significantly, depending on species.
- The use of live food is necessary for some reptiles (e.g. chameleons), as they require prey movement to stimulate feeding.
- Feeder insects must fed a diet shown to provide optimal nutrition and calcium to the animals consuming the diet.
- Feeder insects may also be dusted with a vitamin and mineral supplement.
- Commercial/prepared food must be placed in an appropriately sized container and not directly on bottom of the enclosure/substrate.
- Sand Impaction:
 - Juvenile reptiles kept on a sand type substrate may be fed live food in a habitat without a sand substrate to limit the amount of substrate ingested while eating.
- Some reptile species will consume commercial or prepared diets.
- Some reptile species must be fed in the water to consume their food (e.g., some species of aquatic turtles)

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Food and Feedings – Amphibian

- Food must be provided in sufficient quantity and frequency to ensure the health of the animals.
- The use of live food is necessary for most amphibians, as they require prey movement to stimulate feeding.
- Feeder insects must be maintained on nutritious diets, gut loaded or dusted with a vitamin and/or mineral supplement to ensure a balanced diet.
- Some amphibian species will consume commercial or prepared diets.
- Commercial/prepared food must be placed in an appropriately sized container and not directly on bottom of the enclosure/substrate.

Food and Feedings – Aquatic

- The dietary needs of aquatic life vary significantly, depending on species.
- Aquatic life food must be species specific
- Most aquatic species will consume pelleted/flake diets.
- Food must be provided in sufficient quantity and frequency to ensure the health of the animals.
- Frozen food that has been thawed and not used must not be refrozen and used again.
 - Frozen food that has been thawed and not used must be discarded

Water – Reptile

- Water bowl size is dictated by species behavior and number of occupants in the enclosure.
- All animals within the habitat must be able to easily access the water, and the container must be large enough for animals to soak.
- Box turtles and tortoises must be provided with shallow water dishes that are easy to access and cannot be tipped over.
- Some species need water to be moving before they drink.
 - Water spray systems or running water may be needed for these species

Water – Amphibian

- Many amphibian species do not consume water, but rather absorb water through the skin.
- Filtered water (e.g. activated charcoal), reverse osmosis (RO), distilled, and deionized water may all be used
 - pH must be monitored to ensure it is correct for the species.
- It is necessary to conduct periodic monitoring of not only the source water and the treated water provided to the animals, but also the water in the enclosures.

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(202) 841-6080

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- Excess food and animal waste must be removed as necessary to maintain good water quality.
- In systems with recirculating filtration systems, the water parameters must be tested to ensure the water is healthy for the species.
- If the tanks do not have a recirculating water filter system, the water must be changed as necessary to ensure the water is healthy for the species.

Water – Invertebrates

- Hermit crabs:
 - Maintain two shallow bowls of water in the habitat at all times:
 - One with fresh, de-chlorinated water
 - One with marine saltwater with a specific gravity range of 1.021 - 1.026.
 - The water must be shallow enough to keep the crabs from drowning
 - Clean sponges may be used in the water bowls
 - Sponges must be cleaned/disinfected as needed to ensure animal health.
 - Extra appropriately sized shells must be available at all times
- Other invertebrates:
 - Maintain shallow bowls with fresh, de-chlorinated water in the habitats as needed
 - Clean sponges may be used in the water bowls
 - Sponges must be cleaned/disinfected as needed to ensure animal health.

Health

- All breeding events must be recorded.
- All illness must be tracked electronically or hard copy form and include information of date/species/problem/treatment at a minimum.
 - Medications used to treat the animal must be included.
- All mortality must be tracked and recorded.

Veterinary Care

- Facility must have an ongoing relationship with a veterinarian who shall provide adequate veterinary care to its animals and is legally licensed to practice veterinary medicine in the state the facility is located.
- Formal arrangement shall include a veterinary care plan. The facility must assure that a corporate or consulting veterinarian has appropriate authority to ensure the provision of adequate veterinary care and to oversee the adequacy of other aspects of animal care.
- All sick or injured animals must be seen by a veterinarian, a veterinarian be consulted about the animal's condition, or a veterinary approved protocol be enacted within 24 hours of the illness or injury being noticed.
- The program of adequate veterinary care must include:

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- The availability of appropriate facilities, personnel, equipment, and services to comply to provide adequate care.
- The use of appropriate methods to prevent, control, diagnose, and treat diseases and injuries, and the availability of emergency, weekend, and holiday care.
- A mechanism of direct and frequent communication so that timely and accurate information on problems of animal health, behavior, and well-being is conveyed to the contracted veterinarian
- Adequate guidance to personnel involved in the care and use of animals regarding handling, immobilization, anesthesia, analgesia, tranquilization, and euthanasia.
- Adequate pre-procedural and post-procedural care in accordance with established veterinary medical and nursing procedures.
- Facility must have a designated isolation area for ill animals being treated for communicable diseases or in need of convalescence. This must be a quiet, private area with the ability for staff to hand sanitize before leaving the room.
- Isolation room lighting cycles must support the animal's (mammals, birds, reptiles and aquatic life) normal circadian rhythm.
- Facility must have protocol for monitoring animals' health daily.
- Ferrets must be vaccinated against canine distemper virus and rabies virus based on vaccination protocols for the vaccine products being used.
- Veterinary visits must be recorded and updated as needed.
- All animal medical records must be kept a minimum of two (2) years and updated as needed and be in compliance with the state veterinary medicinal board.

Medication

- All prescription medications must be prescribed by a veterinarian and administered only by properly trained employees under the guidance of a licensed veterinarian.
 - Medications for one animal must not be given to another animal without specific directions to do so.
- Prophylactic treatments may be used to eliminate aquatic life parasites.
 - Aquatic life prophylactic treatments must not include antibiotics.
- Prescription medications must have a prescription label on the medication bottle or container/box that is in compliance with the state veterinary medicinal board requirements.
- Safety data sheets must be available for all medications used and stored in the facility.
- Records of medications given must be kept a minimum of two (2) years and updated as needed and be in compliance with the state veterinary medicinal board.
- Expired medications must be discarded appropriately.

End of Life Standards and Protocol

- Euthanasia of all small animals, birds, reptiles and amphibians must be performed by a licensed veterinarian.

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- Euthanasia protocols must be species specific and follow AVMA guidelines.
 - Euthanizing any animal by hypothermia in a freezer is NOT allowed.
- Euthanasia must be performed in a secure and sanitary location.
- Disposal of deceased animals must follow local, state, and federal laws.
- Records of euthanasia must be kept a minimum of two (2) years and updated as needed and be in compliance with the state veterinary medicinal board.
- Reptiles must not be euthanized with CO₂ as a sole means of euthanasia. If CO₂ is used, a secondary step must be taken to ensure the animal has been humanely euthanized. Freezing is not an acceptable secondary step.

Staff Training

- Employers must follow all state, local, and federal labor laws.
- Employers have a duty of care to their employees to take all the steps which are reasonably possible to ensure their health, safety, and wellbeing.
- Each shift must have enough staff to ensure that animals are properly and attentively cared for.
- All staff must be properly trained in order to work with animals. Re-training must be completed as needed and on a pre-determined schedule.
 - Training must include, but is not limited to proper cleaning techniques, animal care techniques, animal handling techniques, and training in how to monitor visual cues of the health of the animals.
- Training and re-training records must be kept for a minimum of two years.
- Personal biosecurity and safety measures must be made available to staff (gloves, protective coverings, hand washing/sanitation stations).
 - Information on the healthy way to handle animals must be available.
- Pre-employment screening protocols are encouraged either internally or using a third party.
- Security measures must be in place to ensure employees are only able to access areas that pertain to their responsibilities at agreed upon times.

Safety & Sanitation

Biosecurity

- Facilities must have a biosecurity plan designed to minimize cross-contamination between all areas created with input from your corporate or consulting veterinarian. The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) between areas must be used where appropriate to prevent cross contamination.
- The building must be properly maintained to prevent entry of wild/feral animals or pests.

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- Sticky traps designed to capture mammals, birds or reptiles must not be used to prevent the escape of owned animals.
- Sticky traps designed to capture mammals, birds or reptiles must not be used to prevent the entry of wild/feral animals.
- Rooms must be designed to prevent animals from escaping outside of their designated rooms.
- Animal areas on the sales floor and animal rooms must be equipped with full hand washing stations, or, at minimum, hand sanitizer stations.
- Enclosures must be cleaned and disinfected prior to new animal shipments being placed in the enclosure.
- Areas must be clearly marked as restricted for employees only where applicable.
- Waste disposal must follow state, local, and federal guidelines.
- Human interaction with animals that results in the breaking of human skin and/or bleeding:
 - Must be reported to a supervisor/manager on duty
 - The person sustaining the injury must be provided with the opportunity to seek aid from a human health care professional.

Storage of Food, Medicine, and Bedding

- All food must be stored properly in a cool and dry place sealed to prevent moisture and vermin access.
 - Food must be stored off the ground for added security.
- Food must be dated and have necessary information to track possible recalls.
- Storage containers must be cleaned as regularly as needed to maintain the integrity of the food.
- Medicine must be securely stored with restricted access.
- Medicine and supplements must be dated and clearly labeled/ identified.
- Prescription medications must have a prescription label on the medicine bottle or container/box that is in compliance with the state veterinary medicinal board requirements.
- Safety data sheets must be available for all medicines used and stored in the facility.
- Bedding/substrate must be securely stored to prevent contamination from outside sources.
 - Bedding must be stored off the ground for added security.

Remediation in the Event of a Zoonotic Outbreak

- Movement of animals, cages and equipment within the areas of facility without prior sanitation and disinfection must be avoided.
- Staff working with infected (or potentially infected) animals must have access to appropriate personal protective equipment (dust mask, gloves, washable coveralls and footwear).
- Pet provider location must cooperate fully with the Centers for Disease Control, local or state health departments, and departments of agriculture or animal health.

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- All recent records of shipments must be made available to inspectors.
- Customers that have received animals must be notified immediately.
 - Customers of all animals shipped after the pathogen was documented must be notified immediately, including animals potentially exposed to the pathogen prior to discovery.
- Transporters of animals in transit must be notified immediately by the appropriate personnel.
- Animals in the facility must be isolated until the extent of the outbreak has been determined.

Emergency Contingency Planning

- Facility must develop, document, and follow an appropriate plan to provide for the humane handling, treatment, transportation, housing, and care of their animals in the event of an emergency or disaster (one which could reasonably be anticipated and expected to be detrimental to the good health and well-being of the animals in their possession). Such contingency plans must:
 - Identify situations the facility might experience that would trigger the need for the measures identified in a contingency plan to be put into action including, but not limited to, emergencies such as electrical outages, faulty HVAC systems, fires, mechanical breakdowns, and animal escapes, as well as natural disasters most likely to be experienced.
 - Outline specific tasks required to be carried out in response to the identified emergencies or disasters including, but not limited to, detailed animal evacuation instructions or shelter-in-place instructions and provisions for providing backup sources of food and water as well as sanitation, ventilation, bedding, veterinary care, etc.
 - Identify a chain of command and who (by name or by position title) will be responsible for fulfilling these tasks.
 - Address how response and recovery will be handled in terms of materials, resources, and training needed.

Suppliers & Receiving

Animal Suppliers

- All animals must be provided by a company licensed with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) unless exempt from licensing.
- Those suppliers that are exempt must still conform to all the same standards of animal care including but not inclusive to handling, housing, space, feeding and watering, sanitation, ventilation, veterinary care, euthanasia methods, separation by animal type, transportation, and transit requirements.
- No facility shall knowingly obtain any animal from any person who is required to be licensed but who does not hold a current, valid, and unsuspended license.

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Returned Animals

- Animals returned to the pet provider location for any reason (owner relinquishment, illness, injury, etc.) must be tended to immediately upon arrival.
- Animals must be carefully placed in clean and disinfected habitats.
- Animals must be assessed for health and appropriate actions taken for animals that are not healthy.
- All sick or injured returned animals must be seen by a veterinarian, a veterinarian be consulted about the animal's condition, or a veterinary approved protocol be enacted within 24 hours of the illness or injury being noticed.

Receiving Animals

- There must be a method to track all animals by their source (breeding or vendor).
- Animals must be tended to immediately upon arrival at the facility.
- Animals must be carefully placed in clean and disinfected habitats.
- Animals must be assessed for health and appropriate actions taken for animals that are not healthy.

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