

Small Animal Standards of Care – A Summary

The PIJAC Small Animal Standards of Care provides standards of care for small mammals, reptiles, and birds. In a process that began in March 2016 at the Global Pet Expo, stakeholders from across the pet community came together to ensure that all breeders and distributors of birds and reptiles – which are not regulated under the Animal Welfare Act – as well as small mammals would be able to rely on a single set of high-level standards to provide for the care and security of both animals and employees.

For just over a year, PIJAC's Small Animal Care Committee worked diligently to create a document that best represents the industry's commitment to animal welfare, responsible pet ownership, and the availability of healthy pets for pet owners. The committee consisted of individuals representing the breeding, distribution, and retail sectors of the industry, including veterinarians.

The standards combine current Animal Welfare Act regulations and industry best practices to provide guidelines for three groups of animals: small mammals, birds, and reptiles. The standards address facilities, best care practices, and the transport of each animal group. They also include a section on proper record keeping and staffing procedures.

In addition to these standards, PIJAC will present a sample "Duty to Report" policy for breeders and distributors to protect their animals, and a toll-free hotline for employees to anonymously report any animal care issues that they observe.

General standards for all three animal groups address the five shared priority areas below.

Facilities, which addresses:

- Animal Housing
- Exterior and Interior Facility recommendations including building, water, air, and lighting
- Building biosecurity and physical security
- Cleaning and Sanitation
- Proper storage protocol for food, medicine, and bedding

Care, which addresses:

- Nutrition
- Compatibility of Animals
- Climate within enclosures
- Health, including veterinary care
- End of Life Protocol
- Escape Protocol

Transport, which addresses:

- Receiving Protocol
- Enclosure during transport
- Packing and Shipping
- Monitoring during transport
- Emergency Protocol during transport

Staffing, which addresses:

- Personal biosecurity measures
- Staff retention plans
- Duty of Care to employees
- Training requirements and protocols

Record Keeping, which addresses:

- Facilities Record Keeping
- Animal Care Record Keeping
- General Record Keeping, including daily task checklists, intake records, emergency plans, and staffing records

In addition to the shared priority standards, specific standards of care for the three animal groups also include the following:

Standards of Care for Small Mammals are based on U.S. Department of Agriculture Guidelines, and address:

- Proper enclosure size and temperature guidelines
- Nutrition guidelines of proper food and supplements based on species' needs
- Proper storage and monitoring during transport

Standards of Care for Reptiles address:

- Proper enrichment objects based on species' needs
- Enclosure temperature variation and monitoring systems
- Proper food and water source availability during transport

Standards of Care for Birds address:

- Appropriate perch size based on size of the bird
- Appropriate wall coverings in the facility to ensure proper biosecurity
- Psittacosis testing standards that follow the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV), Compendium of Measures to Control *Chlamydia psittaci* Infection Among Humans (Psittacosis) and Pet Birds (Avian Chlamydiosis), 2017