



## Position Statement: Acquisition of Animals

**GFAS believes that a sanctuary or rescue center's acquisition of animals should be legal and ethical, in the animals' best interests, and not done in a manner that encourages the commercial trade of animals.**

The GFAS standard on *Acquisition* provides that animals are only accepted if the sanctuary or rescue center has resources to provide appropriate care, the acceptance does not jeopardize the health or welfare of other animals currently housed, and if such acquisition is consistent with the sanctuary's or rescue center's mission. The sanctuary or rescue center should have all legal documentation showing that it has legal ownership and/or custody of each animal in its care.

The intent of the standard is to ensure that animals are acquired in a manner that does not contribute to the commercial trade of animals and that the acquisition does not jeopardize the welfare of the acquired animal or other animals in the facility's care.

***Acquisitions of animals are consistent with the sanctuary's mission and in the best interests of the animals.***

Sanctuaries want to help animals in need, but taking in a new animal when the facility is already at or over capacity, or if it is a species for which the sanctuary personnel have no experience and expertise, may not be in the animal's best interests and may in fact compromise that animal's welfare. A sanctuary caring for big cats, for example, may have no knowledge of the specialized veterinary care, nutrition, and enrichment that a bird needs. GFAS understands that in some instances a rescue center may be asked to assist in a large rescue operation or to accept multiple confiscated animals (e.g., animals seized by authorities from illegal wildlife trafficking). The center may be unable to turn the animals away, or feel reluctant to do so. In those instances, centers are encouraged to explore options to transfer some animals to other appropriate facilities that have more expertise or other resources to care for the species.

***Acquisitions of animals generally occur through donation or rescue.***

Animals in need of care enter sanctuaries, rescues, and rehabilitation centers through many different avenues of intake, from retirement at biomedical research facilities, to confiscation by law enforcement due to abuse and neglect, to owner surrender of legally owned animals. A true sanctuary does not promote the commercial exploitation of the species, and animals are generally not acquired through purchase. Animals are not sold, nor are animal parts, by-products, or offspring.

GFAS recognizes that some sanctuaries may purchase animals in an attempt to save those animals' lives; for example, this practice is periodically seen at equine rescues purchasing horses from auctions, or facilities in Asia that purchase elephants from their owners in order to retire them from entertainment or hard labor. While GFAS acknowledges that those in the animal rescue and welfare field may have the best intentions in saving the lives of individual animals, this strategy can sometimes ultimately result in more harm than good. Purchasing animals can create a vicious cycle: each animal purchased provides an injection of funds and continued motivation for the breeder or private owner. When you rescue an animal by purchase, you may be paying for his replacement.

In some instances, there are safety net programs which can be put in practice that keep animals from entering the purchase cycle, such as gelding clinics and euthanasia assistance for equines. Some organizations have successfully reduced or ended cruel treatment of wild animals by offering alternative livelihood programs in exchange for surrender of animals, with an agreement that the surrendered animal will not be replaced by another.

GFAS will consider limited exceptions to its standard upon reviewing each sanctuary or rescue's unique situation. If animals have been purchased, or if the sanctuary has a policy in place that allows purchase under certain circumstances, the sanctuary must provide GFAS with this information, indicating why such purchases are consistent with the sanctuary's mission and why they do not sustain or promote the commercial exploitation of the species.

***No acquisition results from the intentional breeding of animals for or at the sanctuary.***

For more information, see the GFAS Position Statement on 'Breeding of Animals in Captivity'.