

GFAS Standards Revisions Overview and FAQ's – NEW Bear Standards Appendix Coming Soon

The Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) has developed and maintained a set of animal-specific and operations standards that we use to promote excellence in animal care and evaluate organizations' operations. The GFAS Standards are considered living documents, as practices continue to progress and change through advancements in knowledge.

The purpose of these standards is to assist facility directors and personnel, other animal welfare agencies and professionals, and the public regarding best practices and appropriate criteria for the effective and efficient operations of an animal sanctuary, rescue, rehabilitation or transition center. These standards are voluntary, but provide the basis for GFAS Accreditation and Verification.

Standards for all species as well as General Animal Care and Operations Standards can be found on the GFAS website, at <https://www.sanctuaryfederation.org/accreditation/standards/>

When must sanctuaries start to use the revised requirements and Standards found in the new GFAS Bear Appendix?

- a. As of January 15, 2023, the new Bear Appendix will be available at www.sanctuaryfederation.org
- b. Applicant facilities caring for bears are encouraged to immediately begin using the revised requirements and Standards found in the GFAS Bear Appendix, in their applications for GFAS accreditation.
- c. As of January 15, 2023, all new GFAS Accreditation and Verification applicant facilities caring for bears for must use the requirements and Standards found in the Bear Appendix, in conjunction with the GFAS General Animal Care Standards and Operations Standards.

What is the policy for applicant facilities currently/already engaged in the GFAS Accreditation or Verification application process?

- a. Applicants currently in the GFAS Accreditation or Verification process will have assessments based on the 2019 version of the GFAS Standards for Bear Sanctuaries. Additionally, applicants whose Organizational Overview Form (Form A) was accepted prior to January 15, 2023 must have their entire GFAS application package submitted to GFAS prior to June 15, 2023 to utilize the 2019 version of the GFAS Standards for Bear Sanctuaries.
- b. Application submissions not completed and accepted by GFAS by June 15, 2023 are subject to the requirements and Standards found in the new GFAS Bear Appendix, and may need to resubmit some application materials.

How do the revisions to the GFAS Bear Appendix affect currently Accredited or Verified sanctuaries?

- a. GFAS Accreditation and Verification are in place for a period of three years, and expire at the end of that period. Unless the GFAS Accreditation Committee has recommended an alternate, specific timeline, Accredited and Verified facilities must complete a renewal assessment within one year of the end of that period, to avoid a lapse in GFAS status. A facility will be issued a new three-year certification upon completion of a renewal assessment. Through the renewal process, GFAS confirms that the facility is continuing to meet GFAS Standards. Facilities undergoing renewal assessment are subject to any new or higher Standards, policies, or guidelines adopted by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries. Even though a facility may have been Accredited or Verified previously, there is no guarantee that certification will be granted during subsequent assessments. GFAS Standards are subject to continuous review and enhancement.
- b. As of June 15, 2023, any GFAS Accredited or Verified sanctuary beginning a three-year renewal assessment should follow the requirements and Standards found in the new GFAS Bear Appendix. Alignment with requirements and Standards will continue to be assessed through the totality of the GFAS Accreditation/Verification renewal process, which may include, but is not limited to, submission of required documentation, interviews, and demonstration and/or

confirmation of practices during a sanctuary site visit. GFAS recognizes that there may be many acceptable ways of meeting the intent of each standard.

What are the key differences between the new GFAS Bear Appendix and the previous version of the GFAS Standards for Bears?

a. GFAS has reformatted our Standards to improve consistency and clarity, regarding what is required for GFAS Accreditation and Verification and what is recommended/preferred practice. Additionally, as GFAS expands our global reach, we recognize that there are different ways to meet our Standards that may be impacted by national laws and other circumstances; these revisions aim to bring more ease of application, emphasizing the purpose of each Standard and the outcome it seeks to achieve.

b. GFAS Standards are formatted in such a way as to separate the Operations and Animal Care portions. One single volume of Operations Standards, containing guidelines for governance, finance, staffing, safety and outreach is meant to apply to facilities caring for any/all animal taxa. Operations Standards are then paired with the Animal Care Standard(s) which correspond to the animals being cared for at any sanctuary facility. All applicants for Accreditation or Verification are expected to comply with the Operations Standards and Animal Care Standards. Additionally, GFAS Animal Care Standards for Bears have been reformatted to the new Appendix for Bear Sanctuaries. This Appendix is intended to be read in conjunction with the General Animal Care Standards, and provides additional requirements and recommendations for bears.

How can comments, feedback, and suggested changes to Standards be submitted?

a. Comments and feedback can be submitted by using the online 'Standard Suggestion' form. Comments and feedback received are directed to the GFAS Accreditation Committee and reviewed during a formalized, annual and regular process for revisions to GFAS Animal Care and Operations Standards.

The Accreditation Committee will review comments and feedback and ultimately make one of the following decisions:

1. That the Standard needs to be amended with no change in intent and is written into the next version of the *GFAS Standards*.
2. That the Standard needs to be amended but changes the intent of the Standard and is written into the next version of the *GFAS Standards*.
3. That no action to amend the Standard is required.

If a change is made, a revision of the Standards will be posted on the GFAS website, delineating the new and updated/changed content with the date revisions were released. Revised versions of Standards will also be distributed to GFAS Accredited/Verified sanctuaries and those applicants in process on an annual and regular basis.

Online Standard Suggestion Form:

<https://www.sanctuaryfederation.org/accreditation/standards/suggested-change-to-a-standard/>

b. Comments, feedback, and suggestions submitted are organized, reviewed, and analyzed by GFAS at least once annually, during the months of January/February.

Who can I contact if I have questions?

Questions can be directed to:

Contact@sanctuaryfederation.org