

APPENDIX**WILDLIFE RESPONSE STRATEGY FOR ASHMORE REEF NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE AND CARTIER ISLAND MARINE RESERVE WITHIN COMMONWEALTH WATERS. (as at 31 October 2009)****ASSETS**Current Assignment – Ashmore Reef lagoon

Australian Customs Vessel

- 6 crew available (dependent on operational priorities) for oil spill clean-up. These crew can assist in basic cleanup operations under the direction of an experienced oil spill clean up officer.
- Basic clean-up equipment is available and includes shovels, rakes, sand bags and basic personal protective equipment.

SHORELINE CLEAN-UP STRATEGY**Planning assumptions:**

- a) ACV will be equipped for basic shoreline clean-up operations.
- b) Should additional cleanup resources be required during this period, DEWHA will liaise with AMSA to ensure resources (personnel and equipment) are directed to Ashmore and/or Cartier as soon as possible.

Strategy

1. Daily survey of beaches on all Ashmore Islands to determine if oiling has occurred in previous 24 hour period.
2. Establish photographic monitoring points, from which photos of the shoreline are taken on each patrol, to assist in determining the environmental impacts if oil reaches the islands.
3. If oiling is identified, undertaken a shoreline assessment and report to DEWHA via the DEWHA duty phone on 0419 293 465 and then compile a report to send via email to the DEWHA duty Officer who responds. The incident report should include location, oil distribution and character, a sketch of the area as per the Shoreline Oiling Assessment template plus photos.
4. DEWHA and AMSA Incident Controller to discuss oiling, and provide advice to Customs officer on how/when clean up should commence.
5. Recovery of oiling if situation warrants. Recovery on the beaches of West, Middle and East Islands will be via:
 - a. Use of rakes to shift oil into rows.
 - b. Use of shovels to lift recovered oil into sand bags.
 - c. Care should be taken to minimise sediment removal. If percentage recovered oil to sediment is less than 50% advice should be obtained from AMSA and DEWHA before proceeding further.
6. Recovered oil is to be photographed, recorded and stored on the ACV for return to mainland. AMSA and DEWHA to coordinate disposal on arrival.

7. Care should be taken to minimise transferral of oil from scene to vessels via boots and Clothing. Officers should utilise the personal protective equipment provided by AMSA to reduce the risk of injury from oil/sheen. Officers should not enter the water without full protection to prevent burning of skin.

OILED WILDLIFE RESPONSE STRATEGY

If oiled wildlife is found, the following procedures should be followed:

1. Note the time of day, the location the animal was found and the general condition of the animal – how much oil is on it, if movement appears laboured, etc.
2. Identify the animal to species level if possible.
3. Take photographs of all affected wildlife and affected surrounds
4. Note how many other individuals of the same species are in the vicinity (flying, swimming, nesting etc).
5. Contact the DEWHA duty phone for advice on how to handle (0419 293 465) – note that wildlife can be dangerous, particularly if distressed, so no attempt to capture the animal should be made until advised. Anyone handling wildlife should be appropriately trained to do so.
6. Prior to collecting samples of dead wildlife ensure photos of the animal are taken. Where possible take samples for evidence collection purposes noting that samples cannot come in contact with any plastics. Wrap the samples in alfoil and then place in a sealed plastic bag. Samples must then be frozen in a specifically dedicated bio-hazard freezer to maintain their evidence value. Ensure that the location (inc latitude and longitude coordinates), the species name (if known), the date and time, and the contact details for the person who collected the sample are recorded and stored with the sample.
7. All samples (evidence) then need to be managed in line using standard operating procedures with utmost caution.
8. DEWHA to liaise with experts and provide advice as soon as possible to the onsite officers.
9. Waste management guidelines need to be developed specifically for any dead oiled wildlife that require disposal. These need to be undertaken in consultation with Customs and Quarantine to consider their requirements. If the slick continues to move closer to the Reserves then we are likely to see large numbers of oiled wildlife that will require disposal.

Specific instructions for oiled birds

1. If birds can be caught, put in a box big enough to allow bird to fully rotate (but not necessarily stretch wings) – put 20mm diameter (maximum) holes around the box to allow airflow.
2. Box mustn't go in air conditioning – place on rear deck out of the weather.
3. If birds feet feel cold, place warm water in sealed bottle in the box (to act like a water bottle).
4. Contact DEWHA as soon as possible.

CARE OF OILED WILDLIFE

- Primary care, triage and rehabilitation for oiled wildlife will be required. This process involves capturing the animal, providing basic onsite care, stabilisation and triage. Animals with a high triage priority will require transfer to the mainland for veterinary treatment. Animals will be sent to the wildlife response centre in Broome for complete

washing and rehabilitation before release when the number of wildlife in care reaches a threshold of 25 animals. Until this threshold is met, oiled wildlife will continue to be transferred to Darwin for veterinary treatment.

- Experienced wildlife officers are necessary to conduct and oversee collection operations. This activity is beyond the capability and expectations of ACV crews. Consequently, the following steps should only be followed by, or under the supervision, of a trained wildlife response expert:

Basic on site care

The oiled wildlife systems and actions established aboard the Customs vessels at Ashmore Reserve by DEWHA in effect are providing remote stabilisation in its simplest form. These actions can only be implemented by suitably experienced and competent staff and are beyond the ability of Customs crews on site. Ongoing arrangements for on site experienced wildlife personnel support are therefore necessary to achieve stabilisation.

Requires AMSA oiled wildlife response kits:

1. Quick wash – to remove the worst of the oil contamination and prevent further skin/feather damage.
2. Treat infections or physical injuries.
3. Provide temperature control, hydration and nutritional requirements.

Triage Assessment

There is suitable equipment aboard the Australian Customs Vessel stationed at Ashmore to undertake a full oiled wildlife assessment for each animal. The process does however require an appropriate level of training and confidence to deliver this assessment.

Animals will be assessed by the onsite wildlife response expert after which a decision (based on veterinary advice) will be made to transport the animal to the mainland, to veterinary facilities or to the wildlife response centre in Broome, or to release the animal.

Transport to mainland

Animals assessed as high triage priority, as determined by the onsite wildlife response expert in conjunction with veterinary advice, will require transportation to the mainland accompanied by a wildlife response expert to minimise the loss of animals during transport.

Mainland response centre

Until the number of birds in care reaches 25, wildlife will be transported from Ashmore as needed and placed in the care of a veterinarian in Darwin. Once the trigger of 25 birds has been reached the response centre established in Broome, will be activated which will allow for complete washing and rehabilitation prior to the animal's release.

POST RESPONSE WILDLIFE RELEASE

1. *Stabilise wildlife from the "Cleaning and Drying" phase*
This involves providing adequate housing, temperature control, ventilation, fluid therapy, meeting nutritional needs and any other requirements to allow the bird to get over the stress associated with the washing process.

2. *Prepare wildlife for release*

For all aquatic birds this involves the provision of pools to facilitate the waterproofing process and may take some days. Waterproof management and implementation is a specialised activity and requires specialised support from experienced personnel.

3. *Select wildlife to be released based on protocols*

Protocols include adequate body weights; good blood values; normal behaviour and waterproof testing (minimum 6 hours for terns, noddys, boobies and most coastal species; true pelagic species will require 24 hour tests).

4. *Release*

- Arrange for banding/tagging of all wildlife to be released (contact DEWHA for details)
- Select suitable sites for wildlife release
- Make arrangements for release of wildlife
- Transport wildlife to release sites