WHEA Ethical Standards of Care for Marine Animals

Last Updated: March 2025

At WHEA, we prioritize the safety and security of our students, staff, and campus. Parts of our campus and curriculum involve managing and caring for marine animals. Often, under the guidance of trained staff, students will be involved in the care of animals during their studies at WHEA.

These Ethical Standards of Care for Marine Animals are presented as a guideline for students, staff, and volunteers following the Animal Welfare Regulations and Public Health Service Policy as put forth by the USDA, which requires all personnel involved with the care and use of animals be adequately educated, trained and/or qualified in basic principles of animal husbandry to ensure high-quality scientific education and animal well-being.

Ethical marine animal care involves prioritizing their welfare and minimizing harm, respecting their natural behaviors, ensuring adequate space and habitat, and avoiding unnecessary stress or suffering. It also includes practicing responsible interactions and research that respect their conservation status and natural habitats.

General Policy

- WHEA Staff identified as responsible parties in animal care will take the required husbandry training before each school year begins or before the lapse of their last certification, as applicable.
- Follow and adhere to WHEA's Husbandry Standard Operating Procedures found in the Standard Operating Procedure: Tanks, Space, Water, Electricity, and Live Animals.
- Students will be required to report changes or concerns in animal health to trained staff (listed below) who retain control over animal welfare on campus. The trained staff will provide an assessment of the animal and a plan of action for modifying or fixing any issues raised.
    - Water quality, temperature, and light cycles must be carefully maintained to provide a healthy environment for marine animals.
    - Diets should be species-specific, addressing foraging behavior, providing a balanced and nutritious plan, and ensuring food is prepared and presented hygienically.
    - Marine research should be conducted with the least possible animal harm, emphasizing conservation and sustainable practices and ensuring appropriate methods and techniques.

    - Marine animals should be used for educational purposes that are ethical and responsible, promoting awareness of conservation efforts and respecting animals' well-being.
- No marine animals shall be brought onto campus unless explicitly approved by the administration, who will acknowledge whether the animals are within WHEA's permit to have a safe environment in controlled habitats and approve the purpose of the animal's presence at WHEA.
- Do not release the animal into the wild or allow it to escape – it's cruel to the animal and can harm Hawaii's environment and native & endemic wildlife.
- The need to properly dispose of waste and affluent so that eggs and pests can't get into the wild
- Specific to Fishes: The right home – your fish need a suitable tank or pond that's big enough and has the right equipment and accessories.
    - ☐ WHEA requires one inch of fish per gallon of water in a freshwater aquarium and ½" per gallon of water in a saltwater tank. This measurement refers to the adult size of the fish, not including the tail.
    - ☐ **Fish type**: The ratio of fish to water depends on the kind of fish, such as tropical, marine, schooling, pairing, or not.
    - ☐ **Fish size**: Consider the adult size of the fish to avoid overcrowding or your fish outgrowing their environment
    - ☐ **Water surface area** - Adequate water surface area helps with oxygen exchange and waste removal
    - ☐ **Overcrowding consequences** - Keeping too many fish in a small space can cause water quality issues, health problems for your fish, territorial fighting, fin nipping, and disease outbreaks.
- The right food – your fish needs food suitable for its species, identical to or as close to the fish's wild habitat diet as possible.
- The proper behavior – your fish needs to be provided with an environment where it can act normally; this is accomplished by knowing the baseline behavior of the fish.
- The proper care – your fish needs protection from pain, suffering, injury, and disease. Provide enough water surface area for efficient oxygen exchange and waste removal.
- Providing room for fish to hide can help reduce disease issues.
- Specific to Elasmobranchii (sharks & rays): Includes the specifics to fishes and invertebrates.

For sharks in an aquarium, the general rule of thumb is to provide a tank at least 3 times the shark's length, 2 times the shark's length in width, and at least 1 times the shark's height.

- **Sharks that need to swim to breathe:**
  A tank that is 7.5 times the shark's length, 3 times the shark's width, and b times the

shark's length is recommended.
Blacktip Reef Shark = (5.4 feet): A tank of at least 45' x 18' x 6' is recommended.

Student Requirements

1. Respect for Life: Students must understand that living creatures should be treated with care and respect.
2. Students must be approved by an advisor to work with animals.
3. Students must wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after handling aquarium water or equipment.
4. Eating and drinking are prohibited while working with aquariums.
5. Students with open cuts or abrasions should wear waterproof gloves when handling aquarium water or NOT enter the water.
6. Students should be careful when handling glass aquariums or equipment to avoid breakage.
7. Be aware that some fish and aquarium decorations can have sharp edges.
8. Fish should only be handled when necessary.
9. If nets are used, they should be appropriate for the size and type of fish.
10. Be aware of students' allergies to fish food or other aquarium supplies.

By implementing these policies, WHEA ensures a safe, structured, and welcoming environment for students, staff, guests, and animals. Thank you for cooperating to keep our campus secure and foster a positive learning atmosphere.

Trained Staff -

1. Mark Yap
2. Erik Swenson