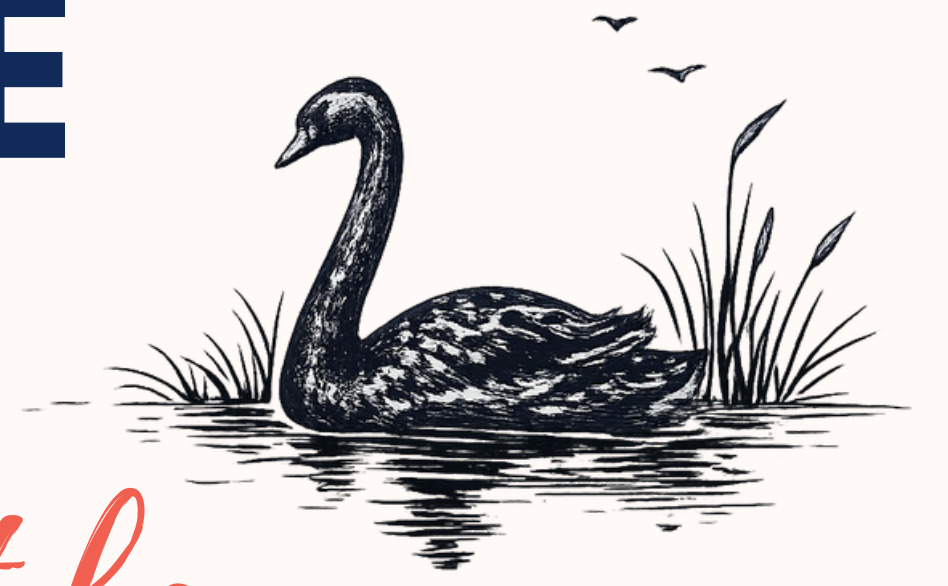


ACKNOWLEDGING WILDLIFE LOSS



When the work is over, the loss may not be

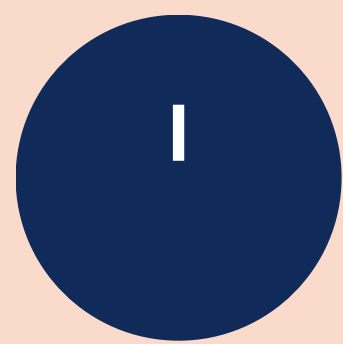
Wildlife disease and mass mortality can leave little time to stop. There may be animals to collect, biosecurity procedures to follow, records to complete and another site to attend.

But when the operational response ends, the human response doesn't necessarily end with it.

Taking a moment to acknowledge what happened can help mark the loss.

There is no single right way to do this.

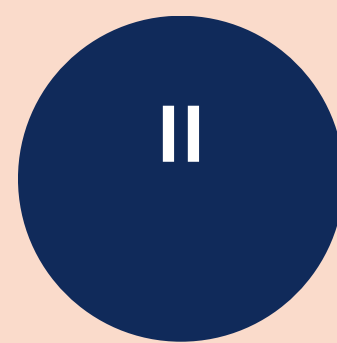
Choose what feels appropriate for you, your team, the animals and place involved. You may want to pause, remember, release — or do nothing at all.



PAUSE

Acknowledge what happened

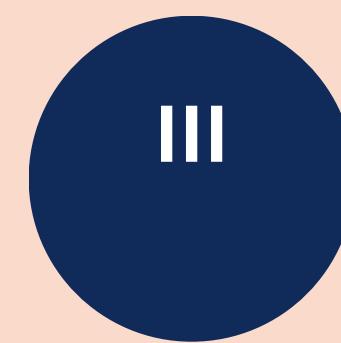
Something significant happened here. Give it a moment of recognition.



REMEMBER

Mark what mattered

Create a way to remember the animals, population, place or work that mattered.



RELEASE

Recognise the limits of care

Acknowledge what you wished you could change — and what was never yours alone to carry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS NOT ABOUT FINDING A POSITIVE

It can simply mean recognising that something mattered, that something was lost, and that caring for it had value — even when you couldn't change the outcome.

Use this resource as a menu, not a prescription.

People grieve differently. No one should be required to speak, participate in a ritual or disclose how they feel. Simply being present can be enough.

PAUSE

Acknowledge what happened

After an intense response, it can be easy to move straight to the next task. A brief pause can mark that something significant has happened without requiring anyone to explain or process it.

YOU MIGHT...

- Pause together at the end of a response.
- Name the species, population or place that has been lost.
- Hold a minute of silence.
- Share one thing people want remembered.
- Invite people to write a few words privately.
- Record what was witnessed in a field journal or team record.
- Acknowledge what people did, even when the outcome could not be changed.

THERE IS NO REQUIREMENT TO TALK

Simply stopping together, quietly, can be enough.

Avoid compulsory emotional debriefing. Offer an opportunity to acknowledge the experience, while allowing people to participate in their own way.

REMEMBER

Mark what mattered

Sometimes people want to do something that gives the loss a place in the story of their work — particularly when it involves animals, populations or places they have cared for over time.

YOU MIGHT...

- Create a photograph, drawing, map or species list.
- Create a temporary place of acknowledgement.
- Plant or restore something appropriate later.
- Return to the site when the response is over — not to work, but simply to be there.
- Record what was learned or what you want future people to know.
- Where appropriate, ask Traditional Owners how they would like loss on Country acknowledged.

KEEP BIOSECURITY IN MIND

Do not collect feathers, carcasses or other biological material from affected sites as keepsakes. Follow current biosecurity requirements.

Remembering does not have to be permanent or public. A small private act can be meaningful.

RELEASE

Recognise the limits of your care

Caring deeply can bring a painful sense that you should have been able to do more. This short practice is for moments when you need to acknowledge that feeling without carrying responsibility for everything that happened.

THE LIMITS OF CARE

A short practice for when you wish you could have done more

1. Look outside into the larger living world.
2. Take a breath, hand on chest or lap.
3. Acknowledge how you are feeling:

"I wish I could do more."

4. Pause.
5. Put down what isn't yours alone to carry:

"I am one small part of a larger web of care."

6. Let your gaze soften toward the outside.
7. Return to the room.

Caring deeply doesn't mean you have to carry all of it.

FOR INDIVIDUALS AND TEAMS

These practices can be used after a single difficult event, during a prolonged response, or later when there is finally space to recognise what happened.

IF YOU ARE LEADING A TEAM

- Offer, don't require, participation.
- Keep acknowledgement separate from operational review or performance discussion.
- Allow silence and different ways of responding.
- Be mindful of cultural meaning, Country and local protocols.
- Recognise the contribution people made without using recognition to cancel out grief.

A SIMPLE END-OF-RESPONSE PROMPT

What happened? • What mattered? • What did we do? • What was beyond our control?

AND AFTERWARDS...

Acknowledgement is not a substitute for rest, practical support or professional help. If distress is intense, ongoing or interfering with daily life, connect with support.

WILDTALK

1300 945 382

LIFELINE

13 11 14

YOUR GP / EAP

Something mattered. Something was lost. Caring for it still had value.