



TOURISM, ARTS AND HERITAGE CABINET KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF FISH & WILDLIFE RESOURCES

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Dear Wildlife Rehabilitator:

Welcome to the world of wildlife rehabilitation! New wildlife rehabilitators should consider volunteering at an established wildlife rehabilitation facility before working on their own. Working under a mentor is also recommended. Remember that the goal of wildlife rehabilitation is to return the animal to the wild to survive without the assistance of humans. Please read the following guidelines to help you with your endeavor!

Know your laws

301 KAR 2:075 Wildlife Rehabilitation: <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/kar/301/002/075.htm>

Minimum Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation: <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/kar/301/002/075.htm>

You must comply with both The Minimum Standards of Wildlife Rehabilitation and 301 KAR 2:075.

Keep accurate records. Annual reporting is required. You can find the report at:
<https://fw.ky.gov/Wildlife/Documents/rehabannreport.pdf>

International Wildlife Rehabilitation Course is mandatory

<https://thewrc.org/courses>

You are required to take the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council's (IWRC) course on Basic Wildlife Rehabilitation within one (1) year of becoming permitted. Injured, ill, and orphaned wildlife are often in need of emergency medical care when they come to a rehabber. A rehabber must know how to treat a variety of conditions such as shock, dehydration, broken bones, illnesses, and a variety of wounds. A rehabber must learn to euthanize suffering animals. Rehabbers also must have the knowledge to protect themselves from various diseases transmitted from wildlife. Without this class, many rehabbers would not have the skills or training to treat these animals or protect themselves from harm. KDFWR recommends that wildlife rehabilitators take the course and receive training before working on their own.

Keep Wildlife Wild!

Wildlife under your care are patients, not pets! Only handle wildlife when necessary to minimize stress and habituation. Wildlife must be housed in a quiet area, with minimal visual stimuli that is away from human activity. Visitors shall not be permitted to view, handle, or have any contact with wildlife. This stresses the animal and puts people in danger from bites, scratches, or disease. Domestic animals may not be present in the facility. It is your responsibility to ensure animals are not habituated to humans to the best of your ability. **Wildlife must be maintained in an enclosure and shall not be loose in the facility or home. Treating a wild animal as a pet is a violation of 301 KAR 2:075. Wildlife rehabilitators that treat animals as pets risk losing their rehabilitation permit. They also risk citation and confiscation of wildlife.**

Enclosures

Do not house prey and predators adjacent to each other. This creates a stressful situation that inhibits healing. Indoor cages should be replaced by outdoor enclosures as the animal progresses through the rehabilitation process. Outdoor enclosures condition the animal for survival in the wild and reduce the chances of habituation. For more information, read the Minimum Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation at the link above.

Disease Transmission

It is important to understand the disease risks associated with each species you work with. Diseases that are passed from animals to humans are called zoonoses. Wildlife rehabilitators are at a greater risk of contracting zoonoses. Zoonoses of concern include but are not limited to: anaplasmosis, anthrax, arbovirus encephalitis, babesiosis, baylisascaris procyonis, bovine tuberculosis, brucellosis, campylobacteriosis, cryptosporidiosis, giardiasis, hantavirus, highly pathogenic avian influenza, histoplasmosis, leptospirosis, Lyme disease, plague, psittacosis, Q fever, rabies, rocky mountain spotted fever, salmonellosis, spirochaetal relapsing fever, toxoplasmosis, tularemia, and West Nile virus. Please go to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website at <https://www.cdc.gov> and read the Minimum Standards to understand additional disease risks.

Raccoon Roundworm

Please go to the CDC website for more information: <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/baylisascaris/> *Baylisascaris* infection is caused by a roundworm found in raccoons. This roundworm can infect people as well as a variety of other animals, including dogs. Human infections are rare, but can be severe if the parasites invade the eye (ocular larva migrans), organs (visceral larva migrans) or the brain (neural larva migrans). Children are more susceptible. Roundworm can only be killed by boiling water or propane flame-gun.

Rabies

Please go to the CDC website for more information: <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/index.html> Rabies is a viral disease that is spread most often from bites, contaminated saliva, or exposure to neural tissue. Once symptoms occur, treatment is ineffective and the disease is fatal. All mammals are potential hosts for rabies. The most common infected species are raccoon, fox, coyote, bat, and skunk,

otherwise known as Rabies Vector Species (RVS). Persons working with mammals should use personal protective equipment (PPE), get pre-exposure vaccinations, and specialized training in rabies vector species. **Rabies Vector Species should never come into contact with anyone other than the permitted wildlife rehabilitator. If a human comes into contact with an animal in which rabies is suspected, observation alone is inadequate. By law, the animal must be tested by microscopic examination of brain tissue.**

KRS 258.085 Animal Control and Protection

Quarantine of animals suspected of having rabies -- Destruction of animal in lieu of quarantine --
(c) If a wild or exotic animal bites a human being or exhibits symptoms of rabies, that animal shall be destroyed and tested for rabies

902 KAR 2:070 Department for Public Health

Section 5. Destroying an Animal Exhibiting Positive Signs of Rabies
Wild animals suspected of rabies shall be sacrificed and their heads submitted to the laboratory immediately

Pre-exposure Rabies Vaccinations

All rehabilitators handling mammals (especially adults) should have pre-exposure rabies vaccinations and be knowledgeable in the handling of these species. Any bites from an RVS should be reported to the public health department. Animals suspected of rabies that are to be tested should be refrigerated immediately following death or euthanasia; these carcasses should NOT be frozen or the test results will often be invalid.

Department of Occupational Health and Travel, University of Kentucky

Paula Naylor, LPN, Patient Services Coordinator 859-257-5150
<http://www.uky.edu/publichealth/pmclinic>
Cost: \$810 for full series (3 doses) + \$65 doctor consultation fee

Franklin County Health Department

Tammie J. Bertram, MSN, RN, Director of Nursing & Harm Reduction/Syringe Exchange Program
502-564-7647 Email: tammiej.bertram@ky.gov
Cost: \$915 for full series (3 doses)

Immune-compromised individuals

Individuals with medical conditions that suppress their immune system are at a much higher risk of contracting diseases from wildlife (zoonoses). This includes but is not limited to persons with autoimmune diseases and those undergoing cancer treatments, such as chemotherapy. These individuals should refrain from wildlife rehabilitation and should not be on the premises of a wildlife rehabilitation facility. Nor should they come in contact with wildlife or any contaminated materials.

Do not create Nuisance Wildlife

Wildlife should be released in appropriate habitat within the county of capture or adjacent county of capture. Cities, towns, and subdivisions are not appropriate for most species. Habituated animals often become nuisance animals, causing structural damage to homes. Homeowners are forced to deal with problem animals. These animals are often trapped and euthanized. Removal is costly. You put too much work into these animals to lose them due to nuisance issues. Feeding wildlife after its release creates a dependency on humans that leads to nuisance behavior. This does not meet the objectives of wildlife rehabilitation. Wildlife congregated around a feeding source are more likely to spread disease, become overpopulated, and become a nuisance to others.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

Migratory birds are federally protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). A federal wildlife rehabilitation permit is required to rehabilitate migratory birds. A sub-permit is required to pick up and regularly transport migratory birds to a wildlife rehabilitation facility. Federal permits and sub-permits must be on file with KDFWR. All birds in KY except invasive species are protected under the MBTA. Eurasian Starlings, House sparrows, and pigeons are invasive species and rehabilitation is prohibited. Game birds are protected by state law. To obtain a federal migratory bird rehabilitation permit, please contact U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Program, Southeast Region at address P.O. Box 49208, Atlanta, Georgia 30359. Phone Office: (404) 679-4163

Nestlings and Fledglings

It is illegal to take healthy fledglings or nestlings. Nestlings can be returned to the nest if they fall out. Nestlings can be distinguished from fledglings because they are covered in down and lack flight feathers. Nestlings may not be taken if their parents are present unless they have an obvious injury or illness. Fledglings are simply young birds learning to fly. It is very common to see them on the ground or in branches. They must learn to fly and do not need our assistance. Taking a fledgling from its parents is both a state and federal crime and often fatal for the bird.

Euthanasia

Euthanasia, from the Greek word *eu thanatos* meaning "good death" is the act of causing death in a humane way. Euthanasia is the most difficult part of wildlife rehabilitation. However, under certain circumstances is the most humane. Wildlife Rehabilitators must be skilled in euthanasia techniques and willing to euthanize suffering wildlife.

Non-releasable Animals

Only non-releasable animals may be used for educational programs and public viewing. Specific injuries that allow a wildlife rehabilitator to keep a non-releasable animal include a mammal with an amputated leg, an animal that is blind, or lacks locomotive skills. Euthanasia is often the best decision for wildlife that cannot be released into the wild. Non-releasable animals must be kept in enclosures that mimic their natural environment. They shall not be treated as pets. They shall not be loose in your home or facility. **Habituated animals are not permitted to be kept by wildlife rehabilitators.** Injured, ill,

orphaned, or displaced wildlife under your care shall not be used in educational programs. They are in the process of healing and shall be kept in the rehabilitation facility. **Rabies vector species must not come into contact with the anyone other than the permitted wildlife rehabilitator.**

Illegal Pets

A wildlife rehabilitator can only accept wildlife that is injured, ill, displaced, or orphaned. Illegal pets do not fit these categories and may not be accepted from the public. These animals are most often adults that cannot survive on their own in the wild due to habituation. Habituated animals do not qualify as non-releasable animals and cannot be kept. Report illegal pets to your local conservation officer. If you accept illegal pets, you will be responsible for euthanasia if they cannot be returned to the wild. By protecting the person that caused the animal's death from the consequences of their actions, they failed to learn the error of their ways. More than likely, they will repeat the illegal behavior, causing another wild animal to suffer.

Reuniting Wildlife

Each year the struggle to provide care for large numbers of healthy orphans places a heavy burden on wildlife rehabilitators. **Healthy orphans should be reunited with their parents immediately.** Typically, true orphans will not be healthy, since they have been left alone in the wild without parental care. Although wildlife rehabilitators do an excellent job caring for wildlife, the advantages of growing up in the wild can never be matched. Reuniting juveniles within 24 hours ensures the highest rate of success. During the first 24 hours, the parents are usually actively searching for lost young and easily find them.

Sometimes, young animals are often found wandering on their own with no apparent nest or den in sight. Unknowing but well-intentioned finders often assume these youngsters are in need of help. If you get a call from a concerned citizen, and the animal seems healthy, assess the situation and direct them to release the animal in the location found. Advise the person to leave the area to allow the parents to come back.

Intentional Obstruction of Lawful Take of Wildlife

Hunters and trappers are a vital part of wildlife conservation. The purchase of hunting/fishing/trapping licenses pays for conservation of wildlife and their habitats. Many wildlife populations in KY have rebounded thanks to the support of sportsmen and women. Without their funding, many species would lose protection. It is against the law to interfere with hunting or trapping. This includes removing nuisance animals from traps. **Wildlife rehabilitators that attempt to or stop a hunter or trapper from harvesting an animal shall be cited. Their wildlife rehabilitation permit shall be revoked and wildlife confiscated.**

KRS 150.710

- (1) No person shall intentionally obstruct or disrupt the right of a person to lawfully take wildlife by hunting, trapping, or fishing.
- (2) The Attorney General or any person directly affected may bring an action to restrain conduct unlawful under this section and may bring an action to recover damages.
- (3) The officers of the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, or any other peace officer, police officer, state police officer, or sheriff may enforce this section.
- (4) This section shall not apply to incidental interference with the taking of wildlife by hunting, trapping, or fishing caused by lawful activities including, but not limited to, farming, mining, or recreation.

Medical Procedures

Wildlife shall only be treated for injuries or illness necessary for their survival. Neutering or spaying a wild animal greatly reduces their quality of life. It is also a violation of law. Vaccines are often unnecessary and expensive. Follow up vaccinations are often required a year after the initial dose. Wildlife must be released immediately after recovery. It is illegal to keep a rehabilitated animal simply to administer follow up vaccinations.

Release Considerations

Wildlife must be released immediately upon recovery from injury or illness, or upon reaching appropriate age to survive on its own. Wildlife shall not be kept in rehabilitation more than 180 days.

Facility Inspection

A Conservation Officer will inspect your facility annually. Facility Inspection requirements are based on the Minimum Standards of Wildlife Rehabilitation. Requirements:

1. Veterinarian support
2. Separate refrigeration from human food for animal food, carcasses, and postmortem specimens
3. Adequate medical supplies such as disposable gloves and personal protective equipment
4. Domestic animals must not have direct contact or exposure to wildlife
5. Facility must have both indoor and outdoor enclosures of appropriate size, made from appropriate materials, for all species and ages of wildlife you expect to treat*
6. Indoor wildlife enclosures must be placed away from human disturbance and located in a quiet area with minimal visual stimuli
7. Wildlife must be contained in enclosures and cannot be loose in the facility
8. Outdoor enclosures must have a roofed portion, nest box, or other means of protection from inclement weather, yet still allow animal to be conditioned for survival in the wild
9. Wildlife enclosures must provide sufficient shelter from overheating, excessive rain, snow, or cold Temperatures
10. Food and bedding must be stored in a manner to protect from spoilage, infestation, and contamination
11. Facility and animal enclosures must be kept reasonably clean to prevent disease transmission between wildlife and humans
12. Facility must have potable water and electricity
13. The natural history and behavior of the animal must be considered in enclosure design so the animal can relearn behaviors specific to that species
14. Outdoor enclosures must be surrounded by a fence or placed out of view of the general public to avoid habituation to humans
13. Must not have been convicted of a wildlife violation or KRS 150 or had a permit denied or revoked within the last year.

Attention: Amendments to Wildlife Rehabilitation Regulation (301 KAR 2:075)

I would also like to take this opportunity to inform you of important amendments to 301 KAR 2:075 in regards to rehabilitation of Rabies Vector Species (RVS) in the Enhanced Rabies Surveillance Area. Rabies vector species include **coyote, gray fox, raccoon, red fox, spotted skunk, and striped skunk.**

USDA-Wildlife Services has been distributing oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baits since 1997 in the Appalachian Mountains, stretching from Maine to Alabama in an attempt to create a barrier over which raccoon variant rabies does not cross. The USDA-WS has been maintaining enhanced surveillance in areas where raccoon variant rabies may emerge and currently maintains a 25-county enhanced rabies surveillance zone in Eastern Kentucky. The Enhanced Rabies Surveillance Area includes **Bell, Boyd, Bracken, Carter, Clay, Elliot, Fleming, Floyd, Greenup, Harlan, Johnson, Knott, Knox, Laurel, Lawrence, Leslie, Letcher, Lewis, Martin, Mason, McCreary, Pike, Perry, Robertson, and Whitley counties.**

In the US, raccoons constitute the most frequently reported rabid wildlife species. Where raccoon rabies is endemic, rates of human exposure are much higher than in other parts of the US, and risk of exposure and death to domestic animals, including livestock is greater.

Currently, bat and skunk variant rabies are the only strains found in Kentucky. However, in May of 2017, there was a breach in the oral rabies vaccination zone and two rabid raccoons were detected in Big Stone Gap, Virginia (Wise County). The detection was 7 miles east of the Kentucky border. These were the first confirmed cases of raccoon rabies in Wise County and the farthest west that raccoon rabies have been confirmed in Virginia.

Amendments to the Wildlife Rehabilitation regulation are as follows:

Starting February 1, 2018, a licensed wildlife rehabilitator shall not accept, obtain, or possess a rabies vector species originating from the enhanced rabies surveillance area or transport a rehabilitated rabies vector species into or out of the enhanced rabies surveillance area.

Therefore, Wildlife Rehabilitators in this zone may not rehabilitate raccoons, skunks, foxes, or coyotes.

These amendments are essential to reduce the opportunity for the disease to enter Kentucky by placing added restrictions on the handling and transportation of those animals defined as rabies vector species.

