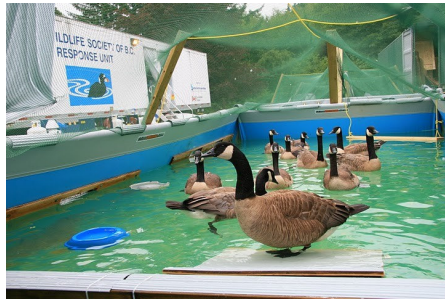


Oiled Wildlife and Your Facility — What Does it Take?

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The call comes in: there has been an oil spill in your community and impacted wildlife have been spotted. Members of the public, regulators, the media and/or the company responsible are asking if they can bring you oiled animals. Your organization is founded on the principles of animal welfare and assisting wildlife in need; but is the answer to their request so straightforward?



Historically, industry and regulators have relied on wildlife NGOs to care for wildlife impacted in oil spills. However, treatment and care of oiled wildlife, especially in a response environment, is an extremely specialized discipline with different requirements for success. These requirements often conflict with those required for traditional wildlife rehabilitation. The admission of even one or two oiled patients into an existing wildlife rehabilitation facility can have a significant impact on the ability of a wildlife rehabilitator to provide high quality care for their existing patients, in addition to that required for any oiled animals. Furthermore, there are now widely researched, internationally accepted protocols for oiled wildlife care and response, and anything less than upholding these standards is no longer acceptable. Adherence to these protocols is required to ensure the welfare of affected animals, their survival through treatment and their success post-release.

Oiled animals require isolation and separation from non-oiled patients. Separate physical space, caging and air exchanges, as well as different ambient air temperatures are requirements during stabilization phases. Once stable, washing requires specific hoses, nozzles, water quality and pressure, as well as **unlimited** quantities of hot water, a means of disposal of cleaning solutions and rinse water, and drying pens and groomer dryers, just to name a few. Pre-release conditioning requires more water and overflow pools. Throughout this process, veterinary and rehabilitation staff experienced in oiled wildlife care and management of health risks associated with caring for oiled animals ensure the health and safety of wild patients and those caring for them (including appropriate PPE and decontamination procedures). In

the near future it is likely to become required that rehabilitators also obtain separate federal and provincial permits for the rehabilitation of oiled wildlife (differing from traditional rehabilitation permits). The space requirements alone for oiled wildlife response are daunting (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Minimum space requirements for rehabilitation of 100-150 oiled animals (Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research Inc.)

- Front Desk / Admissions	300 sq. ft.
- Operations Office	300 sq. ft.
- Kitchen / Food Storage	300 sq. ft.
- Husbandry Area (large central room)	2,800 sq. ft.
- Supplies / Storage	500 sq. ft.
- Wildlife Cleaning Area I	750 sq. ft.
- Medical Treatment / Exam	300 sq. ft.
- Pathology / Lab / Cold Storage	150 sq. ft.
- Isolation Ward	300 sq. ft.
- Volunteer / Worker Rest Room	300 sq. ft.
- Bathrooms / Decon / Changing	200 sq. ft.
- Outside Pool Areas (one 10' x 15' x 2' pool per 15 birds + access and maintenance space)	3,300 sq. ft.
- Nonhazardous and regulated (medical and oiled) trash	
Indoor	100 sq. ft.
Outside	400 sq. ft.
- Outside area for oily waste water	300 sq. ft.
- Loading Dock / Parking for 50 (opposite side of building from outside cages)	5,000 sq. ft.
Total interior sq. ft.	6,300 sq. ft.
Total exterior sq. ft.	9,000 sq. ft.
Total sq. ft.	15,300 sq. ft.

Note: If an existing wildlife rehabilitation center were to be used, it would require the above space in addition to the space allocated for any existing caseload. Animals impacted by an oil spill must be cared for separately from the in-house population.

Detailed requirements for wildlife response can be found in both the IPIECA "Guide to Oiled Wildlife Response Planning" (both marine mammals and birds) and the USFWS "Guide to Best Practices for Migratory Bird Care During Oil Spill Response". Wildlife rehabilitators may also admit individual oiled animals throughout the year in the absence of a spill event (e.g. accidental oiling of birds in grease dumpsters, roadside petroleum products or fish oils that act as attractants). We can do our best to prepare our facilities for the treatment of these patients, or temporary stabilization until transfer to a more suitable facility can be arranged. See Figure 2 for a preliminary checklist for oiled bird preparedness.

Figure 2. Preliminary checklist for individual oiled bird preparedness

General Requirements

- Minimum of 10-15 complete air exchanges per hour with outside air in all animal areas
- Air temperature adjustable and maintainable to any given temperature within 30-32°C (65-85°F) with ventilation system running
- Electrical capacity to support heat lamps, pet dryers, etc.
- Sufficient staff and volunteer support to handle extra workload

Oiled Bird Requirements

- Intake and assessment area that is separate from regular patients (recommended 40 ft²)
- Area to house oiled patients separate from regular rehabilitation patients (recommended 6 ft² per average sized bird); the ability to prevent cross contamination through establishment of a decontamination zone
- At least one pre-wash holding pen no smaller than 2' x 2' x 2' with appropriate net bottom (1/2" stretched, no-knot mesh) at least 1" off the ground
- At least one post-wash holding pen no smaller than 3' x 2' x 2' (other specs same as above)

Wash Requirements

- Wash/rinse area (recommended 100 ft²)
- 300 gallons of fresh water available **per wash** (5 gallons per minute capacity)
- Water maintainable at 39-41°C (102-108°F) "On Demand" water heater(s)
- Water hardness of 2-5 GH (34-85 mg/L)
- Water pressure sustainable at 40-60 psi for the duration of the rinse process
- Ability to collect and safely dispose of oily waste water

Post-Wash Support

- At least one warm water pool equipped with water temperature, water volume and overflow control (staff training for management techniques)
- Conditioning pool with a minimum of 7.5 ft² of surface area, 3' depth and constantly running water that drains from the surface to exchange the volume of the pool 4.25 times/day

To provide oiled wildlife with the best chance of successful rehabilitation and survival post-release, professional oiled wildlife response personnel should always be employed by the Responsible Party (RP) during an oil spill event. Working within the Wildlife Branch of the Incident Command System (ICS), they can quickly implement appropriate facilities and expertise for capture and hazing, stabilization, washing, conditioning

and release. Professional wildlife response organizations often develop relationships and MOUs with local wildlife rehabilitation centres to supply the trained workforce required for operation of the wildlife response.

So, what do you do when you get that call?

1. Report the spill.

Call the BC Environmental Emergency Program at 1-800-663-3456. This activates local authorities.

2. Contact Environment Canada.

Erika Lok: 604-940-4704
erika.lok@ec.gc.ca

3. Contact the Ministry of Environment.

Graham Knox: 250-356-8383
graham.knox@gov.bc.ca

4. Contact the Oiled Wildlife Trust (OWT).

WRNBC's representative for this year is Lani Sheldon (lanisheldon@wrnbc.org). You can also reach OWT through OWT member Wildlife Rescue Association of BC at 604-526-7275. OWT works closely with regulators to achieve professional, uniform oiled wildlife response.

5. Maintain a log.

Record information on reports of individual oiled animals with location, species, date and time. Callers should be discouraged from attempting capture of oiled wildlife, as this is dangerous for both the animal and the handler, and can jeopardize future search and collection efforts.

A list of oiled wildlife response contractors can be found on our new website. Stay tuned as WRNBC and the Oiled Wildlife Society of BC (OWS) are planning First Responder training for 2012. For facilities that are interested in determining their preparedness and creating a capacity for oiled wildlife, contact OWS at info@oiledwildlifesociety.com. A participant's survey will be announced soon. **Please take this opportunity to provide us with your training interests.**

For further information on oiled wildlife care, legislation and response planning, visit <http://www.wrnbc.org/about-wildlife-rehabilitation/oiled-wildlife-in-bc/>.

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