

# A Guide for Veterinarians Dealing with Wildlife



Presented by

*Wildlife Rescue*  
ASSOCIATION

HELPING WILDLIFE SINCE 1979



**WRA Wildlife Rescue Association of BC provides leadership in rehabilitating wildlife and in promoting the welfare of wild animals in the urban environment.**

**Our vision is to continually improve the welfare of urban wildlife.**

The Wildlife Rescue Association of BC (WRA) is a charitable, not-for-profit society located on Burnaby Lake, in Burnaby, B.C. With the aid of six full-time staff, a consulting veterinarian and 300 volunteers, WRA admits more than 4,000 animals from across the Lower Mainland each year. As well as treating more than 150 species of birds and mammals, we also run education and outreach programs that teach members of the public how to co-exist with wildlife.

#### **The WRA:**

- **Medically treats and rehabilitates wildlife**
- **Provides trained personnel and support for wildlife in the event of oil spills or other environmental crises**
- **Trains and supports a diverse volunteer group of 300 individuals**
- **Reports to both provincial and federal ministries about issues impacting wildlife in British Columbia**
- **Maintains a year-round telephone information line for the public**
- **Provides front-line information to disease control agencies**
- **Is involved in non-invasive research programs**
- **Is an active member of the Wildlife Rehabilitators Network of BC, the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association and the Oiled Wildlife Trust.**

#### **Authors**

**Linda Bakker, WRA Team Leader,  
Wildlife Rehabilitation**

**Mira Ziolo, H.BSc. DVM,  
Consulting Veterinarian**

**Photos** Paul Steeves

© 2013 Wildlife Rescue Association of BC

**WRA Wildlife Rescue Association of BC**  
5216 Glencarin Drive, Burnaby, BC V5B 3C1  
**WRA Wildlife Helpline** 604 526 7275  
**Administration** 604 526 2747  
**Email** [info@wildliferescue.ca](mailto:info@wildliferescue.ca)  
**[www.wildliferescue.ca](http://www.wildliferescue.ca)**

**Registered Charity #131373490RR0001**

**If you require advice or information regarding the treatment of wildlife, please do not hesitate to call our Wildlife Helpline at 604 526 7275.**

## BASIC CARE FOR WILDLIFE



Every year, hundreds of injured and sick wild animals are brought to veterinarians by members of the public. The WRA has more than 35 years of experience in the field and this publication aims to address some common concerns faced by veterinarians dealing with sick or injured wildlife.

### Legal and professional responsibilities

There are no laws that require a veterinarian to treat wildlife. However, we hope that veterinarians apply their professional judgment to provide short-term emergency treatment, or euthanasia of wild animals to prevent unnecessary suffering.

If you do receive a wild animal, please call us before you start treatment, and we will be able to advise on the best course of action. Whenever possible, we will try to organize a transfer to our centre or recommend an alternative facility.

### Issues to consider prior to treatment

Housing, restraint techniques, species specific diets, risk of human

imprinting, presence of offensive and defensive weapons (e.g. claws, teeth, antlers, hoofs, talons etc) and zoonotic disease risk are additional natural history challenges that affect treatment decisions.

One of the most important considerations is the long-term prospects of the animals. A wild animal must be in optimum condition following rehabilitation to thrive in the wild. To ensure the best outcome, veterinarians and rehabilitators should communicate when making triage decisions to determine which animals will benefit most from treatment.

### Triage and critical distress protocols

In general, wildlife is significantly more stressed than domestic animals when both injured and in captivity. Unless the animal is suffering from an extremely life threatening condition, the best approach for the animal is leaving them isolated in a warm and dark environment until they are transferred to a licensed wildlife

**Species native to BC are defined as wildlife, and a permit is required to possess wildlife, dead wildlife or parts. However, alien or exotic species that are not native to B.C. are classified as Controlled Alien Species (CAS). It is illegal to possess certain species unless the animal was in B.C. prior to March 16, 2009 AND if the owner complies to a number of requirements and restrictions posted on the Ministry of Environment website.**

## BASIC CARE FOR WILDLIFE

rehabilitation facility. The number one immediate problem for most distressed animals is shock, and handling can make this worse.

If deemed appropriate by the veterinarian, pain medications and antibiotics may be administered (see our *Basic Care for Wildlife* brochure). If dehydration, emaciation or shock is suspected, fluid therapy is recommended.

If an animal is severely depressed, IV fluid therapy can be started by accessing the medial tibiotarsal or medial ulnar vein in birds and the cephalic or saphenous vein in mammals. A bolus of up to 2% body weight can be administered to birds.

Do not administer fluids intraperitoneally in birds.

Please note that a complete physical exam is not a priority unless you are making the decision to euthanize.

### General rehydration guidelines

Oral rehydration of up to 3% body weight\* using Pedialyte® or Lactated Ringers +/- 2.5% dextrose.

Subcutaneous rehydration of up to 2% body weight using Lactated Ringers +/- 2.5% dextrose.

(\*2% body weight = 2ml/100g.)

**Wildlife rehabilitators are knowledgeable individuals licensed by the MFLNRO to provide care for orphaned, sick or injured wild animals with the goal of releasing them back to their natural habitats. They are not veterinarians; they may not charge for their services or practice veterinary medicine. However, it is recommended that rehabilitators consult with veterinarians to ensure that proper care is provided to distressed wildlife.**

### Useful websites

**Ministry of Forests, Land and Natural Resource Operations:**  
[www.gov.bc.ca/for](http://www.gov.bc.ca/for)

**Wildlife Rescue Association:**  
[www.wildliferescue.ca](http://www.wildliferescue.ca)

**Wildlife Rehabilitators Network of BC:** [www.wrnbc.org](http://www.wrnbc.org)

**The International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council:** <http://theiwrc.org>

**The National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association:** [www.nwrawildlife.org](http://www.nwrawildlife.org)

**The Oiled Wildlife Trust:**  
[www.wildliferescue.ca/pdf/owt.pdf](http://www.wildliferescue.ca/pdf/owt.pdf)

### Further reading

*Fowler's Zoo and Wild Animal Medicine: Current Therapy Volume 7*, Murray Fowler, DVM, DACZM, DACVIM, DABVT, Saunders, 2012.

*Ferrets, Rabbits and Rodents: Clinical Medicine and Surgery. 3rd Edition*, Katherine Quesenberry, James W. Carpenter Elsevier Health Sciences, May 12, 2011.

*Manual of Avian Medicine*, Glenn H. Olsen, Susan E. Orosz Mosby Year Book, 2000.

*Exotic Animal Formulary*. Edition 4, Carpenter, J. W. Elsevier Health Sciences, 2012.