

Ministry of Environment
Wildlife and Controlled Alien Species (CAS) Regulations
What CVBC Members Need to Know

Background

Day to day veterinary practice in British Columbia (BC) often involves advising on the care of and the examination or treatment of injured or abandoned nondomestic animals. Some veterinarians in BC work regularly with species that are either native or exotic to BC. These animals may be wild and free-ranging or captive. They may be presented to clinics by Ministry of Environment staff, wildlife rehabilitation centres, zoo and conservation breeding facilities, professional animal handlers and trainers or private citizens who hold such species as “pets” or are well-meaning caregivers of found animals.

Most College of Veterinarians of British Columbia (CVBC) members that include these species in their practices are well versed in their medicine and surgery, but, if not, should have no difficulty in developing the appropriate knowledge base by accessing information through web and information networks. However, there are requirements that may not be so well known or understood to allow the legal possession and care of nondomestic species by the public and veterinary professionals.

In addition, there are recent changes to the BC Wildlife Act and its regulations that control the possession of specific species. While legal information may not be a common part of BC veterinary practice, the CVBC membership that see or hold wild species on a temporary basis or for a longer term need to be aware of the rules their practices should follow, as well as to advise their clients.

The Old and New Wildlife Act Regulations

Under the BC Wildlife Act, wild animals are classified into two general categories; those native to BC and those that are not – that is, alien or exotic species.

Species native to BC are defined as wildlife and their possession is allowed under permit. In order to possess wildlife, dead wildlife or parts, a permit is required and must be applied for - the process is managed by the Permit Authorization Service Bureau (PASB) of the Ministry of Environment. Their website is at <http://env.gov.bc.ca/pasb/>.

Since the spring of 2009, the BC Wildlife Act also includes species considered “Controlled Alien Species” (CAS). Animals listed as CAS are NOT wildlife. The Act defines CAS as not native to BC and considered either a public safety or health threat or a threat to the environment. At this time, species that pose a serious/lethal threat to humans are of the highest concern. In March, 2009 regulations to control such species were announced with a list of CAS that individuals are prohibited from possessing between March of 2009 and April 01, 2010 unless the animal was in BC prior to March 16, 2009.

Members of the public who were in possession of a listed animal in BC before March 16, 2009 may be able to keep the animal until its death if they comply with a number of requirements and restrictions:

- They must apply for, and be granted, a permit from the Ministry of Environment between Nov. 1, 2009 and March 31, 2010.
- They must not breed the animals. All breeding of these animals has been prohibited as of March 16, 2009, unless the animal is possessed by an accredited zoo (accredited by the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums), research or educational institution. Under special circumstances, a person involved in breeding one of the controlled alien species as an established and registered business may be granted a permit to breed until April 01, 2010.
- Accredited zoos, research and educational institutions can continue to acquire, breed and possess the listed species, but they will be required to apply for, and be granted, a permit for each animal in their possession beginning April 01, 2009.
- Permit applications will be available November 01, 2009 from the PASB website.
- Effective immediately, the film industry will be required to apply for a permit to temporarily bring any listed animals into BC and must remove those same animals from BC when their film shoot is completed.
- And finally, those individuals currently in possession of a CAS are prohibited from releasing the CAS (or allowing it to escape).

Penalties for violating the new restrictions may result in one or more of the following; a maximum fine of \$250,000 and/or up to two years of imprisonment, seizure of the animal and removal from the province at the owner's expense, or seizure of the animal and transport to an accredited zoo at the owner's expense. If removal is not possible, the animal may be euthanized.

The full list of controlled alien species and the requirements and restrictions under the new regulation contained in the Wildlife Act are posted on the Ministry of Environment website at www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/wildlifeactreview/cas/.

Wildlife Rehabilitation

Some BC veterinarians assist wildlife rehabilitation facilities with the care and treatment of injured or orphaned wildlife either at the rehabilitation facility or for short term, at a veterinary clinic. The holding of wildlife for the purpose of rehabilitation or rearing of orphaned wildlife requires a specific permit "to possess, treat, release, and euthanize, if necessary", all or specific groups of wildlife species.

The requirements to obtain a permit for a designated rehabilitation facility are available on the PASB website, but in general they are:

- a need in the community for such services and,
- the individual(s) must have approved facilities for the species to be admitted, and
 - must be able to demonstrate training or experience in this field,

- have an established relationship with a veterinarian licenced in BC,
- have the appropriate liability insurance, and
- submit annual records of all wildlife treated.

Where to find out more

For more information on Controlled Alien species and the process that is underway, link to the CAS website: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/wildlifeactreview/cas/>

All Provincial permits for the possession of wildlife (excluding migratory birds) and for wildlife rehabilitators are administered by the Permit and Authorization Service Bureau (PASB) at <http://env.gov.bc.ca/pasb/> .

In addition to the authority of the BC Wildlife Act, the care and humane treatment of wildlife in captivity is governed by the BC Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and enforced by the BC Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SCPCA). In addition, the Canadian Criminal Code provides for criminal offenses respecting inhumane treatment of all animals.

Position statements on wild animals as pets:

- Canadian Veterinary Medical Association - Keeping of Exotic or Native Wild Animals as Pets <http://canadianveterinarians.net/ShowText.aspx?ResourceID=30>
- Canadian Federation of Humane Societies - http://cfhs.ca/widl/widl_animals_as_pets/
- Association of Exotic Mammal Veterinarians and American Veterinary Medical Association – <http://www.aemv.org/policies.cfm>

Information regarding permits for migratory bird species can be obtained from: Gloria White, Canadian Wildlife Service, 5421 Robertson Road, RR#1, Delta, BC, V4K 3N2 604-940-4650 fax 604-940-7022.

Guidelines on the care and use of wildlife for research purposes are available through the Canadian Council on Animal Care. Humane euthanasia standards for wildlife are available through the CCAC, the American Veterinary Medical Association (http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/euthanasia.pdf) and from the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians.

<http://www.aazv.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=441>