

Wild Animal Euthanasia by Veterinarians:

Veterinarians may be requested to examine, treat and/or euthanize injured, sick or orphaned wild animals native to British Columbia (BC). Wild animals may be presented by government staff (biologists or conservation officers), wildlife rehabilitation facilities, municipal animal control or animal welfare organizations as well as the public. In some cases animals can be quickly treated and transferred to a permitted wildlife rehabilitator for long term care. However, there are limitations to what is practical and humane for wild animal care due to their often limited ability to tolerate the stresses of capture, treatment and captivity. For some wild animals immediate euthanasia is not only the most humane option but the safest procedure for animal and humans.

Under the B.C. *Wildlife Act*, the possession of most wild species requires a permit. However for situations that involve the emergency treatment or euthanasia of wild animals, there is currently no mechanism for emergency access to wildlife permits. In the absence of such a mechanism, the province's wildlife management authorities appreciate the compassion, cooperation and professional judgement of the veterinary community.

Veterinarians who do receive wild animals are requested to keep records with the following data on site and available for all wild animals treated and held short term or euthanized, in the same manner that records on domestic animals are kept:

- species
- age estimate (juvenile, adult)
- sex, if obvious
- location where animal was first picked up, and date of pick-up
- condition (e.g. wing fracture, head trauma, respiratory distress)
- animal fate (i.e. treated and transferred immediately to wildlife rehabilitator (including name of rehabilitation facility); treated, held 24-72 hours and transferred to wildlife rehabilitator (including name of rehabilitation facility); euthanized)

The appropriate method of euthanasia varies with the species; guidelines specific for species groups can be obtained through various sources, for example, the AVMA has published new guidelines that include free-ranging wildlife (<https://www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Documents/euthanasia.pdf>), or contact the Provincial Wildlife Veterinarian at 250-953-4285.

If the animal is an "of concern" (blue listed) or "at risk" (red listed) species, the appropriate provincial regional office should be notified of the animal and its condition as soon as possible (see link below for a list of contact points). For most species their identification and conservation status can be assessed at the following website <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/atrisk/toolintro.html>. For example, if a veterinarian on Vancouver Island is presented with a live or dead Vancouver Island marmot (a species at risk) they should immediately contact the Ministry of Forests Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO) regional office in Nanaimo.

Other species are extremely common, such as robins or crows, or are non-native such as starlings or Eastern grey squirrels. These species are not considered of conservation priority and do not require any notification.

Unusual or unexpected illnesses or mortalities are of interest to the B.C. Wildlife Health Program and collaborators for human, wild and domestic animal disease surveillance. Selected cases may be submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Health Centre or other laboratories for diagnostic testing but require prior approval by the Provincial Wildlife Veterinarian. See the Wildlife Health Program website for further information on wildlife health at <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/wldhealth/>.

Euthanized wild animals should be frozen and held until disposal or pick up but cannot be kept for long term personal use without a permit. Possession permits may be available for some species, see <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/pasb/applications/#wildlifeact>. As mentioned above, some species have significant value for health testing but others may be required for other scientific, research or cultural (First Nation) values. For example, bald and golden eagle carcasses are used by many First Nations communities for ceremonial purposes. For these two species, please notify the local FLNRO regional office and regional staff will arrange to pick up the carcasses.

If there are questions regarding specific wild animal cases, species and their disposition please contact a regional FLNRO office or the Wildlife Veterinarian. For regional office contacts – see <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/main/regions.html> and <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/offices.html>

To contact the Provincial Wildlife Veterinarian or the Wildlife Health Program – see <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/wldhealth/>.

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