

Injured Wildlife: Treatment, Euthanasia and Fees

The public may bring injured wild animals (i.e., non-domestic, non-exotic animals) to veterinary facilities for examination and treatment. All BC wildlife, whether under federal or provincial legislation, are the property of the Crown, and not the property of individuals. The only exception is when a member of the public or an organization has a permit under the BC *Wildlife Act* (or a federal Act) for the possession of that animal (e.g. a falconer, wildlife rehabilitator, educational or zoo facility). Therefore, a member of the public without a permit cannot provide direction or consent to a veterinarian for treatment, including euthanasia, of wildlife.

When injured wildlife is in "critical distress" (a specific term as defined by the BCSPCA), BC wildlife authorities recognize that veterinarians may need to euthanize these animals in a humane and timely manner without the specific notification of a wildlife authority or special constable of the BCSPCA. Some common and non-native species are listed under Schedule C of the BC *Wildlife Act* and do not require any notification. However, the admittance, treatment and/or euthanasia of many species, especially those considered to present a risk to human safety or considered species "of concern" or "at risk" requires notification. In some cases, approval from a Regional Biologist (see the closest regional office of the Ministry of Forests Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO)) or the provincial Wildlife Veterinarian must be given as soon as possible after admission. Questions regarding specific wild animal cases, species identification and disposition should be directed to these contacts. The designation/classification of species can be determined by accessing the BC Species and Ecosystems Explorer from the Conservation Data Centre website at <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/cdc>

Injured wildlife requiring long term treatment must be transferred to a permitted facility, usually a wildlife rehabilitation facility: some veterinary facilities have these permits. One of the conditions of a rehabilitation facility's wildlife permit is that they have an established relationship with a licensed veterinarian, who provides service through a practice facility.

Wildlife rehabilitation facilities are usually non-profit organizations. The payment of standard veterinary fees for many services, especially euthanasia of wildlife in critical distress, may not be feasible. Wildlife authorities unfortunately have no means to provide payment for the medical care of wildlife except under extremely rare situations. Organizations such as the BCSPCA, as well as most wildlife rehabilitation facilities, have few resources to cover veterinary costs and must prioritize expenditures to the long term care of patients. While it is at the discretion of the veterinarian to provide any service to wildlife, it is important for veterinarians to know that should they choose to provide service without fee, the benevolence of such action is greatly appreciated by society. Donated veterinary services, particularly those provided to critically injured animals, significantly add to the humane care and wellness of the wild animals treated.

Further information on how wildlife authorities view wild animal care and treatment is available in the following two articles updated to March 19, 2013 that can be accessed from the CVBC website:

1. 'Wild Animal Euthanasia by Veterinarians': The article contains contact information for regional offices of the Ministry of Forests Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO) or the Wildlife Veterinarian to provide contacts regarding specific wild animal cases, species and their disposition.
2. 'Ministry of Environment - Wildlife and Controlled Alien Species (CAS) Regulations. What BCVMA Members Need to Know' (note: reference to BCVMA means the CVBC and the Ministry of Environment also refers to the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations).