

Domestic animals and wild animals

The public is increasingly concerned about wildlife and wants to find qualified help. The professional wildlife rehabilitation communities appreciate veterinary staffs that recognize that there is a difference between wildlife and domestic animals and treat wildlife accordingly. Rehabilitators are grateful for veterinary services to wildlife provided at low or no cost, such treatments, consultation, supplies, and training. The positive relationships with supportive veterinary clinics provide a referral source and accelerate getting help for wildlife in trouble. Advance preparation can help the veterinary clinic be ready for calls about the 'orphaned' rabbit, raccoon in the chimney, delivery of the fledging bird brought in by the cat, or the hawk with a gunshot wound. Close working relationships have been created between your local rehabilitators and the veterinary clinics to attempt the best medical care for injured native wildlife species.

Wildlife responds differently to humans, which are considered predators; than domestic animals which are comforted by human contact. Many wild animals hide their symptoms from predators (e.g., humans) and may appear healthy, and then die of health problems or stress. Wildlife can die from the stress of capture, handling, and captivity, as well as their injuries or health problems. Having the wild animal in a rehabilitation facility that is designed to be quieter and less stressful for wildlife may also accelerate the animal's recovery. The rehabilitator can also provide information to help prevent or resolve human-wildlife conflicts. A busy veterinary clinic simply does not have this knowledge base and cannot be expected to respond. Most wildlife rehabilitation facilities rely upon volunteer 'staffing'.

The private citizen can help wildlife by ensuring their dogs and cats are neutered or spayed. They can also diminish the potential for infectious disease transmission by ensuring their pets are vaccinated and treated for worms. Additionally, ensuring your pets are fed properly will reduce potential predation. Dogs should be kept confined in fenced yards or walked on leashes where conflicts with wildlife are likely. Cats should be kept indoors or wear collars with devices designed to prevent them from hunting or supervised when outside. There are modifications which can be made to bird feeders and waterers to allow additional time for the wild birds to escape the predator. Feral dog and cat colonies should be humanely removed. In the US alone, cats kill more than 1 billion birds*. Dogs kill ungulate young species or run the adults to exhaustion & death**. They also transmit a plethora of diseases.

* = IWRC survey results @4 centers ** =survey results @2 centers. IWRC is a professional international wildlife membership network

There is a different level of knowledge required for practicing veterinary medicine on domestic animals, such as pets or livestock than that level of knowledge in responding to wildlife. These clinics report to federal and state wildlife agencies. Possession of native wildlife requires state and, often, federal permits, regardless of the person's good intentions or other credentials. Wildlife requires specialized knowledge and care, such as special diets, caging, and handling. It is neither advisable nor legal for the clinic to send a wild animal 'home'. It is very common for people, including personnel at veterinary clinics, to want to immediately feed a wild animal. However, feeding the incorrect diets or amounts of food, or using improper techniques can result in serious problems, including the death of the animal.

For example, a well-meaning person may have fed cow's milk to juvenile cottontails, resulting in severe diarrhea and death. Young birds are inappropriately fed white bread and milk which cannot be digested and results in a variety of problems. Or the young birds are fed earthworms, which may result in gapeworm infestation and sometimes death. Juvenile squirrels have been tube-fed, causing aspiration or a ruptured esophagus – and death.

The veterinary clinic may be able to provide emergency treatments but it must be mentioned federal and state wildlife regulations must come into consideration. Specific state wildlife agency rules and regulations should be checked since

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they may determine what treatments may be offered by non-rehabilitators, including veterinarians, and the amount of time the wild animal may stay with a veterinarian which may be less than 24 hours.

Procedures that would result in non-releasable wildlife may require written authorization in advance by the governing agency(s). For example, amputation of a wing of a bird would prevent it from flying and be unlikely to be approved; only in rare cases is it legal or practical to keep non-releasable wildlife permanently in captivity. The most humane decision would be to euthanize and end the suffering. In addition, state and federal laws may influence the decision and timing of euthanasia. It is necessary to contact the US Fish and Wildlife Service before euthanasia of a member of a species protected under the Endangered Species Act, such as trumpeter swans. Clinics must also be familiar with and follow established agency protocols for wildlife carcass disposition (such as necropsy, incineration, or transfer to government facilities). Again, local rehabilitators and wildlife agency personnel can provide information on euthanasia considerations and requirements.

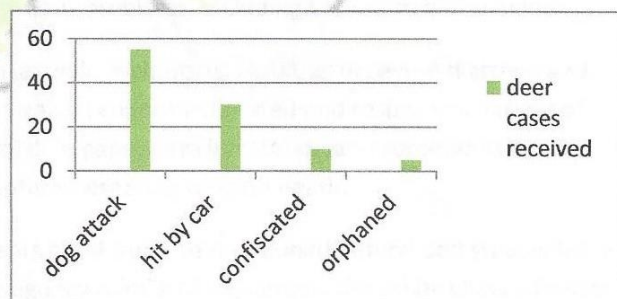
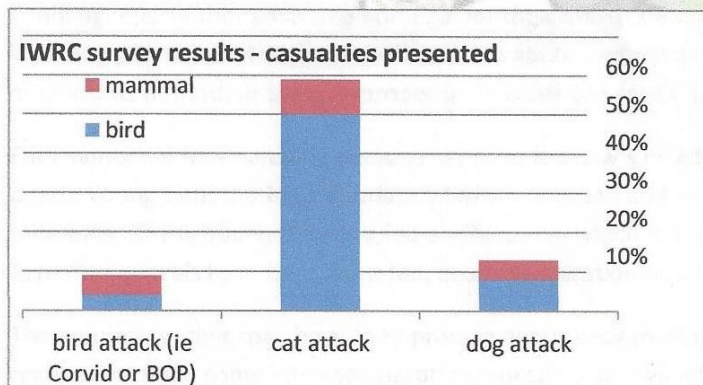
To maintain our federal and state permits, AHWF is bound by law to release wild animals that recover fully back to the wild. In North Idaho there are three recognized wildlife rehabilitation facilities. Mystic Farms (deer rehabilitation), Bird of Prey Northwest (raptors), and American Heritage Wildlife Foundation (nongame mammals, most birds, reptiles) are trained and knowledgeable in working with wildlife, have the appropriate facilities, diets, and permits, and are available to accept wildlife. BOPNW & AHWF have USFWS migratory bird permits to rehabilitate bird species. Any other citizens that care for wildlife are not legal as rehabilitators. If they wish to learn and be approved, they must undergo training.

When a caller finds a wild animal, please refer them to the appropriate rehabilitation facility. Many wild animals may successfully be reunited with the parents. If the caller already has the wild animal in possession, it is critical that the animal be taken to a rehabilitator as soon as possible. Bear in mind, the person should minimize handling in order to reduce risk to the people and to the animal. The animal should be kept in a secure container (with air holes) in a quiet, relatively dark, and warm place (not in the sun). The animal should NOT be fed any food or liquid. The caller should be encouraged to surrender wild animals that they have in possession. Remember it is illegal to keep the wild animal long term. It takes skill, facilities, permits, time, and other requirements to provide effective care. There are safety precautions that are initiated to protect humans, pets, and the wild animal. Zoonotic disease is just one concern.

Exercise caution in handling wildlife! Handling and observation should be minimized to what is needed for treatment. Limiting handling reduces the risk to humans of injury, disease, and parasites as well as escape in the facility. Stress to the wild animal should be minimized, regardless of whether they are birds, mammals, or reptiles. Do not feed wildlife in temporary care unless so directed by a rehabilitator who works with that species.

Help AHWF help keep North Idaho WILD! Make the pledge to present the present as a present for future generations.

Please donate time, talent or treasure today.



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