



# Wildlife Rehabilitator

## Definitions and Requirements

### Introduction

Wildlife rehabilitators provide a valuable public service. In order to ensure the safety of both the public and the animals, only persons who can demonstrate proper knowledge, skills and abilities to care for sick, injured, orphaned or displaced wildlife, from intake to the point of the animal's release back into their habitat are considered for permitting as wildlife rehabilitators. It is the Division's responsibility to administer the permit process and monitor the permit holders who rehabilitate wildlife.

### 1. Rehabilitator Permit

A Wildlife Rehabilitation permit is required for the temporary holding, care and rehabilitation of New Jersey's native wildlife.

Requirements:

- One year minimum apprenticeship (see Apprenticeship definition below) with a New Jersey rehabilitator which shall begin upon submission of the apprentice's name, address, telephone number and start date by the sponsoring rehabilitator in writing to the Division within 30 days of their official start date, or as listed on the rehabilitator's annual report when submitted to the Division prior to start of apprenticeship.
- One letter of recommendation from the sponsoring rehabilitator which details the understanding and proficiency of the apprentice in the following areas:
  - a) Code of ethics
  - b) State and Federal regulations pertaining to wildlife rehabilitation
  - c) Basic identification of common native wildlife species
  - d) Natural history and species specific behavior
  - e) Methods to prevent wildlife problems and humane solutions
  - f) Proper diet and nutrition (for those species trained for)

- g) Safe capture and handling procedures (for those species trained for)
  - h) Ability to assess basic health problems (for those species trained for)
  - i) Basic first aid
  - j) Wildlife parasites and diseases (including zoonoses)
  - k) Euthanasia and disposal methods
  - l) Release criteria (for those species trained for)
  - m) Public contact
  - n) Record keeping
- Completion of initial rehabilitation permit application.
  - Letter of commitment from a veterinarian willing to work with applying rehabilitator.
  - Approval of an on-site inspection including proper caging and facility standards
  - Secure applicable permits from United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for avian species.
  - Completion and submission of the Annual Report and Renewal Form along with required Documentation, when renewing the rehabilitation permit.

## **2. Apprentice**

An apprentice is a person working under the direct supervision of a permitted rehabilitator for the purpose of obtaining a wildlife rehabilitator's permit in their own name. An apprentice may be an on-site sub-permittee (see on-site sub-permittee definition below).

Requirements:

- The sponsoring rehabilitator is required to have been permitted as a rehabilitator by the Division for at least two years prior to sponsoring an apprentice.
- The sponsoring rehabilitator must submit a letter stating the apprentice's name, address, telephone number and start date. This letter must be received within 30 days of the official start date.
- Apprenticeship shall be a minimum of one-year (12 consecutive months) and a minimum of 200 hours of active participation/training. This will allow the apprentice a working

knowledge of the full cycle that takes place at a rehabilitation facility from infancy through to release, in addition to proper handling and care of injured adults that may arrive during the winter months.

- Training shall take place at the sponsoring rehabilitator's facility.
- Upon completion of the above requirements, an apprentice may apply for his or her own license by:
  - 1) Completing and submitting an application from the Division along with the required documentation.
  - 2) Submitting one letter of recommendation from the sponsoring rehabilitator which details the understanding and proficiency of the apprentice in the following areas:
    - a) Code of ethics
    - b) State and Federal regulations pertaining to wildlife rehabilitation
    - c) Basic identification of common native wildlife species
    - d) Natural history and species specific behavior
    - e) Methods to prevent wildlife problems and humane solutions
    - f) Proper diet and nutrition (for those species trained for)
    - g) Safe capture and handling procedures (for those species trained for)
    - h) Ability to assess basic health problems (for those species trained for)
    - i) Basic first aid
    - j) Wildlife parasites, disease, including zoonoses
    - k) Euthanasia and disposal methods
    - l) Release criteria (for those species trained for)
    - m) Public contact
    - n) Record keeping
  - 3) Completion of initial permit application.
  - 4) Letter of commitment from a veterinarian willing to work with applying rehabilitator.

- 5) Approval of an on-site inspection of proper caging and facility standards.
- 6) Secure applicable permits from USFWS for avian species.

### **3. On-site sub-permittee**

A volunteer working under the supervision of a rehabilitator to provide on-site care in the temporary (not to exceed 60 days) absence of the rehabilitator.

An on-site sub-permittee may be an apprentice.

Requirements:

- (a) The sponsoring rehabilitator must submit a letter stating the on-site sub-permittee's name, address, phone number and start date. This letter must be received within 30 days of the official start date.
- (b) The on-site sub-permittee's name, address, phone number and start date must be listed on the rehabilitator's annual report.
- (d) The rehabilitator will be held responsible for the activities of the on-site sub-permittee while providing care for wildlife at their facility.
- (e) On-site sub-permittees are not permitted to operate their own facility.
- (f) If care must be provided by the on-site caregiver for more than 60 days, the rehabilitator may request written permission from the Division for an extension of the 60-day limit.

### **4. Off-site Caregiver**

A volunteer working under the supervision of a rehabilitator to provide off-site care for a period not to exceed 60 days, to animals requiring around-the-clock care with the understanding that the animals will be returned to the rehabilitator.

An off-site caregiver may be an Apprentice.

Requirements:

- (a) Off-site caregivers are not permitted to operate their own facility. All animals must be admitted at the facility of the rehabilitator before going off-site with the off-site caregiver.
- (b) The sponsoring rehabilitator must submit a letter stating the off-site caregiver's name, address, phone number and start date. This letter must be received within 30 days of the official start date.

(c) The off-site caregiver's name, address, phone number and start date must be listed on the rehabilitator's annual report.

(d) When round-the clock intensive care is no longer needed, the animals must be returned to the facility where it was admitted. The rehabilitator is responsible to oversee the final care and release of these animals.

(e) The rehabilitator will be held responsible for the activities of the off-site caregiver while they are providing care for wildlife that have been admitted to the rehabilitator's facility.

(f) All animals handled by the off-site caregiver will be reported on the rehabilitator's annual report to the Division.

(g) If care must be provided by the off-site caregiver for more than 60 days, the rehabilitator may request written permission from the Division for an extension of the 60-day limit.

## **5. General Licensing Requirements:**

### **Permit Posted:**

Once received, the wildlife rehabilitation permit shall be posted for the public.

### **Permit Expiration:**

Wildlife rehabilitation permits expire on December 31st of each year.

### **Handling Telephone Calls:**

All rehabilitators must maintain an appropriate telephone message answering system for handling and directing wildlife calls when they are not readily available to personally receive telephone inquiries.

### **Facility Inspection**

The Division may inspect any facility, site, and/or records during normal working hours.

### **Record Keeping**

Wildlife rehabilitators are required to maintain records on each animal that is accepted for rehabilitation. Required information includes the date received, name, address, and phone number of person you receive the animal from, species, reason for admittance (injured, sick, orphaned), type of injury or illness, status and final disposition report including location of release, relocation and/or transfer. An initial exam, daily care log and a medical sheet shall be maintained for each animal.

## **Record Retention**

The Division requests all records be held for a minimum of 3 years. The USFWS requires records on migratory birds be held for a minimum of 5 years following the end of the calendar year covered by the records.

## **Renewals**

All permits are issued for one calendar year and expire on December 31. If the following requirements are met, the Division may renew the permit.

- An annual report and renewal form must be completed and returned with required documents and tallies of wildlife handled prior to due date each year. Required information includes:
  - copies of other wildlife permits currently held by the permittee
  - a list of apprentices names, addresses, telephone number and start date
  - a list of on-site sub-permittees names, addresses, telephone number and start date
  - a list of off-site caregivers names, addresses, telephone number and start date
  - a list of all animals received, date received, disposition and name/location transferred/released.
  - Tallies to be provided include, but are not limited to:
    - Total animals handled
    - Total animals released
    - Total animals held over
    - Number of animals that died upon arrival or while in your care.
    - Number of animals that you had to euthanize
    - Number of animals that you transferred to another rehabilitator

Permits may be revoked upon finding in any five-year period two or more violations of any permit condition(s) or any regulation appearing in the New Jersey Administrative Code 7:25-10.

Rehabilitators who allow their permits to lapse for less than three years must submit a letter of recommendation from one rehabilitator along with a permit renewal application. Rehabilitators that have allowed their permits to lapse for more than three years must submit two letters of

recommendation from two New Jersey rehabilitators with their permit renewal application and have their facility inspected by the Division.

### **Species Covered by the Rehabilitation Permit**

Each family of species that a rehabilitator is permitted to handle shall be listed on their permit. Occasionally, a rehabilitator may receive an animal that is not listed on their permit. Rehabilitators are required to notify the Division if transportation of these animals to a rehabilitator permitted for that particular family of species is not possible within 48-hours. Alternative courses of action may also be discussed with the Division.

### **Application for Additional Species**

Application for the addition of a new family of species to an existing permit requires written request to the Division accompanied by proof of:

- Proper training and development of skills required to care for the species.
- Appropriate caging which meets the minimum standards to house the species.
- Letter of recommendation from the sponsoring rehabilitator

### **Out-of-State Licensed Rehabilitators**

Wildlife rehabilitators, who are permitted in another state and move into New Jersey, may be issued a permit without the required apprenticeship period pending review of their application and qualifications by the Division.

### **Veterinarians**

New Jersey licensed veterinarians may take temporary possession of wildlife and/or provide medical treatment of the wildlife for up to 48 hours . Veterinarians are encouraged to contact a rehabilitator upon accepting wildlife to discuss treatment, transfer and payment of costs for such medical treatment prior to rendering any services.

### **Avian Species**

Rehabilitators of avian species are required to apply for, obtain and forward a copy of a federal Migratory Bird Rehabilitation Permit. Contact the USFWS– Migratory Bird permitting office at 413-253-8643 to obtain an application.

### **Rabies Vector Species**

Rabies Vector Species are those wildlife species that have been identified as the most common carriers of the rabies virus and include raccoon, skunk, woodchuck, fox and bats. New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife and New Jersey Department of Health and Social Services recommends that anyone who obtains a wildlife rehabilitation permit for rabies vector species

consider pre-exposure rabies vaccinations. All medical options should be discussed with your physician.

### **Other Permits**

The issuance of a New Jersey Wildlife Rehabilitation permit is contingent upon compliance with all local, state, and federal regulations. Some local governments do not allow wildlife rehabilitation facilities. All applicants should contact the local municipality regarding such regulations.

## **5. General Policy Information**

### **Funding/Contributions/Donations**

The Division does not provide funding for wildlife rehabilitation. Rehabilitation permit holders may solicit donations; however, such donations are not to be required of individuals bringing wildlife to rehabilitators.

**Mandatory donations are not permitted when accepting wildlife for rehabilitation.**

### **Facility Maintenance**

Animals, facility (whether it is a separate building or in the home) and release sites should be maintained in a manner respectful of neighbors and in adherence with local, state and health ordinances. This includes:

- Arranging for separate indoor and outdoor facilities for wildlife facing away from people and pets.
- Control of noise levels, odors and proper sanitation procedures.
- Prior to a change in facility location, the Division must be notified in order to inspect and approve the new facility. Significant changes to existing facilities and caging require documentation and approval by the Division.

### **Exploitation**

The exploitation or presentation of any wildlife to the public in a manner that is unsafe or unprofessional is inappropriate. Wildlife is not to be utilized, photographed or displayed in any manner which depicts them as pets or implies to the public that handling of wildlife in any unsafe manner is acceptable. Wildlife that is being rehabilitated for release may not be used in educational programs.

### **Minimum Standards**



All rehabilitators are expected to follow the minimum standards guidelines as outlined in the most current version of the IWRC/NWRA Minimum Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation publication.

### **Continuing Education**

Attendance and/or participation in at least one continuing education program yearly (such as the NJWRA, IWRC, NWRA, NYSWRC or PWREC conferences, workshops, or other pre-approved educational program) is recommended. Documentation of attendance/participation should be included with the annual report.

### **Administration of Medications**

Very few medications have received Food and Drug Administration approval for use in wildlife species. Therefore, the use of most medication in wildlife is considered "extralabel" use. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, federal regulation 21 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 530, addresses extralabel use of medications and use of extralabel medication in food producing species. The use of the medication for extralabel use requires a valid vet/client/patient relationship and the responsibility to ensure the medication does not enter the food chain (whether via human or predator/prey consumption) is on the veterinarian. Your veterinarian should take this into account before authorizing an animal as ready for release.

### **Criteria for Release / Non-Releasable Wildlife**

In order to be considered releasable, wildlife must be capable of recognizing, obtaining and processing natural food; recognizing, evading or defending against predators; acquiring shelter; acquiring and defending territories; performing normal seasonal movements and dispersal; and exhibiting normal socialization with conspecifics. Released game species must not have been given medications that could be dangerous for sportsmen or predators to consume. Animals that cannot meet these basic release criteria, or cannot be returned to the wild because of physical or behavioral problems are to be euthanized.

On occasion, non-releasable animals may be placed in the permanent care of a permit holder in the animal exhibitor or zoological category, if there is an educational need for such animals. The final decision regarding placement of non-releasable wildlife, is that of the Division.

### **Regulations Regarding Bird-Banding**

Regulations regarding bird banding permits are described in the USFWS CFR, 50 CFR10 General Provisions; 50 CFR 13 General Permit Procedures; and 50 CFR 21 Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Applications for banding or marking permits should be submitted to the Bird Banding Laboratory, USFWS, Office of Migratory Bird Management and all federal permit fees and conditions apply.

## **Euthanasia**

Euthanasia is an unavoidable part of providing humane care to wildlife. The Division has the authority to mandate euthanasia of sick, injured or surplus animals to prevent overcrowding or spread of disease. The Division, at its discretion, may request the assistance of another rehabilitator in evaluating the need for euthanasia of non-releasable wildlife.

## **Temporary Nature of Rehabilitation Permit**

The rehabilitation permit is temporary in nature. It does not allow rehabilitators to permanently keep injured wildlife. The USFWS does not authorize the retention of migratory birds longer than 180 days without additional authorization from the Regional Migratory Bird Permit Office. If the appropriate season for release is outside the 180-day timeframe, you must seek authorization from the USFWS Regional Migratory Bird Permit Office in Hadley MA to possess the bird until the appropriate season.

Animals being rehabilitated must be maintained separately from other wildlife and may not be used for education programs or kept in a manner that may affect their ability to be released.

Rehabilitators possessing exhibitor permits which allow the public to view wildlife at their facility must maintain the wildlife separately from any contact and view of animals being rehabilitated. Animals being rehabilitated for release may not be used for educational programs or maintained in any manner adversely affecting their ability to be released back into the wild.

## **Confiscation of Wildlife**

Possession of a wildlife rehabilitation permit does not imply that the permit holder has the authority to trespass on private property, or to take possession of an animal held by another without permission of the property owner.

## **Liability Concerns**

Handling and rehabilitating wildlife may expose the rehabilitator, the apprentice, on-site sub-permittees, off-site caregivers and/or volunteers to legal conflicts and/or personal injury. Rehabilitators are advised to investigate insurance coverage for their rehabilitation activities.

## **Revocation of Permit**

Violation of State or Federal regulations relating to the rehabilitation permit may result in loss of the permit.