

SECTION: Wildlife in Captivity
POLICY: WiPo.2.2 (replaces WilPo.5.3.8)
SUBJECT: **Disposition of Live Wildlife**
DATE: July 2019

1.0 PURPOSE

Under the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997* (hereafter referred to as the FWCA) the keeping of game wildlife or specially protected wildlife in captivity is generally prohibited as wildlife, by its nature, belongs in the wild. There are some exceptions to this general prohibition that are addressed through licences and authorizations, or rules in regulation, where the risks of keeping wildlife in captivity can be acceptably managed. For more information please see WiPo.2.1 Wildlife in Captivity: Policy Overview.

WiPo.2.2 provides direction when Ministry staff and the general public come into possession of wildlife which is abandoned, orphaned, injured or sick, or has been taken from the wild for personal enjoyment or use. The disposition of this wildlife will vary depending on the particulars of the acquisition, species involved and other extenuating circumstances.

This policy provides direction to ensure the best interests of the individual wildlife specimen and the resource are met, legal implications of any disposition are considered, and to ensure consistency of approach.

2.0 POLICY DIRECTION

2.1 Return to the Wild

Wildlife, by its nature, belongs in the wild and the highest priority is always given to returning any wildlife specimen to the wild in a condition which allows it the best chance of survival. To manage the risks of relocation and to support the animal's success release must occur as close to the original collection site as reasonably possible.

Wildlife that is picked up by the public or comes into the possession of ministry staff should be returned to the site of collection as quickly as possible when there is a reasonable possibility of the animal surviving. This approach applies in situations involving "abandoned" fawns, moose calves, bear cubs or other species where the mother of the young is likely nearby and will continue care, as well as for animals with

minor injuries that are likely to recover on their own. Refer to WiPo.3.1.2 Management of Problem Black Bear for additional information on returning black bear to the wild.

In some cases, wildlife will require temporary care prior to release. In these cases, specially protected wildlife and game wildlife should be transferred to an authorized wildlife custodian who is authorized to provide rehabilitation and care to the particular wildlife species.

Note that no ministry authorization is required for a person who is temporarily in possession of live wildlife for the purpose of transfer to a wildlife custodian or a veterinarian, if it is kept for less than 24 hours (s. 44 of O. Reg. 668/98).

The ministry does not cover expenses related to the transportation, rehabilitation care or veterinary services for wildlife being held in captivity. Ministry staff may provide technical advice or assistance as resources allow.

2.2 Retain in Permanent Captivity or Euthanasia

If the decision is made that a wild animal cannot be released back to the wild there are two options. The animal may be provided with humane euthanasia or may be transferred to a person that is licensed or authorized to keep wildlife in captivity permanently. Generally, this would be an authorization under 40(2)(4) of the FWCA (WiPo.2.4) or a zoo licence (WiPo.2.5).

Euthanasia is taking away life for a humane purpose, and is the induction of death with minimal pain, stress or anxiety. Any wild animal that is seriously incapacitated due to sickness or injury, or that is undergoing a high degree of suffering should be immediately and humanely euthanized. In some cases, there may be a threat to the safety of other wildlife, the public and/or pets if the animal is diseased or parasitized (e.g. rabies infection). Euthanasia may also be provided where permanent captivity is not an option due to, for example, lack of appropriate disposition or housing options. Euthanasia may only be conducted by certain individuals such as an authorized wildlife custodian or a licensed veterinarian.

The decision to transfer a wild animal to permanent captivity is a significant one. Not all wild animals will adapt to life in captivity, and euthanasia can be the more humane option. Where a wild animal is transferred to life in permanent captivity there must be due consideration to the needs of the individual animal; does it have the temperament and physical ability to reasonably live a healthy life free from undue stress? There are resources from organizations like the National Wildlife Rehabilitator's Association to assist with making this determination.

Transfer of wildlife should not in any way result in the wildlife being sold as it is broadly defined by the FWCA.

Transfers to permanent captivity should provide for optimum potential benefit to wildlife management and society. Transfers and applications will be considered for the following (in order of preference):

- a) Facilities with approved captive breeding programs for species at risk to enhance and/or restore wild populations.
- b) Facilities with a well-developed public education program with a priority given to publicly funded and operated facilities (e.g. municipal zoos).
- c) Facilities with well-developed scientific or research programs which are of benefit to wildlife or the public. Transfers will not be approved to facilities doing research for commercial gain.
- d) Other facilities (e.g., privately operated zoos).