



Wildlife Rehabilitator Definitions and Requirements

Introduction

Licensed 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 licensing 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 Rehabilitator permit is required for the temporary holding, care and rehabilitation of NJ's native wildlife.

Requirements:

- One year minimum apprenticeship (see Apprenticeship definition below) with a NJ licensed 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 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 US Fish and Wildlife Service for avian species.
- Completion and submission of the Annual Report and Renewal Form along with required documentation.

2. Apprentice

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

Requirements:

- The sponsoring rehabilitator is required to have been licensed as a rehabilitator by the Division for at least two years prior to taking on an apprentice.
- The sponsoring rehabilitator must submit a letter stating the apprentice's name, address, phone 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) 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 application.
 - 4) Letter of commitment from a veterinarian willing to work with applying rehabilitator.
 - 5) Approval of an on-site inspection including proper caging and facility standards.
 - 6) Secure applicable permits from US Fish and Wildlife Service for avian species.
 - 7) Completion and submission of the Annual Report and Renewal Form along with required documentation.

3. Sub-permittee

A volunteer working under the supervision of a licensed rehabilitator to provide *temporary*, off-site care for animals requiring around-the-clock care for a short period of time.

A Sub-permittee may be an Apprentice.

Requirements:

- (a) The sponsoring rehabilitator must submit a letter stating the 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 sub-permittee's name, address, phone number and start date must be listed on the rehabilitator's annual report.
- (c) When round-the clock intensive care is no longer needed, the animals must be returned to the facility where it was admitted. The licensed rehabilitator is responsible to oversee the final care and release of these animals.
- (d) The rehabilitator will be held responsible for the activities of the sub-permittees while functioning under their license.
- (e) **Sub-permittees are not permitted to operate their own facility.** All animals must be admitted at the facility of the licensed rehabilitator before going off-site with the sub-permittee.
- (f) All animals handled by the sub-permittee will be reported on the licensed rehabilitator's annual report to the Division.

4. 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 licensed 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 inquires.

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 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 all records for migratory birds be held for a minimum of 5 years following the end of the calendar year covered by the records.

Renewals

All licenses 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 sub-permittees names, addresses, telephone number and start date
 - a list of apprentices 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
 - HO # held over
 - R # Released
 - DOA # Died on Arrival (or within 24 hours)
 - DIC # Died in care
 - EOA # Euthanized on arrival (or within 24 hours)
 - EIC # Euthanized in care
 - T # Transferred
 - Total phone calls received
- Permittee must be in good standing with the Division of Fish and Wildlife.

Species Covered by the Rehabilitation Permit

Each species that a rehabilitator is permitted to handle shall be listed on their license.

Occasionally, a rehabilitator may receive an animal that is not listed on their permit. Rehabilitators are required to notify the Division (609-292-2966) within 12 hours of taking possession of the animal and arrange to transport these animals to a rehabilitator licensed for that particular species as soon as reasonably possible. Alternative courses of action may also be discussed with the Division.

Application for Additional Species

Application for the addition of new species to an existing license 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.

Out-of-State Licensed Rehabilitators

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

Veterinarians

NJ licensed veterinarians may take temporary possession of wildlife and/or provide medical treatment of the wildlife while making arrangements to transfer the animals within 48 hours to a currently licensed wildlife rehabilitator licensed for that species. However, veterinarians are encouraged to discuss the payment of costs for such medical treatment prior to rendering any services.

As per federal regulation 21 CFR 530, a veterinarian that disperses or administers a medication for an extralabel use (such as for use in wildlife) is responsible for ensuring the medication does not enter the food chain whether via human consumption of game species or predator/prey activities.

Mentoring

The role of a mentor is to act as an experienced professional advisor or sponsor with individuals having a goal of obtaining a wildlife rehabilitation permit in their own name. Mentoring is voluntary and not a requirement of a rehabilitator's permit. Mentoring can be time consuming, requires a lot of planning, training and supervision. Activities involve developing a structured training program that utilizes the most current and recognized materials and methods and addresses all areas of proficiency listed in #2 Apprentices (see above). Experience can be gained through a combination of hands on activity at the mentor's facility, review of various reference materials and continuous educational opportunities such as wildlife training programs and symposiums. 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. Mentors are encouraged to attend the apprentice's facility inspection. The DFW requests mentors be licensed for at least 2 years prior to taking on an apprentice.

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 United States Fish and Wildlife – Migratory Bird permitting office at 413-253-8643 to obtain an application.

Rabies Vector Species

NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife and NJ Department of Health and Social Services recommends that anyone who obtains a wildlife rehabilitation permit for rabies vector species consider pre-exposure rabies vaccinations. This is only a suggestion and not a requirement to obtaining a permit. All medical procedures should be discussed with your physician.

Other Permits

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

5. General Policy Information

Funding/Contributions/Donations

The Division does not provide funding for the rehabilitation program. 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 change in facility location, the Division must be notified in order to inspect and approve the relocation. 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 and may be cause for re-evaluation or loss of permit. 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 strongly recommended. Documentation of attendance/participation should be included with the annual report.

Administration of Medications

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Center for Veterinary Medicine has confirmed very few medications have received FDA 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 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 consumption of game species or predator/prey consumption) is on the veterinarian. Your veterinarian should take this into account before administering a medication or 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.

Tagging/Marking of Wildlife

Rehabilitators that wish to ear-tag, collar or otherwise identify an animal that was rehabilitated prior to release, must obtain a NJ scientific collecting permit (\$20.00 per year for game animals, \$22.00 for nongame species. Additional permits may be required depending on the species.). NJ scientific collecting permits are granted for research purposes only. In order to obtain a scientific collecting permit a study proposal must be provided to the Division, along with references from two scientists.

Regulations regarding bird banding permits are described in the US Fish and Wildlife Service Code of Federal Regulations, 50 CFR 10 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, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Migratory Bird Management and all federal permit fees and conditions apply.

Euthanasia

The Division, at its discretion, may request the assistance of another rehabilitator in evaluating the final disposition of non-releasable wildlife. The final decision regarding disposition of non-releasable wildlife, shall be that of the Division.

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 Fish and Wildlife Service 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 or a direct request from the Division.

Liability Concerns

Handling and rehabilitating wildlife may expose the rehabilitator, the apprentice, subpermittees and/or volunteers to legal conflicts and/or personal injury. Be advised that insurance coverage for wildlife rehabilitators and activities involving wildlife rehabilitation are now available.

Revocation of Permit

Inappropriate handling of wildlife and/or violation of State or Federal regulations and policies related to maintaining the rehabilitation permit may result in re-evaluation or loss of the permit. Any questions regarding policies or regulations pertaining to rehabilitation permits, should be directed to the Division of Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Permitting Unit at (609) 292-2966.