

Provision of Veterinary Services to Wildlife

Published: July 2020

Introduction

Ontario is home to a diverse wildlife population that inhabits both the rural and urban areas of the province. These species play an important role in Canada's ecosystem, and their protection and preservation are essential to maintaining a well-balanced environment for both humans and animals alike.

In order to ensure that wildlife are properly managed and cared for, there are a variety of federal and provincial laws and regulations that have been developed to outline the legal ways in which an individual can interact with these species. In Ontario, these legal requirements are overseen and enforced by a variety of government agencies, including the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, and the Ministry of the Solicitor General.



Safe and effective veterinary care is an essential part of providing services to wildlife when necessary. Given this, a veterinarian may choose to work in either a paid or volunteer capacity to help ensure that wildlife receives appropriate and effective veterinary treatment. The provision of veterinary services to wildlife is unique in the practice of veterinary medicine and requires a veterinarian to develop expertise, knowledge and relationships outside the realm of traditional practice.

As this is an area of practice that intersects across numerous areas of oversight and accountability, it is important that veterinarians understand the legal and regulatory frameworks that shape this subset of veterinary medicine.

Purpose

This policy statement has been developed as a resource to support veterinarians who provide, or are considering providing, veterinary services to animals designated as wildlife.

Definition

Game Wildlife: Game wildlife means a fur-bearing mammal, game amphibian, game bird, game mammal or game reptile.¹

Migratory Bird: means a migratory bird referred to in the Convention found in the schedules of the Migratory Birds Convention Act and includes the sperm, eggs, embryos, tissue cultures, and parts of the bird.²

Specially Protected Wildlife: Specially protected wildlife means a specially protected amphibian, specially protected bird, specially protected invertebrate, specially protected mammal or specially protected reptile, as outlined in Schedules 6 to 11 of the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*.³

Wildlife: Wildlife means an animal that belongs to a species that is wild by nature and includes game wildlife and specially protected wildlife.⁴

¹ Definition taken from the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*, 1997.

² Definition adapted from the *Migratory Bird Convention Act*, 1994.

³ Definition taken from the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*, 1997.

⁴ Definition taken from the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*, 1997.



Wildlife Custodian: Wildlife custodian means a person authorized by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to keep injured, sick or immature game wildlife or specially protected wildlife for the purpose of rehabilitating or caring for them.⁵

General Requirements

Overview

Any veterinarian who provides veterinary services to an animal in Ontario, including wildlife, is required to be licensed by the College and adhere to all applicable practice standards regardless of whether they are compensated for their services.

A veterinarian who provides veterinary services to wildlife in Ontario must do so from an accredited facility. While there is no specific facility type for wildlife, a veterinarian may practice from another facility type determined by their scope of practice,

Treating Wildlife Presented to an Accredited Facility by a Member of the Public

A veterinarian may provide veterinary services to wildlife that is presented by a member of the public at an accredited facility for emergency treatment without establishing a veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR). However, it is expected that any wildlife treated by a veterinarian be transferred to a wildlife custodian for rehabilitation or release once the animal is stable. If a veterinarian wishes to provide rehabilitation to an animal classified as wildlife beyond completion of emergency treatment, they are required to become authorized as a wildlife custodian.

In accordance with Section 61 of the *Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act*, a veterinarian is permitted to euthanize wildlife presented to an accredited facility by a member of the public without consent if they determine through their professional judgement that the animal is suffering and euthanasia is the most humane course of action.

Treating Wildlife in the Care of a Wildlife Custodian

A wildlife custodian is a person or organization that has been authorized by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to keep and make care decisions for wildlife for the purpose of rehabilitation.

⁵ Definition taken from the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*, 1997.



All wildlife custodians are expected to form a VCPR with a veterinarian. Before forming this relationship, a veterinarian is expected to confirm that the individual they are engaging with is a Ministry-authorized wildlife custodian.

A veterinarian is permitted to establish standard operating procedures (SOPs) with a wildlife custodian should they determine that it is appropriate within the context of the VCPR.

A veterinarian is able to euthanize wildlife in the care of a wildlife custodian in accordance with their professional judgement. A veterinarian is also permitted by regulation to dispense T-61 to a wildlife custodian for the purpose of euthanasia.

Legislative Authority

Veterinarians Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. V.3 R.R.O. 1990,
Reg 1093 (*Veterinarians Act*), in particular Section 33 (2)(f)(c)
Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, S.O. 1997, c. 41
O. Reg. 668/98: Wildlife in Captivity, s. 44 (*Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*, 1997)
Endangered Species Act, 2007, S.O. 2007, c. 6
O. Reg. 242/08: General, s. 15-16 (*Endangered Species Act*, 2007)
Provincial Animal Welfare Act, 2019
Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994.

Resources

The following can be found at the College's website at cvo.org:

1. *Professional Practice Standard: Informed Client Consent*
2. *Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Informed Client Consent*
3. *Professional Practice Standard: Medical Records*
4. *Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Medical Records*
5. *Professional Practice Standard: Prescribing a Drug*
6. *Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Prescribing a Drug*
7. *Professional Practice Standard: Dispensing a Drug*
8. *Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Dispensing a Drug*
9. *Professional Practice Standard: Extra-Label Drug Use*
10. *Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Extra-Label Drug Use*
11. *Professional Practice Standard: Use of Compounded Drugs in Veterinary Practice*
12. *Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Use of Compounded Drugs in Veterinary Practice*
13. *Professional Practice Standard: Management and Disposal of Controlled Drugs*
14. *Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Management and Disposal of Controlled Drugs*



15. *Professional Practice Standard: Establishing, Maintaining, and Discontinuing a Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR)*
16. *Guide to the Professional Practice Standard: Establishing, Maintaining, and Discontinuing a Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR)*
17. *Professional Practice Standard: Veterinary Euthanasia*
18. *Professional Practice Standard: Humane Animal Handling and Restraint*
19. *Position Statement: Reporting Animal Abuse or Neglect*

Other Resources

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry - Wildlife Rehabilitation Policy – available from any Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry District Office: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-natural-resources-and-forestry-regional-and-district-offices>

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry – Keeping Wild Animals in Captivity:
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/keep-wild-animals-captivity>

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry – Rescue a Sick, Injured or Abandoned Wild Animal:
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/rescue-sick-injured-or-abandoned-wild-animal>

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry – Find a Wildlife Rehabilitator:
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-wildlife-rehabilitator>

AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2020 Edition:
https://www.avma.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/2020_Euthanasia_Final_1-15-20.pdf

College publications contain practice parameters and standards which should be considered by all Ontario veterinarians in the care of their patients and in the practice of the profession. College publications are developed in consultation with the profession and describe current professional expectations. It is important to note that these College publications may be used by the College or other bodies in determining whether appropriate standards of practice and professional responsibilities have been maintained. The College encourages you to refer to the website (www.cvo.org) to ensure you are referring to the most recent version of any document.