



FACT SHEET:

Regulations Impacting Veterinary Care of Wildlife in Arkansas

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Authority

Amendment 35 to the Arkansas Constitution grants authority to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to regulate the "the control, management, restoration, conservation and regulation of birds, fish, game and wildlife resources of the State". The Commission has defined wildlife to include both native and non-native species and which would include "exotic" animals.

Regulations regarding captive wildlife that could have a bearing on Arkansas veterinarians are summarized below:

Care for Native Wildlife Pets

Commission regulations do permit the public to capture many species of native wildlife by hand and to keep them as personal pets provided that males and females are kept separate or that the males are neutered. Veterinarians may provide care to animals kept under these regulations.

Care for Exotic Pets

Commission regulations allow for personal ownership of many species of exotic wildlife. Although a permit from the Commission is not required to keep most such species, the owners of all exotic wildlife must bring these animals to a veterinarian to determine if they are healthy and free of any diseases or parasites and must maintain records of such an examination for as long as they own the animal. There are no specific tests that are required to meet this standard.

Skunks

There is no legal way for an Arkansas resident, except a Wildlife Rehabilitator, to possess a skunk. Except for those under the care of a Wildlife Rehabilitator, all other skunks are illegally possessed and veterinarians should not provide "de-scenting" or other services for them.

Assistance to Commercial Wildlife Operations

The Commission regulates commercial activities involving captive wildlife, including breeding, selling, and hunting. Veterinarians may provide medical services to such permitted facilities. Those breeding wild species of waterfowl are required to have veterinarians sample flocks for duck virus enteritis annually.

Assistance to Falconers

Veterinarians may provide professional services for birds possessed by those with Commission Falconry Permits.

Rehabilitation of Injured or Orphaned Birds Found in the Wild

All wild bird species are protected by state and federal law except English (House) Sparrows, European Starlings and Rock Doves (Pigeons).

Licensed veterinarians are not required to obtain a Federal migratory bird permit to temporarily possess, stabilize, or euthanize sick and injured migratory birds. However, a veterinarian without a migratory bird rehabilitation permit must transfer any such bird to a federally permitted migratory bird rehabilitator within 24 hours after the bird's condition is stabilized, unless the bird is euthanized.

If a veterinarian is unable to locate a permitted rehabilitator within that time, the veterinarian must contact his or her Regional Migratory Bird Permit Office for assistance in locating a permitted migratory bird rehabilitator and/or to obtain authorization to continue to hold the bird.

In addition, veterinarians must notify the local U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ecological Services Office immediately upon receiving a threatened or endangered migratory bird species. Veterinarians must keep records for 5 years of all migratory birds that die while in their care, including those they euthanize. The records must include: the species of bird, the type of injury, the date of acquisition, the date of death, and whether the bird was euthanized.

Rehabilitation of Injured or Orphaned Wildlife Found in the Wild (other than Birds)

Licensed veterinarians are not required to obtain a Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit to temporarily possess, stabilize, or euthanize sick or injured wildlife with the exception of deer and elk. However, a veterinarian without a Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit must transfer any such animal to a permitted wildlife rehabilitator within 72 hours after the animal's condition is stabilized, unless the animal is euthanized. Licensed veterinarians may temporarily possess, provide medical care or euthanize wildlife that has been brought to them by a permitted wildlife rehabilitator provided that animals are returned to the permitted wildlife rehabilitator prior to release. Under no circumstances are veterinarians allowed to release animals to the wild without a Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit.

A veterinarian's signature is part of the process to becoming a permitted Wildlife Rehabilitator. A veterinarian that agrees to assist a Wildlife Rehabilitator is expected to provide the Wildlife Rehabilitator advice on caring for animals, but is not required to provide medical care, although they can do so if they would like. While Wildlife Rehabilitators cannot charge for their services, a veterinarian may charge Wildlife Rehabilitators for professional services provided to them if they so choose.