

Animal Control Officers and Wild Animals

Protocol for Incidental Capture of Animals, Depredating Animals and Sick or Diseased Animals



All wild animals are regulated. North Carolina law protects all wildlife from take without a license or permit. Licensed trappers may take wildlife during the **trapping season** open for those species. All other trapping circumstances require a permit, except as noted below for animals captured incidentally and suspected of carrying **rabies**.

Incidental Capture

It is possible in the course of trapping for domestic animals that an Animal Control Officer (ACO) will capture a non-target wild animal. In these instances, the officer should take the following actions:

1. Assess the animal.
2. If the animal is suspected of having rabies, the officer may secure the animal and transport it to a place where it can be humanely euthanized and tested for rabies.
3. If the animal appears healthy, it may not be transported and must be released in the immediate vicinity of capture. If the officer suspects the animal may be responsible for depredation, the officer should follow the guidance below for **depredating** wildlife.

Depredating Wild Animals

When there is evidence that wild animals are causing damage or destroying property, they may be taken under a depredation permit. Depredation permits are issued by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) or a Wildlife Damage Control Agent to take wild animals causing damage or destruction to property. The following points apply to depredation permits:

1. Depredation permits are issued directly to the property owner or lessee.
2. Depredation permits from the WRC may be obtained from a **District Biologist** or a local **Wildlife Enforcement Officer**.
3. Depredation permits are not issued to remove wild animals simply because they are present in a residential area or visible during the day.
4. Depredation permits are not needed for feral or free-ranging domestic animals like dogs and cats.

Wildlife Damage Control Agents (WDCA) are individuals certified by the WRC who may issue depredation permits and act as a second party to remove depredating wildlife. WDCA's may not issue depredation permits for big game animals, bats, or species listed as endangered, threatened or special concern. An ACO may be certified as a WDCA by attending a WDCA certification course. Call 919-707-0050 for a course schedule and more information.

Sick or Diseased Wild Animals

When a wild animal is showing obvious signs of rabies, unprovoked aggression associated with rabies, or if human exposure to a potentially rabid animal cannot be ruled out, ACO should use the “Wildlife Depredation Permit for Public Health and Safety for County and City Offices”. County or city animal control supervisors can be issued this permit annually. Call 919-707-0068 if you are an animal control supervisor and do not have the permit application information. Under a depredation permit, the ACO may euthanize the animal or transport it to a place where it can be humanely euthanized and tested for rabies if warranted in accordance with State Laboratory of Public Health guidelines. Wild animals may not be held for observation but must be euthanized because the shedding period for rabies virus is not known for wild animals.

State Laboratory of Public Health guidelines: <http://slph.ncpublichealth.com/virology-serology/rabies.asp>



Bats, foxes, raccoons and skunks are the most likely rabies vector species that animal control officers will encounter.



N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Division of Wildlife Management
www.ncwildlife.org
919-707-0050