

What to do if You Find a Sick, Injured or Abandoned Wild Animal

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If you see what you think may be a sick, injured, or abandoned animal, do not remove it from its natural habitat. The animal may not need assistance and you could do more harm trying to help.

Determining if Wildlife is Sick or Injured

- Blood, wounds, or swelling on the body
- Unusual or uneven loss of fur or feathers
- Body covered in fleas, or with visible winter ticks
- Difficult or raspy breathing or sneezing
- A dangling leg or wing
- Closed eyes and head tucked under wing
- Emaciation, tremors or disoriented behaviour
- Not afraid of humans.

Determining if Wildlife is Abandoned

During the day, some species leave their offspring alone temporarily. For example, deer and cottontail rabbits spend much of the day away from their offspring.

To determine if a young animal has been abandoned:

- Check it periodically for 24 to 48 hours to see if it still appears abandoned. However, keep your distance.
- Keep cats and dogs away from the area. The mother may not return if it is noisy or if predators or people are close by.

What to do if Wildlife is Sick, Injured, or Abandoned

If the animal meets the criteria above or if you remain uncertain, contact:

- A [wildlife rehabilitator](#) who can help you assess the situation, provide advice and reduce the risk of harm to yourself and the animal. Immediate and specialized care may be needed to help an animal; a wildlife rehabilitator can help you determine the best course of action. Please be aware that many volunteer-operated wildlife rehabilitation organizations have limited capacity to accept animals, especially in the spring.
- The Natural Resources Information Centre at 1-800-667-1940 from Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

What to do if you Suspect Wildlife is Rabid

- If you suspect there is a public health risk from a sick wild animal, such as rabies, or you or your pet had contact with a suspected rabid animal, contact your local [Public Health Unit](#) immediately. You may also contact Service Ontario toll-free at 1-866-532-3161 and they will connect you to the Public Health Unit.

- Rabies is a fatal, viral disease with early symptoms that may include numbness around the bite site, fever, headache and nausea. Rabies can be transmitted to humans, livestock, and pets.

Tips for Handling Wildlife

- A person may temporarily possess a wild animal for up to 24 hours to transport it to a wildlife rehabilitator or veterinarian. However, you cannot keep wildlife in captivity without approval from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.
- If you must handle a wild animal, wear protective clothing and equipment, such as leather gloves to avoid bites or scratches.
- Wash hands after handling the animal.

Reporting Dead Wildlife

- To report dead animals (including birds or bats) contact the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative:
 - Website: www.cwhc-rcsf.ca/
 - Email: on-nu@cwhc-rcsf.ca
 - Phone: 1-866-673-4781

LEARN MORE:

- List of wildlife rehabilitators: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-wildlife-rehabilitator>
- What to do if you find a sick, injured or abandoned wild animal: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/rescue-sick-injured-or-abandoned-wild-animal>
- Information on wildlife in captivity: www.ontario.ca/page/keep-wild-animals-captivity
- Learn more about wildlife: ontario.ca/wildlife
- Find your local Public Health Unit: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx>

MNRF Office Locations: ontario.ca/mnrfoffices
Media Calls Only: Media Desk, Communications Services
Branch, 416-314-2106

ontario.ca/natural-resources-news

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