

Dear fellow veterinarians

We have all been impacted by COVID-19 in our practices. What you may not realize is that licensed wildlife rehabilitators in our state are being impacted too. Independent wildlife rehabilitators and centers across the state have had to work to develop plans to allow them to care for animals while keeping their staff and volunteers healthy, just as we have at our own clinics. All have been working through tough decisions, and some have temporarily closed. As a result, this spring veterinarians may be contacted by citizens in the hope that we may be able to fill in the gap in wildlife rehabilitation services.

The good news is that you can help without admitting any of these animals and without investing a lot of your staff's time! As a veterinarian, you have access to a large group of caring individuals who may be willing to spread messages that will decrease the number of animals that need care. Messages like:

- It's important to check a tree for a wild animal nest before trimming it (if there's a nest please wait to trim as the babies will develop quickly)
- Please don't live trap "nuisance" animals. If you need to relocate them, especially during the breeding season, use humane exclusion methods to encourage them to move out, with their babies, on their own.
- There are some easy ways to help prevent birds from flying into windows and injuring themselves.

The Wisconsin Humane Society Wildlife Rehabilitation Center has some valuable information pages about commonly-encountered wildlife situations that you could share with your clients either collectively through social media or via one-on-one telephone consultations when they call your clinic.

A link for Solutions for Wildlife Conflicts is <https://www.wihumane.org/wildlife/help-i-have-a-wild-animal-issue/solutions-for-wildlife-conflicts>

A link for Preventing Window Collisions is <https://www.wihumane.org/wildlife/preventing-window-collisions>

Encourage people to talk to a wildlife rehabilitator before "rescuing" a wild animal. Even the wildlife rehabilitators that have temporarily closed to admissions are still taking calls to help provide life-saving information. Often, providing information about the behavior and habits of a species is all that is needed to prevent animals from coming into care unnecessarily. A listing of many of Wisconsin's licensed wildlife rehabilitators is here on the Wisconsin DNR's website: <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/directory.html>

I also encourage you to reach out to your local wildlife rehabilitator and see what their availability and abilities are for wildlife care.

I know everyone is very busy, but I ask on behalf of wild animals and wildlife rehabilitators in our state that you help us get these messages out. It could make a huge difference in saving the lives of wild animals this year!

Thank You!

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