



# Ohio Department of Natural Resources

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**Kendra S. Wecker, Chief**

Division of Wildlife  
2045 Morse Rd, Building G  
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January 29, 2021

Re: COVID-19 Exposure and Safe Wildlife Handling Guidance

Dear Ohio wildlife practitioners:

Thank you for your continued support and efforts to reduce risk of COVID transmission to Ohio's wildlife over the last year. As the year progressed, we have learned additional information about coronavirus transmission to wildlife. Many questions remain; however, mammals appear to be at the highest risk of being infected with coronavirus, including the following groups of Ohio wild mammals: bats, deer, felids, canids, and mustelids. Although largely unchanged from our April 2020 guidance, this document has been updated to include recommendations regarding handling, care, and contact with these groups of live wild mammals.

- Follow all state, local, corporate, and institutional guidance regarding practices to reduce the human-to-human spread of coronavirus.
- Wear a face mask to block or minimize the exchange of respiratory droplets. This may include use of a surgical mask, dust mask, or cloth mask.
- Wear disposable or reusable gloves, such as rubber dish-washing gloves that can be decontaminated, when working directly with live wild mammals or cleaning their enclosures.
- Wear washable or disposable coveralls, or a change of clothing and footwear, to prevent movement of pathogens between sites.
- Keep domestic animals in separate housing from wild mammals; solid walls between caging are preferred.
- Implement additional disinfection, quarantine, and cleaning procedures according to CDC guidelines.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone who has, do not work directly or indirectly with wild mammals.

### **Scientific Collection Permittees and Nuisance Wild Animal Control Operators:**

For those Permittees and Operators that encounter live wild mammals, we recommend following the precautions above until additional information regarding mammal susceptibility is available.

- At this time, we anticipate seasonal bat capture research and handling will be allowed in 2021.
- Euthanization of bats remains illegal in Ohio unless rabies is suspected or a bite cannot be ruled out. Please contact [Wildlife.Permits@dnr.state.oh.us](mailto:Wildlife.Permits@dnr.state.oh.us) with any questions.

### **Ohio Wildlife Rehabilitators (including sub-permittees) and Education Permittees:**

Please follow the precautions above when coming into contact with any live mammals. Additionally, the following apply to Rehabilitators and Education Permittees:

- Intake and release of animals, including bats, are still allowed at this time but please reduce new mammal intakes as much as possible. If you are not able to follow these guidelines, do not accept new mammals. Mortally injured mammals including bats, deer, mustelids, felids, and canids should be euthanized in the field and not admitted into the facility, if possible. House all new bats, deer, felids, canids, and mustelids in isolation away from other animals in your facility.
- Where practical, refrain from any direct handling of wild mammals. This is of most importance with bats, deer, felids, canids, and mustelids. If handling is required, use the precautions outlined above.
- Limit interactions with animals to as few handlers as possible.
- When possible, have the same person work with the same animals to limit potential exposures.
- Should you or others in your facility/household be diagnosed with COVID-19 or suspected of infection, we request you notify the Division by email [Wildlife.Permits@dnr.ohio.gov](mailto:Wildlife.Permits@dnr.ohio.gov) so that we may track animals with potential exposure to the virus. Our COVID-19 response team will only use this information if further testing or evaluation needs to occur.
- Should you no longer be able to care for wildlife, do not transfer mammals in your care; contact the Division at the email above for further instructions, as this is a dynamic situation.
- Additional guidelines may arise as information regarding the SARS-CoV-2 virus becomes available.

Sincerely,  
/s/ Kendra S. Wecker  
Kendra S. Wecker  
Chief