

Recommendations for Transporting Wildlife

Note to public: Please contact the Department of Natural Resources or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator before transporting wildlife. If you choose to assist a wild animal that appears to be in need of help, it comes with some risk of being bitten, scratched or otherwise injured. You also place yourself at some risk of exposure to a variety of diseases and parasites that may be transmitted from animals to humans. Please protect yourself from injury by not handling the animal directly, even with gloved hands. Instead, licensed wildlife rehabilitators usually recommend that people gently scoop an animal into a cardboard box, pet carrier or other sturdy container. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after coming into close contact with animals and disinfect or discard any materials used in the process.

Contact: WDNR Call Center (1-888-WDNRINFO / 936-7463)

Visit: dnr.wi.gov, keyword “rehab”

If you work in the natural resources field or are involved in wildlife rehabilitation, sooner or later you will be faced with a situation in which the transport of a live wild animal is necessary, whether it is to a veterinarian, a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, or a release site. When transporting wild animals it is important to remember that most wild animals view humans as a threat and may experience high levels of stress while in our presence. Furthermore, the animal being transported is likely already in a compromised physical state (e.g., sick, injured, starved, dehydrated), which can be made worse by additional stress. Therefore, every effort must be made to minimize stress for the animal during transport.

To prevent stress and further injury to wild animals during transport:

- **Do not feed or offer water to the wild animal unless specifically directed to do so.**
- **Avoid excessive handling** of the animal.
- **Avoid direct eye contact** with the animal, as most animals view eye contact as a challenging or threatening gesture.
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- **Do not take photographs** of the animal. The bright camera flash and exposing the animal to needless handling and visual stimuli can be stressful.
- Animals should be contained in a **well-ventilated container** with **no sharp or protruding objects** that could cause injury.
- **Do not use wire cages to transport birds.** Wire cages can cause serious injury and feather damage. A sturdy, covered cardboard box with pencil-sized holes in the top provides a great transport container for most wild birds. Pet carrier doors and windows should be covered with cloth or cardboard to keep birds from getting a wing, leg or bill caught in the mesh.



- **Provide a thick layer of ravel-free non-slip material on the bottom of the transport container**, such as a towel, artificial turf or a carpet pad. This provides secure footing for an animal that might experience stress and injury by trying to stand and maintain balance on a slippery surface. There should be no loose strings or loops in the material because that can cause entanglement or even strangulation.
- The **lid, door or other opening to the transport container should be secured** to prevent the animal from escaping.
- **Do not allow other animals to approach the transport container.** Keep dogs and cats from sniffing or walking around the container as this is very stressful for the caged wild animal and may cause it to injure itself while trying to get away from the perceived threat. If transporting multiple species of wild animals, make sure visual barriers are in place so the animals can't see each other.
- The transport container should be **placed securely in the vehicle** to prevent excessive movement (i.e. sliding, tipping over) during transport.
- **Do not transport animals in the trunk of a vehicle or in the uncovered bed of a truck.** The trunk of a vehicle does not offer enough ventilation and may become too hot. Transporting an animal in the back of an open vehicle exposes the animal to the elements, harsh winds, excessive noise and potential injury from objects that may crash into the transport container.
- **Limit visual stimuli** for the animal by covering the transport container with a sheet, towel, blanket, etc. Always allow for adequate ventilation when covering an animal or container.
- **Limit auditory stimuli** in the transport vehicle. Do not play music or expose the animal to excessive talking, traffic noise, or wind through open windows.
- **Limit exposure to noxious fumes.** Do not smoke while transporting an animal in your vehicle. Do not place the transport container where the animal may be exposed to exhaust fumes.
- **Control temperature** inside your vehicle so the animal does not overheat or become too cold.
- **Avoid unnecessary delays** while transporting animals. Avoid side-trips, such as running errands or visiting friends, which would prolong the time the animal spends in transport. Since transport causes stress for the animal involved, it is important to get to the destination as soon as possible (while, of course, maintaining speed limits and observing traffic laws).

