WAC 220-450-110   Wildlife rehabilitation—Releasing wildlife.

(1) Rehabilitated wildlife must be released as soon as the animal is deemed physically, behaviorally, and psychologically fit and conforming to the species natural history to increase successful reintegration into the wild.

(2) It is unlawful to hold wildlife for rehabilitation longer than one hundred eighty days. A primary permittee must obtain department authorization if the animal requires care longer than the one hundred eighty-day time limit. The department may grant a time extension if wildlife is over-wintering, molting, completing recovery, or waiting for suitable placement.

(3) Wildlife must be released at locations using methods and protocol to minimize stress on released animal; disease free; and into the same area from which the wildlife was taken unless doing this poses a substantial risk to the health or safety of the released wildlife or humans; or at a location within the wildlife's normal species range and appropriate habitat if location of origin is unknown or release cannot or should not occur at origin location.

The department may direct the permittee to release wildlife at a location other than where the wildlife was taken.

(4) A group of unrelated wildlife of the same species and that were raised together for socialization may be released at the same location even if that location is not where the wildlife was originally taken. All other release requirements must be followed. Migratory birds including raptors may be released at a location other than where they originated, without department preapproval, but within their natural range and must be at a location and timing appropriate for migration or flock behavior.

(5) **Release restriction and requirements.**

(a) Wildlife may not be given to the public to release after rehabilitation.

(b) Permittees must obtain department authorization for the release location prior to releasing cervids, large carnivores, coyotes, or beaver; cervids may not be released out of their WDFW region of origin.

(c) Orphaned cervids received by a wildlife rehabilitator and born during the year received must be released no later than October 31 of the year received. If an extension is needed to complete rehabilitation, a request must be made to the department for an extension authorization.

(d) Eastern gray squirrels, Virginia opossum, eastern cottontail, European starlings, and house sparrows must be released where these species already abundantly occur, releasing these species outside of where these species already occur is prohibited.

(e) Amphibians and reptiles must be released at point of origin, without exception. It is unlawful to release amphibians and reptiles if:

(i) They are a Washington state nonnative species.

(ii) They have been in captivity as pets.

(iii) They have been exposed to items or animals from the pet trade or pet stores including live food items or plants prior to being admitted to the permitted rehabilitation facility.

(iv) The point of origin is unknown.

(6) The primary permittee must notify and receive authorization from the department before releasing oiled wildlife, or state or federally designated threatened, endangered, or sensitive species.

(7) Hacking of orphaned raptors is permitted at or through a permitted facility where department-inspected and approved hacking facilities are available.

(8) A violation of this section is punishable under RCW 77.15.750(1), Unlawful use of a department permit—Penalty.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 77.04.012, 77.04.013, 77.04.020, 77.04.055, 77.12.047, 77.12.240, 77.12.467, 77.12.469, and 77.32.070. WSR 19-06-038 (Order 19-35), § 220-450-110, filed 3/1/19, effective 4/1/19. Statutory Authority: RCW 77.04.012, 77.04.013, 77.04.020, 77.04.055, and 77.12.047. WSR 17-05-112 (Order 17-04), recodified as § 220-450-110, filed 2/15/17, effective 3/18/17. Statutory Authority: RCW 77.12.047, 77.12.240, 77.12.467, 77.12.469, and 77.32.070. WSR 13-18-046 (Order 13-192), § 232-12-849, filed 8/30/13, effective 9/30/13.]