

OBTAINING A WILDLIFE REHABILITATION PERMIT IN VIRGINIA

The Wildlife Center of Virginia
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For those interested in obtaining a rehabilitation permit in Virginia, please review the VDGIF Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit Conditions at <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/forms/PERM/PERM-044.pdf>. Contact DGIF for a copy.

In Virginia, there are four categories of rehabilitation permits:

Category I: Category I permittees, or apprentices, are for individuals who have less than two years of rehabilitation experience. Apprentices must be sponsored and supervised by a Category II or III permittee.

Category II: Those with advanced skills and more than two years of rehabilitation experience may obtain a Category II permit. Category II permittees may be individuals (IIA) or organizations (IIB).

Category III: Professionally operated facilities with an on-site veterinary staff may qualify for Category III status.

Category IV: Category IV permittees, or care providers, are able to work at a facility of a Category I, II, or III permitted rehabilitator. Category IV permittees may not care for wildlife in their own homes.

Please review the DGIF permit conditions for complete descriptions and requirements.

Sponsors

New applicants must obtain a sponsor. A sponsor is a permitted wildlife rehabilitator who will provide education, training, and support for you for the first two years of your wildlife rehabilitation experience (i.e., apprenticeship). This step is necessary in obtaining your permit. **Sponsors must be permitted rehabilitators who hold a valid Category II or III permit.** The DGIF website has a list of permitted Category II rehabilitators who can serve as sponsors at <http://www.dgif.state.va.us/wildlife/injured/rehabilitators.asp>

Cooperating Veterinarian

Category II permittees will need to establish a relationship with a veterinarian. Your veterinarian will not only be the person who signs your permit, but also will help to provide medical care and support for your patients. It is *essential* for successful rehabilitation that such a relationship exists. New (Category I) rehabilitators will not need a vet to sign off on their permits, as they will not be working with injured wildlife. Those ready to apply for a Category II permit (after the two-year apprenticeship) will need to work with a cooperating veterinarian.

Facility Inspection:

New applicants should spend some time setting up and organizing their "facility". This means selecting the area in your home in which you will be rehabilitating wildlife. The area can be an unused bedroom, basement, out-building, etc. The area must have a door that separates it from other living quarters. Obtain the necessary equipment (i.e., cages, heating pads, scale, hygrometer, handling gloves and syringes) and food (i.e., formulas, solid foods) needed to care for your patients. Create medical logs/log sheets and feeding charts, build outdoor caging (if applicable), organize and clean work areas and housing areas. This area will be inspected by a DGIF conservation police officer once you initiate the permitting process with DGIF.

Apply for the Permit:

Once you have read the DGIF permit conditions, familiarized yourself with the process of rehabilitating wildlife, located a sponsor, and have set up your facility, contact the rehabilitation permitting officer at the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. **Dianne Waller is the current permitting official; contact her at (804)-367-9588.** Dianne will send you a copy of Virginia's Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit Conditions and an application. If you are applying for a Category I permit, she will contact a conservation police officer in your area who will come to inspect your facility within the next three weeks. The conservation police officer will have a permit application when s/he arrives; if you pass the inspection, the application will be left for you to fill out and mail to VDGIF, along with a \$10.00 application fee.

As a Category I permittee, you may accept orphaned wildlife from your sponsor only after you have completed all of the above steps and have received a valid permit for the calendar year (February through end of January of the following year).

Continuing Education

Permitted rehabilitators must attend a *minimum* of six hours of approved education related to wildlife rehabilitation each year to renew permits. New rehabilitators do not need to take classes prior to obtaining a permit, though the Wildlife Center recommends taking some introductory-level rehabilitation classes to learn more and see if rehabilitation is right for you. Please see the included page on "Continuing Education Opportunities."

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE ABOVE GUIDELINES APPLY TO VIRGINIA RESIDENTS ONLY!

Continuing Education Opportunities for Renewing Permits

In the state of Virginia, wildlife rehabilitators must attend a *minimum* of 6 hours of education related to wildlife rehabilitation to renew permits. There are a variety of opportunities offered by the Wildlife Center of Virginia, rehabilitation organizations around the state, national organizations, and out-of-state wildlife centers and groups. Here are just some of opportunities that are available:

- **The Wildlife Center of Virginia's "On the Road" classes.**
The Wildlife Center offers a variety of introductory and beginner classes around the state of Virginia throughout the year. Please visit the Wildlife Center's website (www.wildlifecenter.org) under "training opportunities" for a current class schedule.
- **The Wildlife Center of Virginia's annual *Call of the Wild* conference.**
The Wildlife Center's annual wildlife rehabilitation conference typically takes place in October or November and is held in Waynesboro, VA. This two-day event offers a variety of classes for beginner to advanced wildlife rehabilitators, environmental educators, veterinary professionals, and wildlife enthusiasts. One day of the conference equals six hours of continuing education. Please check the Wildlife Center's website for dates and schedules.
- **Rehabilitation groups around the state of Virginia offer various classes, seminars, and other forms of continuing education. These groups are also excellent contacts for finding sponsors in your area.**
 - *Wildlife Response, Inc:* Hampton Roads area and Virginia Beach. Offers introductory rehabilitation classes as well as an annual seminar (typically in February/March) on a variety of wildlife rehabilitation topics.
Hotline: 757-543-7000
www.wildliferesponse.org
 - *Virginia Beach SPCA Wildlife Program:* 757-427-0070
www.vbspcawildlife.com
 - *Wildlife Rescue League:* Primarily serves the Northern Virginia area, also has members throughout Northern Neck and into Maryland. Offers classes throughout the year. Hotline: 703-440-0800
www.wildliferescueleague.org
 - *Native Wildlife Rescue, Inc.* Group of rehabilitators in the Rappahannock, Madison, Culpeper area. Offers an annual one-day seminar on a variety of rehabilitation topics, typically in February. Contact Amo Merritt at amo134134@yahoo.com.
 - *Area Rehabbers Klub:* Serves Richmond and surrounding areas. Hotline: 804-598-8380
<http://welcome.to/arkva>
 - *Wildlife Care Alliance:* Serves Roanoke, Bedford, Lynchburg and southwest Virginia.
www.wildlifecarealliance.org
- **There are two national/international professional wildlife rehabilitation organizations that offer opportunities for continuing education.** These groups also offer high quality publications on an assortment of rehabilitation topics. It is highly recommended that those who are interested in wildlife rehabilitation look into one or both of these groups.
 - *National Wildlife Rehabilitator Association (NWRA):* www.nwrawildlife.org NWRA is dedicated to improving and promoting the profession of wildlife rehabilitation and its contributions to preserving natural ecosystems. NWRA offers an annual conference in March at a different location in the U.S. each year.
 - *International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (IWRC):* www.theiwrc.org IWRC provides science-based education and resources to wildlife rehabilitators and the public to promote wildlife conservation and welfare. IWRC offers an annual symposium (typically in October or November), as well as rehabilitation seminars throughout the U.S. and Canada. On-line classes are also offered.