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Relocating Wildlife: Why it usually does more harm than good

Often when people are in conflict with wildlife, they think the best solution is moving the animal. Wildlife relocation is seen as an easy, quick and humane way to solve conflicts, but this is not usually the case. Relocating wild animals may cause more harm than good, with undesirable consequences for both people and wildlife.

The ministry will relocate wildlife in very limited situations, using scientific research and expertise to do so in a way that is safe for people and animals.



Why can relocating wildlife be harmful?

Resources are limited

Wildlife may have a difficult time meeting their basic needs – food, water and shelter – in unfamiliar areas or areas with limited resources.

Someone is already living there

Wildlife will likely be relocated to areas that are already home to other animals. These animals may not welcome newcomers or share food sources and shelter. This may create stress and conflict among animals, which can lead to injury or death.

Diseases can be spread

Moving animals around increases the chances of introducing or spreading diseases such as rabies. This can decrease wildlife populations and become a threat to humans.

Relocated animals may try to return

Faced with unfamiliar surroundings, competition for limited resources and possible separation from families, wildlife may try to return home. During the journey their chances of becoming injured or killed – such as in vehicle collisions – increase.

Relocation is not a long-term solution

If an area is attractive to wildlife – with good sources of food or shelter – animals may continue to take up residence.

It becomes someone else's problem

Wildlife will seek food, water and shelter wherever it is easily available. Relocated animals that survive may contribute to problems in other areas, especially if they are used to living around people.

What works when humans and wildlife are in conflict?

There are various effective, humane and inexpensive things people can do to prevent and manage human-wildlife conflict instead of relocating wild animals.

For example, many problems can be prevented and managed using methods such as wildlife-proofing your home, practising proper waste management techniques, etc.

For more information on ways to prevent and manage human-wildlife conflict, visit Ontario.ca/wildlife.



What does the law say?

Wildlife relocation is regulated in Ontario under the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*. If an animal is captured it must be released unharmed in close proximity to the capture site (within 1 kilometer) or, if sick or injured, delivered to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator within 24 hours unless otherwise directed by the Ministry.