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www.pgc.state.pa.us

October 17, 2002

TO: All Wildlife Rehabilitators
All Wildlife Pest Control Permittees

Please be advised that the list of “high risk” rabies vector species has been amended on a recommendation from the state Department of Health to include bats, coyotes, and groundhogs.

In addition, the Department of Health recommended deletion of the opossum from the list since scientific literature fully documents the extreme rarity with which this mammal acquires rabies infection.

In considering the above, the release of skunks, raccoons, foxes, coyotes and groundhogs, through rehabilitation (unless RVS certified) or wildlife pest control activities, is hereby prohibited on a statewide basis.

Bats require special consideration. Little brown (*Myotis lucifugus*) and big brown (*Eptesicus fuscus*) bats have adapted to the way humans have changed the environment. These species, especially little brown bats, now use human structures as primary roosts and can concentrate in large numbers. This behavior makes them susceptible to wholesale destruction causing population declines that could lead to a threatened or endangered species status listing. **It is a goal of the Pennsylvania Game Commission to keep species from declining and becoming listed.** Bats are economically valuable within the Commonwealth. A single little brown bat is capable of capturing over 1,000 insects per hour, providing a valuable insect control service.

The use of manmade structures by the federally and state-endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) has been documented. This endangered species is very similar in appearance to our most common bat, the little brown, and requires extensive experience to be correctly identified. The state-threatened small-footed bat (*Myotis leibii*), though not commonly found in buildings, is also difficult to distinguish from the common little brown bat.

Should a bat come in contact with a person or human exposure is evident because of a bite, scratch or exposure to saliva or other body fluid or suspected (as in the case of a bat being found in a house where it could have contacted a sleeping individual or child), that animal shall be captured for testing. No permittee shall, without special permission from the Pennsylvania Game Commission, destroy or euthanize an entire colony of bats from a structure. The approved method of expelling a colony from a building is to seal the structure to exclude bats. Recommendations and timing for building exclusion can be found in “A Homeowner’s Guide to Northeastern Bats and Bat Problems” available from the Penn State Cooperative Extension office in your county. If conditions permit, it is recommended that a bat house of proven design be used to provide a new roost for the colony. Trapping or capture of an entire colony of bats by a pest control operator is discouraged and will be considered unlawful unless exempted by the Pa. Game Commission in special situations.

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If you come into possession of a bat that has not had human exposure, you must obtain the services of a person determined qualified in bat identification by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), State College Office, or you must release the bat immediately at the location of capture. Any bat released through pest control or wildlife rehabilitation activities shall be released in the area in which it was captured. If a bat is being dispatched for any reason other than submission for laboratory testing, the services of a person certified in bat identification shall be solicited to verify the identification. Any confirmed Indiana bat must be reported to the Pennsylvania Game Commission and USFWS within 48 hours with the following information: Capture location (latitude/longitude and map), number of Indiana bats, person doing the identification, and disposition of the bat. In the event of a small-footed bat capture, the preceding information need only be reported to the Pa. Game Commission.

It is also recommended that rehabilitators and pest control permittees, as well as employees and volunteers who may handle rabies vector species, receive pre-exposure prophylaxis.

Failure to comply with this directive will result in the recall of your permit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vernon R. Ross". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "V".

Vernon R. Ross
Executive Director