

FAQs

Rules on Euthanizing Nuisance Wildlife

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What does the term “nuisance wildlife” mean?

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has defined nuisance wildlife as “wildlife that causes or is about to cause property damage, presents a threat to public safety, or wildlife causing an annoyance within, under or upon a building.” For reference, the rule is under [68A-1.004](#) (55) of the Florida Administrative Code (FAC) (Definitions).

What does the rule say about transporting and relocating nuisance wildlife?

In part, the rule, FAC 68A-9.010, states that live-captured nuisance wildlife can be moved only to euthanize it, or the animal can be released alive on site. You can find additional information for dealing with nuisance wildlife and the associated rules on the FWC’s Web site at MyFWC.com/license_permit/NuisWild.aspx.

If the FWC and its employees truly care about wildlife, why do they have a rule that requires nuisance wild animals to be killed after being trapped?

The Commissioners and agency employees are dedicated to wildlife conservation, which means they have devoted their lives to the protection of wildlife, making sure Florida always has wild animals. Allowing an animal to be trapped and euthanized may seem counter to the FWC’s mission. But, as difficult as this is, once a wild animal becomes a nuisance to people, there are few good alternatives when considering wildlife health and public safety risks.

Rather than euthanize a nuisance animal, why not move it to a zoo or other captive wildlife facility?

Nuisance wildlife generally isn’t taken to captive wildlife facilities because it’s difficult or impossible for many animals taken from the wild to adapt to living in a captive situation. As a result, most captive wildlife facilities are generally hesitant to take them because the animals become stressed, are subject to illness, fight with other animals and/or introduce disease into the facility. In addition, many facilities just don’t have the room for these animals.

Why is it necessary to euthanize a nuisance animal that has been trapped rather than releasing back to the “wild?”

There are several biological reasons why it's generally not a good idea to move wildlife to new areas. It is difficult to find rural areas without any humans nearby. And moving wildlife only puts it into another animal's territory, which can create stress, injury and even death.

In addition,

- Relocation can be stressful to wild animals. They may experience elevated heart rates and breathing rates, high blood pressure, acute changes in blood chemistry and depressed appetites. These factors, in turn, may make them more vulnerable to disease or predation.
- Relocated animals have no prior experience with their new homes, which immediately puts them at a disadvantage for finding food and shelter. Many wildlife species, such as bobcats, foxes, opossums and raccoons, are common and widespread. That means when they become nuisance animals there is no place to relocate them that doesn't already have established populations of those animals.
- Animals released in a new territory are often out-competed for food and shelter by resident animals.
- Relocating nuisance animals can increase the spread of disease. In some cases, animals become nuisances when they get sick because they look for easy sources of food and may become less fearful of people. Just as we humans spread disease among our populations by traveling, animals can bring diseases into new areas when they are relocated, thus affecting the resident animal populations.
- Animals that are relocated often leave the area where they are released. Relocated animals may wander for miles, leading to further interactions with wildlife and people.

Is the FWC considering any changes to the rule?

Yes. Staff has been directed to explore ideas that offer flexibility to the rule. It is possible a rule change will allow for the release of certain animals under specific criteria. FWC staff is in the process of opening a dialogue with stakeholders and interested parties in order to discuss options. Any rule changes will follow the agency's rule-making process.

How do animals become “nuisances?”

Some animals become nuisances because they learn habits that cause problems for people. Many times people inadvertently create the conditions that cause wild animals to become problems by doing ordinary, everyday things such as leaving pet food outside, feeding birds and putting their trash out long before scheduled pickups.

Once the animals learn how easy it is to get food around humans, they often continue to cause the same types of problems. So relocating a wild animal that has become a nuisance is relocating the nuisance habit with it, and the problem can simply become someone else's problem.

Some animals become nuisances because they lose some of their fear of people. When that happens there is a greater chance of people being hurt by wildlife, because it is more likely those people will be confronted or attacked by these animals. Moving animals and releasing them in new areas won't change that, so again, moving an animal that has become bold, and thus a problem around people, is simply moving that problem right along with it.

Some animals become nuisances because they are sick, and moving sick animals can spread illnesses from one animal to another and from one animal population to another. When a wild animal has been trapped, it isn't always possible to tell that the animal is sick simply by looking at it, even for diseases such as rabies. Relocating wildlife can increase the spread of certain diseases among animal populations.

Where can I get information about how to live with wildlife without conflict?

You can call the FWC at the regional office nearest you. The numbers are online at MyFWC.com/Contact/. Staff can give you things to do that will discourage wildlife from becoming comfortable at your house.

You can also get information on the agency's Web site: MyFWC.com.

It is important not to let wildlife become comfortable around humans. That means not giving it food in any form, making sure your house is in good repair so critters can't get inside attics, eaves, garages, etc., and acting in a manner that encourages wild animals to behave naturally.

What additional information is available about people or companies who trap nuisance wildlife in my area?

The FWC views trapping and euthanizing wildlife as a last resort for property owners and encourages people to try non-lethal methods of dealing with nuisance wildlife before calling a trapper. By law, trappers are required to euthanize or release a trapped animal on site.

To assist people who prefer to have the animal trapped and euthanized, we provide a list of nuisance trappers online at MyFWC.com/trappers/. There you can also find Commission rules governing nuisance wildlife trappers, further explanations of nuisance wildlife rules and other information for nuisance wildlife trappers.

Does the FWC regulate or license nuisance wildlife trappers?

Rule 68A-9.010 FAC states, in part, that "Any person owning property may take nuisance wildlife or they may authorize another person to take nuisance wildlife on their behalf except those species listed in subsection (1) below on their property by any method except those methods listed in subsection (2) below. Persons responsible for government owned property are considered "landowners" for the purpose of this rule."

Changes to this rule went into effect on July 1, 2008.

- As of that date, persons wanting to take nuisance wildlife were no longer required to be registered with the Commission.
- Because the Commission does not regulate the business or practices of nuisance wildlife capture, the Commission does not require people or companies wanting to do business as nuisance wildlife trappers to be registered with the Commission.
- As a service to the public, the Commission has continued to provide contact information of nuisance trappers (with their consent). The list of trappers is at MyFWC.com/trappers/.
- People who call the Commission and want to have nuisance wildlife removed:
 - Can be given names and phone numbers of trappers whose names are available to Commission staff on the list at MyFWC.com/trappers/.
 - Can look up trappers who are willing to work in their area by going to MyFWC.com/trappers/.
 - Can simply contact another person willing to do that work.
- Nuisance wildlife trappers (businesses) wanting to work with mice, rats, squirrels, bats or pest birds in, under, or upon buildings should be licensed by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) to do that type of work. They would need to contact FDACS for licensing information for that type of work.
- However, nuisance wildlife trappers would not need to be licensed by FDACS to work with other nuisance wildlife such as bobcats, foxes, raccoons, opossums, armadillos, snakes, etc., even in those situations.
- Nuisance wildlife trappers who will not be working in, under, or upon buildings do not need any license or registration to perform their work; they only need landowner permission.

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