



This document is intended to provide guidance on how to address wildlife issues commonly reported by the public to local dispatchers, animal control officers or other local law enforcement staff. By following this guidance, the public can be directed to the most expeditious and effective solution to solve wildlife issues, whether it be a conflict (i.e. bear eating from a garbage can), an orphaned or injured wild animal, or simply the need for education regarding the wildlife-related issue someone is experiencing.

One of the many challenges faced by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR), local law enforcement agencies and animal control is how to manage the number of calls from the public regarding human-wildlife conflicts and/or concern about individual animal welfare. DWR staff recognize that localities, specifically dispatch centers, receive a large volume of calls from residents, visitors, and other constituents specifically looking for resolution to wildlife-related issues. The Wildlife Conflict Helpline (Helpline), a centralized resource/service for the public to acquire comprehensive advice and education, was implemented by DWR in 2013 to help with wildlife conflict resolution. Citizen use of the Helpline for wildlife information and conflict resolution continues to increase annually and this has proved to be an incredibly valuable service for people requesting information and advice. DWR staff recognize that the Helpline is unable to resolve all wildlife-related issues and the service is not meant as a “hotline” or emergency call center. Therefore, it is important to be able to provide callers an appropriate avenue for situations that the Helpline was not designed for.

Below is a quick reference guide for directing local responders and callers to appropriate resources to assist with resolution of many commonly reported wildlife-related issues. Examples are presented to help provide clarity, but do not represent every possible situation that callers may experience. It is very important to acquire as much information as possible about the reported situation in order to determine the appropriate course of action and direct callers to the appropriate resource.

It should be noted that DWR Wildlife Division and Helpline staff will not respond to non-emergency wildlife-related issues reported after normal business hours (8:15am-5:00pm weekdays) until at least the following regular business day.

Scenario	Contact	Example(s)
Direct Contact Between Human and Wildlife		
Individual will require or is currently receiving emergency medical treatment	Contact DWR Conservation Police Dispatch	Individual bitten by a bobcat receiving multiple bites and lacerations requiring emergency room visit
Individual is not in need of medical treatment or will seek treatment from personal physician	If mammal: direct caller to contact <u>local Health Department</u> for rabies protocol guidance. If non-mammal: direct caller to Wildlife Conflict Helpline .	Individual scratched by swooping hawk, deer kicked person/dog but deer is no longer present, gardener bitten by groundhog and the animal has left the scene
Wildlife Confined in a Structure/Public Area/Trap		
Avenue of escape can be provided	Direct caller to open doors, windows, etc. and leave area or provide other mechanism for egress. Can also direct caller to Wildlife Conflict Helpline or Wildlife Control Operator .	Raccoon stuck in a dumpster, snake in a window well
Animal is a bear, deer or elk	Contact DWR Conservation Police Dispatch	Antlered elk stuck in a swing set, deer trapped in a pit at a water treatment plant
Animal NOT a bear, deer or elk	Direct caller to contact Wildlife Conflict Helpline or Wildlife Control Operator or DWR Nuisance & Problem Wildlife website	Birds stuck in a warehouse, snake in house, raccoon in attic
Wildlife Threatening Human Safety		
Animal currently on scene and will not/cannot flee after harassment (e.g. yelling, loud noises)	Contact DWR Conservation Police Dispatch	Yelling, etc. did not scare coyote from yard, bear in a crowded shopping center approaching people and will not leave, lethargic deer that is approachable or approaching people
Animal is no longer present	Direct caller to contact Wildlife Conflict Helpline	Bear walking through parking lot approaching parked cars but fled when harassed, deer with fawn chased person away
Captive Wildlife/Illegal Possession		
Black bear, adult deer or elk	Contact DWR Conservation Police Dispatch	Report of black bear cub being kept in a home
All others	Contact DWR Wildlife Crime Line or direct caller to contact Wildlife Rehabilitator	Crime Line: Report of squirrel being kept as pet Rehabilitator: Report of injured squirrel found in yard

Scenario	Contact	Example(s)
Sick/Injured/Orphaned/Deceased Wildlife		
Likely to cause a public safety risk AND cannot be humanely dispatched by authorized individuals present or locally available*	Contact DWR Conservation Police Dispatch	Deer or bear lying in the middle or on the side of major highway AND cannot be humanely dispatched by local LE or other authorized person on scene, bear with mange in a garage and unable/unwilling to leave.
Intentional harm or killing of animal(s) outside legal seasons/methods	Contact DWR Wildlife Crime Line	Individual reporting the poisoning of wildlife by neighbor, individual shot bear eating from birdfeeder
All others	Direct caller to contact Wildlife Conflict Helpline, DWR Injured and Orphaned Wildlife website or if in possession of animal direct caller to contact Wildlife Rehabilitator.	Person sees duck with fishing line on leg, driver saw an animal limping across the road, bear with mange, neurologically inappropriate/unaware raccoon near home or business
Wildlife Sightings		
Sightings of wildlife in public areas that do not meet criteria of significant public safety risk and are able to leave on own	Direct caller to DWR Nuisance & Problem Wildlife website or direct caller to contact Wildlife Conflict Helpline	Fox sighted in town, wildlife sighting on social media, bear or bear cubs up tree
Sightings of non-native, invasive, or exotic species	Direct caller to contact Wildlife Conflict Helpline	Mute swan in HOA pond, alligator snapping turtle in a neighborhood
General Human-Wildlife Conflict / Property Damage		
Commercial agricultural and livestock damage situations	Direct caller to contact Wildlife Conflict Helpline	Damage in a commercial corn field caused by deer
Wildlife conflict related to residential property damage, damage to non-commercial agriculture	Direct caller to DWR Nuisance & Problem Wildlife website or to contact Wildlife Conflict Helpline	Canada geese on golf course, black bear getting in garbage or eating from bird-feeder, raccoon eating fish from homeowner pond

* Humane dispatch of sick or injured wildlife by gunshot may be performed by a local Animal Control Officer or any other local sheriff, police officer, or other peace officer of the Commonwealth (4VAC15-30-50, § 29.1-202)

Contact information and websites:

Department of Wildlife Resources: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/>

Conservation Police Dispatch: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/conservation-police/>

- Call: 804-367-5415

Injured and Orphan Wildlife Information: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/injured/>

Nuisance & Problem Wildlife Information: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/nuisance/>

Wildlife Conflict Helpline: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/nuisance/>

- Call: 855-571-9003, or
- Email: vawildlifeconflict@usda.gov

Wildlife Control Operators: <https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/nuisance/trappers/>

Wildlife Crime Line: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/conservation-police/wildlife-violation/>

- Call: 800-237-5712, or
- Email: WildCrime@dwr.virginia.gov

Wildlife Rehabilitators: <https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/injured/rehabilitators>

External

Virginia Department of Health (VDH): <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/>

- Local health district directory: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/local-health-districts/>
- After-hours VDH phone number: 866-531-3068