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Wildlife in the Classroom Requirements to display wildlife in the classroom.

How to use this Document:

- 1) Read all paragraphs on page one.
- 2) On page 2, read the statements and choose the one that best applies to your situation
- 3) If you need clarification at any time, please contact the DWR Permitting Department at collectionpermits@dwr.virginia.gov

There are Virginia regulatory requirements for teachers regarding the collection and display of wildlife species in classrooms. This attempts to reviews those regulations and attempts to put you on the correct path of action. Teachers are allowed one time “show and tell” display of wildlife species (only non-threatened and endangered reptiles, amphibians, and fish) without any permit or reporting.

This document does NOT exempt elementary and secondary school teachers from LOCAL ordinances regarding keeping certain wildlife or other animal species in captivity or in classroom environments. ALWAYS check with your county/city and your school system regarding any ordinances that may affect keeping certain wildlife or other animal species in captivity.

This document does NOT exempt teachers from best management practices when considering displaying wildlife in the classroom. Before displaying wildlife, please consider the following: how does this organism tie to the curriculum and SOL; what is the life span of the organism; how will the organism be cared for over breaks/holidays; how do I keep my students safe from any disease the species may carry, etc.

- Anytime a person is bitten by a mammalian wildlife species, the injury must be reported to the [local health department, under the Virginia Department of Health](#). The offending animal must be segregated from other animals and humans until the health department is notified.
- Any captive wildlife is to be confined under sanitary and humane conditions that are appropriate for the given species. All cages and enclosures shall be locked at all times, when wildlife is not under immediate control or direct supervision of the handler to prevent escape or unauthorized contact with other individuals.
- VDWR SHALL be notified within 24 hours of an instance of a wildlife sickness or disease. This only applies to the native/naturalized species you report to DWR (see the Displaying Native or Naturalized Wildlife Species section below)

In Virginia, NO native or naturalized wildlife species can be purchased or sold, which includes ordering via catalogues or over the internet. If you are in Virginia, it is illegal for you to purchase or sell any wildlife species that is native or naturalized to the Commonwealth. ([4VAC15-30-10](#)).

NO wildlife (native, naturalized, or nonnative) shall ever be released into the wild, UNLESS provided written authorization from the VDWR ([4VAC15-30-10](#)). The only other exception is wild-caught, native, non-threatened, and non-endangered reptiles and amphibians that are not banned from collection, which may be released under specific conditions: within 30 days of capture, at the exact location of capture, no signs of illness or injury, and not housed with other animals during captivity. ([4VAC15-360-10, section A. 6.](#))

Display and Collection Scenarios

If you are planning on displaying/raising or collecting a wildlife species in or for the classroom you will need to know the common and preferably the scientific name of the species before proceeding.

Read the statements below and determine which one best applies to your situation:

- A) If the wildlife species you would like to display in your classroom is a reptile, amphibian, or fish on the native or naturalized species list and is not on the threatened or endangered list and is not a predatory or undesirable animal. Please proceed to the “Displaying Native or Naturalized Wildlife Species” section below on the next page.
- B) If the wildlife species you would like to display in your classroom is a non-threatened/non-endangered terrestrial insect such as annelid worms, planarians/flatworms, centipedes, millipedes, arachnids, pillbugs, isopods, amphipods, then you do not need to report your species. Be sure you are following all local regulations (city, county, school system) regarding terrestrial insects. You do not need to proceed any further in this document.
- C) If the species you would like to display in your classroom is considered a domestic animal, as defined by 4VAC15-20-50, then you do not need to report your species to DWR. DWR does not regulate domestic animals, please contact the Department of Agriculture if applicable and follow your local regulations (city, county, school system) regarding domestic animals. You do not need to proceed any further in this document.
- D) If the wildlife species you would like to display in your classroom is a non-native/exotic animal that was purchased at a pet store and it is **NOT listed** in 4 VAC 15-30-40, Subsection A, 4VAC15-290-60, 29.1-571, 4VAC15-20-210, 4VAC15-30-40, or 4VAC15-20-160 then you do NOT need to report your species to DWR and you do not need any additional permits. You do not need to proceed any further in this document.
- E) If the species you would like to display is a non-native/exotic species animal that is listed in 4 VAC 15-30-40, Subsection A, 4VAC15-290-60, 29.1-571, 4VAC15-20-210, 4VAC15-30-40, or 4VAC15-20-160 you MUST apply for a Exhibitor Permit Application, pay the associated application fee, and submit an annual report for the species on exhibit.
- F) If the species you would like to display is a fur-bearing wildlife species (§ 29.1-521), a migratory birds (16USC §§ 703-711 and 4VAC15-290-60), or a federal or state threatened or endangered wildlife species (4VAC15-20-130) DWR permits, USFWS, and at times, USDA, permits are required. Review and submit the appropriate DWR permits and contact USFWS and USDA for additional permits.

***If the species, you would like to display does not match any of these categories or if you are unsure please reach out to the DWR Permitting Department at collectionpermits@dwr.virginia.gov**

- G) If you are interested in actively surveying for and/or collecting any specimens (live, dead, or parts/terrestrial or aquatic) of native or naturalized wildlife species (except for terrestrial insects, annelid worms, planarians/flatworms, centipedes, millipedes, arachnids) from the wild, then either a Scientific/Educational Collection Permits or Salvage Permits must be obtained.
 - a. This includes aquatic macroinvertebrates collected with a seine, kick net, or other disturbance method but not a leaf pack method. Leaf packs do not require collection permits.

Displaying Native or Naturalized Wildlife Species

If your reptile, amphibian, or fish species appears on this [native and naturalized species list](#) (and it not [Threatened/Endangered](#) and not a [predatory or undesirable animal](#)), then you have to report the wildlife you are displaying to VDWR within 48 hours of displaying. You can report your native or naturalized wildlife to VDWR by:

Filling out the “Wildlife In the Classroom Reporting Form” found at the top of this [DWR webpage](#), then save and email it to the VDWR Permitting Department (see form for email address). You may also print and mail the form to VDWR Permits Section, P.O. Box 90778, Henrico, VA 23228

Teachers are required to update VDWR any time that additional wildlife is added to the display.

Regulation involved in this process: As of July 1, 2013, VDWR regulation 4 VAC 15-290-60 **exempts** elementary and secondary teachers from having to 1) submit a completed Exhibitor’s Permit Application and 2) pay the associated application fee, **ONLY** if they are exhibiting live native or naturalized wildlife species (only certain reptiles, amphibians, and fish) in the classroom for educational purposes. This regulation only applies to teaching personnel within the school and the teacher must have a valid teaching license and/or be able to list the classes they teach and the number of hours they teach per week.