

FAIRFAX COUNTY WILDLIFE



WILDLIFE RELOCATION: NOT A SOLUTION

When confronted with wildlife living in their own homes or backyards, many well-meaning homeowners often resort to what they see as a humane approach to resolving conflicts - live-trapping the animal and releasing it in a park or distant natural area. Common species found in Fairfax County include foxes, raccoons, groundhogs, skunks, and squirrels.

Trapping and relocation is commonly perceived as a quick, effective, and humane solution for dealing with urban wildlife. It is none of the above. It rarely offers a permanent solution and has negative consequences for the wildlife involved.

Relocation of wildlife is unlawful in Virginia (4VAC15-30-10). Fairfax County Park Authority rules also prohibit the release of wildlife onto county parkland (FCPA §1.22 D. Wildlife and Habitat Protection).

According to Virginia wildlife regulations, nuisance wildlife trapped by homeowners, licensed animal trappers, or companies must either be euthanized or released on-site. Animals cannot be moved to a new location.

Coexisting with wildlife is not always convenient. It may require changing conditions on your property to remove food or habitat attractants to discourage unwanted wildlife and prevent conflicts from occurring. Humane exclusion and harassment methods can be used to effectively reduce wildlife conflicts in most situations. For more information, please visit: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/nuisance/> or www.wildneighbors.org.

Why is relocation not allowed or advised?

- The welfare of relocated animals is often poor and survival is low.
- Relocation displaces animals– they may be unable to find suitable food, water or shelter at the release site.
- Animals may have territorial disputes with those that are already established in the area resulting in animals being chased out, attacked or killed.
- Relocated animals usually don't stay at a release site and could become a problem for others.
- Many animals attempt to return home which places them in jeopardy as they cross unfamiliar terrain. Many are killed by cars while attempting to return.
- Moving animals can increase the potential for disease transmission (e.g., rabies, distemper, parvovirus, sarcoptic mange, among others).
- Animals trapped may also have dependent young that are left behind and unintentionally orphaned.
- A new animal will usually quickly replace the one which was relocated if food and habitat attractants remain on the property.
- There are already healthy populations of many species within the county and across Virginia. There are few suitable locations for their release.

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*Virginia Wildlife Conflict Helpline
Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources
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