**University of Georgia Wildlife Treatment Crew Manual**

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**MAIN POINTS**

**\*\*\*\*MUST PROVIDE AN EXACT ADDRESS OF WHERE THE ANIMAL WAS FOUND. REHAB LOCATIONS NEED THIS BY LAW SO THEY CAN KNOW WHERE TO RELEASE THE ANIMAL**

**This has to do with ETHICS and MORALITY - Animal will die if they cannot release them properly. \*\*\*\***

Please be RESPECTFUL and PROFESSIONAL when dealing with rehabbers. Veterinarians are experts in medicine, while rehabbers are experts in rehabbing an animal.

If a rehab center is licensed, they have ALL the requirements and are following the laws. It is impolite to question their abilities and caging requirements. See “Sample Rehab Conversation”.

If a rehab facility asks for donations, please remember that most are paying for these animals out of their personal pocket. They are not trying to steal from us – they are trying to support and rehab the animals. Please keep price in mind with treatment plans and recommended medications.

Always try re-nesting a baby squirrel before admitting it. See “Squirrel section” on this.

**TURTLES**

First steps in treating a new turtle:

1. Put turtle on HEAT right away (most of the time they are in shock or bleeding).
2. Assess injuries and stop bleeding. Often turtles look worse than they are (a broken shell can be fixed).
3. Check for maggots.

Common injuries/illnesses:

Coelom - If the coelom has ruptured, there is not a good chance for survival, but always try.

Broken shell - Don’t just close a broken turtle shell. The turtle needs to be on antibiotics and cleaned for several days, and then shell can be closed. Epoxy to fix turtle shells, brackets with zips does not work.

Ear - Check for ear infection.

Proper handling and care:

GIVE UV LIGHT – turtles cannot metabolize without this like box turtle, it will die if not. If the turtle does not have access to sunlight, ensure that the UV light includes UVB radiation.

SOAK THEM in warm water every day. 1cm of water is appropriate so water does not go into the shell.

Feeding tubes in neck - Do not do this after a couple days. First, soak turtle or stimulate by putting it outside. A feeding tube may be placed after 2-3 weeks of not eating. Just observe the weight and keep turtle hydrated. For example, AWARE had one turtle that did not eat for 4 weeks and it did very well in recovery.

Always put hand under bottom shell of turtle. MAKE SURE YOU KNOW IF IT IS A SNAPPING TURTLE.

**SQUIRRELS**

**Proper Re-nesting:**

1. **Get a small cardboard box and nail it to the side of a tree at least 6 feet up close to where squirrel was found.**
2. **Put a sock with rice that has been microwaved so that it lasts a few hours. Make sure baby can get away from sock in the box. Mom will think baby is dead if it is cold.**
3. **Leave the squirrel for at least 4 hours in the re-nest box.**
4. **Put baby out until dark and then bring he/she in for the night.**
5. **Check on it every 4 hours.**
6. **While inside, put a heating pad on low under half of the box.**
7. **A baby squirrel will not starve to death for 2 days without milk. The baby should just be given pedialyte during these two days. Always give pedialyte VERY SLOWLY (when pedialyte comes out of nose, baby is aspirating).**
8. **Repeat this process for 2 days.**
9. **Play baby squirrel calls on phone or computer and loop it on repeat for baby to hear while inside for night. This helps the baby squirrel remain calm.**
10. **Mom squirrel has two nests, so if one nest with baby in it is destroyed, she has another nest.**

Proper care and handling:

Squirrels WILL bite

DO NOT SQUEEZE the squirrel.

Adult Diet: Offer veggies and minimal fruit (2-4 pieces), no more than 2 nuts. Rat pellets.

If squirrel does not want to eat, hand feed baby food (vegetable can be given SID or BID, only once every 2 days for fruit baby food). Nutrical really stimulates them to eat – 1cc is enough.

Baby Diet: Do not give carnivore care, **squirrels are not carnivores**. Do NOT give squirrels kmr.

Common injuries and illnesses:

Squirrels usually come in with pelvic injuries, but that is not enough reason to euthanize.

If he is peeing and pooping, squirrel can usually be given a chance.

Check teeth to check if they are growing abnormally.

Mites - CANNOT give ivermectin, have to give selamectin if hair loss or mites

**SNAKES**

Proper handling and care:

Snakes can strike 2/3rd their body length.

General rule but not always the case - If the snake is brown, it is likely venomous. If snake is black, usually not venomous in GA.

DO NOT pull snakes, you can split them in half.

Soak snake each day.

If he/she does not eat for 2 weeks, tube feed with carnivore care. However, snake teeth are very sensitive and can break. Do not use spatula or popsicle stick to open mouth. Use cotton tip applicator (plastic ones not wood and just roll into mouth).

Provide heat!

Make sure snake is shedding normally. Check for eye cap being retained.

Provide UVA and UVB light either from sunlight or UV lightbulb that specifically produces both!

Make sure to determine the type of snake to understand behavior. Most snakes strike at first, but they will usually calm down over time.

**OWLS**

Pupillary response is not always automatic. Owls can control their two pupils independently of one another – uneven pupil response is normal in owls!!

Check for flat flies – if present, spray with Adam’s flea spray. You can directly spray evenly and put on hand to rub on head and armpits.

Always do eye exam as owls commonly suffer from head trauma.

Check feather condition.

Check for mites!!

DO NOT cover up cloaca with tail sheath, this is ineffective and unsanitary.

**SONGBIRDS**

Proper care and handling:

Songbirds NEED to eat – they will starve to death. If songbird does not eat in two days, you must tube feed. You can NOT wait with them.

Fluids are often required twice a day, but if you give more, they will likely stress to death.

Always put a towel over the cage.

Once you notice open mouth breathing, you have 15 seconds to get it into the cage and out of you hand. Do NOT finish procedure once this happens.

Lifejacket holding technique does not work well on songbirds. They like to move their head and will freak out if they are unable to do so.

If a cardinal bites, give them a Q tip so you don’t have to hold their head.

**GEESE**

Common illness/injuries:

Always check for mites.

Check keel.

See a lot of fishing line injuries – as long as wound is not necrotic, it will usually heal even if it looks bad.

Injuries on carpus (wrist) are seen commonly. This almost always indicates another goose is bullying other geese in the flock. This does not indicate the goose was hit by a car.

LISTEN TO COUGHING – Geese get gipe worm (in lung). Treat with ivermectin.

Proper care and handling:

Geese do not need to be able to fly in GA to be released, as long as the wing isn’t dragging and pond near them does not freeze over

Benefit greatly from swim therapy once wounds are healed.

Try to keep goose a little thin with pelvic injury, or else the goose might be too fat to carry itself.

Can tube feed them critical care.

**HAWKS**

Appearance:

Sears are bluish in red tail hawk, they are yellow in red shouldered hawk.

Occipiter hawks – inside of their mouth is blue

Red tail mouth is pink

Falcon mouth is black

Common injuries and illnesses:

Check for Flat flies

Check for MITES (more common in vultures, geese and songbirds). Mites are species specific.

Hawks cannot have more than 2 broken wing feathers in order to be released.

Check keel and how well fleshed it is.

Proper care and handling:

Cover the hawk’s head with a towel when handling

The moment before a hawk dies is when it is strongest!!!! It will strike. Use towels to handle even when using gloves.

Approach the cage with caution. Stay back from the cage unless necessary because hawks will pull your hand in.

Always leave towel over cages.

**VULTURE**

Common injuries and illnesses:

Check keel.

Vultures often have irreparable injuries.

Vultures almost always have mites.

General tips:

Vultures are scavengers and do not hunt. If you catch a vulture, it has likely been injured for weeks. 90% of the time, the vulture will not recover.

Do not put a vulture down because it cannot be released. Vultures can be placed in a sanctuary permanently without difficulty.

Vultures are NOT RAPTORS.

White on leg is urine to keep themselves cool.

Proper Handling and care:

Do NOT worry about feet when handling, worry about MOUTH.

Vultures will puke on you while you are hand feeding them. You can squeeze their neck on lateral sides to prevent them from vomiting – not on front and back.

**RACCOON**

Common injuries and illnesses:

Raccoons are very prone to Distemper (both feline and canine) and to Parvo. YOU MUST QUARANTINE.

**Vaccinate** against rabies provided they are healthy enough.

Look for discharge in eyes.

If a raccoon is NEUROLOGICAL, EUTHANIZE it – it may have distemper and parvo or rabies. It is not worth the risk.

Proper handling and care:

Raccoon and rabbits eat kmr, do not give esbilac. You can use goats milk as well.

Rabbits and raccoons can get kitten milk, every other baby animal gets puppy milk (esbilac).

**RABBITS**

Common injuries and illnesses:

A rabbit that has been caught by an animal like a dog must ALWAYS be brought in. Any cat bite needs to be treated with Baytril (5 day treatment). Rabbits cannot have any of the cilins (penicillin, amoxicillin, etc.) – rabbits are very dependent on microbes in gut.

Baby rabbits bloat very easily, monitor carefully. If it starts to bloat, it will almost always die.

Metacam, sucralfate, metoclopramide, and simethicone are usually mixed (bunny bloat cocktail) to treat bloat.

If the rabbit has diarrhea for more than two days, it will likely die.

Degloving is a common injury. The rabbit will usually do well if this occurs to less than 30% of body.

Rabbits are prone to becoming hypoglycemic – give dextrose with water to treat.

Proper care and handling:

Make sure not to have any air in feeding tube because rabbits do not pass gas.

Formula should be given hot and it should be kitten formula.

When tube feeding, know that rabbits have a soft palate so the tube can go straight into the lungs or puncture the body wall.

Bunny are very high stress, be careful. When holding, be sure to support the hind end to prevent kicking, which can lead to a broken back when stressed. Additional restrain includes tucking their head within your elbow and holding the scruff of the neck.

Rabbit poop: babies eat liquid form of poop from mom. Have to use lots and lots of probiotics to raise them. Needs to be liquid form, not solid poop – will not work.

General tips:

Rabbit moms have internal GPS – do not change nest location. If the nest is flooded in rain, you can try to move it close by but usually you can put nest back once rain is gone. If nest is covered in ants, clean it out and put it back in same location. Mom takes her fur to make nest.

Only take a baby rabbit to rehab/vet as a LAST RESORT – you are likely to lose it in rehab (70% die in rehab). Even if one baby dies in the nest, the mom might still come back.

**POSSUMS**

Common injuries and illnesses:

Possums tend to develop Nutritional metabolic bone disease. It is typically seen in wrist joints.

ALWAYS check pouches (ARE THERE BABIES IN POUCH?). Check for yeast or fungal infections as well.

Proper handling and care:

Baby possums do not suckle, you have to tube feed them or lid feed them once they reach a weight of 40g. Gently dunk their nose in lid at each feeding.

COUNT NUMBER OF POSSUMS. Possums cannibalize, so always check tails and toes.

If possums are together after 2-3 months, they will cannibalize each other. If it seems like room is small at all, separate them NOW.

Do not combine possums when they are going outside if they did not grow up together or they will kill each other.

Possums are not aggressive normally.

General tips:

EDUCATE people on possums. They do not typically get rabies (their body temp is too low). They kill and eat venomous snakes, rats, dead organisms, and ticks. They help clean our environment.

They are the only marsupials in North America.