Wildlife Rehabilitation

Risk Assessment

CONTACT DETAILS

IN AN EMERGENCY CALL:

Lead:	**Primary Contact:**
Participants:	

SERVICE/ACTIVITY DETAILS

Purpose:	**Date:**

Benefit: Educates the public on the importance of wildlife protection and ecological balance. | Enhances scientific understanding of wildlife through observation and rehabilitation. | Provides medical treatment and recovery programs for sick and endangered species. | Reduces human-wildlife conflicts by safely reintroducing animals to natural habitats. | Rescues and rehabilitates injured and orphaned wildlife, supporting conservation efforts. | Supports biodiversity by restoring populations of threatened and endangered species.

HAZARDS

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Animal bites and scratches	Bites, scratches, infections	Direct interaction with animals enables critical medical treatment, behavioral assessments, and a higher chance of successful rehabilitation and release.	Train staff extensively in species-specific handling techniques, focusing on animal body language and de-escalation strategies. Mandate the use of bite-resistant gloves, arm guards, and proper restraint tools. Provide immediate access to first aid kits and require incident reporting with medical follow-up procedures. **(ALL)**	Staff, volunteers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Animal escapes	Injury to staff, loss of rehabilitating animals, damage to environment	Giving animals more spacious, naturalistic enclosures promotes physical and mental well-being, which speeds up rehabilitation.	Conduct daily enclosure inspections for weak points, wear, or damage. Install redundant security measures, including double-door entry systems, padlocks, and reinforced mesh. Implement emergency recapture protocols with designated roles, recapture tools (nets, kennels, sedation), and routine staff drills. **(ALL)**	Staff, public, volunteers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Chemical burns from disinfectants	Skin burns, eye damage, respiratory irritation	Using strong disinfectants ensures the facility meets high sanitation standards, preventing disease transmission.	Provide acid-resistant gloves, face shields, and aprons for all staff handling disinfectants. Implement strict dilution protocols and install emergency eyewash stations in every cleaning area. **(ALL)**	Staff, volunteers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Contaminated bedding materials	Parasitic infestations, respiratory infections, allergic reactions	Using a variety of bedding types teaches rehabilitators how different materials impact animal recovery.	Source bedding from certified, pest-free suppliers and store in a dry, well-ventilated area to prevent mold growth. Implement a bi-weekly sanitization routine with antimicrobial treatments. Replace bedding regularly, particularly after suspected disease exposure. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Contamination of food and water supplies	Foodborne illness, bacterial infections, parasite exposure	Managing safe food and water storage provides practical experience for rehabilitators who may work in remote field conditions.	Store food in airtight, rodent-proof containers and keep it in temperature-controlled storage. Implement a strict first-in, first-out (FIFO) rotation system to prevent spoilage. Regularly test water sources for bacterial and chemical contaminants, and sanitize all feeding equipment between uses. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Dehydration in animals	Weakness, organ failure, death	Learning how different species react to dehydration helps refine hydration protocols, improving long-term care strategies.	Monitor hydration through daily weight checks and mucous membrane assessments. Provide automatic water dispensers with built-in filtration and backup water sources. Establish scheduled hydration checks and administer fluids via syringe or IV when necessary. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Difficulty in sourcing appropriate medications	Treatment delays, reliance on suboptimal alternatives, increased mortality rates	Navigating medication shortages prepares rehabilitators for fieldwork in remote or resource-limited areas.	Establish agreements with multiple veterinary suppliers and maintain a reserve of critical medications. Work with wildlife veterinarians to identify legal alternative treatments when shortages occur. Implement an inventory tracking system to ensure timely reordering. **(ALL)**	Staff, animals	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Electric shock from fencing or equipment	Severe burns, neurological damage, fatal injuries	Using electrified barriers allows for the safe containment of high-risk species, preventing escapes while minimizing stress compared to traditional caging.	Regularly inspect electrical wiring, ensuring all exposed cables are secured and properly insulated. Install ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) in wet areas. Train staff in electrical safety and provide warning signs near any electrified barriers. **(ALL)**	Staff, animals	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Exposure to hazardous chemicals	Chemical burns, inhalation hazards, poisoning	Use of disinfectants, medications, and pest control improves hygiene and prevents disease outbreaks, increasing rehabilitation success rates.	Store chemicals in locked, ventilated cabinets with clear labeling and safety data sheets (MSDS). Train staff on chemical handling, including dilution ratios, spill containment, and emergency response. Provide PPE such as chemical-resistant gloves, aprons, and goggles. Ensure emergency eyewash stations are available. **(ALL)**	Staff, volunteers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Fire hazards	Smoke inhalation, burns, loss of wildlife and facilities	Operating a facility with various flammable materials allows for the rescue and rehabilitation of wildlife in forest fire-prone regions.	Install fire alarms, smoke detectors, and sprinklers in animal housing areas. Conduct annual fire safety drills, ensure evacuation plans are visible in all enclosures, and maintain fire extinguishers at key points throughout the facility. **(ALL)**	Staff, animals	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Heat stress in animals	Dehydration, overheating, organ failure	Exposure to varying weather conditions allows animals to acclimate, increasing survival chances upon release.	Install thermostats and climate control systems in enclosures. Provide shade, misting systems, and species-appropriate cooling (e.g., frozen food for carnivores, damp towels for small mammals). Monitor temperature changes and implement hydration protocols for at-risk species. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Injury from aggressive animal behavior	Bites, scratches, broken bones, trauma	Working with aggressive animals allows for rehabilitation of species that might otherwise be euthanized, supporting biodiversity conservation.	Conduct temperament assessments before handling, track behavior history, and provide defensive handling training for staff. Equip all handlers with bite sticks, muzzles, and reinforced protective clothing. Implement emergency escape procedures in high-risk enclosures. **(ALL)**	Staff, volunteers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Injury from syringes and needles	Puncture wounds, infections, accidental self-injection	Administering injections and blood draws provides hands-on medical training, improving wildlife veterinary care skills.	Train all staff in needle safety, including proper handling, disposal, and sharps injury protocols. Use self-retracting syringes where possible. Install puncture-proof sharps disposal containers in every treatment area, with a strict "immediate disposal after use" policy. **(ALL)**	Staff, volunteers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Noise-induced stress in animals	Increased aggression, reduced feeding, compromised immune response	Understanding how noise affects different species helps in designing better conservation areas and reserves.	Soundproof high-traffic areas, schedule loud tasks away from enclosures, and provide calming enrichment such as soft bedding and hiding areas. Monitor stress responses and adjust accordingly. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Nutritional deficiencies	Malnutrition, weakened immune systems, developmental issues	Managing varied diets enhances knowledge of species-specific nutrition needs, which contributes to better wildlife dietary guidelines.	Develop species-specific feeding plans in consultation with veterinary nutritionists. Ensure varied, high-quality food sources that meet specific dietary needs. Monitor weight, energy levels, and coat/feather condition to detect deficiencies early and adjust diets accordingly. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Parasite infestations	Internal and external parasite transmission, disease outbreaks, animal stress	Treating parasites in captivity prevents their spread in the wild, ensuring that released animals don’t introduce infections to natural populations.	Conduct routine fecal and blood testing to detect parasites early. Implement a strict decontamination schedule, treating enclosures with species-appropriate anti-parasitic agents. Train staff to identify early signs of infestation and establish a quarantine protocol for infected animals. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Public interaction risks	Animal stress, bites, unauthorized handling incidents	Public engagement programs raise awareness about wildlife conservation and rehabilitation efforts, fostering community support and funding opportunities.	Limit direct public-animal interaction to supervised, controlled settings. Enforce strict visitor guidelines, requiring PPE when necessary. Train staff to manage crowd control and de-escalate situations where visitors become too close to enclosures. Post clear educational signage regarding wildlife behavior and safety. **(ALL)**	Public, staff	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Sharp objects in enclosures	Lacerations, impalement, infection risk	Keeping enclosures free of hazards allows for the rehabilitation of high-risk species that require complex environments, such as climbers or burrowers.	Conduct daily inspections for sharp edges, broken structures, or hazardous objects. Use only rounded-edge, animal-safe materials for enclosure construction. Provide safe chewing materials for species prone to gnawing to prevent injury from self-inflicted enclosure damage. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Stress-induced behaviors	Self-harm, aggression, reduced rehabilitation success	Observing stress responses informs better rehabilitation strategies, leading to improved long-term survival in the wild.	Design enclosures that mimic natural habitats with hiding spots, climbing structures, and burrowing areas. Implement low-stress handling techniques and enrichment activities like scent trails, puzzle feeders, and tactile stimuli to encourage natural behaviors. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Toxic plant ingestion	Poisoning, neurological damage, organ failure	Allowing animals to forage and interact with plants enhances their natural behaviors and skill development, which improves survival rates after release.	Conduct a full botanical survey of all plants within enclosures and remove any toxic species. Train staff to identify potentially hazardous vegetation. Provide species-appropriate foliage or alternative foraging materials that fulfill dietary and behavioral needs. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Transmission of diseases between animals	Disease outbreaks, increased mortality, cross-species infections	Managing disease outbreaks within a facility provides valuable epidemiological data, supporting conservation and veterinary research.	House high-risk species separately, quarantine new arrivals for observation, and enforce strict cleaning protocols using species-specific disinfectants. Train staff to recognize early disease symptoms and maintain detailed health records for all animals. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Venomous animal handling	Bites, envenomation, allergic reactions	Safely managing venomous animals allows for their rehabilitation instead of euthanasia, contributing to the preservation of ecologically important species.	Only trained specialists should handle venomous species. Require the use of snake hooks, protective gloves, and face shields. Keep antivenom in stock, stored at the correct temperature, and train all staff in emergency response protocols. Implement a strict handling log for high-risk species. **(ALL)**	Staff	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Waterborne infections in aquatic species	Bacterial infections, fungal growth, parasitic infestations	Managing waterborne infections contributes to broader conservation efforts by refining care techniques for endangered aquatic species in captivity.	Continuously monitor water pH, ammonia levels, and temperature. Install UV sterilization systems in water enclosures and perform regular water changes to prevent pathogen buildup. Train staff in recognizing early signs of infection and implement quarantine procedures for sick aquatic animals. **(ALL)**	Animals	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Zoonotic disease transmission	Disease transmission, infections, cross-contamination	Close care of wildlife contributes to disease research, improving understanding of zoonotic risks and supporting future public health efforts.	Implement strict biosecurity measures, including dedicated PPE for specific enclosures, disinfection stations between animal areas, and mandatory quarantine for all new arrivals. Require rabies, tetanus, and other relevant vaccinations for staff. Conduct regular disease screenings and isolate infected animals. **(ALL)**	Staff, volunteers	Before Measure: **High** After Measure: **Med**
Allergic reactions to animal dander	Severe allergic reactions, respiratory distress, skin irritation	Exposure to diverse species provides staff with hands-on experience across multiple animal types, broadening expertise and career development.	Install HEPA air filtration in enclosed spaces to reduce allergens. Provide PPE, including allergen-resistant gloves, masks, and protective overalls. Conduct pre-employment allergy testing and ensure access to antihistamines and epinephrine for emergency reactions. **(ALL)**	Staff, volunteers	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**

HAZARD	RISK	RISK BENEFIT	MEASURE	RISK TO	RISK LEVEL
Inadequate record-keeping	Loss of medical history, incorrect treatments, regulatory non-compliance	Handling real-time wildlife data contributes to conservation databases, benefiting global research efforts.	Implement a digital record-keeping system with real-time data entry, requiring standardized log entries for all animal interactions, medical treatments, and observations. Conduct bi-monthly audits to ensure accuracy and compliance with legal requirements. Train staff on data entry procedures. **(ALL)**	Staff, volunteers	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Injury from animal handling equipment	Bruises, fractures, entanglement injuries	The use of specialized handling equipment allows rehabilitators to work with dangerous or fragile animals that would otherwise be untreatable.	Train staff in proper use and maintenance of catch poles, transport carriers, and protective gear. Perform weekly equipment safety checks, immediately replacing damaged items. Establish designated testing areas for safe equipment use. Maintain a log of all equipment inspections. **(ALL)**	Staff, volunteers	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Musculoskeletal injuries from lifting	Back injuries, muscle strain, long-term mobility issues	Handling animals manually fosters stronger observational skills and a deeper understanding of individual animal needs.	Train staff in proper lifting mechanics, implement a two-person lift policy for heavy loads, and provide carts or hoists for transport. Rotate physical tasks among staff to prevent overuse injuries. **(ALL)**	Staff, volunteers	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Slips, trips, and falls	Fractures, sprains, head injuries	Working in varied terrains mimics real field conditions, improving staff adaptability for in-the-wild rescues.	Install non-slip flooring in high-traffic areas and keep all walkways clear of debris. Provide reflective markers for uneven surfaces. Require slip-resistant footwear for all staff and conduct regular safety audits. **(ALL)**	Staff, volunteers	Before Measure: **Med** After Measure: **Low**
Unpredicted risks	Illness, injury, death		Continuous risk monitoring conducted by all staff. Any unforeseen hazards must be reported promptly to supervisors or management, with immediate corrective action taken as necessary. **(ALL)**	All	**N/A**

NOTES

Extra notes & activity evaluation:

Completed by	Reviewed/Approved by	Risk Assessment Date	Review Required Date