

Municipal Support for Wildlife Rehabilitation Licence

ISSUE

This report is requesting municipal support to allow two individuals to obtain a wildlife rehabilitation licence from the Government of Saskatchewan and operate within Saskatoon.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services recommend to City Council:

- 1) That municipal support be granted to applicant, Dawn Erker, to obtain a wildlife rehabilitation licence from the Government of Saskatchewan and operate within Saskatoon; and
- 2) That municipal support be granted to applicant, John Polson, to obtain a wildlife rehabilitation licence from the Government of Saskatchewan and operate within Saskatoon.

BACKGROUND

Wildlife rehabilitation licences are regulated by the Government of Saskatchewan, Ministry of Environment; Fish, Wildlife and Lands Branch (Ministry of Environment). Wildlife rehabilitation is defined as treatment and care of sick, injured or abandoned native wildlife, temporarily held in captivity, to be released after rehabilitation. A wildlife rehabilitation licence is required to rehabilitate all native Saskatchewan wildlife, as outlined in *The Captive Wildlife Regulations, 2021*. Currently, four licensed wildlife rehabilitators operate out of Saskatoon (see Appendix 1).

Wildlife rehabilitators have been operating in Saskatoon since early 2000's and have assisted in rehabilitation and release of countless urban wildlife, varying in an array of species. Living Sky Wildlife Rehabilitation was created as a charity, in January of 2010, to support the independent rehabilitation work of Jan Shadick, who received her wildlife rehabilitation licence in 2005. Since that time, Living Sky Wildlife Rehabilitation has cared for over 12,000 animals, with the majority being birds and approximately 1,370 being small mammals, including tree and ground squirrels, foxes, porcupines, beavers, badgers, skunk kits (babies), mice and the occasional mink or weasel.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

In 2016, Administration provided a letter to the Ministry of Environment, requesting a requirement for municipal approval from City Council prior to approving and authorizing an applicant's wildlife rehabilitation licence. The current City of Saskatoon process for new applicants includes:

1. A review of the request by Saskatoon Animal Services to determine if there are any relevant contraventions of [Bylaw No. 7860, Animal Control Bylaw, 1999](#) (Animal Control Bylaw);
2. Making a recommendation with respect to the request; and
3. Providing this information to City Council for approval.

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Licence renewals do not require the same written approval from City Council as the initial application. Renewals are issued at the discretion of the Ministry of Environment.

The Animal Control Bylaw, Part VI - Control and Regulation of Exotic and Wild Animals, prohibits a person from buying, owning or harbouring an animal listed in Schedule No. 5, however, does not apply to any person who holds a licence under any statute of the Legislature of Saskatchewan or the Government of Canada, which permits keeping of animals under stated conditions. As *The Captive Wildlife Regulations, 2021*, are a matter of provincial jurisdiction, Administration will direct any inquires to the appropriate provincial authority on matters related to captive wildlife and captive wildlife licensing.

In 2022, Animal Services received requests from two applicants, Mr. John Polson and Ms. Dawn Erker, for municipal support to allow the Ministry of Environment to proceed with approving their wildlife rehabilitation applications. These are the first applications since the 2016 letter was provided to the Ministry of Environment and municipal approval changes were introduced to *The Captive Wildlife Regulations, 2021*. Under Part 3 General Provisions, it states:

“No person shall apply for a captive wildlife licence without providing written confirmation satisfactory to the minister that the council of the municipality in which the wildlife is to be held in captivity is not opposed to the holding of the wildlife within the municipality”.

Mr. Polson intends to rehabilitate small mammals, focusing on rabbits and hares. Ms. Erker intends to rehabilitate bats, raccoons and other small mammals, such as squirrels and mice. In addition to the applications from the Ministry of Environment, Animal Services received letters of support for Mr. Polson and Ms. Erker’s wildlife rehabilitation applications from the following people:

1. Jan Shadwick, Living Sky Wildlife Rehabilitation, dated April 27, 2022;
2. Eva Alexandrovici, Saskatoon Animal Control Agency, dated April 6, 2022;
3. Derrick & Julia Lee, Resident on Cochin Terrace, dated January 20, 2023; and
4. Norm Fisher & Becky Laliberte, Resident on Cochin Terrace, dated January 30, 2023.

After review, Administration supports both Mr. Polson’s and Ms. Erker’s wildlife rehabilitation licence applications to the Ministry of Environment as each applicant has the ability to accommodate wildlife rehabilitation within city limits, avoid over capacity issues, and when licensed for wildlife rehabilitation, would not contravene the Animal Control Bylaw. For applicants to operate in Saskatoon, in principle, each applicant will meet the following conditions:

1. Obtain City Council approval; and
2. Receive a wildlife rehabilitation licence from the Ministry of Environment.

Requirements for Wildlife Rehabilitations and Release

Both the *Captive Wildlife Regulations, 2021*, and the Ministry of Environment’s wildlife rehabilitation licence indicate specific requirements for intake processes, rehabilitation and release, as well as specific standards for wildlife rehabilitation facilities. The standards set out in the Minimum Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation, 4th edition (2012), published by the National Wildlife Rehabilitation Association and International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, apply to wildlife rehabilitation.

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For all wild animals undergoing rehabilitation, a set of criteria must be met prior to release. Wildlife must be released in a manner which does not endanger the public and at a time and manner which provides the greatest likelihood of successful reintroduction into the wild. If the collection location, defined as where the injured or ill wildlife was found, is not deemed suitable, or is unavailable, the wildlife rehabilitators will work with a provincial conservation officer and/or landowner to release the animal at the nearest site of appropriate habitat, outside city limits.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications identified.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

If the wildlife rehabilitator's licence becomes suspended, cancelled or renewal is denied by the Ministry of Environment, they would no longer be able to operate within Saskatoon.

There are no other social, environmental, privacy or legal implications identified.

NEXT STEPS

Pending City Council's approval, Administration will provide a letter to the applicant stating municipal approval is granted, allowing the applicants to temporarily hold wildlife for rehabilitation purposes within city limits. Applicants will be able to proceed with their applications to the Ministry of Environment for a valid wildlife rehabilitation licence and will operate within Saskatoon.

APPENDICES

1. Licensed Wildlife Rehabilitators in Saskatoon

REPORT APPROVAL

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