

Rehabilitators, animal control organizations, wildlife officers and the police receive numerous calls from people who have rescued injured/orphaned rabies vector species. In most cases, by the time a 'rescuer' calls, they already have the animal in their possession and have an emotional investment in the animal. A significant portion of the public chooses not to surrender a baby raccoon when they learn that it will be euthanized. They attempt to raise the raccoon when there is no other option available. How many do not even call because they have heard that, if they do, the animal will be euthanized? The public health is at risk when well intentioned, but untrained and unvaccinated people care for these animals.

At this time there is no other approved channel for these calls. There should be.

Wildlife Rehabilitators of North Carolina (WRNC) proposes that the North Carolina Resources Commission establish a permit that would allow specially trained rehabilitators to take in and care for rabies vector species. The goal of this new program is to lower the risk to North Carolina citizens by decreasing exposure. When specially trained rehabilitators are allowed to accept these animals, people agree to surrender the animals. Potentially rabid animals are removed from the public and are instead brought under the care of a few people who are thoroughly trained in safe handling procedures and understand the precautions that must be taken with the animals. An additional benefit of this program is that rehabilitators will be better able to direct potential exposure cases to the correct authorities.

WRNC is prepared to obtain the training for rehabilitators who wish to obtain the permit and has set aside the funds to finance this training. We propose that these rehabilitators receive a full rabies pre-exposure series then monitor their titers every two years, boosting the vaccine as appropriate, complete RVS specific training and have proper caging in place prior to applying for the permit.

Every other state on the east coast has established a rabies vector species program such as the one we propose. It is time for North Carolina to do so. Establishing an RVS program is sound public health planning and makes sense for the many people who are faced with dealing with RVS problems every year. We ask that you return the enclosed postcard to let us know that you support this proposal.