Class Descriptions - 2027 WRNC Symposium

Beginner Track

BASIC MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY

Presenter: Jean Chamberlain

Have you ever been to pick up an animal from a veterinarian and felt like you were hearing a different language as they went through the patient's condition and prognosis (likely outcome or future for the patient)? Well, medical terminology is like a new language for many new, or non-medical rehabilitators. This lecture aims to teach some of the more common terminology, used in caring for wildlife in the rehabilitation and veterinary settings.

BEYOND SURVIVAL: A FRESH APPROACH TO NEONATAL SQUIRREL REHAB

Presenter: Betsy D. Shank, CWR

Not all squirrel rehabilitation methods are created equal. In this session, we will discuss proven, hands-on approach to raising Eastern Grey Squirrels from birth to three weeks old; an approach that challenges traditional methods and focuses on helping neonates *thrive*, not just survive.

BEYOND THE BOTTLE: ADVANCING SQUIRREL CARE FROM SURVIING TO THRIVING

Presenter: Betsy D. Shank, CWR

As Eastern Grey Squirrels grow beyond the neonatal stage, their needs change rapidly and so should our methods. In this follow-up session, we will continue with the "Beyond Survival" approach, focusing on how to raise healthy, confident juveniles ready for the wild.

INTRODUCTION TO WILDLIFE REHABILITATION

Presenter: Tara Frost

Want to start Rehabilitating Wildlife? There are a few things you need to know to make sure wildlife rehabilitation is for you. This presentation covers the basics of rehabilitation, such as pros and cons, basic care, and expectations, to prepare beginners for what rehabilitation involves.

HANDLING WILDLIFE CALLS

Carla Johnson

'My dog has brought me a baby bird.' 'I don't think the mother rabbit is feeding the young in the nest in my back yard.' 'There's a bat in my chimney.' Carla covers many of the calls frequently received by rehabilitators and vet offices.

APPRENTICE PERMIT & NEW REHABBER Q&A

Rebekah Kriston

The NCWRC has a new online procedure for applying for permits. Applying for your first permit as an apprentice can be very confusing. This presentation will go through the procedure and answer your questions about the procedure.

I LIKE BABY BUNS AND I CANNOT LIE: COTTONTAIL REHAB

Nancy Vergara

I Like Baby Buns and I Cannot Lie: Cottontail Rehab is an introduction to eastern cottontail rabbit rehabilitation, from intake to release. This session explores early development, nutrition and the challenges of caring for young cottontails. Topics include communication with finders, intake assessment, housing, formula preparation, feeding schedules, weaning and gastrointestinal issues like diarrhea. We will walk, step by step, through a typical day caring for infant cottontails to help establish best practices and routines for better care.

ZOONOSES: SANITATION AND KEEPING IT CLEAN

Carla Johnson

This presentation covers the causes, modes of transmission, description of common zoonoses, symptoms of infection, and most of all, prevention.

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF OPOSSUM REHABILITATION

Mac Stewart

RVS Track

READY FOR RVS REHABBING?!

Presenter: Ruby Davis

This course provides wildlife rehabilitators with the essential knowledge and regulatory guidance needed to safely and legally care for North Carolina's Rabies Vector Species (RVS)—raccoons,

foxes, skunks, bobcats, and bats. Students will learn species basics, safe handling and quarantine procedures, zoonotic disease precautions, and requirements set by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission.

Topics include intake assessment, neonatal and juvenile care, appropriate housing and enrichment, common medical issues, and release planning. Emphasis is placed on public safety, rabies risk management, and compliance with state laws. This course is ideal for beginners preparing to work with RVS or support licensed rehab facilities.

SHOULD YOU REHAB RACCOONS?

Presenter: Ruby Davis

This introductory course provides the foundational knowledge and practical skills needed to care for sick, injured, and orphaned raccoons. Participants will learn the essential principles of raccoon biology, behavior, nutrition, housing, and medical needs, as well as safe handling practices and legal considerations required for ethical and compliant rehabilitation.

We will explore topics such as natural history, intake procedures, infant and juvenile care, common injuries and illnesses, enrichment, zoonotic disease precautions, and preparing raccoons for release back into the wild. Emphasis is placed on humane practices, public safety, and supporting the animal's physical and psychological development.

This course is ideal for beginner rehabilitators, animal care volunteers, veterinary assistants, or anyone interested in supporting raccoon rescue and rehabilitation efforts. No prior experience is required, but a commitment to compassionate, responsible wildlife care is essential.

COMPREHENSIVE RACCOON CARE: DIAGNOSTICS, TREATMENT AND RELEASE STRATEGIES

Presenter: Ruby Davis

The course is designed for experienced wildlife rehabilitators seeking to deepen their expertise in the complex medical, behavioral, and developmental needs of raccoons. Building on foundational rehabilitation skills, this course explores advanced diagnostics, treatment protocols, enrichment strategies, and release planning to support successful outcomes for challenging or high-risk cases.

Participants will learn to manage severe trauma, infectious diseases, and neurological conditions; develop advanced infant and juvenile care techniques; design species-specific housing for long-term cases; and implement behaviorally informed enrichment to promote natural instincts and reduce habituation. Additional training includes evaluating candidates for

soft and hard release, addressing human–wildlife conflict issues, coordinating with veterinarians and agencies, and developing data-driven rehabilitation plans.
The material will help students refine their ability to assess complex cases, troubleshoot rehabilitation challenges, and make informed decisions that prioritize animal welfare and public safety. This course is ideal for rehabilitators with prior experience caring for raccoons who want to advance their clinical skills, expand their problem-solving abilities, and strengthen their readiness to manage demanding cases.

HELPING THE CLEVER CANIDS: FOX REHAB ESSENTIALS

Presenter: Ruby Davis

This introductory course provides the essential knowledge and hands-on skills required to care for orphaned, injured, or ill foxes. Students will learn the fundamentals of fox biology, behavior, nutrition, and natural history, along with the ethical and legal responsibilities involved in fox rehabilitation. The course covers species identification, safe capture and handling, infant neonate care, common medical issues, intake assessments, appropriate housing and enrichment, zoonotic disease precautions, and strategies to prevent imprinting and habituation. Participants will also explore the behavioral development of young foxes, techniques for fostering natural hunting and survival skills, and best practices for preparing foxes for release back into the wild. Designed for new rehabilitators, volunteers, and animal care professionals, this course emphasizes humane, evidence-based practices and public safety. No prior experience is required—only a commitment to responsible wildlife care and a willingness to learn.

REHABILITATING RABIES VECTOR SPECIES IN NC: LICENSING AND REGULATIONS

Presenters: Christina Stylianos

Rehabilitation of Rabies Vector Species (RVS) requires additional safeguards for rehabilitators, volunteers, facilities, and enclosures. This presentation will outline these requirements and the process to get licensed to work with rabies vector species in NC.

Vet Lectures

RAPTOR CASE STUDY

Presenter: Dr. David Scott

During this presentation, we will discuss several interesting and clinically relevant raptor cases. This is an interactive discussion so bring your questions regarding any cases that you may have.

POST SURGERY TREATMENT & CARE FOR RAPTORS

Presenter: Dr. David Scott

This presentation will focus on what happens after a surgical procedure. Surgery, although an important piece of the puzzle, is really just the first step of many required to get an injured raptor through to release. Therefore, we will discuss various aspects of post-op care including pain management, wound care and implant maintenance, as well as physical therapy and reconditioning.

INTERESTING CASE STUDIES OF REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Presenter: Dr. Gregory Lewbart, DVM

RESPONSIBLE ANTIBIOTIC USE FOR WILDLIFE; IT'S NOT JUST BAYTRIL

Presenter: Dr. Sarah Hargrove, DVM, MSc

In livestock animal medicine, veterinarians have limitations as to which medications they can use by law, while companion animal medicine has a wider range of options. Wildlife medicine, with the wide range of species cared for and limited studies available of medication efficacy, tends to rely on a few 'tried and true' options, all of which are off-label. As a group, we need to start becoming more aware of the importance of using first or second generation antibiotics before moving to the 'big gun' antibiotics. Antimicrobial resistance in humans and animals is becoming more prevalent and wildlife populations can play a part in spreading this. Let's look at what options we have in treating our patients before they are released back into our native populations.

FOIL TAPE - A VERSATILE AND NON-INVASIVE METHOD FOR SHELL FRACTURE STABILIZATION

Presenter: Dr. Miranda Torkelson

ENDOSCOPY OF REPTILES

Presenter: Shane Boylan

Endoscopy is a very useful diagnostic in reptile rehabilitation. This talk will demonstrate rigid and flexible endoscopy use in ectopic eggs in chelonians, reptile wound management, blood patch repair in lung bulla/pneumocoelom, reptile bronchoscopy, ophidian Cryptosporidium sampling, fish hook removal, and treating crocodilian head trauma. Equipment costs have been reduced from tens of thousands of dollars to a more manageable 3-4 thousand which will be discussed. With every new patient, this lecture will demonstrate the myriad uses in diagnosing and treating your reptile patient.

General Track

BETTER CARE THROUGH TECHNOLOGY: AN INTAKE-TO-RELEASE WALKTHROUGH OF WILDCARE

Presenter: Jeremy Bivins

Every patient that comes through your door generates a trail of records: intake forms, exam notes, medications, weights, feedings, enclosure moves, and finally the outcome that ends up on your state and federal annual reports. In this session we'll follow a single animal through that entire journey, live, in WildCare, a free web-based patient management system built by a wildlife rehabilitator.

RAPTOR ID

Presenter: Betty O'Leary

Identifying raptors that come in for rehab can be confusing especially in juvenile plumage. Using a Power Point presentation this class will teach you how to identify diurnal raptors native to the east coast with extra emphasis on juvenile plumage. At the end of the class some raptor cadavers will be used so you can physically see the difference.

SQUIRREL AILMENTS

Presenter: Linda Bergman-Althouse

When Rocky is down for the count, it can be anything from infected "ANT" bites to the "POX" and everything in between. Although fast and furious, a squirrel can find him or herself in some precarious situations that demand immediate medical attention. Squirrels presenting with

aspiration, burns, emaciation, car collision, cat attack, concussion, cuterebra emasculator, dehydration, hypothermia, mange, MBD, malocclusion, pneumonia, poisoning, pox or even just an intense flea problem are dependent upon us to put a treatment plan together to give them the best chance of survival. This session will help you recognize an ailment and devise a treatment plan with varying options to treat or not to treat in some cases. Let's be ready for every ailing squirrel carried through our doors!

HAZARDS OF WILDLIFE REHABILITATION

Presenter: Linda Bergman-Althouse

We all know the JOYS of rehabbing: those good feelings generated when an animal finally recovers enough to be released and the public praises you for "doing a good thing" (that always feels good), and what about just the personal satisfaction of a "job well done?" What we don't usually think about are the hidden costs of being a wildlife rehabilitator. This session will focus on the not often talked about issues that can take a toll on the physical and emotional health of wildlife caretakers and the ability, as well as, the need to recognize and manage those issues in a healthy manner.

LIFE ON A HOST: WORKING WITH ECTOPARASITES

Presenter: Katherine Brown

Ticks and louse flies are blood-feeding ectoparasites that can influence wildlife health through their feeding activity and interactions with pathogens. Studying their distribution, host associations, and seasonal activity helps clarify their ecological roles and potential contributions to pathogen transmission. Examining these groups and creating surveillance systems within North and South Carolina provides a broader framework for exploring host–parasite relationships, assessing potential health impacts, and identifying gaps in wildlife parasite surveillance. Such efforts can strengthen understanding of ectoparasite ecology and inform future research on wildlife health and pathogen transmission.

HUMANE WILDLIFE CAPTURE & HANDLING

Let us explore ways to incorporate stress reduction and animal comfort into our everyday protocols. We will start by questioning IF we even need to capture the animal in question, and if RESCUE is the solution how can the rescue be the best possible event for THAT ANIMAL **AND** the next animal of that species that shows up on that homeowner's property! Low, Slow, & Soft

techniques will be emphasized. Concepts like attractant containment and structural exclusion will be prioritized over animal removal.

Labs & Workshops

LARGE BIRD BANDAGING LAB (2 HOUR LAB)

Presenter: Sunny Cooper

This lab will focus on understanding the purpose of a good bandage and how to apply them. Anatomy and function will be a large emphasis in this lab. There will be plenty of time for participants to practice wing wraps and leg splints on cadavers.

TURTLE SHELL REPAIR LAB (2 HOUR LAB)

Presenter: Dr Gregory Lewbart, DVM and Turtle Rescue Team Students

I will co-present this lab with a group of dedicated Turtle Rescue Team students. After a short (20-30 minutes) talk, attendees will be able to observe and then perform shell repair, feeding tube placement, blood collection, and aural abscess management. Anatomy will be emphasized. Actual procedures will depend on the available specimens.

AVIAN PHYSICAL EXAM (2 HOUR LAB)

Presenter: Betty O'Leary

This lab covers the basics of an avian external anatomy and examination. Students are supplied with cadavers and an examination form to practice during class.

TUBE FEEDING FOR NUTRITION AND MEDICAL CARE (2 HOUR LAB)

Presenters: Savannah Trantham, CWR and Allison Rudisill

From tiny neonates to injured adults and everything in between, nutrition and hydration is essential to a full recovery and release. Rather you are simply maintaining a growing infant, trying to get medication into a stubborn goose, or helping a large snapping turtle heal; tube/gavage feeding ability is something you need in your repertoire of rehabilitation skills. In this lecture we will touch on a variety of reasons and times tube feeding is not only appropriate, but essential. How tube feeding may increase your success rates. When to choose gavage feeding over other options. What items go through those tubes! What tubes to choose for

various species and ages. How to successfully gavage feed a variety of species. And then we will put it all to practice in the hands-on portion.

FLUID THERAPY LAB (2 HOUR LAB)

Presenter: TDB

This lab will give participants the opportunity to practice administering fluids to cadaver animals of all species.

MAMMAL PHYSICAL EXAM LAB (2 HOUR LAB)

Presenter: TBD

This lab will cover the basics of mammalian anatomy and examination. Students will be supplied with cadavers to practice.

SONGBIRD BANDAGING LAB

Presenter: Dr. Miranda Torkelson

MAMMAL FECAL EXAM

Presenter: Dr. Moorhead

BAT HOUSE WORKSHOP

Presenter: Mathias Engelmann

RAPTOR PUPPET MAKING WORKSHOP

Presenter: Sunny Cooper

Caring for young raptors comes with many challenges but imprinting is one of the biggest hurtles. Come learn how cadaver puppets can help prevent birds from imprinting on you or your staff/volunteers as well as how to use them with babies in the spring. We will also be making our own puppets with cadavers through the course of two days.