

WILDLIFE

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These frequently asked questions (FAQs) are intended to assist investigators, instructors, and members of animal care committees in the implementation of the [CCAC guidelines: Wildlife](#). FAQs provide general responses to comments and questions received by the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) during the external reviews of this guidelines document.

If you do not find the answer to your question here, do not hesitate to [contact the CCAC](#) and we will be pleased to provide assistance.

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1. What types of animals are covered in the *CCAC guidelines: Wildlife*?

The guidelines document covers free-ranging and wild-caught cephalopods and vertebrates except fish, which are covered in the [CCAC guidelines on: the care and use of fish in research, teaching and testing](#) (currently under revision). This includes wild amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals that are native, introduced, or have become feral.

The document focuses on free-ranging wildlife and wild-caught animals that have not been habituated to captivity. The [CCAC guidelines: Husbandry of animals in science](#) must be consulted where wild animals are to be maintained in animal facilities over a period that is likely to significantly impact successful reintroduction into their native environment.

2. What types of activities are covered by the *CCAC guidelines: Wildlife*?

The guidelines document covers scientific activities involving wildlife that require animal care committee approval as detailed in the [Requirement for submitting an animal protocol: Addendum to the CCAC policy statement on terms of reference for animal care committees](#). For animal-based activities that fall within the CCAC's mandate but do not require animals be included in a protocol, such as observational activities in which there is no expected impact on the animals or those around them, investigators must still inform the animal care committee for confirmation that the activity does not require an animal protocol.

3. Why is there a section on observational activities if a protocol is not required?

Guidance on the conduct of observational activities in the field is included in the [CCAC guidelines: Wildlife](#) because it is difficult to account for inadvertent disturbance that may occur from the presence of an observer or remotely operated equipment. Some scientific activities that are thought to be strictly observational may cause disturbance, such as disruption of normal target and non-target animal activities due to the presence of an observer or a drone.

Ultimately, animal care committees are responsible for determining the category of welfare impact of each scientific activity (CCAC guidelines on categories of welfare impact, in prep.). Activities that are considered only observational must be justified as such in reference to the most recent literature and expert advice for the species, so that the animal care committee can determine whether a protocol is required (see the [Requirement for submitting an animal protocol: Addendum to the CCAC policy statement on terms of reference for animal care committees](#)).

4. Postmortems can be difficult in the field. When and why are they necessary?

Postmortems provide valuable information for identifying underlying circumstances and should be used as much as possible. For example, it may be obvious that a bird died because it flew into a window, but a postmortem may show that it was the result of an eye injury from handling. If an immobilized bear falls from a tree and dies, a postmortem can reveal whether it died from hemorrhaging or from the anesthetic.

In the [CCAC guidelines: Wildlife](#), the requirement for a postmortem is a 'should', not a 'must'. It can be challenging to obtain appropriate samples for a postmortem; however, the basic requirement is to consult and follow the advice of a pathologist for best practices for taking samples. Where circumstances prevent

retrieval of a carcass from the field, there should be a cursory examination of the animal, accompanied by documentation, photographs, and samples to the extent possible.

5. CCAC guidelines documents now put greater emphasis on welfare assessment. What is expected of those working with wildlife?

Welfare assessment is a necessary component of all animal-based scientific activities to ensure a good quality of life for the animals within the constraints of the scientific activity and for the quality of scientific data. The [CCAC guidelines: Animal welfare assessment](#) details the general requirements for all animals, and the [CCAC guidelines: Wildlife](#) builds on this foundation.

For scientific activities involving wildlife, welfare assessments can be used to identify potential risks to animals and inform decisions regarding their inclusion in the scientific activity, the level of monitoring required, and the need to implement mitigation strategies to improve animal welfare. The guideline statement in this section of the [CCAC guidelines: Wildlife](#) details the basic requirement: “The welfare of all wild animals that are involved in scientific activities must be assessed according to a plan that is suited to the type of scientific activity and designed to optimize the collection of information without adding procedures that would cause stress for the animal.” The guidelines document also lists potential welfare indicators and provides a reference to a sample template for assessing the welfare of wild animals for consideration.