

Wildlife Population Control

Last updated: 2/11/13

- I. General or large-scale population reduction programs have generally not proven effective for controlling rabies, however wildlife population reduction programs may be useful in the following instances:
 - a. to remove animals from localized areas of extremely high human-contact, such as picnic areas where wildlife show little fear and approach humans expecting handouts; or
 - b. as part of a scientifically based study to develop or test methods to control wildlife rabies.
- II. The following disadvantages of population reduction must be taken into account before deciding any such activity:
 - a. in an area of normal habitat where animal populations are high (urban settings may support higher populations of some species than rural ones), a 60-80% reduction of the population is probably required before intraspecies transmission can be terminated;
 - b. reduction efforts must be continuous because new animals will move into the territory from adjacent areas and the reproductive capacity of the remaining animals may increase;
 - c. continuous population reduction efforts are usually prohibitively expensive;
 - d. in an endemic or epidemic area, naturally immune animals may be removed thus eliminating a barrier to transmission and encouraging the spread of the disease;
 - e. other species, especially pets, may be at risk of being inadvertently affected by the population reduction methods;
 - f. live trapping has been demonstrated to be the least cost effective of all population reduction methods; and
 - g. live trapping requires that the animals be euthanized because relocation of potentially rabid animals increases the risk of rabies spread.

Note: The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) should always be consulted when wildlife population reduction programs are being considered. A directory of DGIF offices and information about Virginia's wildlife can be found at www.dgif.virginia.gov

