

**HOUSE SUMMARY OF SENATE AMENDMENTS****HCR 6****2024 Regular Session****Ventrella**

WILDLIFE &amp; FISHERIES: Provides relative to Wildlife Rehabilitation Program rules

**Synopsis of Senate Amendments**

1. Defines "Wildlife Rescuer" as an individual who is allowed to possess certain wildlife in accordance with certain exemption requirements.
2. Clarifies requirements for allowing a wildlife rescuer to possess certain wildlife while providing care for up to 90 days.
3. Removes the limitation that the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries may only inspect an applicant once per permit lifetime except with probable cause of a violation.
4. Requires the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to issue a Special Purpose and Possession permit if an individual has met certain requirements, including wildlife rescuer training, applied for a permit, and the animal is determined to be medically non-releasable by a veterinarian.
5. Adds a limitation of liability for veterinarians in determining an animal is non-releasable or show signs of adjusted life in captivity.
6. Prohibits exploitation of wildlife.
7. Makes technical changes.

**Digest of Bill as Finally Passed by Senate**

Present law (LAC 76:V.131) provides for the Wildlife Rehabilitation Program (WRP) permitting and operations and provides definitions.

Proposed law retains present law and defines "Wildlife Rescuer" as a person who is allowed to possess certain wildlife in accordance with certain exemption requirements.

Present law (LAC 76:V.131(E)(4)) provides for permit requirements for the WRP, and requires completion of a course certified by the La. Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). Proposed law requires that LDWF approved courses be readily available online, with completion of the course subject to an interactive test.

Present law (LAC 76:V.131(E)(6)) allows for inspection of an applicant's animal housing facilities by the LDWF. Proposed law provides that an applicant must have suitable housing for the animal and must report the habitat specifications to the department, with permitted facilities subject to inspection by the LDWF upon twenty-four hours notice to the WRP applicant.

Proposed law provides that a Wildlife Rescuer may possess in captivity any sick, injured, or orphaned wildlife while providing care for up to 90 days under the following conditions:

- (1) For squirrel, opossum, rabbit or chipmunk, limit of one animal or litter per individual.
- (2) Single raccoon or skunk, upon notification of the LDWF and receipt of information on rabies vectors and a list of rehabilitators.

- (3) Possessors held strictly liable for damages to persons or property.

Proposed law provides that a Wildlife Rescuer may possess sick, injured, or orphaned wildlife beyond 90 days under the following conditions:

- (1) The individual satisfies LDWF training requirements, which must be offered online and provide information on safety, husbandry, and diseases.
- (2) The individual applies for a Special Purpose and Possession permit.
- (3) A La. licensed veterinarian determines the animal is non-releasable or is adjusted to captivity.

Proposed law requires the LDWF to issue the Special Purpose and Possession permit where all requirements are met, and the individual will be allowed to possess the animal for the remainder of its life. Proposed law further requires that the animal be spayed or neutered, and rabies vector species shall be microchipped.

Proposed law provides that a La. licensed veterinarian is not liable for injury, illness, death, loss, civil penalty, or damage in determining the animal is non-releasable or is adjusted to captivity, except in cases of gross negligence or willful misconduct.

Proposed law prohibits use of any animal possessed under proposed law for exploitation, including promotion, commerce, or pet trade. Proposed law further provides that any such use is grounds for seizure of the animal and revocation of the permit.

(Amends LAC 76:V.131(B), (E)(4) and (6); Adds LAC 76:V.131(D)(3))