

Discussing and Understanding Animal Welfare Challenges
in Research and Education on Wildlife, Non-Model Species and Biodiversity – A Workshop

Role of Veterinary Medicine in Wildlife Research

Role of the veterinarian and oversight for use of controlled substances in the field by non-veterinarians; AMDUCA; options for input from veterinarians and oversight bodies for ongoing work with high-profile species by field crews; availability of veterinarians with taxon-appropriate expertise.

Biologist “versus” Veterinarian

Biologist “versus” Veterinarian



**Back off, man.
I'm a scientist.**

Ghostbusters (Columbia Pictures, 1984)

Biologist “versus” Veterinarian



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The Good News Today (2022)

Biologist “versus” Veterinarian



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The Wizard of Oz (MGM Studios, 1939)

The Great and Powerful Oz, DVM, has spoken!

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Role of Veterinary Medicine in Wildlife Research

Perspectives on understanding, accepting, & enhancing
the role of veterinary medicine in wildlife research

Role of Veterinary Medicine in Wildlife Research

Aspect	Biologist	Veterinarian
Training	Ecology, biology, management, Statistics–data bent (can vary considerably)	Animal medicine, care & welfare, pain management, sedation & anesthesia, ± wildlife-related techniques
Authority	None, or Principal Investigator Evidence or experience based	Ultimate practice authority per license (e.g., R); also some oversight authorities under federal/state laws
Responsibility	Data collection, finding answers Animal ethics and welfare–less defined but affect credibility, rapport, funding	Well-defined legal/ethical responsibilities for animal welfare/medicine/R – oath, license, federal/state laws agency/institution/public perception
Perspective	Perhaps broader & more population or data bent Conservation or species recovery: contrast with individual animal	Perhaps more individual animal focus, emphasis on welfare & preventive medicine (with respect to roles in others’ research)
Drugs	Veterinarian- <u>client</u> -patient relationship – must work with a DVM to access R drugs	Acquire, use, prescribe under license ± DEA registration ± other laws (e.g., extralabel use)
Experience	Lack common core training, so can be highly variable from little to expert in the field	Common core training, but not all practicing veterinarians are created equal: lab/academic vs. private practice vs. wildlife/zoo/nondomestic

Understanding, accepting, & enhancing the role of veterinary medicine in wildlife research: A wildlife veterinarian's perspective

*A little
about me...*



Understanding, accepting, & enhancing the role of veterinary medicine in wildlife research: A wildlife veterinarian's perspective



the “veterinarian-client-patient relationship”

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the “veterinarian-client-patient relationship”



veterinarian-biologist-wildlife “relationship”

Understanding, accepting, & enhancing the role of veterinary medicine in wildlife research: A wildlife veterinarian's perspective



How can we foster functional veterinarian-biologist-wildlife subject relationships?

Understanding, accepting, & enhancing the role of veterinary medicine in wildlife research:

A wildlife veterinarian's perspective

Three things that “biologists” need to understand:

- Catching & handling wild animals is distressing (& sometimes painful).
- The veterinarian did not make the rules (but is obliged to follow them).
- It's OK to seek help & consider alternatives.

Understanding, accepting, & enhancing the role of veterinary medicine in wildlife research:

A wildlife veterinarian's perspective

Three things that “veterinarians” need to understand:

- Authority does not necessarily equate to expertise.
- It's OK to seek help & consider alternatives.
- It's OK to say “no” or “stop”...

Understanding, accepting, & enhancing the role of veterinary medicine in wildlife research:

A wildlife veterinarian's perspective

Five challenges in veterinarian-biologist-wildlife relationships:

- Understanding of & respect for rules, responsibilities, differences in professional perspectives & standards.
- Consistent application of animal welfare laws to “field studies”.
- Availability of true wildlife medicine expertise in field & oversight settings.
- Navigating myriad rules related to veterinary practice, extralabel prescription drug use, etc.
- Veterinarian's participation in situations under their practice authority/responsibility.

Understanding, accepting, & enhancing the role of veterinary medicine in wildlife research:

A wildlife veterinarian's perspective

Five things that could help improve & smooth relationships:

- Training in stress & pain physiology & management.
- Training in animal welfare laws & ethics with specific applications to wildlife studies.
- Standards for acceptable field practices.
- Informal veterinary consultations early in field study planning.
- Involve wildlife & wildlife medicine experts in institutional review processes for wildlife studies.

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Seems time to move beyond
biologist vs. veterinarian...



toward fostering functional
veterinarian-biologist-wildlife subject relationships.

