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Addendum to Class Protocol #004: Bat Capture, Handling, and Release

Wildlife Research Permits and Collection Licences

Adopted July 12, 2009

Alberta Bat Handling Protocol to Prevent Spread of White-Nose Syndrome

Basic procedures for working with bats in Alberta are provided in the provincial Class Protocol referenced above. Due to concerns about the spread of White-Nose Syndrome (WNS), a new fungal disease associated with massive mortality of hibernating bats in eastern North America, the Fish and Wildlife Division of Sustainable Resource Development requires compliance with the following additional handling procedures:

In Alberta, DO NOT USE any equipment, clothing, or footwear used in any WNS affected cave or mine in other jurisdictions.

In Alberta, do not use any equipment, clothing, or footwear used in bat-inhabited caves or mines east of the Mississippi River.

Decontaminate gear and clothes after entering **ANY** cave or minesite where bats are known to hibernate in Alberta or anywhere else; use US Fish and Wildlife Service protocols (see below).

Store clean items separately from items that have been contaminated.

Whenever possible micro-process and release bats at the capture device. Limit data collection to species, gender, adult/juvenile, reproductive status, fitness (emaciated or not), and wing damage assessment (see below). Hold bats for no longer than necessary and for no more than 1 hour.

Place only one bat in each holding bag (as opposed to multiple bats) and use each bag only once per night. Wash and dry holding bags before using again. One-time use paper bags may be used instead of cloth bags

All field gear used to capture, handle, and measure bats should be cleaned with a disinfecting agent each night, and equipment that comes in direct contact with bats, such as calipers and biopsy punches, should be cleaned after each bat. Disposable gloves may be worn over handling gloves. Although mist nets will be difficult to clean thoroughly, spot wiping with disinfecting agent where bats were captured is recommended as a minimum. For information on suitable disinfectants and further details refer to the US Fish and Wildlife Service Decontamination Protocols for Bat Field Studies:

http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/mammals/BatDisinfectionProtocol.html

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Be aware of indications of WNS: white fungus on any skin surface, emaciation, and/or prominent wing damage (see below)

If a live bat is found with white powdery fungus anywhere on the skin, please take photos if possible, collect the bat and keep it isolated in a ventilated container. If large numbers of dead bats (more than 10 at one site) are found, please document the mortality by recording time, place, estimated number of dead bats, any other significant aspects of the mortality event, as well as take a picture and collect a few fresh dead carcasses (gloves must be worn and decontamination protocol followed). In either situation, contact any Fish and Wildlife office (toll free in Alberta 310-0000) or Dr. Margo Pybus (Alberta Provincial Wildlife Disease Specialist 780-427-3462) for further direction.

To help assess whether a bat has survived WNS, an index to bat wing damage has been developed:

www.fws.gov/northeast/PDF/Reichard_Scarring%20index%20bat%20wings.pdf

Please take photos of any bat showing similar wing damage and then notify Margo Pybus (as above). At this time, we are not requesting that bats with wing damage be collected.

WNS has not YET been detected in western North America; however, the rapid spread of bat mortality in the east and the likelihood that humans can carry the fungus to new areas requires a proactive approach to prevent WNS from spreading into or within Alberta.

Thank you for your cooperation.

For further information, visit:

http://srd.alberta.ca/FishWildlife/WildlifeResearchCollection/Default.aspx

You can also contact Lisa Wilkinson (Species at Risk Biologist, 780-723-8556).