



State of California - Natural Resources Agency
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Notice of Changes to Scientific Collecting Permit (SCP) and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Authorizations, and Handling Precautions for Bats and other Mammals

You are receiving this letter because you currently possess an active Scientific Collecting Permit (SCP) and/or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), for work with mammals in California. The emergence of COVID-19, the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, is a human health crisis of unusual proportions with the potential to directly impact California's wildlife. By all reports to date, COVID-19 is a human-to-human pandemic, with no evidence of wildlife playing a continued role in the spread or transmission of this disease beyond the initial spillover. Experts agree that this novel coronavirus likely originated in bats and preliminary research into this virus raises concern that other mammals could be susceptible. However, additional work is needed and the potential risks SARS-CoV-2 may pose to wildlife remains largely unknown. A multi-agency, State and Federal task force has recently convened to assess these risks, with an emphasis on risk posed to North American bats. Isolated human-to-animal cases of SARS-CoV-2 in domestic and captive wild felid and mustelids, suggest these taxa may be more susceptible. In the meantime, the Department is taking a proactive precautionary approach to working with and handling wildlife that could be at risk of human-to-animal viral transmission (reverse zoonosis).

Until better information is available concerning the risk of reverse zoonosis of the SARS-CoV-2 virus from humans to wild mammals, **the Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is temporarily suspending authorizations for hands-on work with bats and requiring additional precautions for hands-on work with other mammals.** This action is taken under the authority of Title 14, California Code of Regulations, section 650(s)(2)(D), wherein CDFW may suspend, revoke, or modify any permit if, in CDFW's assessment, wildlife is vulnerable from permitted activities. The changes below are organized by taxonomic group for clarity:

Bats

The following activities are suspended and shall not be conducted until further notice: capture of live bats by mist- or hand-net, harp traps, and by hand, measurements, tissue sampling, and banding and other marking.

This temporary postponement of permit authorizations does not apply to work that does not involve handling. Studies involving ultrasonic recordings of bats at detector stations and emergence counts conducted at a distance from roost sites may be conducted, however we recommend that surveys and other work in confined spaces, such as in

cavernous roosts in caves, mines, and building spaces, also be postponed until further guidance from the State and federal task force risk assessment becomes available.

Additional Precautions Required for Handling Other Live Wild Mammals:

Monitor yourself for symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, shortness of breath), follow public health guidance on quarantine duration following any possible exposures to COVID-19, or a COVID-19 positive test, and stay at home if you are sick.

- 1) For Carnivores: Wear an appropriate face covering (ex. woven cotton or surgical mask, plastic face shield, cotton bandana or neck gaiter that covers the nose and mouth) when near a captured animal or other person to prevent respiratory droplets from being transferred. Face coverings should be laundered daily or after each use. N95 masks should be reserved for healthcare providers and first responders.
- 2) Practice good hand-washing hygiene.
- 3) Work outdoors or in a well-ventilated area whenever possible.
- 4) Wear dedicated clothing, and gloves when handling captured animals. Consider eye protection.
- 5) Thoroughly clean any reusable supplies that contact animals with soap and water followed by disinfection whenever possible with 70% isopropyl alcohol, 10% solution of chlorine bleach or Lysol.
- 6) Perform a risk assessment of all job duties and evaluate the need for additional precautions or personal protective equipment (PPE) for other identified risks based on the situation and species you are working with.

CDFW's modification of permit conditions does not apply to work that does not involve handling. For example, studies involving trail camera monitoring, tracking from a distance, radio/satellite telemetry tracking, visual observations from a distance, and non-invasive scat/hair collection may be conducted. That said, all state and local public health guidance also applies while conducting these activities.

Finally, we ask that mammal SCP/MOU holders report any unusual or unexpected mortalities of study animals to Dr. Deana Clifford (deana.clifford@wildlife.ca.gov). The Department's Wildlife Investigations Laboratory may be able to facilitate postmortem examination of certain cases.

CDFW understands postponement or modification of planned capture work is disruptive to project schedules. We are committed to revising this directive if and as soon as additional scientific information becomes available and keeping our wildlife research community informed about the SARS-CoV-2 virus and potential risks to wildlife.

For clarifications or additional information please email our Nongame Wildlife Program at wildlifemgt@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:


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