

To: All Department of Fish and Wildlife Scientific Staff

Subject: Department of Fish and Wildlife Animal Welfare Policy

## POLICY STATEMENT

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is committed to the humane and responsible use of animals in research. In order to ensure the ethical and compassionate treatment of fish and wildlife during capture, anesthesia, care, euthanasia and other research-related activities, the CDFW's animal welfare policy is as follows:

- Research, surveys, and experiments involving free-ranging and captive invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, birds, and mammals shall consider:
  - Whether the use of animals is necessary;
  - The number of animals needed to obtain valid scientific data; and
  - Methods to avoid or minimize pain, discomfort, and distress consistent with sound research design and practice.
- Animals shall be housed under conditions that are species-appropriate in environments that are safe and secure for animals and staff.
- Methods of euthanasia shall be consistent with current recommendations of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Panel on Euthanasia, unless alternatives have been justified and approved by the appropriate CDFW Program (Wildlife Branch, Fisheries Branch, or Marine Region).

## Implementation Guidelines

CDFW Programs regularly conduct, support, or authorize studies involving the use of fish and wildlife. To ensure these activities are scientifically sound, relevant, and employ methods that consider the welfare of individual animals and wildlife populations, Programs shall implement the following:

- Detailed study plans should be prepared describing the need and methods proposed for research activities. Plans should be prepared prior to implementing projects, peer reviewed, reference pertinent literature, and be approved by the appropriate CDFW Program (see Appendix I of the CDFW Scientific Integrity Policy [here](#)).
- As appropriate, field studies will incorporate existing guidelines for research involving fish and wildlife. Some guidelines that may be relevant and useful are as follows:
  - Mammals: [Guidelines of The American Society of Mammalogists for the Use of Wild Mammals in Research](#), Journal of Mammalogy, Volume 88, Issue 3 pp. 809-823, 2007.

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- Birds: [Guidelines to the Use of Wild Birds in Research](#), The Ornithological Council, Washington, DC, 3rd ed., 2010.
- Amphibians and reptiles: Guidelines for the Use of Live Amphibians and Reptiles in Field Research. Joint publication of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, The Herpetologists' League, and Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles. 2nd Ed., 2004.
- Use of Fishes in Research Committee (joint committee of the American Fisheries Society, the American Institute of Fishery Research Biologists, and the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists). 2014. Guidelines for the use of fishes in research. American Fisheries Society, Bethesda, Maryland. <http://fisheries.org/policy-media/science-guidelines/guidelines-for-the-use-of-fishes-in-research/>
- Euthanasia: AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2013 Edition.
- Study plans involving chemical immobilization of birds and mammals by CDFW personnel should be submitted to the Wildlife Investigations Laboratory (WIL) for review and approval. Plans should incorporate guidance provided in CDFW's Wildlife Restraint Manual and by WIL staff.
- CDFW personnel conducting scientific studies involving the capture and handling of animals should possess the experience necessary to conduct those activities safely and humanely. CDFW programs may require employees successfully complete specific training (e.g., Wildlife Restraint) or a guided mentorship period before capturing certain species of fish or wildlife.

*Signed original on file*

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Charlton H. Bonham  
Director