



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

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Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment have reviewed the request to allow rehabilitation and holding of all native Colorado bat species until research results from a planned SARS coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection study are availableⁱ. Both agencies agree that rehabilitation and holding of bat species is allowable with the following restrictionsⁱⁱ:

- All PPE guidance referenced in the CPW document titled 'Wildlife Rehabilitation Restrictions through December 31, 2021 - Revised 05/19/21' will be followed for all bat species.
- All rehabilitated bat species (except big brown bats) will be held at a licensed rehabilitation facility (or other location designated by CPW) until the SARS-CoV-2 susceptibility research study on Colorado's native Brazilian free-tailed bats (*Taderida brasiliensis*) is complete (anticipated late September).
- If this scientific study demonstrates that Brazilian free-tailed bats do not become infected with, shed, or transmit SARS-CoV-2 virus, then all rehabilitated bats can be released back into the wild as directed by CPW. Research results must demonstrate no identification of SARS-CoV-2 virus in the tissues of bats post-infection, no detection of SARS-CoV-2 shedding post-infection, and no antibody response to SARS-CoV-2 post-infection.
- If *any* studies are not definitive or results indicate Brazilian free-tailed bats (or other North American bat species) may be susceptible to, shed, or transmit SARS-CoV-2 virus, then all species of rehabilitated bats other than big brown bats will be euthanized by the rehabilitator. All euthanized bat carcasses will be submitted to the CPW wildlife health laboratory for necropsy and SARS-CoV-2 testing.
- When directed by CPW, rehabilitators will release bats in their possession or will be required to surrender the bat to CPW per Chapter W-14 #1400.C.

Big brown bats were not susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 challenge and may continue to be rehabilitated and released as outlined in the CPW document titled 'Wildlife Rehabilitation Restrictions through December 31, 2021 - Revised 05/19/21'.

ⁱ SARS-CoV-2 transmission between humans and animals complicates disease dynamics and risk assessments, requiring coordinated responses from human and animal health entities. While transmission to a number of wildlife species has been demonstrated in the scientific literature, the greatest concern lies with the potential for transmission to bats. Bats are known to harbor a variety of coronaviruses, and infection with multiple viruses creates the potential for viral recombination or other mutation events that could create new viral strains. In addition, bats' social nature could allow for rapid viral transmission in a population if SARS-CoV-2 or novel coronavirus strains were introduced. This could establish a new disease reservoir that would pose a risk to humans and hinder bat conservation efforts. Available data suggest that multiple native Colorado bats could be susceptible to SARS-CoV-2; however, those with the greatest likelihood of susceptibility are in the family of free-tailed bats (Molossidae). If native Colorado free-tailed bats are not susceptible to infection with SARS-CoV-2, then the risk of releasing bats from rehabilitation is very low. However, if free-tailed bats are susceptible, further research will be necessary to evaluate risk to other Colorado bat species.

ⁱⁱ Possession of live wildlife, including bat species, for the purposes of rehabilitation is only allowed by a licensed rehabilitator as described in Chapter W-14 of the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Regulations. Violations of these regulations, conditions of a license or of these restrictions could result in the suspension of a license, a citation, or both.

