

Frequently Asked Questions about WILD-One

Just what is WILD-ONE?

WILD-ONE, the *Wildlife Incident Log/Database and Online Network*, is the first totally online database created specifically to assist wildlife care facilities in the collection and use of data about their patients, and the issues affecting them. The system includes an admission form which uses standardized terminology and incident descriptions, most of which are provided in convenient and efficient drop-down lists, for ease of use and consistency in reporting. There are sophisticated, yet very user-friendly geographic information tools provided to make the collection of precise rescue and release locations as simple as finding directions to a local restaurant. The system has been designed to assist users in collecting critical information about their patients, compiling and using that information in a variety of ways. One of the most basic, yet attractive features of the system is the ability to automatically generate information for annual reports for state and federal permitting agencies, a process that can take a great deal of time.

The most important advance provided by the system is in the standardization of terms and descriptions. For the first time, wildlife care facilities will be able to compile, sort, and search the information contained in patient records, based on any field, or combination of fields, within the records, including species, date, rescue/release locations, types of injuries, ages of the patients, etc. The use of a standard intake template, and a single set of terms and definitions, also means that data on patients in multiple care facilities can be combined, analyzed and studied. Until now, it has been impossible to develop a comprehensive understanding of what species are being presented for care, where and when they are being found, and what factors are leading to their injuries, illnesses, or other problems. If even a relatively small percentage of the more than 5,000 permitted wildlife rehabilitators across North America use WILD-ONE, or at least adopt its terminology and report format, our community's potential knowledge and understanding of the issues affecting wildlife health can be greatly advanced.

Who created WILD-ONE?

The WILD-ONE database itself was created by the Wildlife Center of Virginia (WCV), one of the oldest and most-respected wildlife hospitals in the United States. However, during the development of WILD-ONE, WCV drew upon the work of many other organizations. The template for incident reporting, including the critical data fields, terminology and definitions, was largely created by the Clinical Wildlife Health Initiative (CWHI), a collaborative effort of more than a dozen wildlife care and conservation organizations (including WCV). CWHI was organized and chaired by The Raptor Center of the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine, with whom WCV continues to work closely on this project. The International Species Information System (ISIS) contributed the terminology and definitions of the life-stages of the various species listed. The list of species, including both scientific and common names, was provided by the Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS), which is generally acknowledged to be the scientific standard for species nomenclature in North America.

For nearly a decade, WCV has been interested in creating tools and strategies to more effectively detect emerging diseases and other environmental threats to wildlife, so that the impacts of these problems can be more quickly and effectively addressed. WILD-ONE is the result of nearly a decade of work and the investment of more than a half-million dollars. Developed under the working title, *Project Tripwire*, this database has been honed and refined to provide a versatile and powerful set of tools for the collection of data about all types of wildlife incidents. While WILD-ONE may have eventual application for other types of wildlife work, from oil spill response to field research and disease surveillance, the primary reason it was created is to facilitate and support data collection in wildlife care facilities.

Why should I be interested in this system?

All wildlife care providers, whether an individual, home-based wildlife rehabilitator, or a large professionally-staffed facility, need a complete history of what happened to each patient in order to provide appropriate care. This system makes the collection of that information a simple and routine process. WILD-ONE is a system specifically designed to meet the basic information gathering and recordkeeping needs of wildlife rehabilitation centers and hospitals, especially the information which must be gathered when a new patient is admitted. The basic version of the WILD-ONE database automates the collection and documentation of intake data, using standard terminology that is imbedded in drop-down lists. Instead of having to write or manually enter the description of the patient and the circumstances of its injury or problem, you can simply click on the options provided. The resulting admission log will include information on all patients that is both accurate and consistent, making access to, and use of, intake information easier and more effective. Since most federal and state agencies that regulate or oversee wildlife rehabilitation require annual activity reports, the advanced search functions of the database will eventually include the ability to generate most comprehensive reports at the touch of a button.

What else can the system do for my organization?

WILD-ONE enables you to collect information about each of your patients that can then be used to review and analyze intake patterns, which can be extremely valuable in planning and budgeting. In addition to information about the animals, WILD-ONE also provides tools for gathering contact information about the *people* who found, rescued, transported or otherwise came into contact with your patients. You will be able to sort and compile this contact information for follow-up communication, the generation of mailing lists, or export to fundraising or accounting software. You can even keep track of whether the rescuer or transporter makes a financial contribution, or perhaps wants to be contacted about the release of the patient when it is able to return to the wild.

I already keep my records on a computer; why should I consider switching to this system?

The WILD-ONE database uses a standardized set of data fields and terminology that have been developed by a broad consortium of public and private organizations and institutions working together

as the Clinical Wildlife Health Initiative. While diverse in their focus and priorities, all of these organizations share the belief that wildlife care facilities are untapped sources of information about the things affecting wildlife, especially information which could greatly extend our knowledge and understanding of wildlife health issues. Sooner or later, wildlife rehabilitation centers will see just about every problem affecting wildlife. Unfortunately, until now there has been neither a standard set of descriptions for those problems, nor a means through which wildlife rehabilitation centers can pool their information to facilitate a comprehensive analysis of wildlife health issues. By working together, using a single set of data collection tools, the wildlife rehabilitation community could provide the most comprehensive picture of wildlife health issues ever seen in North America. Over time, as more historic data is gathered, we will be able to detect—or even predict—changes that result from factors as diverse as emerging infectious disease or pesticide poisoning, to global warming and habitat loss. This can only happen if the information we gather can be combined and studied in a cumulative way.

How safe is will my data be on this system?

Each day, information critical to our lives is gathered, transmitted and stored on computer networks. This includes bank records, credit card transactions, medical records, online purchases, and even email. With very few exceptions, these operations are smooth and totally secure. Network security technology is readily available and is very advanced. Initially, WILD-ONE will operate from highly secure servers owned and maintained by a company called Site-Vision, in Roanoke, Virginia. These same servers also host networks which maintain critical data for the government's Emergency Management System, and other extremely important operations. They are protected by the highest level of security software, which prevents unauthorized intrusion. The data contained on these servers is routinely backed up so, even if a disaster or malfunction would occur, no data will be lost and operations would have minimal disruption.

If you need even more reassurance, WILD-ONE will eventually include a feature that allows you do download your patient records into an Excel spreadsheet, or other database you can maintain on your own computers, network, or server, or simply print them out on paper.

This system is online; what happens if the power fails or the Internet connection is lost?

If your electricity goes off, it doesn't matter what kind of computerized system you are using, there will be a disruption. However, unlike the use of desktop or laptop computers for data storage inside your facility, power surges or disruptions that could damage or destroy the data on your own system will have no effect on your data maintained online. If your Internet connection is disrupted or intermittent, WILD-ONE has printable admission forms which can be used to capture all critical data on patient intake, using the standardized report format and terms. This information can then be entered into the online system when the connection is restored.

Eventually, a downloadable version of WILD-ONE is planned, but for the foreseeable future, WILD-ONE will be an exclusively online database.

If I use WILD-ONE, will I lose ownership or control of my data?

Absolutely not!! Your patient records and the data you put into the system belong to you; your decision to use WILD-ONE will not change that. You will always *own* that information and have access to it. By using the system, the only thing you are agreeing to do is to share the portion of your patient intake record that is, for the most part, already *public information*.

It helps to keep in mind that information about the animals received for care and the description of their injuries is not really personal or proprietary information. It is information to which the agencies issuing your wildlife rehabilitation permits already have legal access. Generally speaking, if the government can access that information, it is essentially public information. This includes the basic data about the animals and what happened to them, before you admit them for care. This includes only such things as: the species; age and gender; where it was found; what happened to the animal; what kind of injury it sustained. Unlike human medical information, or even veterinary information on privately-owned pets, there are no privacy obstacles to sharing such general wildlife health data. Wildlife is a public trust resource—owned by everyone—so what happens to the animal is everyone’s business. While there is a great deal of variation in the annual reports required by the state and federal agencies that regulate wildlife rehabilitation, most require some version of these incident descriptions. Information included on those reports is generally considered public information.

Is any of my information private and confidential?

Yes! Absolutely, some of the information you capture is yours exclusively and cannot be accessed or used by anyone else without your express permission. WILD-ONE is not “*Big Brother*”; nobody will be looking over your shoulder or spying on your operation. For example, the names and contact information for the people who rescued or transported the animal, and whether or not they made a donation, is all confidential data over which you will maintain full ownership and control. The specific manner in which you care for your patients, what food or medicines you provide, the results of tests you perform is generally not public information and cannot be accessed by anyone unless you give your permission. Your use of WILD-ONE will not compromise your intellectual property rights in any way.

Who will have access to my patient records and other information?

In general, access to your data will only happen *after* your data has been combined with the data from other system users. The system is not intended to give third parties the ability to look inside each participating center and judge their respective operations. Rather it is intended to let many centers share information, about bald eagles for example, which will show what kinds of problems are affecting them in different regions of the country. The system will also facilitate the study of particular wildlife health issues, such as collisions with power lines, by illustrating how many species are being affected and where the problem areas are found. The whole point of strict authorization of users, the use of passwords, and secure sign-in procedures is to protect your information and the integrity of the database. The information in WILD-ONE will not be available for any unauthorized personnel to access, and will certainly not enable anyone to single out a specific care center for scrutiny or criticism. You can

even control which of the authorized users within your facility can see what information. The goal of WILD-ONE is to provide a powerful and secure set of tools to help our community pool data and look at “the big picture”, not to spy on individual wildlife rehabilitation centers or second-guess anyone’s care. Once an animal is admitted as a patient, your care of that animal is your business.

As time goes on, and the volume of data increases, there may be certain functions of WILD-ONE that will be available to the public. For example, it may be of interest to the public to know when certain species of migratory birds show up in their state, or how widely distributed a certain species may be. Scientists or birding organizations that compile breeding bird census reports may benefit from knowing where fledglings of a certain species have been found, in order to assure that nesting territory is properly delineated. However, in any access scenario, both the interests of the participating centers, and the interests of wildlife will be considered and protected.

Will there be exceptions to this limited access?

The few scenarios under which access to the records of an individual center might happen are those addressed by either state or federal laws. In general, state and federal wildlife agencies already have the legal authority to enter your facility and review your records. However, since WILD-ONE is a privately owned and operated database, they have no such right of access to the system without a specific court order or other specific legal authorization. WILD-ONE can certainly help you comply with appropriate requests for information, but without your permission, no one will have the ability to simply log-on to your organization’s account and review your WILD-ONE records.

Within some states, there may be certain exceptions to these general provisions with which WILD-ONE administrators will have to comply. For example, certain diseases are “reportable” under public health and agricultural regulations. Participation in WILD-ONE will not change this at all; it will just make it easier to comply with such requirements and fulfill agency request for information. There are even features planned for the system which would make some of this reporting automatic, requiring no effort on your part at all. However, the bottom line is that your use of WILD-ONE will not affect what information you must share and what you can keep private.

All this having been said, there may be times when you will *want* someone to be able to see your data—all of your data—to provide technical support or trouble-shooting of any problems associated with your use of WILD-ONE. With your permission, WILD-ONE system administrators and technicians will be able to access your files in order to help you resolve any issues you may be having, and to help you assure that your records are complete. However, such access to private data will be with your permission, and will not compromise your ownership of the data. Essentially, it will be the same as customer service personnel at your bank or any other entity with which you do business being able to view your accounts to help answer questions for you, or meet your service needs.

What will it cost me to use WILD-ONE?

At this point, the goal is to make WILD-ONE available to wildlife care facilities at little or no cost at all. The only thing asked in return will be the commitment of the participating centers to make a concerted effort to gather and enter data on their patients accurately and consistently, and in compliance with the WILD-ONE data collection protocols. The Wildlife Center of Virginia is seeking third-party funding with which to operate the system so it can be provided at no charge to the wildlife care community. While there is no way to know what the future may hold, there is no plan to charge care facilities for the basic use of the system. There may be a charge for customized features or forms that you wish to create for your own facility, or for customized analysis or reporting of your records, but these will be strictly optional services which will be available to you.

Okay, what's the catch? Who is making money on my data?

As a nonprofit hospital for wildlife, the Wildlife Center of Virginia considers the development and deployment of WILD-ONE to be a mission-related program; that is, part of the reason the Wildlife Center is in business. Obviously, having invested over a half-million dollars in the development of the system and now facing tens of thousands of dollars in operating and maintenance costs each year, the Wildlife Center needs to find a way to pay for WILD-ONE. However, it will not be by selling your private data or unfairly exploiting your hard work.

While created for wildlife rehabilitation facilities, the type of information WILD-ONE can manage includes much more than just patient intake data. The WILD-ONE database is a very powerful set of software tools which, with some modifications, can be used by many groups, including governments, industry, and researchers; anyone needing to record and compile information about wildlife incidents. It could be used to document any type of wildlife morbidity and mortality information, from oil spills and road kill, to hunter harvest and power line collisions. The goal of the Wildlife Center of Virginia is to have *other* users of the WILD-ONE system pay for the full cost of operation, essentially subsidizing the availability of the system for wildlife care providers. Since the only data you agree to share in exchange for your use of WILD-ONE is generally public information already, there is not likely to be a very lucrative market for such information.

Suppose I try it and don't like it; can I change my mind?

Participation in the WILD-ONE system is strictly voluntary. To participate, the only commitment you make is to comply with the terms of use, and follow the standardized data collection protocols. If you want to drop out, you can do so at any time. You can download your data from WILD-ONE to your own system, or go back to paper records. It's as simple as that.

What lies ahead for WILD-ONE?

While the basic version of WILD-ONE is essentially a patient intake log, a far more sophisticated version of WILD-ONE will be released for testing, early in 2011. This will include a complete patient

management package for wildlife care facilities, including a total medical records system. This system will help wildlife care providers keep track of treatments, medications, diagnostic test results, and any other information related to patient management, care, and rehabilitation. As with the basic version, this system is being made available, at no charge, to encourage the wildlife care community to embrace standardized data collection and information sharing.

In addition to the patient management capabilities, new features for WILD-ONE will soon include the ability to map patient capture and release locations, reporting tools for use of patient data in fundraising activities, and features to assist care facilities with planning and budgeting. These features will be made available to all users of WILD-ONE as they are developed.

Okay, I'm convinced, how do I take a look at WILD-ONE, or take it out for a test drive?

You can contact Dr. Dave McRuer, Director of Veterinary Services at the Wildlife Center of Virginia, to arrange an online demo of the WILD-One system. You can reach Dr. McRuer at 540-942-9453, or by email atdmcruer@wildlifecenter.org.....

...or, plan to attend the WILD-ONE lecture at the upcoming 2011 NWRA Symposium.