

## Program discontinued

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### Herald Special

Since the inception of the Ontario S.P.C.A.'s wildlife rehabilitation programme four years ago at its Newmarket facility, there has been a steady and dramatic increase in the number of wild animals brought to our facility for care. A large percentage of these animals consist of immature animals. These are either brought in by animal control facilities, or a member of the public, with the history that they have been abandoned. However, on closer questioning, we find that the adult mother has been trapped and relocated, without her young, and the young discovered a day or two later. In some instances, if a pest control company is involved, the adult animal is destroyed, or released in an inappropriate area.

In an attempt to halt this indiscriminate dislocation of healthy wildlife, the Ontario S.P.C.A. has made the decision to discontinue its practice of loaning out humane box traps in the critical spring months each year. We consider the critical months to be from the end of February to the end of June.

In 1990, the wildlife facility in Newmarket, received 300 immature raccoons, and 250 immature squirrels. The majority of these animals were removed from their nesting site indiscriminately. Our total to date so far for 1990 is close to 1,000 animals.

In conjunction with this decision to discontinue its practice of loaning out humane traps for wildlife removal, the O.S.P.C.A. will be launching a public education campaign, directed towards prevention, rather than indiscriminate dislocation and recycling of wildlife.

Proofing one's home at this time of year, before the breeding season begins, is a good deterrent to wildlife.

Check your roof, cap chimneys, and kitchen and dryer vents with mesh. These measures will put an end to unwelcome visitors.

In addition to the above preventative measures, we also appeal for tolerance for our wildlife. Routinely removing wildlife is not a solution, rather a band-aid approach. You are simply creating a vacancy for another animal to move in.

We have to look for a balance. While certain species of wildlife may be causing a headache, we must look at what would happen if we were to eliminate them. Many species of wildlife feed on a variety of insects and small animals. If we eliminate or significantly reduce those at the higher level of the food chain, these insects and small mammals will increase. We will then be faced with another problem, which could be more damaging. What then? If we begin to use chemical methods of control, we will be further contaminating the food chain, with dire repercussions.

Several other municipalities have already discontinued the practice of routinely loaning out humane traps for wildlife removal. In the Ottawa/Carleton area for example, several animal control facilities have discontinued this practice entirely. In other areas, such as Toronto, an inspection and assessment is carried out beforehand, to determine the true need for wildlife control.

While we will continue to loan out humane traps in situations where there is potential danger to animal or human life, it is anticipated that this action on the part of the Society, at a provincial level, will lead to a decline in the number of dislocated and "recycled" wildlife that come in to our care.

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