



# Breckenridge Police Department

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The Breckenridge Animal Control Division has decided to discontinue servicing any live-capture traps. It is understood that eliminating the program that allowed residents to borrow humane traps will create issues and concerns among some citizens. Hopefully, the explanation and information contained below will alleviate many of these issues.

## The Genesis of the Department's Original Wildlife Program

Despite the fact that its original mission had nothing to do with wildlife, animal control has historically responded to complaints about skunks, opossums, raccoons, and other indigenous wildlife by routinely trapping and relocating them. Additionally, animal control lent live-capture traps to citizens so that they could trap wildlife on their own property. In many cases, trapping led to euthanasia of the animal. The focus was simply to remove animals and thereby remove the current perceived problem. Unfortunately, trapping wildlife is a reactive approach and is a **temporary solution to a permanent problem**.

While trapping and removing wildlife is warranted in certain situations, trapping as a sole means of wildlife management is inherently flawed. Targeted animals may not be the ones captured or may not have been the culprit and therefore perceived nuisances may continue.

Even if the correct animal is captured and removed, there is no way to prevent nuisances from reoccurring as it is simply a matter of time before another animal moves into vacated territory. Due to these issues, Breckenridge Animal Control will no longer be servicing live-capture traps. While these targeted removals may temporarily resolve current problems, it fails to address the underlying source of issues so it will be incumbent upon the resident to identify and remove the attractants to prevent future issues.

## Department Function & Policy

All municipal animal control programs were originally tasked with protecting citizens from the threat of rabies. Investigating bites against people and enforcing rabies vaccination requirements remain as two of the top priorities for Breckenridge Animal Control. The Division's main objective is to deal with domestic animal issues and problems irresponsible pet owners cause.

Domestic animals have owners who are legally responsible for them and animal control works to ensure that all owners abide by state and local laws so their pets do not create disturbances for others who live in their neighborhood. Domestic animals are also far more likely to injure another person or pet than any wild animal so focusing the Department's limited resources on these animals is the best option from a public safety standpoint.

The City of Breckenridge does not own or have control of any wild animal found within its boundaries, nor is the City responsible for the actions or damage caused by them. In fact, wild animals have no owners to be responsible for their actions and therefore cannot be regulated in any way. There are no laws requiring Breckenridge Animal Control to respond to wildlife issues or remove wildlife perceived by some to be a problem. Breckenridge Animal Control will always

respond to situations where public safety is being jeopardized, however, the mere presence of a wild animal does not constitute a public safety threat. These animals are a common and important part of our ecosystem that benefit the human population in numerous ways.

### **A More Proactive Approach**

Preventing animals from becoming accustomed to people is the first step in reducing human/wildlife interactions. Wildlife will continue to come to people's homes as long as there is food, water, or shelter there for them. Eliminating attractants will encourage wildlife to forage in areas outside of neighborhoods and eventually will lead to their understanding that there are no benefits to being in close proximity to people.

The opposite is also true as well, if nothing is changed and the benefits of being around humans remain unchecked, then wildlife behavior will remain the same and they will continue to seek out yards and homes that appeal to them.

It will take all of Breckenridge's residents working together to accomplish this. Some people love wildlife. Others don't believe that a wild animal has any reason to belong in a city setting. Regardless of where you stand on this issue, the fact is clear that reducing human/wildlife interactions is in the best interest of people, pets, and wild animals.

If you love wildlife, the basic point of this message is: let the wildlife be wild. They have survived without our assistance for many generations. Feeding them will lead to them associating people with food. This can create a dangerous situation for people and pets who live in the area. Enjoy their beauty from afar and appreciate their ability to be independent and self-sufficient. Treating them as anything less will lead to tragic consequences for wild animals.

If you are not a big fan of wildlife, the basic point of this message is: let the wildlife be wild. Eliminate any possible reason that may attract them to your home or yard. Make certain your chimney is capped and keep landscaping well-groomed. Feed your pets indoors or at least pick up any remaining food after they eat. Keep all trash containers tightly sealed. Trim overhanging branches that provide easy access to your roof for squirrels and other wildlife. If you have a pet door, close it securely at night. Cover crawlspace and attic openings with heavy gauge, rustproof wire mesh (not chicken wire). Wild animals want less to do with you than you do with them. If you do not attract them, they will stay away from you and will be happy to let you live your life without their interference.

Above all else, be a responsible pet owner. Do not allow any animal, even cats, to run loose within the city. Your fenced-in yard or at the end of your six foot leash is the safest place for all pets and will ensure that they do not end up interacting with wildlife. Make sure all pets are vaccinated against rabies and licensed with the city each year. Protecting your pets from diseases that wildlife can carry will also protect your family from being exposed through your pet. Being a responsible pet owner helps ensure that you and your pet are good neighbors to the people, pets, and wildlife with which we share our neighborhoods with.

Wildlife are here to stay. No amount of money or manpower can change this fact. With a little personal responsibility, all of Breckenridge's residents can share the City and minimize inconveniences that wild animals may present while still giving citizens the opportunity to appreciate the beauty and spirit that gives wildlife the resiliency to adapt to whatever environment we create for them.

Animal Control Officer  
Nicole Dooley #139