



MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

To / Destinataire Mayor and Members of Council File/N° de fichier: _____

From / Expéditeur Roger Chapman
Director
By-law and Regulatory Services _____

Subject / Objet Large Wild Mammal Response Date: May 5, 2023 _____

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide further information with respect to the City's Large Wild Mammal Response protocol, following the incident that occurred on April 24, 2023, involving a bear in western Ottawa. Several questions have been posed since that time and responses to those are provided below.

1. What happened in the lead-up to the shooting that led the officer to decide the bear could no longer be monitored but had to be dispatched?

By-law and Regulatory Services (BLRS) had been working with its partners, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), the National Capital Commission (NCC) and the Ottawa Police Service (OPS), to conduct live trapping operations with the goal of relocating the bear to more remote habitat. This bear had been sighted in the Bells Corners and Bridlewood areas in recent days. One of the live traps was in the wooded area close to the location where the bear was dispatched.

BLRS, the NCC and MNRF were not involved in the decision to put down the animal, given that OPS, as first responder, is best suited to determine whether the bear was posing an imminent threat requiring such action in the circumstances that existed at that time.

2. How will By-law and Regulatory Services communicate in an ongoing way with other wildlife response agencies and the Ottawa Police Service about service calls dealing with animals so that the appropriate collaborative plans can be put in place?

A protocol currently exists for Large Wild Mammal Response and each agency has a role to play and follows the procedures set out in the protocol. That includes:

- By-law and Regulatory Services to triage calls as outlined below

- Ottawa Police Service, often the first responder to such calls, to gather information and assess public safety, and to undertake crowd and traffic control during interventions
- National Capital Commission to provide field response for interventions or other assistance upon request from BLRS
- Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to provide support in the field or as otherwise requested and feasible given distance of its staff from Ottawa.

When a large wild mammal (bear, deer, moose) is reported in an urban area within City limits, BLRS may receive a call either from 3-1-1 or one of its partner agencies, including OPS or the MNRF.

BLRS has an experienced staff member available to receive and triage calls 24-hours a day, although most calls come in during daylight hours when residents are more likely to see large wild animals.

Once a call has been received, the following steps are taken:

- BLRS will determine the location of the animal (urban vs. suburban vs. rural) and its condition.
- BLRS will follow protocols based on the species and proximity to wildlife corridors.
- If the animal is severely injured and cannot be rehabilitated, it will be humanely euthanized by the appropriate agency.
- If the animal is not injured and is in a lower-risk area, its movements will be monitored. Intervention is most often not necessary in these cases. However, depending on the animal's behaviour or if it moves to a more high-risk, high population-density area, BLRS may contact the NCC or the MNRF to live trap or chemically immobilize the animal and move it to a more remote location with suitable habitat.

This approach is based on the guiding principles of the Wildlife Strategy with respect to human wildlife conflicts. BLRS' priority is the safety of the public but will always assess situations to consider the least invasive option, which is preferred, with euthanasia being the last resort.

If OPS is first on-scene, they will contact BLRS for advice and any other assistance deemed necessary once the circumstances are triaged. However, it is important to note again that OPS, as first responder, is best suited to determine whether there is an imminent danger to the public based on the species and specific circumstances at that time.

Since 2002, when the protocol was first established, there have been only two other occasions when a large wild mammal was dispatched in circumstances similar to the April 24th bear occurrence. On countless other occasions, animals have been safely and successfully relocated—either by live trapping, chemical immobilization, or “herding” to a suitable area—with full partner agency collaboration, including OPS, in accordance with the protocol.

3. When the frequency of service calls indicate that public safety may be at risk, how will By-law and Regulatory Services review trap and relocate plans to be sped up or modified as necessary?

BLRS and its partners were continuously responding to calls for service and reevaluating and modifying plans accordingly, to safely live capture and relocate the bear. Further interventions were being considered but were cancelled once notice was received that the bear had been put down.

As noted, it is extremely rare that calls about large wild mammals result in having to put down the animal—that is the absolute last resort. In fact, in most instances, no intervention is required at all.

4. How will By-law and Regulatory Services address the complexity of working collaboratively with other wildlife response agencies in nighttime hours. How can By-law and Regulatory Services support Ottawa Police Service officers so that they will be adequately trained and supported by experts in how to manage large mammal wildlife situations.

By-law Enforcement Officers are currently not equipped or trained to respond to large wild animals posing an imminent risk to residents, which would be a significant undertaking requiring a cost-benefit analysis, among other things. This will however be considered as part of the review of the City's Wildlife Strategy. Residents who have concerns or comments regarding this incident are encouraged to submit them, along with their views on the strategy itself, on [Engage Ottawa](#)

As noted, appropriate responses to reports of large wild mammals in the city vary widely depending on the species, location and other factors. Nighttime use of chemical immobilization is unsafe and therefore, not practiced. The need for nighttime interventions is in fact extremely rare and not recommended. The roles of the various agencies and their officers described above are clear and the protocol functions accordingly.

It cannot be stressed enough that prevention plays a very significant role in dealing with human-wildlife interactions. Public education and awareness about removing attractants from back yards (e.g. bird feeders), particularly where residential use directly abuts natural areas such as woodlands and wetlands, and the "Do's and Don'ts" when encountering a wild animal is an integral part of any wildlife strategy.

5. How will large wild mammals be appropriately transported, with cultural consideration, after death?

Procedures and agreements are already in place to transport large wild animals, with cultural consideration, after death. Again, species, timing and circumstances of the animal's death are also considerations.

I trust that this information will be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Roger Chapman
Director
By-law and Regulatory Services

c.c. Wendy Stephanson, Interim City Manager
Kim Ayotte, General Manager, Emergency and Protective Services
Senior Leadership Team
Andrea Lanthier-Seymour, Director, Public Information and Media Relations
Caitlin Salter-MacDonald, Manager, Council and Committee Services