



## IDENTIFICATION

Department	Position Title	
Environment and Climate Change	Wildlife Veterinarian	
Position Number	Community	Division/Region
23-6976	Yellowknife	Wildlife and Forest Management/ HQ

## **PURPOSE OF THE POSITION**

The Wildlife Veterinarian is the senior authority and expert on wildlife health within the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and is responsible for providing overall direction and expert advice on wildlife health research, monitoring and management programs in the Northwest Territories (NWT) to support the overall health, management, conservation and human use of wildlife within the Northwest Territories. As the lead wildlife health authority for the GNWT, the position is also responsible for providing advice on wildlife health issues to support the traditional economy, wildlife related activities and businesses, wildlife harvesting, food security, and the interjurisdictional movement of wildlife and wildlife parts.

The Wildlife Veterinarian serves as the Chief Veterinary Officer for the Northwest Territories.

## **SCOPE**

Located in Yellowknife and reporting to the Director, Wildlife Management (Director), the Wildlife Veterinarian is responsible for the development and implementation of the NWT Wildlife Health Strategy, which is intended to protect and promote wildlife health as an integral part of the Department of Environment and Climate Change (ECC)'s wildlife management and conservation efforts. The Wildlife Veterinarian leads the Government of Northwest Territories (GNWT) Wildlife Health Program, and is responsible for the development, delivery and scientific credibility of integrated wildlife health surveillance, protection and management initiatives. The position develops and implements wildlife health programs and policies that support the management and sustainable use of wildlife populations, including wild food safety, the traditional economy, tourism, outfitting, northern agriculture, and public health. These programs help support the credibility of the Department and its ability to provide leadership in wildlife co-management, conservation, and safe and sustainable use by northern residents.



As the Department's senior expert and authority on wildlife health, the Wildlife Veterinarian plays both a high level strategic planning role on wildlife health issues, as well as a field implementation role in ensuring wildlife health programs are delivered effectively. The incumbent leads the development and implementation of a long-term wildlife health research and monitoring agenda, working collaboratively with other ECC staff, other departments and agencies, Indigenous Governments and organizations, wildlife management boards, academics, other researchers, and local experts such as hunters and trappers. The position is a key advisor on wildlife health for senior management, other divisions, regions and departments, and public health officials to provide timely and relevant information to support management decisions.

The Wildlife Health Program deals with a number of complex, difficult and contentious issues that can be local, regional or national in scope. The Wildlife Veterinarian is responsible for monitoring for threats to the health of wildlife and providing timely advice or taking action to prevent or mitigate potentially significant impacts of diseases on wildlife populations, as well as on domestic animal and public health. The incumbent requires highly specialized knowledge and skills, and an ability to use diverse problem-solving skills and innovative approaches to understand and respond to complex and frequently novel issues. Given the nature, urgency and potential impact of some wildlife disease situations, the position requires a high degree of autonomy and freedom to act. The Wildlife Veterinarian has a responsibility to manage confidential and personal information, provide and verify health certifications required by other agencies or governments, and meet formal disease reporting requirements required by territorial and federal legislation and policy.

The Wildlife Veterinarian works collaboratively with other departmental staff, territorial/provincial/federal wildlife and animal health agencies, Health and Social Services, other public health agencies, non-governmental wildlife health organizations, universities, wildlife co-management boards, Indigenous governments and organizations, and communities to identify and address key wildlife health issues of importance to the GNWT. The incumbent provides direction and guidance on collaborative wildlife health projects that can involve from 1 to 50 individuals from ECC and other organizations and must be able to lead and motivate a diverse group of individuals and organizations. Manages a budget of up to or greater than

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 1. Provides overall direction, leadership and scientific expertise on wildlife health research, monitoring and management program.**
  - Directs and oversees the GNWT Wildlife Health Program, and ensures it addresses key GNWT priorities using best available information and approaches.
  - Leads development and implementation of an NWT Wildlife Health Strategy.
  - Serves as the GNWT and ECC authority on wildlife health, and provides technical expertise, advice and guidance to other GNWT staff and programs.



- Serves as the Chief Veterinary Officer for the Northwest Territories and represents the NWT on the Canadian Council of Chief Veterinary Officers.
- Provides overall direction on GNWT wildlife health research, monitoring and management programs to support the overall health, management, conservation and human use of wildlife species.
- Identifies key wildlife health research, monitoring and management gaps and recommends ways to address them to meet GNWT and ECC mandates, priorities, goals and objectives.
- Chairs and manages the NWT Wildlife Care Committee and oversees animal care and welfare standards during wildlife research and management activities.
- Participates in or contributes to species and issue specific technical groups to provide input on NWT wildlife health issues.
- Acts as a technical expert on wildlife health issues for media inquiries.

**2. Develops, implements and oversees an NWT-wide wildlife health surveillance system designed to anticipate, detect, tract, and assess the risks posed by disease, parasites and other health stressors.**

- Identifies current and emerging wildlife health issues of concern for wildlife management, conservation, harvesting and public health.
- Designs, conducts and supports targeted wildlife health surveillance programs to identify and track key pathogens, parasites and diseases.
- Oversees, conducts and facilitates scientifically credible wildlife health research projects to better understand the ecology, epidemiology, effects and significance of key wildlife diseases.
- Monitors and tracks wildlife, domestic animal and public health surveillance done by other organizations both within the NWT and in other jurisdictions.
- Coordinates, conducts and supports research and monitoring of contaminants in harvested terrestrial wildlife species to support country food safety and security.
- Provides advice and direction on most appropriate disease monitoring and testing approaches and techniques for wildlife disease surveillance in NWT.
- Investigates, designs and implements innovative approaches and techniques to achieve wildlife disease research, monitoring and management objectives.
- Manages NWT wildlife health data and information and works closely with other relevant GNWT and external databases.
- Directs and oversees the analysis and interpretation of wildlife health information using the most appropriate statistical and epidemiological approaches.
- Conducts qualitative or quantitative wildlife health risk assessments.
- Provides information and expert advice in a timely fashion to inform decision making by individuals, wildlife managers, public health agencies and others.
- Writes and communicates results in progress reports, plain language summaries, peer-reviewed journal publications, and other appropriate formats.



**3. Develops, implements and oversees wildlife disease prevention, response and management strategies, programs and actions.**

- Ensures wildlife health is adequately and effectively addressed in departmental wildlife research and management programs, and incorporated into NWT Wildlife assessments, management plans and strategies.
- Ensures NWT wildlife health management activities are consistent with regional, national and international approaches, standards and best practices.
- Leads, coordinates and/or provides expert advice and direction for investigation of wildlife disease cases and outbreaks.
- Assesses potential consequences and severity of wildlife disease events and provide timely and expert guidance and advice on how to mitigate impacts.
- Develops standardized sampling protocols for disease investigations.
- Provides technical expertise and veterinary support for wildlife forensic and wildlife/human conflict investigations.
- Develops, implements and oversees wildlife disease specific prevention, containment and response plans.
- Leads implementation of wildlife rabies prevention, monitoring and management activities, working closely with the Department of Health and Social Services,
- Maintains and updates the GNWT Anthrax Emergency Response Plan and provides direction for implementing disease control measures during outbreaks.
- Provides expert advice, leadership and assistance in developing and implementing disease control measures to prevent the spread of tuberculosis and brucellosis to non-infected wood bison populations.
- Develops "best practices" (Standard Operating Procedures) for the capture and handling of wildlife in research and management activities to ensure the safe, humane and respectful handling of animals.
- Provides expert advice and recommendations on the development of wildlife and animal health regulations under the NWT Wildlife Act
- Ensures GNWT wildlife programs and activities are consistent with territorial, provincial, national and international animal health policy and legislation.
- Identifies other Territorial legislation, regulations and policies which could have an impact on wildlife health and recommends approaches to minimize impacts.
- Provides health testing information and formal health certifications required to support export of harvested wildlife and wildlife parts from the NWT.
- Leads the identification, implementation and assessment of disease testing and management requirements included in individual ECC issued wildlife permits.
- Provides timely information, advice to the NWT Chief Public Health Officer, Chief Environmental Health Officer and other public health officials in situations where wildlife health issues may be important for human health.

**4. Building capacity and enhancing partnerships.**



- Works collaboratively with regional and headquarters staff, other territorial/provincial/federal agencies, industry, wildlife co-management boards, Indigenous governments and organizations, non-governmental organizations, industry, and communities to deliver wildlife health programs and initiatives.
- Builds, motivates, and provides direction to positive and effective teams.
- Builds partnerships and collaborations with universities and research organizations to promote, initiate and collaborate on wildlife health research and monitoring projects that address NWT needs and priorities.
- Works closely with communities, hunters and trappers, and members of the public to identify and address wildlife health concerns and develop community-based monitoring programs.
- Serves as primary contact with the NWT Chief Public Health Officer, Chief Environmental Health Officer and other public health officials where wildlife health issues affect human health and to discuss issues of mutual concern.
- Represents NWT on relevant working groups, committees and boards to provide NWT perspective on national, regional and territorial wildlife health issues.
- Serves as the primary technical contact with the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative, federal/provincial/territorial wildlife and animal health committees and forums, and wildlife health specialists from other agencies in Canada, the United States and internationally
- Meets or corresponds with representatives of industry, government agencies, academics, consulting firms and with private individuals to discuss wildlife health related issues and proposed research and monitoring studies.
- Identifies, develops, and delivers training, workshops and information sessions on common wildlife diseases and parasites, wildlife health issues, outbreak investigations, necropsy and sampling techniques, wildlife immobilization and other topics to ECC wildlife staff, technical staff from other departments and agencies, co-management boards, industry, and hunters and trappers.
- Presents Departmental wildlife health research, monitoring and management program results at local, regional, territorial, national, and international meetings, workshops, consultations, and public hearings.

##### **5. Administers activities associated with operation of the Wildlife Health Program.**

- Manages and tracks the wildlife health budget and identifies and applies for outside funding to support wildlife health projects.
- Manages contracts, contribution agreements and MOUs.
- Controls annual expenditures in amounts ranging up to or greater than \$250,000.
- Develops and administers formal agreements with outside agencies, universities and organizations to guide collaborative wildlife health research and management programs.



- Responsible for the acquisition, maintenance and repair of technical equipment and supplies required to deliver all aspects of the Wildlife Health Program.
- Responsible for the legal acquisition, storage, record keeping, use and disposal of wildlife immobilization and other veterinary drugs in accordance with all NWT and federal legislation.
- Provides field assistance in the safe capture and immobilization of wildlife.
- Interviews and selects candidates for employment and/or participation in Wildlife Health Program initiatives such as casual employees, contract personnel, volunteers, students and externships. Supervises and assigns work priorities to these subordinates and designates their responsibilities.
- Provides field support, direction and supervision to collaborating researchers from other agencies, universities, non-governmental organizations.
- Responds to public inquiries on wildlife health related issues.

## **WORKING CONDITIONS**

### **Physical Demands**

Significant to extreme physical demands including:

- Field work (year-round) involving physical activities including manipulating live and dead wild animals (some species over 1000 kilograms), camp preparation and maintenance, and equipment repairs.
- Carrying and loading gear, mobile and fuel equipment on airplane, ATV or truck.
- Hiking long distances on rough terrain carrying field equipment.

### **Environmental Conditions**

Significant to extreme environmental conditions including:

- Exposure to and risk of infection with serious or potentially fatal zoonotic diseases (i.e., anthrax, brucellosis, rabies, and tuberculosis,) when handling wildlife, conducting field necropsies, and processing laboratory samples.
- Exposure to potent and potentially lethal wildlife immobilization drugs, and potent drugs and/or firearms while euthanizing animals.
- Exposure to a variety of toxic and dangerous chemicals during laboratory analyses and field disease investigations/response.
- Travel to remote field sites using small aircraft, snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, boats or vehicles, and low-level flying for wildlife research and capture.
- Exposure to repeated, long-term high decibel noise from firearms, aircraft, snowmobiles, ATVs, and working around heavy equipment.
- Exposure to extreme temperature while doing active outdoor field work.

### **Sensory Demands**



There are significant to extreme sensory demands as follows:

- Capturing and handling wildlife requires intense attention to detail and safety, and often requires split-second decision-making skills for the safety of the personnel, the animals, and people in the area.
- Use of potentially dangerous field equipment and chemicals requires rapid and competent judgment under strenuous conditions to ensure safety of personnel.
- Field response to wildlife mortalities and outbreaks that may involve serious diseases that can affect wildlife, domestic animal and human health. Requires rapid and timely responses, long hours of focused effort under difficult field conditions, threats on the landscape (e.g., bears and wolves), and immediate field-based decisions that can have significant negative consequences.

### **Mental Demands**

There are significant to extreme mental demands as follows:

- The incumbent is often away from home for extended periods of time while doing fieldwork (often in isolated locations), community visits and business trips. Expectation to work irregular and long hours, and work weekends or holidays when field and operational activities require.
- Dealing with sensitive, difficult and contentious issues, and dealing with individuals or organizations that are upset, unhappy or angry.
- Dealing with zoonotic diseases and dangerous drugs during fieldwork requires extreme caution, diligence and constant attention to detail. Consequences of incorrect decisions can have significant consequences to staff and the public, resulting in pressure and stress to make rapid, correct decisions.
- Dealing with investigations of individual wildlife mortalities or major disease outbreaks. Requires a dedicated and intense focus to ensure rapid and diagnosis, assessment and implementation of disease management actions to minimize consequences to wildlife populations and people.

### **KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES**

- Highly specialized knowledge in the concepts and principles of wildlife health, disease ecology and epidemiology, health surveillance system design and implementation, health risk assessment, outbreak investigations, disease prevention and management approaches, and current wildlife health issues.
- Highly specialized knowledge and expertise in disease and outbreak investigations, field sampling, necropsy techniques, veterinary pathology, and clinical and laboratory diagnostics.
- Highly specialized knowledge and expertise in wildlife capture and immobilization, including anatomy and physiology, pharmacology, anesthesia, monitoring, emergency medical and surgical procedures, humane animal handling procedures, and euthanasia.



- Demonstrated knowledge of conservation biology, conservation genetics, wildlife population dynamics, and wildlife management issues, with an emphasis on northern species and ecosystems.
- Experience in research and monitoring, data analysis and interpretation.
- Excellent writing and communication skills, with the ability to convey highly technical information and concepts to scientific, technical and public audiences.
- Superior critical thinking, attention to detail, multi-tasking, and organizational skills.
- Ability to work independently and demonstrate initiative in co-operative environment both within the department and external to the department.
- Ability to exercise sound judgment and diplomacy, and deal with conflict on controversial wildlife health and management issues.
- Eligible for veterinary licensure in the Northwest Territories.
- Ability to commit to actively upholding and consistently practicing personal diversity, inclusion and cultural awareness, as well as safety and sensitivity approaches in the workplace.

**Typically, the above qualifications would be attained by:**

Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) and minimum of three (3) years of related experience in a relevant field of wildlife health research and management.

Equivalent combinations of education and experience will be considered.

**ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

**Position Security** (check one)

No criminal records check required  
 Position of Trust – criminal records check required  
 Highly sensitive position – requires verification of identity and a criminal records check

**French language** (check one if applicable)

French required (must identify required level below)  
Level required for this Designated Position is:  
**ORAL EXPRESSION AND COMPREHENSION**  
Basic (B)  Intermediate (I)  Advanced (A)   
**READING COMPREHENSION:**  
Basic (B)  Intermediate (I)  Advanced (A)   
**WRITING SKILLS:**  
Basic (B)  Intermediate (I)  Advanced (A)   
 French preferred



**Indigenous language:** Select language

- Required
- Preferred