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## **Wildlife disease passive surveillance: Are wildlife rehabilitation centres a tool? A case study.**

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Wildlife rehabilitation centre records are an often unexploited source of crucial information on species morbidity and mortality. Analysis of these records can be used to assess and improve rehabilitation techniques. Moreover, it has been suggested that wildlife admitted to wildlife rehabilitation centres may act as sentinels of ecosystem health (Aguirre and Else 2001, Burton and Doblar 2004). In this study, records of birds, reptiles and amphibians admitted to Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre Inc. (KWRC) between 1997 and 2005 have been analysed, in order to determine the most common causes of morbidity and mortality, and to compare the results with those obtained from other studies. The data collected by KWRC, which is located near Perth (Western Australia), provides valuable information about the free-ranging populations of wild animals in the Perth metropolitan area. Risk factors for these populations are described and compared with data from other wildlife rehabilitation centres reported in the literature. A significant proportion of the admissions are caused by direct or indirect human interaction, including attacks by introduced animals. Additionally, the data highlights interesting trends that are species-specific. Enhanced standardization of record keeping and health screening with the help of ancillary diagnostic tests or regular post-mortem examination may enormously improve the quality of wildlife rehabilitation databases and the information obtained may be easily integrated in wildlife disease assessment programs. The knowledge gained from database analysis is not only extremely useful for the specific wildlife rehabilitation centre, but it can also be evaluated in a broader context. The possibility of increased participation of wildlife rehabilitation institutions in national wildlife disease surveillance programs is contemplated and discussed. In conclusion, this study provided insight into the possible effects of certain risks factors on wildlife populations and species distribution, and at the same time raised important questions on rehabilitation management practices.