

## Ethi-Reasoning

### From Wild About Elk: A Project WILD Educator Guide

Suggested Grade: 5-12

In this activity you will examine your own values and beliefs about wildlife, specifically elk. You will read and then discuss with your family the dilemma.

There are many laws about treatment of wildlife including picking up roadkill or taking an injured animal home to care for it. Contact Colorado Parks and Wildlife if you ever have a question.

1. You will be able to read each dilemma.
2. Discuss the dilemma.
3. You can draw cards and have each family member come up with an answer for that specific dilemma.
4. Write your own dilemma.

Dilemma 1: You own a piece of property where elk spend most of their winter. It is an ideal spot to subdivide and build new homes. You could even put in a golf course and park.

Should you:

1. Build the subdivision and not worry about the elk, they will go somewhere else.
2. Sell the land to someone who will not subdivide it.
3. Build the subdivision but plant plants that the elk will eat so they won't eat the residents landscaping.
4. Scale down the size of the development and make less profit but this will allow people and elk to coexist.

Dilemma 2: You are snowmobiling in elk winter range and spot a huge 6-point bull elk. You have a camera with only a short-range lens. Should you:

1. Take the picture from where you are so you don't disturb the elk even though it will just be a small blob.
2. Ride as close as you can and take a picture as you go by.
3. Stop the snowmobile and walk up as close as you can.

Dilemma 3: You are walking in the woods and find an elk calf with no sign of its mother being around. Should you:

1. Leave it where it is
2. Take it to a sheltered area
3. Take it home

Dilemma 2 Background:

Time your outing for dawn and dusk when wildlife are most active. • Find a likely spot for animal activity; sit quietly and wait for wildlife to emerge. • Keep your distance, both for your safety and theirs, when watching deer and elk. Even animals that are accustomed to human presence can easily become stressed. If an animal changes its behavior, stops eating or seems nervous at your presence, it's time to move away. • Avoid sudden movement or loud noises. Minimizing your disturbance will lead to more successful viewing. • During the rut in the fall, deer and elk can become dangerously aggressive. Bucks and bulls may attack without provocation, so give them plenty of space. • Never approach a calf or a fawn even if they appear to be alone. The mother is usually nearby and will defend her young. • For a close-up view, use binoculars or spotting scopes, and use a telephoto lens on your camera. • In Colorado, feeding deer and elk is against the law. Feeding human foods to wildlife can be harmful to them, cause them to alter their natural behavior and become tolerant of humans. It can also be dangerous for people. • Safely pull off the road and use your car as a viewing blind. • Leave pets at home. Dogs and deer/elk don't mix.

### Dilemma 3 Background

What to do if you find young wildlife?

You may see young animals in spring or summer. Even if these animals seem alone or weak, in nearly all cases, the best course of action is to leave the young animal alone. If you care, leave them there!

Newborn or just-hatched wildlife, venturing into the world on shaky legs or fragile wings, are sometimes discovered by people. Every year, the lives of many young wild creatures (fawns in particular) are upset by people who want to help. These people take baby wildlife from the wild in a mistaken attempt to save them. In fact, these well-meaning people are actually harming the young animals' chances of becoming normal adults. Remember, young wildlife belongs in the wild.

For young wildlife, the perils of survival are a natural part of ecology. Some will not survive. However, young animals that learn well from one or both parents, and are the most fit, usually live the longest. Early unsteady steps and flights are part of normal development, helping young animals learn to take care of themselves.

Some types of baby animals develop quickly; others need more parental care before they can fend for themselves. It is at this time that most of the problems arise. Some people assume that young wildlife they have found has been abandoned by the parents. They believe that the young animals are helpless and need to be saved. In nearly all cases, this is a mistake: the young animals are neither abandoned nor orphaned.

When people intervene.

People with good intentions sometimes try to rescue or care for young wildlife. In fact, the opposite is true. Human involvement can cause a lot of problems for these young creatures. Animals brought into human care end up missing out on learning experiences needed to survive in the wild. Even worse, the animal may die at the hands of someone who doesn't fully know how to care for the animal.

Animals released into the wild are at a disadvantage, as they lack the skills needed to find natural food and cover. Young wildlife cared for by humans often end up attached to people, with little fear. This can lead to animals:

- Wandering into populated areas
- Attacked by domestic animals

- Hit by cars
- Getting into stored food, trashcans, or residences
- Injuring people

If you find young wildlife.

If you want to avoid the problems related to people caring for wildlife, leave them alone! It may be very tempting to help these animals, but most of the time it isn't necessary. The adults are often nearby for protection, and visit their young from time to time.