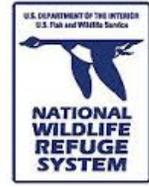


Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Florida Keys National
Wildlife Refuge Complex
179 Key Deer Blvd
Big Pine Key, FL 33043

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 22, 2016

Contact: usfwsscrewworminfo@gmail.com
National Key Deer Refuge
United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Radio-Collaring of Key Deer to Begin Soon

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and our partners will begin putting radio collars and tags on Key deer beginning around the new year, and will continue through the month until the goal is met. The primary objective of this effort is to monitor females during the fawning season for screwworm infestation, and if needed, to facilitate the administration of preventative treatments and/or moving them to holding pens. The tags will also provide data to improve our ability to estimate the population, and identify changes in population numbers.

We want the public to know first and foremost if they see staff and partners trapping Key deer it is not because they are trying to move them into the fenced enclosure (“the Ark”) that was designed earlier in this incident. The purpose of this study is to monitor female Key deer as we enter the fawning season to detect any early signs of screwworm. While the interagency joint unified command has made significant strides toward eliminating fertile screwworms from the environment, complete eradication has not yet been declared and the lower Keys are not officially free of screwworm. Should fertile screwworms still be present, Key deer will be at a higher risk of infestation during fawning. If screwworm is detected the FWS is ready to respond swiftly and diligently to prevent additional infestation to the Key deer.

The goal will be to capture and collar 30 female deer for this particular study. The methods that are used to trap and collar the deer include the use of drop nets, portable drive nets, and hand captures. These methods are well-established for Key deer and have resulted in no injuries or deaths with >300 captures over the years. Once a deer is captured the team will place a flexible vinyl collar on them specially made for Key deer with a radio tag and number in order to track them. Even with good trapping methods and an experienced team, handling Key deer always comes with some risk to both the deer and the trappers. Therefore, we ask the public's cooperation to avoid areas where the trapping effort is occurring to keep both people and deer safe. Monitoring of the deer in this study will continue through the fawning season and will be evaluated at that time for future monitoring needs.

To report dead or injured deer call the Key Deer Hotline at 888-404-3922 ext. 7. For up-to-date information on Key deer recovery efforts check out the refuge website: www.fws.gov/refuge/National_Key_Deer_Refuge/ or like us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/floridakeysrefuges

For more information, please contact usfwsscrewworminfo@gmail.com
National Key Deer Refuge, United States Fish and Wildlife Service

#

The National Wildlife Refuge System protects wildlife and wildlife habitat on more than 150 million acres of land and water from the Caribbean to the Pacific, Maine to Alaska. Refuges also improve human health, provide outdoor recreation, and support local economies. Visit our home page at <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/>.