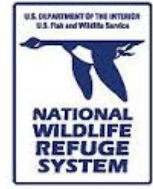


Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Florida Keys National
Wildlife Refuge Complex
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News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Last Successful New World Screwworm Incident Milestone for Key Deer

The last U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) field operation related to monitoring Key deer through the New World Screwworm incident will come to an end in a few more days as specially trained Key deer researchers from Texas A&M University will be working with Service Biologists from August 1-7 to remove all remaining radio collars on female Key deer. These radio collars were put on the deer in January to monitor female Key deer during the fawning season for possible New World Screwworm infestation. They also provided data to improve the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's ability to estimate the population and identify changes in population numbers during the incident. The last confirmed case of New World Screwworm was on January 7, 2017.

"Out of an abundance of caution, we wanted to keep the radio collars on until the pregnant collared does had delivered fawns and we could confirm there was no infestation in does or fawns," explained Refuge Manager Dan Clark. "This week is a culminating milestone for this incident that highlights the success of everyone's efforts. Key deer populations are doing well after the incident. This positive outcome is a direct result of the multi-agency effort as well as additional partners and community members coming together to do what needed to be done for Key deer. We are grateful for this support and look forward to continuing to work with everyone in the future for the benefit of Key deer populations."

The methods used to capture and remove collars from the deer will be similar to those used when the collars were initially put on them. Portable drive nets and hand captures will be used. These methods are well-established for Key deer and have resulted in no injuries or deaths with over 300 captures over the years. Even with good trapping methods and an experienced team, handling Key deer always comes with some risk to both the deer and people handling them. Therefore, we ask the public's cooperation to avoid areas where the trapping effort is occurring to keep both people and deer safe.

National Key Deer Refuge will return to its regular management of Key deer, which includes continued monitoring of Key deer populations through surveys as well as managing habitat for this and other endangered species. National Key Deer Refuge is home to more than 21 species of plants and animals that are threatened or endangered. These include the American crocodile, Lower Keys marsh rabbit, Eastern indigo snake, silver rice rat, Bartram's hairstreak butterfly, Key tree cactus and the Florida Semaphore cactus. Refuge habitat management actions to support these species include removal of invasive exotic plants and animals, prescribed fire, monitoring, and native plant community restoration.

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Look for refuge updates on our website and Facebook page: www.fws.gov/refuge/National_Key_Deer_Refuge/ and www.facebook.com/floridakeysrefuges.

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/>.