

# Facilities Handbook

## Reference Guide for Falconry Facilities in Minnesota



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## 1. Raptor Care Expectations

- All permitted Minnesota falconers are required to have and maintain facilities for the duration of their permit.
- All raptors possessed by permittees must be housed and cared for according to federal and state regulations in safe, humane, and healthy conditions to assure their well-being at all times.
- Raptor facilities, both permanent and temporary, must protect the raptors from the environment, predators, and domestic animals at all times.

## 2. Facilities and Equipment Standards

The facilities and equipment outlined below, along with permit records and raptors, may be inspected without advance notice. Inspections are conducted by state officials in the presence of the permittee during business hours on any day of the week to ensure compliance with regulations and verify the health and welfare of the raptors in the permittee's possession. Prior to construction of facilities, an apprentice should consult with their sponsor as described in the New Falconer Handbook.

Because of the variable weather in Minnesota, permittees are required to have both a mews and weathering area. The intent of this requirement is to protect the birds from extreme weather conditions (high temperatures, extreme cold temperatures, high winds, and storms).

### A. Minimum requirements of all structures that house raptors

All structures that house raptors, whether permanent or temporary, must meet the following minimum requirements:

1. All structures must provide a healthy environment for raptors while inside.
2. All structures must protect the raptors from predators and domestic animals.
  - Raptor facilities must be separate from domestic animals and livestock facilities.



Raptor facilities must be separate from livestock facilities.

3. All structures must minimize undue disturbance to the raptors which could result in injury (heavy vehicle or pedestrian traffic, etc.).
  - It is recommended that the visibility of the bird to the public be minimized to reduce stress to the birds, and reduce the chance that curious citizens may be bit or scratched by the raptor or will report “an illegally trapped raptor”.



Exposure of the raptor to areas of high traffic should be minimized.

4. All structures must allow easy access for care and maintenance.
5. All structures must have at least one **secure** door, which can be easily closed (alone or in combination with the weathering area when attached).
  - Locks are not required, but highly recommended especially in urban areas or when children are present.
  - Two-door systems or mesh/plastic flaps over doors are not required, but recommended to reduce the chance of the raptor escaping.



Secure door—locks are not required, but highly recommended especially in urban areas or when children are present.



Two-door system to prevent escape are also recommended, but not required.



The secure door may be in combination with the weathering area.

6. All structures must have at least one opening or window to allow sunlight which is visible to **each** raptor.
- Northern facing windows should be avoided.



Each raptor must have access to sunlight

7. All structures must have suitable perches for **each** raptor.
- There should be at least one perch of an acceptable design for each raptor. Multiple perch types help prevent bumble foot.



Multiple perch types help prevent bumble foot  
(raptors would not be tethered in this situation)



A perch must be provided for **each** raptor

- Raptors may be tethered (tied to their perch) or untethered (flying free) depending on perch type and structure conditions.
- Untethered raptors may be housed together if they are compatible with each other.



**For raptors that are tethered:** Tethered perches must be designed so the bird cannot get hung up or become tangled

- Tethered perches should be low to the ground or on shelves so that if the bird hops to the ground the bird does not get hung up
- Tethered perches should include some mechanism to ensure that the bird cannot go under or around the perch or other objects and become tangled.



Close-up of a tethered raptor on a shelf perch



Tether system between mews and weathering area



Shelf perches may be side by side for multiple birds

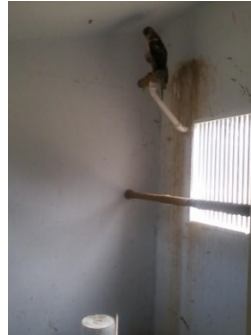
8. All structures must have an area large enough to allow **each** raptor to fly if it is untethered or, if tethered, to fully extend its wings and bate (flap wings while tethered) without damaging its feathers or contacting other raptors
  - Because most falconers start with red-tailed hawks, new falconers should consider building their mews about 12'x8'x7' (LWH) when not tethering their bird and 8'x8'x7' (LWH) when tethering their bird (size recommendation based on "Raptors in Captivity: Guidelines for Care and Management" by Lori Arent).
  - **Remember:** If you plan to have more than one bird as a general or master falconer, you may want to design your mews and weathering area to accommodate additional birds. **Each** bird must be housed and maintained according to federal and state standards. If your structure is designed to accommodate only one bird, you may have to add on to the structure or alter it before obtaining additional birds.
  - **Caution:** Some falconers have found that if the run (open length) becomes too long (particularly when the bird can freely move between the mew and weathering area), the raptor may build up too much speed when flying and crash into the wall at the end of the run. Building the facilities in an L formation often deters such behavior.

**For raptors that are not tethered:** If the raptors are not tethered, the risk of raptor injury due to collision with interior or perimeter construction materials and equipment, such as support poles, windows, netting, perches, or lights must be minimized.

- Remember to look up—raptors will want to perch on the highest available structure.
- Heavy-duty netting or other such materials may be used to cover the walls or roof of the enclosure, but it is not preferred as the bird may get caught up in the netting.



Ensure the structure is large enough for the raptor to be housed there



Raptors will want to perch on the highest available structure

9. All structures allow for access to a pan of clean water for **each** raptor unless weather conditions, the perch type used, or some other factor makes access to a water pan unsafe for the raptor.
  - The bath pan should be no deeper than 2-6”, but large enough for the raptor to bathe in.



Bath container

**The book “*Raptors in Captivity: Guidelines for Care and Management*” by Lori Arent is an excellent reference. The book includes specific information by species regarding: recommended cage size, recommended perch types and sizes, temperament and difficulty of raptor species, and other aspects of care and husbandry. Although the book was intended for raptors used in education programs, much of the information can be used in falconry as well.**

## B. Mews (indoor housing)

The purpose of the mews is to provide the raptor with a safe, secure "home" where it is protected from predators, domestic animals, and the environment. In addition to the minimum requirements that permanent and temporary facilities must have (listed in section A), an indoor facility should be well ventilated, but keep the raptor relatively free from drafts during extreme weather. Falconry facilities should be dedicated to falconry; not shared with pets or livestock.

### **Examples of acceptable indoor facilities include:**

- Freestanding structures.



Freestanding mews with attached weathering area

- Structures within an existing structure.



Mews within a garage

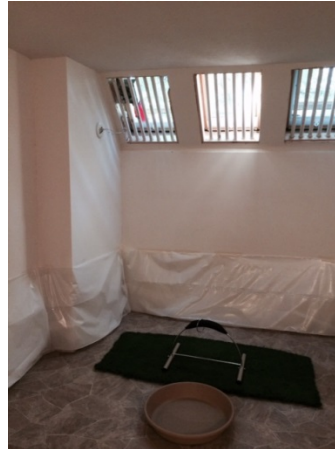


Shelf perch within a garage  
(raptors would be tethered on shelf perches)

- Room within a residence.



Each raptor must be provided with a suitable perch  
(Raptors must be tethered in a home)



Bars are not required

- Other innovative housing systems are acceptable if they provide the raptors with protection and allow them to maintain healthy feathers.
- Raptors used for propagation and other raptors in possession do not have to have to be housed separately; however, propagation raptors must be kept separate from raptors that are not authorized for propagation.
- An eyas raptor may be kept in any suitable container or enclosure until it is capable of flight.



**Minimum requirements for mews (in addition to minimum structure requirements outlined in section A):**

1. The structure should be soundly constructed and entirely enclosed (walls/bars/windows/etc.) to protect the raptors from the elements and predators.
2. The floor must be constructed so it stays dry or is well drained, and it can be easily cleaned.
  - Typically, the floor is composed of either pea gravel or Astroturf-type carpet over concrete or wood.
  - Sand is not recommended on the floor as it can cause crop impaction if ingested, and it can get under anklets and abrade the skin. Sand may sometimes be used in the “litterbox” of a shelf perch; however, the perch/base of the shelf perch should still be covered in astroturf.
  - Shavings, sawdust, straw, and hay are not recommended as they tend to hold moisture and can mold, have fine particles which can be inhaled, and could be ingested and cause crop impaction.
  - Bare concrete is not recommended, especially when a raptor is tethered.



Indoor/Outdoor carpet for flooring  
(easy clean-up—remove and spray off)



Pea gravel for flooring  
(easy clean-up—rake out/spray out waste)



A “litterbox” below the perch allows for easy maintenance (sand is ok here)

3. Each window must have vertical bars/rods on the inside that are narrower than the width of the body of the smallest raptor housed in the structure unless the raptor is tethered in a home or on shelf perches.
  - Screens to prevent West Nile virus and other mosquito borne diseases are highly recommended but not required.



Window with perch and vertical bars

4. The structure must allow for sufficient ventilation in the summer through windows/doors, roof vents and/or access to the weathering area.
5. The structure alone or in combination with in home facilities (garage/home/other structure) must provide protection for the raptors from extreme weather (high winds, storms, and extreme cold temperatures).
  - The structure must keep the bird free from drafts during extreme weather
  - Certain species may need additional protection from the heat or cold such as insulation, heat, or cooling, so you should consider species that you may want to possess in the future when building your mews. Red-tail hawks generally do not need supplemental insulation or heat.



Protected winter mew box with supplemental heat within more open summer mews

**For raptors moved to in home facilities:** The in home room has at least one window and suitable perches for each raptor

- **Each** raptor must be provided with a suitable perch.
  - Windows and other openings of the structure do not need to be modified (bars are not required).
  - Raptors must be tethered.
  - Each raptor must have enough room to spread their wings and bate.
6. When the windows/doors are closed for winter to protect the raptor(s) from high winds, storms, and extreme cold temperatures, the structure must still have at least one opening that allows sunlight to enter which would be visible to each raptor. (Glass, plexiglass, or some other clear material could cover the opening to allow for sunlight but still protect from the elements.)
- Very large windows may be reduced during the winter months.



Very large windows may be reduced



There must be at least one window that allows in sunlight which would be visible to each raptor.

### C. Weathering area (outdoor housing)

The weathering area is a fenced "yard" for the raptor that allows it to safely be outdoors, particularly in the sunny, warm summer months.

#### Examples of acceptable outdoor facilities include:



Weathering area attached to the mews  
(raptor should be tethered due to chain link fence)



Freestanding weathering area  
(raptor should be tethered due to chain link fence)



Weathering area with vertical slats  
(raptor does not need to be tethered)



Covered weathering area  
(raptor does not need to be tethered)



**Minimum weathering area requirements (in addition to minimum structure requirements outlined in section A):**

1. The structure should be soundly constructed and entirely enclosed (bars/ wire/ walls/roof) to prevent the raptors from escaping and to exclude predators.
2. The base of the structure must be protected from burrowing predators (the structure does not need a floor, but the walls should touch the ground, and if the structure does not have a hard floor, the walls should extend approximately 1' underground or 1' out to form an L). If the weathering area is stationary, floors are recommended for good raptor hygiene. Floors should be easily cleaned and allow for good drainage. Pea gravel or astro turf that is removable often work best.



Protection from burrowing predators  
(wire mesh forms an L)



Protection from burrowing predators (buried)

3. The top of the facility must be covered with netting, wire, or other roofing material to exclude predators, including avian predators.



The structure must be secure from predators

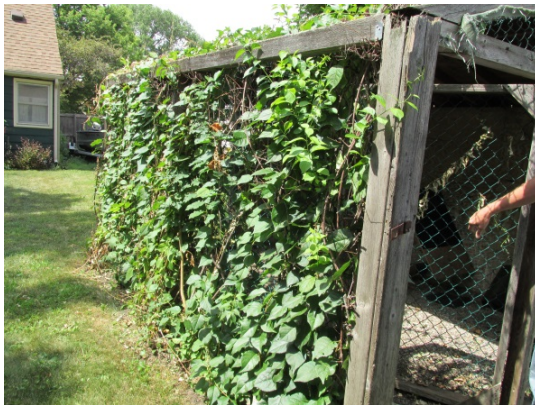
4. There must be at least one covered perch, of an acceptable design, that protects against sun and rain for each raptor. If the weathering area and mew are attached and the bird is untethered so it may go into the mew at will, an additional covered area in the weathering area is unnecessary.



Protection from sun and rain



Protection from sun and rain



Natural shade provided by plants



Attached mews provides necessary protection against sun and rain for weathering area



5. **For raptors that are not tethered:** All walls that are not solid must be protected on the inside with vertical bars/rods narrower than the width of the body of the smallest raptor housed in the structure
- Weathering areas may be made of heavy-gauge wire, heavy duty plastic mesh, slats, pipe, wood, or other suitable material. Depending on the construction materials (wire, mesh, chain-link, etc.) the raptor may need to be tethered. Chicken wire is not recommended as it is weak and may not keep predators out. New types of housing facilities and/or husbandry practices may be used if they satisfy the requirements above and are approved by the Falconry Coordinator.
  - Screens to prevent West Nile virus and other mosquito borne diseases are highly recommended but not required.



Window with slats



Screens are recommended but not required



Chicken wire is not recommended because it is not strong enough to keep the raptors secure from predators



Weathering area with vertical pipes



Vertical slats inside wire mesh

## D. Equipment

Falconry equipment should be in good condition—no tears, frays, or cracks. The leather should be supple. All equipment should be organized and easily accessible. Equipment should be dedicated to the raptor facility. Water pans should not be shared with other animals such as pets or livestock.

Although a falconer may need many items to care for their raptor, the only required items are:

1. Aylmeri style jesses or the materials and equipment to make them
  - An Aylmeri jess consists of an anklet, grommet, and a removable strap for attaching the anklet and grommet to the swivel.
2. Leash
3. Swivel
  - Dog leash/fishing snap-swivels with soft copper/aluminum rivets are rarely acceptable, except for use on kestrels
4. Appropriate scales or balances for weighing raptor(s)
  - Graduated in increments of not more than ½ ounce (15 grams).



Leash and jesses



Material to make jesses



Swivels and leash



Scale (with attached perch) for weighing raptor



Scale (with attached perch) for weighing raptor



Other common items that a falconer may need are:

- Hood
- Giant hood (required under federal regulations when transporting a raptor)
- Movable perches
- Glove



Hoods



Giant Hood (for transporting the raptor)



Examples of moveable perches



Examples of moveable perches



Example of equipment displayed for inspection

### 3. Facilities on Property not Owned by the Permittee or Facilities not located at Permittee's Primary Residence

Falconry facilities may be on property not owned by the permittee:

- If the permittee's primary residence is also located at that property.
- If the permittee's primary residence and the facilities are 30 miles or less apart.
- If the permittee's primary residence and the facilities are over 30 miles apart and used for 120 days or less annually.

Regardless of location, the raptors must be maintained in a humane and healthy manner, and the facilities must comply with federal regulations.

When facilities are on property not owned by the permittee, the property owner must sign and date a statement showing that they agree that the falconry facilities and raptors may be inspected by State authorities at any reasonable time of day in the presence of the property owner; except that the authorities may not enter the facilities or disturb the raptors unless the permittee is present.

### 4. Moving-Reporting Requirements

- All falconry and propagation permittees must report a permanent change in the location of their permitted facilities to the Minnesota Falconry Coordinator within **five days** following the move.
- Until new facilities are inspected, the permittee must house their raptors as described below under "Temporary Facilities" or "Temporary Raptor Care"
- Persons moving out of state must comply with the above regulations, but they must also contact the Falconry Coordinator in the state to which they are moving within 30 days and comply with that state's regulations.
  - Permittees may keep falconry birds that they possess while applying for a falconry permit in a new state. However, the state, tribe, or territory into which they move may place restrictions on their possession of falconry birds until they meet the residency requirements there.
  - Permittees moving to states that require a residency period prior to being able to obtain a falconry permit within that state may retain their Minnesota Falconry Permit, provided they submit written approval of the coordinator in the new state. The updated Minnesota Falconry Permit will expire on the date that residency requirements have been met. The updated permit will not authorize the permittee to possess birds under the permit; they may only use the permit to fly and hunt with raptors provided they follow the regulations of their new state. If the permittee has raptors in their possession at the time of a move, the raptors may need to be transferred to another permittee until they obtain the falconry permit of the new state.
  - Propagation permits are not transferrable out of state.

## **5. Transporting Raptors and Temporary Facilities**

### **A. Transporting and Hunting with Raptors**

When raptors are being transported, used for hunting, or are away from home, permittees must ensure that the bird has a suitable perch and is protected from extreme temperatures, wind, and excessive disturbance. A “giant hood” or similar container is acceptable for transporting or housing a raptor when away from the permanent facilities. When trapping, transporting, working with, or flying raptors, the permittee must have their permit or legible copies of their permit in their immediate possession.

### **B. Temporary Facilities**

Temporary facilities that will house the bird for longer than a hunting weekend, such as during a move or during temporary work assignments, must provide the raptor with a suitable perch and protection from predators, domestic animals, extreme temperatures, wind, and excessive disturbance (see “Facilities and Equipment Standards” for a list of minimum requirements all facilities, whether permanent or temporary, must have).

A raptor may be held in temporary facilities:

- For a period not to exceed 30 days
- Upon request, the Falconry Coordinator, in writing, may extend the period the permittee may temporarily house their raptors for up to 120 calendar days.

After 120 days:

- the raptor must be housed in permanent facilities as outlined above under “Facilities and Equipment Standards.”
  - The facilities must be inspected and approved by a Conservation Officer, Nongame Specialist, or Falconry Coordinator
  - The new facilities location must be added to the permittee's permit.
- Permittees may also transfer their raptors to other permittees, provided that permittee has room to accommodate the raptors and is authorized to have those species.

### **C. Part-year Residents**

- Minnesota Resident Falconers that house their raptors at a location other than their primary facilities for more than 120 consecutive days:
  - Must request to add the facilities at the second location to their Minnesota Falconry Permit.
  - Must comply with state and federal regulations for both facilities locations and have the facilities at the second location inspected (whether it is in Minnesota or a different state).
  - May also be required to obtain a permit in the state, tribe, or territory where the permittee lives part time.
- Nonresident falconers who reside in Minnesota for 120 days or more with their birds:
  - Must comply with state and federal facilities regulations and have their facilities inspected.
  - Must apply for a Minnesota Falconry Permit (see Falconry Permit Application Requirements).

## 6. Temporary Raptor Care

A permitted raptor, including a nestling, may be temporarily held by a person other than the permittee. The permittee must inform the Falconry Coordinator, in writing, within ten days of the transfer, specifying:

1. Where the raptor is to be held.
2. The reason for the transfer.
3. Who is to care for the raptor.
4. What that person is allowed to do with the raptor.
5. Approximately how many days the raptor is expected to be in the care of the person.

### A. Raptor Care by Permitted Individuals

**Falconry raptors** may be cared for by another permitted falconer:

- Care may be at the permittees facilities or at the facilities of the other falconer.
- Care may be provided for up to 120 consecutive calendar days.
  - Care of the raptors may be extended indefinitely in extenuating circumstances, such as illness, military service, or for a family emergency. Such instances will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- The raptors must be reported as a loan or transfer with appropriate paperwork submitted within ten days.
- The raptors will remain on the falconry permit of the original falconer when reported as a loan and will not be counted against the possession limit of the person caring for the raptors.
- If the person caring for the raptors holds the appropriate level falconry permit, they may fly the raptors in whatever way authorized by the original permit holder, including hunting.
- The person caring for the raptors must have a signed and dated statement from the original permit holder authorizing the temporary possession and copies of the 3-186a forms. The statement must include information about the time period for which they will keep the raptors, and about what they are allowed to do with the raptors.
- **EXCEPTION:** The temporary care of a falconry raptor by a permitted propagator for propagation purposes only requires submission of a 3-186a. Terms of less than 120 days may be reported as a loan to that person's propagation permit. Terms longer than 120 days require submission of a 3-186a reported as a transfer to that person's propagation permit.

**Propagation raptors** may be cared for by another permittee:

- Care may be provided for up to 120 calendar days.
  - Care of the raptors longer than 120 days requires submission of a 3-186a reported as a transfer to that person's permit.
- The raptors must be reported as a loan or transfer with appropriate paperwork submitted within ten days.
- The raptors will remain on the permit of the original propagator when reported as a loan and will not be counted against the possession limit of the person caring for the raptors.
- The person caring for the raptors must have a signed and dated statement from the original permit holder authorizing the temporary care for the birds. The date care begins must be noted in the letter.



- The raptors may not be used in falconry or in propagation.
  - use of the raptors in falconry or captive propagation requires submission of a 3-186a reported as a transfer to that person's permit.

## **B. Raptor Care by Non-permitted Individuals**

**Falconry raptors** may be cared for by someone who does not have a falconry permit:

- Care may be provided for up to 45 consecutive calendar days
  - This care may be extended indefinitely in extenuating circumstances, such as illness, military service, or for a family emergency. Such instances will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- The raptors must remain at the falconer's facilities.
- The raptors will remain on the falconer's falconry permit.
- The person caring for the raptors may not fly them for any reason.

**Propagation raptors** may be cared for by someone who does not have a permit:

- Care may be provided for up to 120 consecutive calendar days.
  - This care may be extended indefinitely in extenuating circumstances, such as illness, military service, or for a family emergency. Such instances will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- The raptors must remain at the propagator's facilities.
- The raptors will remain on the propagator's permit.
- The person caring for the raptors may not fly them for any reason.

## **C. Temporary Care of Propagation Nestlings**

Propagation nestlings may be cared for by someone who does not hold a migratory bird permit:

- Another person may temporarily care for and band nestlings from the time they are hatched until they are fully feathered.
- The other person is allowed to keep the nestlings at another location.
- The person caring for the raptors must have a signed and dated statement from the original permit holder authorizing the temporary care for the birds. The date care begins must be noted in the letter.
- The care can be part of each day during the nestling period so that the nestlings can be fed, or it can be a series of full days if transport to and from the breeding facility is not practical or needed.