



ANIMAL CONTROL

Living with Wildlife

Wild animals contribute to our enjoyment of nature and outdoor recreation but they can also damage property, agriculture and natural resources and threaten human health and safety. The Wildlife Services program of the US Department of Agriculture assists in solving problems created by wildlife.

Federal and State law and regulation protect many species of wildlife. For information about protected and endangered species and trapping and relocation regulations, contact Wildlife Services at 223-6832 or your Local State Fish and Game office.

Equipped with the right information and tools, most homeowners can solve their own problems and learn to live with wildlife. For example, trimming trees and shrubbery are ways to change a habitat to make it less attractive to unwanted flocks of birds or even to snakes.

The following information may assist in keeping the curious raccoon out of the garbage can, the persistent rabbit or deer out of the garden, the goose or duck out of the backyard pool, the woodpecker off the siding and the swooping bat out of the attic.

Information contained in this brochure is provided courtesy of the US Department of Agriculture APHIS Wildlife Services Office in Concord NH. You may contact them directly at 603-223-6832 with any further questions.

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Squirrels and Other Rodents

To keep these animals from becoming a permanent part of the family home and yard, screen louvers, vents and fan openings; keep doors and windows in good repair; tighten eaves; replace rotten boards; cap the chimney; trim overhanging trees; remove bird feeders, use squirrel-proof feeders; and remove acorns and other nuts from the yard. Removing denning habitat, which includes logs, rock walls, and stumps, can deter chipmunks.

Woodchucks

These animals, also known as groundhogs, sometimes burrow near buildings, browse in gardens and damage fruit trees and ornamental shrubs. Fencing can help reduce woodchuck damage. The lower edge of the fence should be buried at least ten inches in the ground to prevent burrowing. The fence should be between three and four feet high, with a surrounding electric hot-shot wire placed four to five inches off the ground.

Opossums and Skunks

Opossums and skunks become a problem to homeowners by raiding garbage cans and bird feeders; eating pet foods; and living under porches, low decks, open sheds and any other areas that provide shelter. Skunks also dig holes in lawns, golf courses and gardens. To keep opossums and skunks from denning under buildings, seal off all foundation openings with wire mesh, sheet metal or concrete. Providing tight fitting lids and straps may eliminate foraging in garbage cans.

Bats

Bats prefer to avoid human contact; however, they are known to establish roosts in attics and abandoned buildings. Building and attic roosts can be eliminated by sealing entry and exit holes with such materials as 1/4 inch hardware cloth, caulking or wire mesh. If a bat makes its way into the house, you can encourage it to leave after dark by turning on lights and opening windows and doors.

Rabbits

Rabbits can be kept out of the garden or away from ornamental plants and small trees by using products containing repellents such as Hinder or by placing a two-foot poultry fence around the area. It is important to bury the fence at least six inches beneath the surface of the ground. For information about taste repellents, check your local garden or farm center. Before using any chemical repellents, read the label carefully and check with your State pesticide regulatory agency for application guidelines.

Raccoons

Raccoons are attracted to easy food sources, like garden produce, garbage and pet food. To help prevent scavenging, use metal trash cans that are fastened to a pole or to another solid object. A strap or latch that secures the lid of the garbage can is also helpful. To keep raccoons out of the garden, use two strands of electric livestock fence. The strands should be placed four and eight inches respectively off the ground and surround the entire garden. Exercise caution when implementing this exclusionary method in urban areas.

Raccoons will also readily inhabit attics, chimneys and sheds. Use metal flashing and one inch mesh hardware cloth to block entrances.

Snakes

The best way to keep snakes out of your house and yard is to seal cracks and openings around doors, windows, water pipes, attics and foundations. Removing logs, woodpiles, high grass and controlling insects and rodents are also helpful. Remove nonpoisonous snakes from inside buildings by placing piles of damp burlap bags in areas where snakes have been seen. After the snakes have curled up beneath the bags, remove the bags and snakes from the building. To remove dangerous snakes, call a professional pest control company.

Woodpeckers

These birds damage buildings by drilling holes into wooden siding, eaves or trim boards, especially those made of cedar or redwood. If the pecking creates a suitable cavity, the bird may use it for nesting. Effective methods of excluding woodpeckers include placing lightweight mesh nylon or plastic netting on the wooden siding beneath the eaves, covering pecked areas with metal sheathing, and using visual repellents like "eye-spot" balloons.

Deer

Deer feed on row crops, vegetables, fruit trees, nursery stock, stacked hay and ornamental plants and trees. Deer can be discouraged by removing supplemental food sources and by using scare devices and repellents. The only sure way to eliminate deer damage is to fence the deer out. A wire mesh fence is effective if it is solidly constructed and at least eight feet high. Electric fencing can also help reduce damage.

Coyotes and Foxes

These animals may carry rabies and sometimes prey on domestic pets, rabbits, ducks, geese, chickens, young pigs and lambs. Coyotes also kill calves, goats and deer. Net-wire and electric fencing will help exclude foxes and coyotes; however, because they are good climbers, a roof of net wire on livestock pens may also be necessary. The protection of livestock and poultry is most important during the spring denning period. Foxes and coyotes will den close to farm buildings, under haystacks or inside hog lots or small pastures used for lambing. Shed lambing and farrowing in protected enclosures can be useful in preventing predation on young livestock. Additionally, noise and light making devices, such as the Electronic Guard, may keep these predators away. Guarding dogs are also useful in preventing predation on sheep. Regrettably, dispersal methods are not effective in all situations so trapping or snaring may have to be used.