

KEEPING WILDLIFE OUT OF YOUR HOME

Preventing wildlife problems is more effective, less expensive and friendlier than waiting for a bump in the night.



Cities and suburbs are home to many kinds of wildlife. Their presence can be a source of enjoyment or sheer aggravation. The difference often depends on taking a few simple steps to avoid problems.

Wild animals are attracted to your home by food and shelter. Remove these temptations, and you can cut your risks of structural damage, home invasion and other problems.

High-risk Homes

- Past history of wildlife problems
- See wild animals frequently
- Mature trees in yard and/or neighborhood
- Home located near wildlife travel ways or concentrations (forest preserves, parks, golf courses, rivers or creeks, railroad tracks, vacant buildings, power line rights-of-way)

THE FIRST STEP: REDUCE FOOD AND SHELTER

- ▶ Keep pet food and water dishes indoors, especially at night. Use metal or durable plastic trash containers. Build a frame to hold them upright, secure lids with elastic shock cords (available at most hardware stores) or purchase models with screw-on lids. Do not feed squirrels, raccoons or other wildlife that might cause a problem. Do not allow bird food to accumulate on the ground. Install baffles to keep squirrels and raccoons off your feeders or try models with a weight-activated treadle that closes when unwanted animals get on it. Avoid using sunflower, corn and millet close to your home - use thistle feeders instead.
- ▶ If you have fruit trees in your yard, harvest or dispose of fruit when it's ripe.
- ▶ Do not place food scraps in gardens or compost bins.
- ▶ Stack firewood on a frame that keeps logs at least 2 feet above the ground.
- ▶ Trim branches that extend over your roof. You can prevent access to trees near your home by installing a 3-foot-wide band of sheet metal around the trunks at least 5 feet above the ground. This is effective only for isolated trees (the branches of protected trees must be at least 10-20 feet away from those of any unprotected tree of similar or greater height). Remove brush piles and other debris from your yard. Start a community "clean-up" project to remove brush, tall grass and debris from vacant lots.



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THE SECOND STEP: ANIMAL-PROOFING YOUR HOME

Problem Area	Solution
Fireplace or furnace chimney	Install a commercial chimney cap (secure to chimney with bolts or screws; see figure 1). Hardware cloth (use ½" x ½" mesh) provides an economical alternative but must be secured tightly. Leave a peak or dome over the flue to keep leaves and sticks from accumulating. Do not use window-screening material because it's too weak and will clog with soot, causing a fire hazard.
Attic exhaust fan opening	Cover bottom of fan from inside the attic with ½" x ½" hardware cloth (a piece that's 18" x 18" will cover most openings). Staple hardware cloth to rafters. For added security, nail or screw 1" x 2" lumber to rafters so that it overlaps the edges of the hardware cloth by about 1".
Attic end louvers (vents)	Cover inside with hardware cloth (½" x ½" mesh).
Soffit vents	Cover inside or outside with hardware cloth (½" x ½" mesh).
Soil stack/kitchen or bathroom vents for exhaust fans	Cover outside with hardware cloth (½" x ½" mesh).
Window wells	Cover top with commercial grate.
Decks	Decks that are 2+ feet above the ground aren't a problem. For decks built lower to the ground, dig a trench (at least 10" deep) around the perimeter (see figure 2). Fasten hardware cloth (½" x ½" mesh) or welded wire (1" x 1" mesh) from the top of the outside joists to the bottom of the trench. Leave about 6-8" of extra wire at the bottom and bend it outward to form an "L". Fill in the trench and cover the wire with wood or plastic lattice for aesthetics.
Stoops, cement slabs and sheds	Dig a trench at least 8" wide and 10" deep around base. Place "L" shaped hardware cloth or welded wire in trench so that the top of the "L" extends at least 1" above the bottom of the stoop, slab or shed. Fill trench.
Roof, soffit and fascia	Inspect annually for signs of water damage. Pay close attention to areas where gables or dormers meet the roof line. Repair promptly.

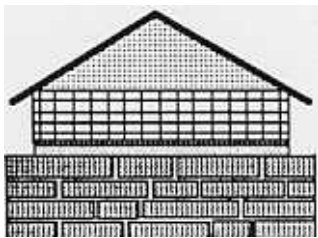


Fig. 1. Commercial chimney cap

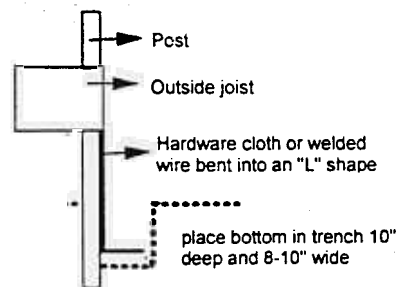


Fig. 2. Animal-proofing a deck

IMPORTANT! Take precautions to avoid sealing animals in your chimney or attic when you install a chimney cap or take other measures to exclude wildlife. Sprinkle flour or talcum powder outside potential entry points. If you don't see any tracks (footprints) for 2-3 days, it's probably safe to proceed with repairs. Holes in your soffit, fascia or roof can be stuffed lightly with 1-2 sheets of newspaper and checked for disturbance.

Visit <http://www.inhs.uiuc.edu/dnr/fur> for more information about the ecology of beaver, raccoon, coyote, striped skunk and other kinds of wildlife. Prepared by Bob Bluett, IDNR-Wildlife Resources in cooperation with Rolling Meadows Police Dept.

NUISANCE RACCOONS IN URBAN SETTINGS

DESCRIPTION: Raccoons are identified easily by a black face mask and distinctive black rings around the tail. Their fur is 1-2" in length. Fur color is usually a grizzled gray or silver tipped with black, but shades of brown, black, yellow, or orange can occur. By fall, body weights range from 12-18 pounds for adults and 9-13 pounds for young-of-the-year.



REPRODUCTION: Breeding peaks in February and early March. About 80-90% of females 1½ years or older produce a single litter of 3-4 young. Most litters are born during April or early May, but a few may arrive as late as August.

DAMAGE: Most problems stem from residential invasion (denning in attics, chimneys, or crawlspaces) and structural damage (holes torn in roofs, soffets or fascias to gain entry). Raids on garbage cans, bird feeders, and gardens can be annoying.

PREVENTING PROBLEMS WITH RACCOONS: Prevention is easier and less costly than solving a problem once it occurs. The following tips should help:

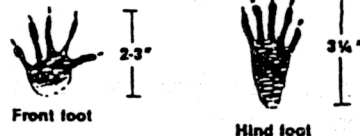
- Do not encourage raccoons by feeding them.
- Keep pet food and watering dishes indoors, especially at night.
- Use metal or durable plastic trash containers. Secure lids with elastic shock cords that are available at most hardware stores.
- Use bird feeders that are equipped with a gravity-operated treadle to prevent access by squirrels and raccoons. Don't allow spillage to accumulate.
- Install chimney caps before raccoons move in.* Hardware cloth (use ½" x ½" mesh) provides an economical alternative, but it must be secured tightly. Leave a peak or dome over the flue to prevent accumulation of leaves and sticks.
- Install hardware cloth (½" x ½" mesh) on the inside of attic vents and fan openings.*
- Repair broken, weak or rotted areas on your roof, soffet, and fascia.*
- Trim tree limbs that provide raccoons with easy access to your roof.

* Take precautions to avoid sealing animals in your chimney or attic when you install a cap or make repairs. Sprinkle flour or talcum powder around the top of the chimney and near other potential entry points. If you don't see any tracks for 2-3 days, proceed with repairs. Holes in your soffet or fascia can be stuffed lightly with 1-2 sheets of crumpled newspaper and checked for disturbance.

Signs of Residential Invasion by Raccoons

- Visual observation
- Noises in attic or chimney
- Tracks on roof or side of house
- Feces on roof or in attic

Raccoon Tracks



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OPTIONS FOR REMOVING NUISANCE RACCOONS:

- **Do it yourself.** This option may be feasible if you have the skills, time, and tools to do the job properly. You will probably have to purchase or rent a wire-mesh cage trap unless your local animal control department loans them to residents. If you have any doubts about undertaking this task on your own, we recommend that you hire someone to do it for you.



Wire-mesh cage traps should be 32-42" in length and have an entrance of 10 or 12 x 12"

In nearly all cases, you will have to obtain a Nuisance Animal Removal Permit; contact your local Department of Conservation (DOC) office for details and exceptions. The issuing officer will specify the period for which the permit is valid (maximum 90 days), the means by which animals may be captured, and the disposition of any animals captured. You are required to return a report of your activities within 10 days after the permit expires.

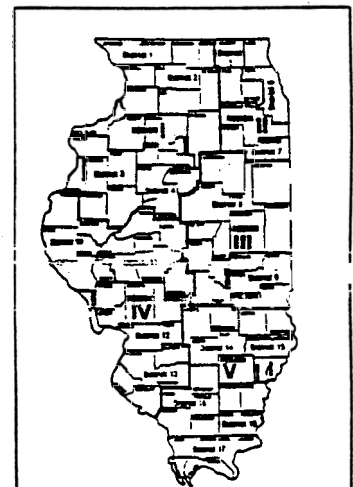
If the issuing officer specifies live-trapping and relocation, you are responsible for obtaining permission from the landowner or site supervisor where you plan to release animals. Most Forest Preserve Districts limit the number of raccoons that can be released because of high populations already living on their properties, concern about transmission of diseases, and respect for neighboring residential areas that don't need any more nuisance raccoons.

Contact your local animal control department. Some municipalities assist residents with the removal of nuisance wildlife. Contact your local animal control personnel to determine what types of services, if any, are offered.

- **Hire someone to do it for you.** This is the best option for most people. Commercial businesses offer nuisance wildlife control services in most cities. Make sure that the person you hire has a valid Nuisance Wildlife Control Permit issued by DOC. Permittees have passed a test administered by DOC and must follow strict guidelines for capturing, handling, and transporting nuisance animals. Check the yellow pages under "Pest Control" or call a DOC office for a list of permittees.

TIPS FOR DO-IT-YOUR-SELFERS

- **DO NOT** attempt to catch an adult female that's caring for helpless young unless you first locate the young and are certain you can remove them by hand. During spring and summer, check adults to determine their sex and whether or not females are nursing young (look for swollen teats). If you catch a nursing female and don't know where the young are, release the female.
- Use non-meat baits like marshmallows, jam, watermelon, or sweet breakfast cereals. They last longer in hot weather and won't be nearly as attractive to pets.
- Place trap near an entry point to better target the animals causing problems. If possible, put the trap on a solid substrate like a board or concrete.
- Stake or wire traps securely in place. When setting a trap on your roof, first fasten it to a sheet of plywood to avoid damage to shingles; if possible, fasten the plywood to the roof to keep it from sliding off.
- Check the trap every day before you go to bed and again when you wake up.
- Do not keep young raccoons as pets. It's unlawful and can be dangerous.
- Playing a portable radio and placing flashing lights in enclosed areas may help to evict raccoons. Ammonia or mothballs may also work, but **DO NOT** use these chemicals if helpless young are present; they may be overcome by fumes. Place mothballs or an ammonia-soaked rag in the denning area shortly before sunset. If using this method for evicting raccoons from a chimney, lower the rag or a stocking filled with mothballs on a string so you can remove it later.
- Watch your hands. Raccoons can move quickly and bite viciously.
- Place trap in a shady location, especially during the summer months. If you must leave an animal in the trap until you return from work, move the trap to a location where it will be shaded all day and provide drinking water.
- Seal or repair entry points to avoid future problems. See "Preventing Problems With Raccoons" for tips on determining if all of the raccoons are gone before you begin repairs.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Region I - Sterling	815/625-2968
Region II - Spring Grove	815/675-2385
Region III - Champaign	217/333-5773
Region IV - Alton	618/462-1181
Region V - Benton	618/435-8138
Chicago Office	312/814-2070
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Enforcement Office	708/746-2854