WILDLIFE CONTROL

Wild animals can become a nuisance when they're in the wrong place at the wrong time. Wildlife populations in the fragmented habitat of southern Ontario are sometimes "out of balance" with natural sources of food, their habitat, or the number of predators. When this happens, the species most likely to thrive are "generalists", those able to feed on many types of foods – including your crops and livestock – and able to live in a variety of habitats – including your property and buildings.

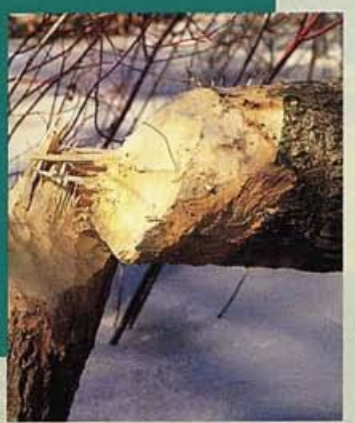
Some wildlife problems can be prevented or minimized by managing habitats carefully. Others can be reduced by hunting or trapping.

This section describes how to deal with wildlife problems. The steps range from tolerance of some damage, to preventive measures like habitat alteration and hunting and trapping, to the killing of nuisance animals. It's important to follow these steps in sequence before deciding what action to take – especially if you're not certain what is causing the damage. Skipping ahead to more severe measures may mean you'll replace one nuisance animal problem with another. For example, killing several coyotes in your area might lead to nuisance groundhog, rabbit and mice populations.

If the cause of the problem is obvious, and the losses intolerable, you may wish to implement control measures immediately.

1. VERIFY THE PROBLEM.

For control measures to work, you must be sure you're targeting the right species. Unless you see the animal at work, or the damage is unmistakable (e.g., a beaver has plugged a culvert), you have some investigative work to do.



Some damage is unmistakable. Other cases will require more investigative work. This tree has been felled by beaver activity.

Try to see or find:

- the animal itself
- dens, burrows, excavations, roosting areas, bedding areas or nests
- tracks or droppings (scats)
- trails, especially at outer edges of fields and adjacent to forest cover
- evidence of feeding such as gnawing, tooth and claw marks, pattern of bites and pecking.

Ensure you correctly identify the problem species before you act. Consult:

- field staff at OMNR, CWS and OMAFRA
- the public library for wildlife field guides
- your local Stewardship Council, naturalist clubs, conservation clubs, rod and gun clubs, trappers and your neighbours.

WILDLIFE CONTROL

2. DETERMINE WHETHER THE PROBLEM IS TOLERABLE.

Before deciding what action to take, take a careful look at the problem. Ask yourself:

- what is the nature and extent of the damage?
- how much is the damage costing me now, and what is the potential for the problem to worsen, lessen or disappear?
- what is the cost of preventive and/or control methods?
- could the problem wildlife provide any benefits? e.g., if deer are causing damage, encourage hunting
- by solving one problem, will I create another for myself or my neighbours?
- is the problem wildlife protected by legislation/regulation?

If the problem is tolerable, enjoy the wildlife while ensuring it doesn't become a problem for you or your neighbours.

After verifying that deer have caused this damage, ask yourself: how much is the problem costing now? What is the potential for the problem to worsen? Is it tolerable?

This orchard stock shows signs of severe mouse damage.

WILDLIFE CONTROL

3. IF THE PROBLEM IS INTOLERABLE, CONSIDER REMOVAL AND PREVENTIVE MEASURES.

Your first goal is to remove the problem animal(s) from a given area. The second is to prevent their re-entry. The following pages describe how to deal with nuisance animals in farmstead buildings, around livestock, in crops and on surrounding lands.

REMOVING AN ANIMAL FROM A BUILDING

This can take longer than you might think. The following steps encourage animals to leave closed quarters, like attics:

- install bright lights and play loud music
- place strong-smelling products, such as mothballs or cotton balls soaked in ammonia around the enclosed area, or
- set live traps.

If the animal has nested or is raising a litter, i.e., early spring to midsummer, wait until the young are able to move about and leave the building.

Always wear gloves when working around wild animals, and thoroughly wash equipment afterward.

SEALING THE BUILDING

The only way to prevent further damage to your buildings is to prevent re-entry.

If you have recently evicted animals, confirm that all animals have left the building, and then seal the last entrance. Watch for droppings, nesting areas, gnawing or clawmarks, and listen for odd noises. If an animal is still inside, re-open the hole and allow it to escape. Otherwise, you risk new problems, e.g., a mother desperate to re-enter can damage your building, and if an animal trapped inside dies, odours and insects may result.

The following techniques address all species. They are inexpensive and go hand-in-hand with good property maintenance:

- fix all holes and cracks, screen all vents, cap chimneys, replace all loose shingles and rotted wood
- seal openings with concrete, galvanized sheet metal, or heavy-gauge hardware cloth – 6-12 millimetre (1/4-1/2 in) mesh

Protect your investment in tree seedlings by using tree shelters. These and other systems (like mulch covers) may require higher investment upfront, but will get the trees off to a quicker start and reduce maintenance costs.

Carefully placed poison bait stations in tree orchards and plantations help control harmful rodents.

WILDLIFE CONTROL

- ▸ store food and garbage properly and keep buildings tidy
- ▸ keep doors to sheds, barns and garages closed
- ▸ trim tree limbs away from buildings so animals can't use them for access
- ▸ clean away and dispose of all nesting material carefully – wear gloves and mask, and sanitize the area if necessary.

Creating brush and rock piles is an excellent way to create habitat. You must locate them carefully to avoid creating nuisance wildlife problems.

DISCOURAGING WILDLIFE FROM LIVESTOCK, CROPS AND SURROUNDING PROPERTY

When deciding on the best deterrents, consider cost, damage, economic loss (past and future), time of year, number of nuisance animals, and length of time that animal(s) must be kept away from crops or livestock.

The following techniques work best when used in combination. The earlier they're used, the better:

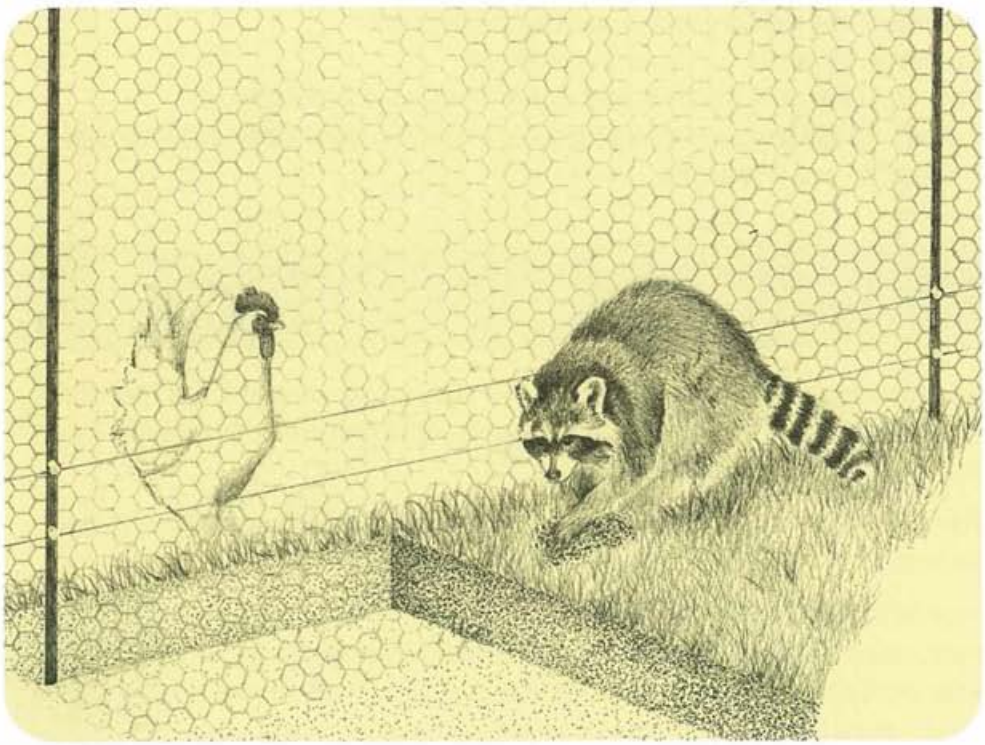
- ▸ use fences and barriers to keep animals out
- ▸ use scare techniques – but check with municipality for noise bylaws
- ▸ use repellents to make food sources or perimeter fences smell or taste bad – this is a short-term measure, and requires continual reapplication
- ▸ plant susceptible crops away from areas used by problem animals
- ▸ plant lure crops away from crops that need protecting – but more animals may be attracted in the long term
- ▸ remove food sources where possible
- ▸ encourage natural predators
- ▸ cooperate with local hunters
- ▸ *as a last resort*, remove denning sites and cover (brush piles, rock piles and hollow trees) in the areas used by problem animals. Bear in mind, this will also affect animals that aren't causing a nuisance.

If control measures aren't in place, white-tailed deer can rapidly damage orchards and cost farmers significant crop loss.

The foregoing are general techniques that can be applied to a number of species. The chart on pages 82-83 presents more specific measures.

WILDLIFE CONTROL

You may wish to allow licensed hunters and trappers on your property. Careful resource use can alleviate or prevent nuisance wildlife problems.



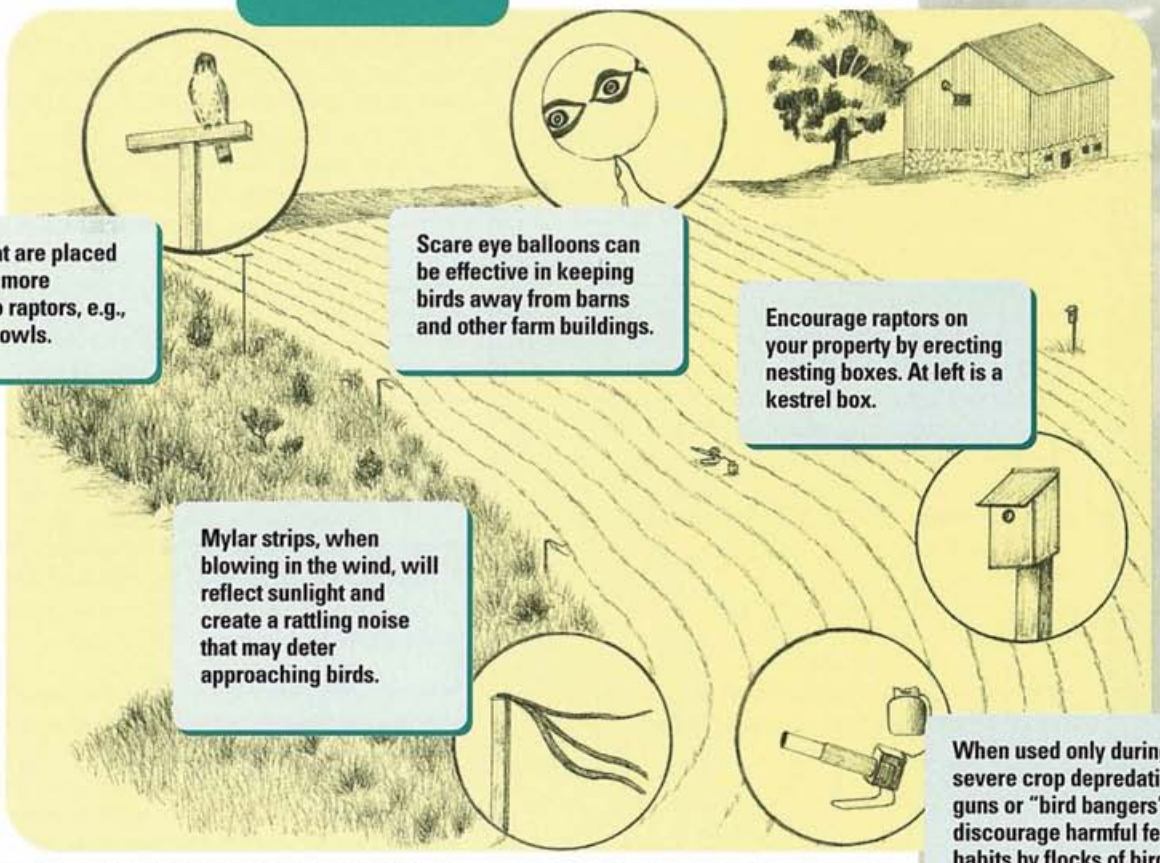
Carefully designed fences are an effective deterrent to problem animals, but can be expensive to construct.

Clipped and maintained grass around this pond is a welcome mat for Canada geese. A good deterrent is to plant and maintain a buffer strip around the pond or wetland with tall grasses and dense shrubs.

WILDLIFE CONTROL

The American kestrel, Ontario's smallest hawk, is often seen hovering as it looks for mice, small birds and grasshoppers. It perches on top of trees, fences or wires, and nests in tree cavities.

SCARE TECHNIQUES



Many scare techniques have proven effective in the short term, but can lose their effectiveness over time. Some techniques are noisy, and can lead to complaints from neighbours.

BMPs FOR DISCOURAGING NUISANCE WILDLIFE

SPECIES	BARRIERS	REPELLENTS/ POPULATION CONTROL
RODENTS	• install tree guards to prevent "girdling" • use a 75 centimetre (30 in) band of flashing around telephone poles and tree trunks to discourage climbing • erect a fence to discourage rabbits and groundhogs	• use taste repellents on tree trunks • odour repellents are effective in short term, but need frequent reapplication • dust susceptible garden crops with equal parts cayenne pepper and flour: reapply after each rain • cats may be effective
RACCOON	• erect chicken wire fences around gardens and coops: supplement with electric fences • lay chicken wire on lawn around garden	• brightly illuminate garden and play loud music at night (a short-term solution) • plant pumpkin vines among sweet corn • dogs may be effective • encourage hunting and trapping by licensed individuals
SKUNK, FOX, OPOSSUM	• fence gardens: supplement with electric fences • install fencing around base of buildings and sheds to prevent animals from denning • drive a series of nails into boards and place face-up at the entrances of beehives	• sprinkle naphthalene flakes (mothballs) under buildings (a short-term solution) • brightly illuminate garden at night, or play loud music (a short-term solution) • dogs may be effective • encourage hunting by licensed hunters
COYOTE, WOLF, BEAR	• use solid fences around farm yards, up to 2 metres (6 ft) high • use electric wire fences around pastures: contact Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency for advice • apiaries can be protected from bears by by electric fence • a woven wire fence with mesh less than 5 x 15 centimetres (2 x 6 in) can deter coyotes and wolves	• dogs, donkeys and llamas can be very cost-effective for livestock protection in some situations • check herds or flocks frequently during high-risk times like calving/lambing • try scare devices like strobe lights and noisemakers in small areas (a short-term solution) • odour and taste repellents have worked to deter coyotes from sheep • encourage hunting and trapping by licensed individuals
DEER	• a variety of fences can be constructed around susceptible areas: e.g., single-strand electric fence baited with peanut butter or molasses; 5-6 strand high tensile electric fences; 2 fencelines running parallel with 3 wires of electric fence at varying heights; high fences of small mesh up to 2.5 metres (8 ft) in height • place a 1.5 metre (4.5 ft) cage of welded mesh to enclose single small valuable trees	• taste and odour repellents usually work for short periods of time; they must be applied before the damage begins, and usually reapplied after each rain • firecrackers, flares, pie plates, tinsel, paper and scarecrows can protect crops for 1-2 weeks • bangers and noisemakers can work if moved often and set in a staggered firing sequence • tethered dogs may be used to frighten deer, but don't allow them to run at large – owners may be charged under the *Game and Fish Act* if dogs are found chasing deer • encourage hunting by licensed hunters
BIRDS	• use netting to protect small areas of valuable crops • place porcupine wire on ledges to discourage roosting	• for migratory birds protected by federal law, scare permits must be obtained from CWS; some species are provincially protected, others not at all • noisemakers include propane bangers, firecrackers, "screamer" shells, and tape-recorded distress calls of birds • scare kites and flagging tape may visually frighten birds • scaring must be done at first appearance of birds • tethered dogs can be used to frighten birds from crops
CANADA GOOSE	• plant and maintain a border of dense shrubs or high grasses around wetlands, ponds and watercourses	• scare permits must be obtained from CWS • in early spring, use bangers or dogs to disturb nesting pairs before the nest is built • in the fall, encourage hunting by licensed hunters

FOOD REMOVAL	MODIFY HABITAT
• don't leave food waste in areas accessible to rodents • keep rodent-prone areas tidy	• remove trees or branches that rodents use to access buildings • remove cover; control weeds and brush from around buildings and bases of orchard trees • install perches for hawks and owls near buildings or around sensitive croplands, e.g., orchards
• don't leave food waste in areas accessible to raccoons • raccoon-proof garbage cans by using a tie-down lid • keep poultry safely cooped	• eliminate access points like overhanging tree branches to sheds, barns, porches, etc.
• secure possible food sources, including dog food and livestock feed • don't let garbage accumulate • elevate beehives to .6 metre (2 ft) off ground to keep skunks out	• eliminate denning sites near buildings by removing rock and brush piles
• where practical, move sheep and cattle into pens or lighted corrals at night • if possible, move ewes or cattle into paddocks or indoor facilities during lambing or calving season • properly dispose of deadstock, and remove/bury placentas from lambing areas	• clear brush and small trees from pasture to remove hiding places for predators
• avoid planting susceptible crops like winter wheat and orchards near deer winter yards	• remove field windbreaks or treed fencerows near orchards – however, this may also remove nesting sites for beneficial insect-eating birds • read pages 37-38 on fencerows before considering this option
• remove spilled food and water at livestock facilities • use bird-proof feeders and storage facilities to prevent contamination by droppings • lower water levels in waterers so birds cannot reach water from edge, but keep it deep enough that they can't stand in it • if hawks are a problem, confine fowl to a woven-wire fenced and covered enclosure • house poultry at night to protect them from owls	• since some raptors (hawks and owls) hunt from snags, remove large standing dead trees within 100 metres (110 yds) of areas where fowl roam freely • ask the telephone company to cap telephone poles with sheet metal cones to eliminate perching spots for raptors
• do not feed overwintering birds between December and March • in summer, consider providing lure crops to keep birds out of high value crops	• don't create nesting islands in wetlands • don't provide mowed grass near wetlands or around ponds; don't fertilize grass surrounding wetlands

WILDLIFE CONTROL

FERAL CATS, FERAL DOGS AND COY-DOGS

Feral animals are domesticated animals, such as dogs, cats and horses, that have gone wild.

Less fearful of humans than coyotes or foxes, feral dogs prey on rabbits, hare, deer, livestock and many other species.

Dogs can interbreed with coyotes, creating cross-breeds called coy-dogs. Coy-dogs can be very aggressive and are less afraid of humans, lights and buildings than coyotes. They are usually 9-11 kilograms (20-25 lbs) heavier than coyotes, and can take down larger prey (e.g., calves). Unlike coyotes, which mate once a year, coy-dogs can mate twice annually.

In one Ontario study of trapped coyotes, 25% were deemed coy-dogs.

Responsible pet ownership by everyone will go far to limit populations of unwanted animals. Neuter your cats and dogs. Never abandon or release them to fend for themselves in the countryside – take them to an animal shelter or find them alternative homes. Don't let animals, especially dogs, roam.

In southern Ontario, coyotes, coy-dogs and feral dogs cause considerable loss in the sheep industry. In northern farm areas, wolves and bears occasionally kill livestock.

In some parts of Ontario, particularly northern rural areas, black bears can be nuisance animals, occasionally killing livestock and damaging apiaries. Electric fencing can be an effective barrier.

Coyotes like this one are often mistaken for the larger timber (gray) wolf. Coyotes benefit farmers by eating mice, voles, groundhogs and rabbits. During times of stress, however, such as in the spring when they're feeding young and during winter, coyotes may feed on unattended livestock.

WILDLIFE CONTROL

4. IF PREVENTIVE MEASURES DON'T WORK, USE NON-LETHAL AND LETHAL CONTROL METHODS.

Control measures include live trapping and removal, lethal trapping, shooting and poisoning. Before you take any action, call OMNR to ensure your plans are legal. If the problem involves migratory birds, call CWS. Check with your municipality periodically for the status of discharge of firearms and other relevant bylaws. A list of relevant legislation appears at the end of this booklet.

NON-LETHAL

LIVE-TRAPPING

Live-trapping is usually done in buildings by animal-control specialists who release animals elsewhere on the property or nearby. The "do-it-yourself" approach is risky: handling live animals requires experience. Diseases can be transmitted from animals to you, and you can harm the animals.

Out of sight, out of mind?
Live-trapping and relocating an animal may appear to be a humane solution, but you may simply be moving the problem to someone else's property. Unless you can release the animal on the same property on which it was caught, the alternative of humanely destroying the animal should be considered.

Moving animals any distance from their home area can be ineffective for the following reasons:
- ▸ animals already living there may defend their territory and kill newcomers
- ▸ animals may return to the area where they were caught
- ▸ shortages of unoccupied denning sites and food may result in starvation
- ▸ relocating animals could contribute to the spread of disease
- ▸ you may simply give the problem to someone else.

Before release on your property, take appropriate preventive measures described on the chart on pages 82-83.

WILDLIFE CONTROL

LETHAL

Under the *Game and Fish Act,* a person can destroy, by means that do not cause unnecessary suffering, any animal on his/her land (except for deer, elk, moose, or caribou) if it is damaging or is about to damage property. The *Act* describes the methods available to farmers. Contact your local OMNR office.

By making the area on your property less attractive to nuisance animals, you may reduce the need to use the following methods.

TRAPPING

Courses on fur management are available at your local OMNR office. If you intend to sell the pelts of furbearers, you'll need a "Farmers' License to Sell Pelts or Carcasses", available at your local ministry office.

For removal of problem wildlife, trapping is quick and effective in the short term. However, if attractive habitat remains, new animals may move in. Review the preventive measures presented earlier in this section for a long-term solution.

Trapping species like raccoon and muskrat on a regular basis can also help control populations before they reach nuisance proportions. In defense of their property, farmers can trap animals using humane techniques.

Only farmers and licensed trappers are allowed to use body-gripping traps under the *Game and Fish Act.* A landowner can:

- ▸ hire a licensed trapper to humanely kill nuisance animals
- ▸ grant permission to a local trapper to access your land.

Contact OMNR for a list of local trappers and details regarding trapping agreements.

SHOOTING

In defence of property, farmers and other landowners may be allowed to shoot nuisance animals, provided local discharge of firearms bylaws are observed. Shooting is a practical method to control animals like groundhog, raccoon and coyote. Remember, animals protected by the *Endangered Species Act* cannot be killed – they're also unlikely to cause problems.

RING-NECKED PHEASANT	RUFFED GROUSE	WILD TURKEY	WOODCOCK	CHIPMUNK AND SQUIRRELS	HARE AND RABBITS	BEAVER	DEER	FISH: pike, muskellunge largemouth bass, sunfish, perch
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		C		F,C			C	
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WILDLIFE CONTROL

Rabies in Ontario

Rabies is a disease spread among wildlife, people, domestic animals and livestock by contact with infected saliva through a bite, or contact with membranes of eyes, nose or mouth. In Ontario, the main vectors are fox and skunk.

If you need to shoot an animal you suspect is rabid, remember that diagnosis of rabies requires analysis of brain tissue. Avoid head shots if possible.

Prevention – by vaccinating pets and prize livestock and not handling wild animals – is the best approach to controlling rabies. If you do come in contact with a suspect animal, immediately wash any bites or scratches with soapy water and seek emergency medical treatment. Contact your local public health unit.

Raccoon rabies is now posing a threat to Ontario. Don't keep raccoons as pets, and discourage them from denning or feeding near your buildings.

POISONS

There are limitations and risks to the use of poison around the farmstead:

- ▸ it is illegal to use poisons to control wildlife other than small rodents such as mice, rats and groundhogs
- ▸ place rodent poisons so that children, livestock, family pets and non-target species cannot consume the baits
- ▸ some poisons require applicator training and a pesticides license
- ▸ contact a pest control company or local farm supply outlet for information on poisons
- ▸ poisons can travel up the food chain, e.g., scavengers/predators can consume poisoned animals and may themselves be affected. Dispose of carcasses properly.