

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.



DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG: Young raccoons weigh about 2½ ounces at birth. Their eyes open when they are 18-29 days of age. At 8-10 weeks of age, the kits begin eating solid food and leaving the den to forage with their mother. Young raccoons can fend for themselves by late summer or early fall, but they may continue to associate with their mother until the spring following their birth.

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:

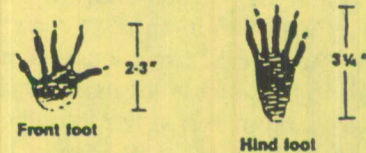
- Do not encourage raccoons by feeding them.
- Keep pet food and watering dishes indoors, especially at night.
- Use metal or durable plastic trash containers. Secure lids with elastic shock cords that are available at most hardware stores.
- Use bird feeders that are equipped with a gravity-operated 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

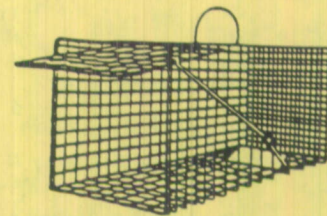
Raccoon Tracks



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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"

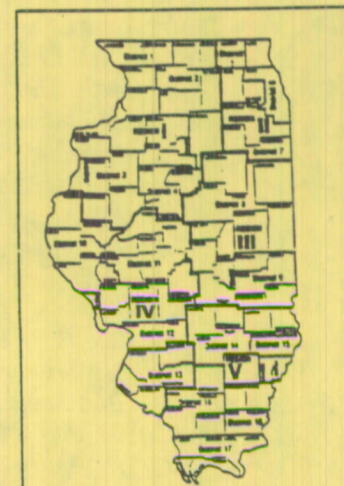
In nearly all cases, you will have to obtain a Nuisance Animal Removal Permit; contact your local Department of Conservation (DOC) office for details and exceptions. The issuing officer will specify the period for which the permit is valid (maximum 90 days), the means by which animals may be captured, 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:

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