

THINK BEFORE YOU TRAP

Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services Program (WS); Distributed by the City of College Park Animal Control

MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE

Statute 10-902 of the Annotated Code of Maryland states that any person desiring to trap any wildlife native to Maryland shall first obtain a permit from the Department of Natural Resources. However, at this time, some species of wildlife such as the woodchuck/ground hog and nutria do not require a permit. To obtain a permit to control nuisance wildlife, call the Nuisance Wildlife Information Line at: **1-877-463-6497**

CAN LIVE-TRAPPING HELP SOLVE YOUR ANIMAL PROBLEMS?

The answer could be YES--if you have a specific, easily identifiable problem, such as an animal invading your house. Common examples of these problems include raccoons or squirrels in the attic or a skunk in the garage or under a mobile home.

The answer is NO--if you have a chronic problem in which it is not practical, or you are not able to remove or prevent the animals access to the attractant. For example, it may not be cost effective to fence some small home gardens or trying to trap squirrels because they are raiding a bird feeder. Moving animals and not attending to the source of attraction is usually not a productive long-term solution.

When you have a problem with a wild animal, you must make a choice. You can attempt to deal with the animals by removing them. However, if the attraction is still available it will only be a matter of time before the problem returns. The most effective and easiest long-term approach is to manage the attractant.

THE MYTH OF THE "HUMANE" TRAP

If you have determined that a live trap is your only option, remember that a trap is neither humane nor inhumane by itself. You must use it wisely. Before you set the trap, make plans for the disposition of the animal once it is caught. Leaving an animal in a trap for hours, exposed to extremes of heat and cold, rain, snow, wind or harassment by dogs or humans is irresponsible and inhumane. Check the trap often and know who will take the responsibility for destroying or relocating the animal. According to Maryland State regulations **FOX, SKUNK, COYOTE AND RACCOON CANNOT BE RELOCATED IN MARYLAND**. If these animals have been trapped, they must be humanely euthanized. For the nearest location to have these animals humanely euthanized please contact the Nuisance Wildlife Information Line. Captured squirrels, rabbits and opossums may be released. However, you have to obtain permission of the landowner or managing authority prior to releasing the animal; this includes park property. Prior to trapping you need to know how and when the animal will be transported and who will transport the animal. Have a cover ready for the trap or, better yet, cover it before you set it. This helps calm a trapped animal and will protect you from being sprayed if you capture a skunk. If it is legal to relocate the animal (check with state/county regulations), make sure you have the landowner's permission and that the area is suitable as a release site.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE HAPPY ENDING?

You take your problem animal to a new location, open the trap and it scampers off you assume to a happier life. Maybe not. An animal's best chance of survival is probably right where it was moved from. It knows where safety, food and shelter occur in its surroundings. Also, translocation of wild mammals is not a biologically sound practice in many situations. Considerable stress is placed on the transported animal due to relocation related activities and territorial disputes often resulting in low survival rates. Studies indicate that a large percentage of animals that have been trapped and relocated do not survive, and those that do survive seldom remain at the location where they were released.

The American Veterinary Medical Association, The National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, and The Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologist opposes relocation of mammals (especially raccoons, skunks, and foxes). Live-trapping should be considered as a last resort management practice.

Live-trapping should never be undertaken lightly. Choose the best alternative for you and the wildlife in your neighborhood. Prevent or reduce conflicts by eliminating attractants.

EASY SOLUTIONS TO EASY PROBLEMS

Whenever practical, store garbage so that it will not attract animals, close off access around foundations of buildings and porches, remove all food sources outside and if practical, fence gardens. In the long run it will be easier for you and easier on the animal if you limit access to the attractant.

By following these easy steps you can control most unwanted animals.

- + Secure clean garbage containers by placing the container in a garage or shed, or use metal garbage cans with a sturdy strap over the lid and tie the cans to something sturdy to prevent them from being tipped over.
- + Do not feed your dog or cat outside, or only put the food outside during the day for an hour or less, any leftover food should be taken inside.
- + Do not throw out leftover food for the wildlife to eat.
- + Remove or modify all bird feeders or feed only small amounts during the winter months. Use an alternate bird attractant such as a dusting area of fine sand or a bird bath.
- + Repair unsound and vulnerable areas that could permit entry by wild animals. You need to screen attic vents, replace rotted boards and torn screens, cap chimneys, trim overhanging branches and seal off the perimeter of raised structures such as sheds and porches
- + Reduce damage to home gardens and ornamental plants with repellents and fencing.

ALWAYS REMEMBER, PREVENTION IS THE BEST METHOD FOR CONTROLLING NUISANCE WILDLIFE. If you have any questions or need additional information please contact:

United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Wildlife Services Program (WS)
1568 Whitehall Road
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
1-877-463-6497
(410) 349-8055

Sources:

- Nielsen, L. and R.D. Brown, eds. 1988. Translocation of Wild Animals. Wisconsin Humane Society, Inc. And the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute.
- Centers for Disease Control. Compendium of Animal Rabies Control, 1990. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 1990;39 (No. RR-4):6
- Nielson, L. 1988. Definitions, Considerations, and Guidelines for Translocation of Wild Animals. Pages 12-51 in L. Nielsen and R.D. Brown, eds. Translocation of Wild Animals. Wisconsin Humane Society, Milwaukee.