

## Nuisance Wildlife In and Around the Home

The spring season is approaching and gardeners and other homeowners are getting ready to work outdoors; yes they are anxious to get their hands dirty and just to enjoy the great outdoors. Many will find that they are not going alone.

Very often, these outdoor spaces are also occupied by wildlife such as squirrels, opossums, raccoons, bats, moles, deer, mice, coyotes and snakes. These animals become a "nuisance" when they are in unwanted areas or cause damage to valuable plants or other property or just make the human inhabitants uncomfortable.

What to do?

First identify the animal by various signs --

Some things to look for are droppings, noise (especially during certain times of the day or night), digging -- the size of the hole is a clue to the size of the animal.

Once the offender is identified then you can use the proven approach to apply the necessary control measures. The measures are; Habitat modification, Exclusion, Repellent, Lethal methods may be used for control.

When you are having problems with unwanted guest it is important that you modify their habitat. That is food, water and shelter that are needed for survival of all wildlife so a change to anyone of these is an effective control method. For example, seal cracks and holes to prevent rodents or bats from entering a building. Always store seeds and pet food in tightly closed containers. Control weeds and garden debris; mice like tall grass and snakes like mice. Therefore keeping the grass around the house very low will get rid of mice and eventually snakes. Store firewood and building supplies on racks or pallets above ground level. It is important to realize that wildlife life will not live in open areas so they will be forced to change their habitat.

Exclusion is often the best and most permanent way. Depending upon the area, the cost may be prohibitive. Fencing and netting are common exclusion methods.

Removal or Repellent – Relocating the nuisance wildlife may be an option but be considerate not to take the nuisance to another person's property. In addition, animals may be deterred from feasting on plants by foul tasting or smelling substances. These repellents will often become less effective as the animals become accustomed to the taste or smell.

Lethal - Should be used as a last resort and may require permits. Live trapping is an option but is not recommended. Raccoons and skunks frequently carry rabies which can be transmitted to pets and people if they are bitten by these animals.

For more information on horticulture related topics contact Grantly Ricketts who is a Horticulture Agent with UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County. He can be reached at 321-697-3000 or email at [gricketts@ufl.edu](mailto:gricketts@ufl.edu).