August and September are historically months with high hurricane activity. Be sure to keep a weather eye out and use the time now to prepare. Think about how to prepare your family, your pets, your home and your yard. As you make plans and gather supplies to endure the storm, consider how you will handle the aftermath of the storm, including wildlife issues.

After hurricanes, debris from trees and structures will be strewn around the yard. Hopefully, your home will be in tact and your trees will still be upright. Your nerves will be frazzled, and your patience tested. Just imagine the impact on wildlife that lives in your yard and neighborhood.

High winds and heavy rains are natural with storms, but wildlife cannot prepare like we do. Unfortunately, they may be flooded out of their homes or tossed out of trees, scrambling for some stable place to live. They may feel your home is the best high ground and seek shelter in your attic, under your house, or even inside your house.

How can you protect yourself from disoriented wildlife? Be safe as you venture out, seal cracks and openings to keep wildlife out and be prepared to remove unwanted wildlife.

Be especially careful after a storm when you venture outside. Watch for downed power lines and debris hanging overhead and watch where you step.

Wear heavy duty work gloves as you gather debris. Use a long stick or rake handle to poke into debris piles before you reach into them. Snakes may be hiding in the piles. If you warn them, by making noise or disturbing them with a stick, they will likely slither off somewhere else.

Rats, opossums, skunks, raccoons and very scared feral cats may take up residence in debris piles. Live traps are the safest way to capture them for removal. Check with local hardware stores now to have a trap on hand. If the cost is more than your budget can stand, neighbors can band together and make a purchase now so you have the trap when you need it.

Sometimes animals enter homes through new openings caused from storm damage. Animals may enter the attic through damaged soffits, fans or ridge vents. They may find their way in through dryer vents or plumbing vents on the roof.

Prevent wildlife from getting inside and avoid other problems. Use metal screen wire to cover vents or damaged areas on the walls or roof. Sheet metal may be needed to cover large areas. Small cracks or openings can be sealed with caulk or expandable foam. Be sure to use foam designed for your specific applications since a special type is needed to seal gaps around windows and doors.

After you get over the shock of finding an animal inside your house, consider the safest way to get it out. Shooting it is not a safe or reasonable option; think traps.

Some cannot handle the thought of a smashed varmint in a traditional snap trap, so check out the new alternative type of live traps. They allow small animals to climb in through a trap door that keeps them from climbing back out. They can then be released outside or euthanized. The traps are available in two sizes to accommodate rats and mice. Larger live traps are available for squirrels, armadillos or raccoons.
You can make traps more attractive by using a food for bait. Squirrels like peanuts, peanut butter, pecans, sunflower seeds, and fruit such as raisins or apple slices. Rodents like rats and mice will be attracted to whole corn, peanut butter, oatmeal and oatmeal paste.

Sometimes, snakes find their way indoors. Sticky glue boards work well to capture them. These sticky traps are very sticky, so place them out of the reach of children and pets.

What you want to catch determines where you locate the trap. Placement is important. Locate the sticky trap near a wall but away from furniture to capture snakes, but next to a wall, behind furniture to capture rats or mice.

Once trapped on a sticky board, the next challenge is how to get the animal outside. Be sure the sticky trap has a hole in the corner so you can pick it up with a hook on a long pole.

Once outside, you can pour vegetable oil on the trap to release the animal. Obviously, the best option is to prevent wildlife from getting inside to begin with.

Storm season is cranking up so take this time to prepare and keep your home and family safe. Contact the UF/IFAS Osceola County Extension office at 321-697-3000 for more information on what to do before, during and after storms.

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