



## Dealing with Wildlife Conflict

### Master Gardener Volunteer Training 2025

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## Living with Wildlife



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## The problem with wildlife conflict...


Too much conflict can lead to backlash against wildlife and habitat conservation.



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## Steps for Managing Wildlife Damage

- 1) Identify the species responsible
- 2) Understand the species habitat needs
- 3) Make cost-effective decisions
  - Bring damage down to a tolerable level
- 4) Employ management options
  - *Often involves persistence, commitment, and continual monitoring*



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## Options for Managing Wildlife Damage

Repellents
Exclusion
Education
Habitat Modification
Trapping
Lethal Control
Harassment



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## Situation 1: Gotcha Covered



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## Identifying Vole Damage

- Damage to plants
  - Should be able to see the chisel marks (1/16" wide)
  - Damaged or missing roots



- Surface runways (1-2" wide)
  - Vegetation clipped close to ground
  - Pieces of vegetation and feces found in the runway

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## Identifying Vole Damage



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## Habitat Modification - Voles

Can you reduce/eliminate ground cover?

- Less mulch
- Straw bales, boards, etc.
- Tall grasses

Can you reduce/eliminate food sources?

- Bird feeders, fruit



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## Exclusion & Repellents

- Hardware cloth cylinders - ¼ - 1/8 inch mesh 12" tall
- Use on young trees with grass/weed control

- Hot pepper, predator urine
  - *Short term protection*



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## Trapping & Repellents - Voles

- Use extended trigger, snap traps or multiple catch traps
- Set traps across runways (unbaited) or outside of burrow entrances (baited)
- Cover traps to protect non-targets
- Most effective for smaller areas
  - Set more at once not fewer over longer period of time
- Repellents
  - Capsaicin and predator urine (coyote, fox)



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## Sometimes nature takes care of it for you...



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# Coyotes

[www.urbancoyoteresearch.com](http://www.urbancoyoteresearch.com)



- Coyotes are common throughout Ohio and regularly seen within city limits.
- Coexistence is possible.
- Coyotes naturally fearful of humans.
- Harass coyotes you see.
- Remove attractants from yard.
- Keep cats indoors. Walk small dogs on short leash during the day.

# Pets and Coyotes - Dogs



- Medium – large dogs
  - Most conflict during late winter to early spring
    - Mating (Jan-Feb)
    - Pup rearing (Mid-April – May)
- Small dogs
  - If coyotes are around...
    - Don't let them off leash
    - Don't walk them at night
    - Most attacks occur at night when the dogs are unattended

# Pets and Coyotes - Cats

- Studies of coyote predation on cats in urban areas show...
  - Reduction in cat numbers
    - Killed as prey and competition
  - Some have also shown an increase in songbird numbers
- If coyotes are around...
  - Keep cats indoors
    - Safest for cats and wildlife

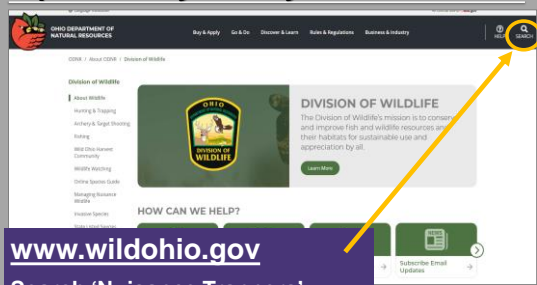


# Our Actions Influence Wild Canid Behavior

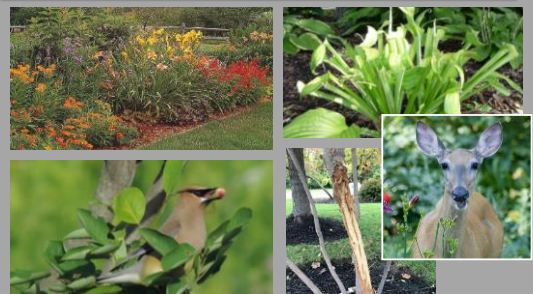
- We need to be diligent about keeping coyotes and foxes scared
- Our actions influence fear...or comfort.
- Look for signs of changed behavior
  - Be smart about removal of a coyote or fox



# List of Nuisance Wild Animal Control Operators by County



# Situation 2: Tasty Vittles



## Identifying Deer Damage



- Deer lack upper incisors
- Jagged, torn surfaces on twigs and foliage
- Damage can be from ground up to 6-8 feet
  - Prefer buds, twig ends, and foliage
  - Damage focused on the top and sides of the plants less than 3' tall

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## Which Repellents Work Best?

- Best results with repellents causing immediate consequences
  - Hot pepper and egg solids
    - Taste repellents over odor repellents
  - Blood products – taste only
- Food safe repellents:
  - Ammonia/potassium salts and fatty acids (Hinder)
  - Some hot pepper and egg solid repellents



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## Choose Your Plants...Wisely.

- Bee balm, butterfly weed, purple coneflower, stiff goldenrod, purple giant hyssop, lanceleaf coreopsis, snapdragons
- Herbs
  - Rosemary, lavender, mint, oregano, sage, and marjoram
    - Excellent bee plants
    - Largely avoided by rabbits and deer
    - Low cost option
- **Remember - nothing stops a hungry animal!**



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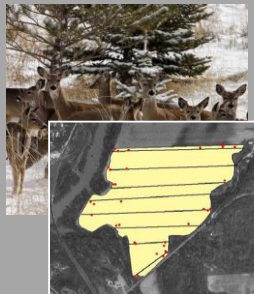
## Less Preferred by Deer

- **Red Chokeberry** (*Aronia arbutifolia*)
- **Red Osier Dogwood** (*Cornus sericea*)
- **Winterberry Holly** (*Ilex verticillata*)
- **Fragrant sumac** (*Rhus aromatica*)
- **Red Elderberry** (*Sambucus racemosa*)
- **Bottlebrush Buckeye** (*Aesculus parviflora*)
- **Viburnum** (*Viburnum sp.*)
- **Serviceberry** (*Amelanchier sp.*)
- **River birch** (*Betula nigra*)
- **Common witch hazel** (*Hamamelis virginiana*)
- **Hawthorn** (*Crataegus sp.*)
- **Tulip poplar** (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)

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## Factors Influencing Deer Damage

- Deer Density
- Season
- Attractiveness/availability of other food
- Availability of nearby shelter
  - Woodland/edge habitat?
  - Corridor between woodlands?



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## Polypropylene Fence



- Durable, lightweight, & easy to work with
- Reduced deer browse by 60-98% in tree plantations (Purdue Extension)
- How tall?

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### ...and try this.

Infrared sensor; Battery powered; Move every few days; One/small garden



### Motion Activated Sprinkler



### Community-Based Deer Management

- Addresses the need for population reduction in environments where tradition methods aren't an option
- Must involve all stakeholders and professionals well-versed in deer management

ODNR, Division of Wildlife District Office  
 1-800-WILDLIFE  
[www.deeradvisor.org](http://www.deeradvisor.org)



A deer problem is defined by people's values and tolerances rather than the number of deer.

### Community Deer Management Info

#### OHIO COMMUNITY WILDLIFE COOPERATIVE

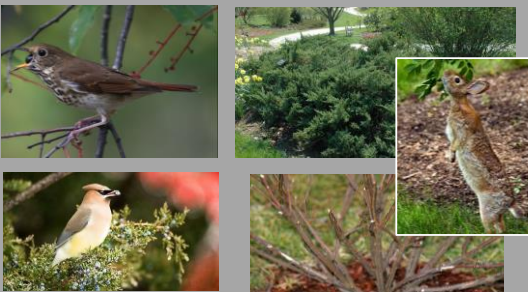
Living with Wildlife and Resolving Conflicts in Ohio



- White-tailed Deer Management: Does Your Community Have a Deer Problem? – Caleb Wellman, USDA WS

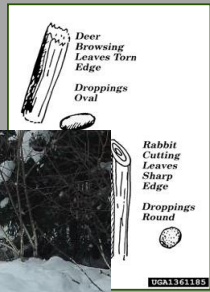
[u.osu.edu/ocwc](http://u.osu.edu/ocwc)

### Situation 3: Rabbitat



### Identifying Rabbit Damage

- No.1 test = 45 degree angle
  - Incisors leave a neat, clipped appearance
- Damage no higher than 2 1/2 feet above ground



### Habitat Modification for Rabbits

- Remove brush piles, tall dense grasses, stone piles



### Managing Rabbit Damage: Exclusion



- Rabbit Fence Rules:
  - 3 feet high, 1" wire mesh
- Tree shelter and tubes protect against winter damage
  - Deer rubs, too!
  - 1/4" mesh
  - 2-3' tall plus expected snow depth
- Deer – at least 4' tall

Best Repellents = same as those for deer

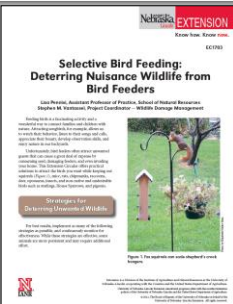
### Situation 4: Feeding the Neighborhood



### Sugar water is a tasty treat...so bring in your feeders at night!



### Squirrel-Proof Feeder Fact Sheet



- University of Nebraska Extension
- EC1783

u.osu.edu/wildside  
'Dealing with Wildlife Conflict in the Garden'

### Situation 5: Unwanted House Guests



- Bats
- Groundhogs
- Skunk
- Raccoons
- Opossums



## Habitat Modification for Unwanted House Guests

- Dispose of garbage
  - Secure in can with lids
  - Put in garage or shed
- Remove attractive shelter
  - Lumber debris
  - Junk cars
  - Rock piles
- Control rodent populations
  - Barns, crawl spaces, sheds, garages
- Don't leave pet food outside



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## So close...

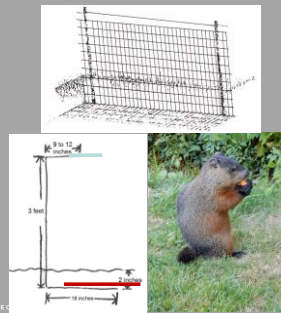


USDA, Wildlife Services

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## Groundhog Management – Fencing

- Two-strand (6" & 12") electric fence
- Non-electric, 3-4' tall
  - Heavy gauge 2-inch mesh wire
  - 18" skirt buried 2+"
  - Upper 9-12" - 45-degree angle overhang



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## Rodent Repellents

### Squirrels, chipmunks, groundhogs, and voles

- Hot pepper/capsaicin
- Predator urine
  - Voles and groundhog only
- Temporary, short-term protection
- *No toxic baits labeled for use on squirrels!*



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## Raccoon & Skunk Repellent??



- Available repellents
  - Garlic oil
  - Capsaicin
  - Black pepper
  - Mustard oil
- Limited to no effectiveness

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## Raccoons in Attics



Assume raccoons living in your attic from February – August may be a mother with young (*they like dark, quiet, safe places*).

### Harassment:

- Sound (radio talk show)
- Light (fire safe)

3-4 days, then check

Be patient.

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## Is relocation allowed?



- **Squirrels and rabbits**
  - Relocated or euthanize
- **Raccoons, skunk, opossum, coyote, beaver, or fox**
  - Euthanize or release back onto property

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## List of Nuisance Wild Animal Control Trappers by County

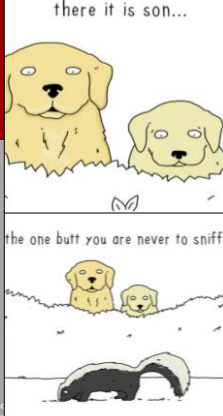


[www.wildohio.gov](http://www.wildohio.gov)  
Search 'Nuisance Trappers'

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**The Best Solution to Get Rid of Skunk Smell**


- 1 quart of 3% hydrogen peroxide
- 1 quarter cup baking soda
- 1 tsp liquid soap
- Rinse well and repeat
- Do not bottle!



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## Situation 5: Unwanted House Guests



- **Bats**
- Groundhogs
- Skunk
- Raccoons
- Opossums

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## Bat Colonies in Buildings

- All Ohio bats are protected.
- Exclusion is the only effective, legal option.
- Exclusion windows: **spring (Apr. 1 – May 15)** and fall (**Aug. 1 – Sept. 30**)



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## Why Exclusion Over Lethal Means?

**All 10 Ohio bat species are protected - 4 species are Endangered, and the rest are Species of Concern.**



[whitenosesyndrome.org](http://whitenosesyndrome.org)

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## u.osu.edu/obwg

Ohio Bat Working Group  
Communication and collaboration between bat-minded people.

Home Annual Meeting **Bat Week** **Coexisting with Bats** Educator Resources Get Involved **Habitat Management** About

**video series on bats & Bat Exclusion Info**




**Bat House info Forest Mgt info**

Follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/OhioBWG](http://www.facebook.com/OhioBWG)

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## Situation 6: Oh, so many HOLES!



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## Situation 6: Oh, so many HOLES!



See [bygl.osu.edu/node/855](http://bygl.osu.edu/node/855) for article on **white grub control.**

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## Managing Chipmunks - Habitat Modification

- Remove wood piles, rocks, and other debris near foundations
- Keep grass cut short around buildings
- Place bird feeders 15-30' away from home



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## Trapping Chipmunks

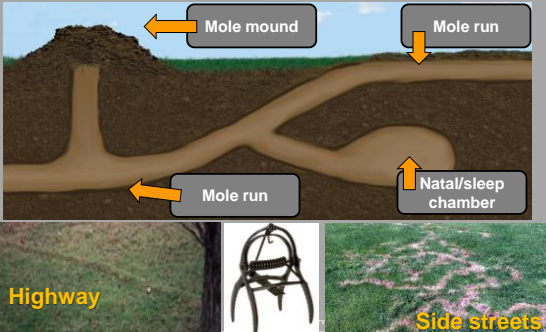
- Use multiple traps
  - Live traps or rat snap traps
  - Cage trap size: 5 x 5 x 18-inch
- Set along runways or at burrows
  - Secure to prevent movement
  - Cover snap traps to protect non-target species
- Place small amounts of bait (peanut butter & oatmeal) at cage trap entrance to lure



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## Trapping Moles



Highway Side streets

## More Mole Management

- **Trapping Tips**
  - Wear gloves
  - Dig down to find tunnel
  - Use multiple traps
  - Do your homework on how traps work
- **Toxic Baits**
  - Zinc Phosphide – pellet bait
  - Warfarin – gel bait
  - **Bromethalin**
    - Grub and worm-shaped bait
  - **Non-restricted use**



**\*\*Note primary and secondary toxicity risks**

## Living with Wildlife

- Know the species co-existing with us and their habitat needs.
- Use habitat modification first.
- Know your available management options, and when & where to seek help.
- Realize that the wildlife are here to stay.
- Find you own level of tolerance/co-existence.

## Orphaned Wildlife



[www.wildohio.gov](http://www.wildohio.gov)

→ Born Wild, Stay Wild  
→ Wildlife Rehabilitators List

## Additional Resources Posted at:



**THEWILDSIDE@OSU**

News, Education, and Conversations on Ohio Wildlife  
[u.osu.edu/wildside](http://u.osu.edu/wildside)

[u.osu.edu/wildside](http://u.osu.edu/wildside)

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