



Frequently Asked Questions for Wildlife Damage and Disease

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How do I catch an armadillo?

Armadillos can be caught using a cage trap with a 10- to 12-inch opening. No bait is required, but you will need to use funnels. Wooden boards or wire fencing that is at least 6 inches tall can be used as a funnel. Longer funnels have a higher chance of directing the armadillo into the trap. Existing barriers, such as flower beds or walls of a building, can be used as part of the funnel. Place the trap in an area of the lawn where damage has occurred and face the opening (and funnels) in the direction you anticipate the armadillo is approaching from. Traps with openings and funnels on both ends are more effective. Irrigating the area immediately around the trap before setting it sometimes attracts armadillo. Once trapped, handle the trap with gloves as armadillo can carry leprosy. Also, wear leather gloves when smoothing out mulched areas that armadillos have recently dug into. Armadillos can be legally trapped and killed all year. It is illegal to move any animal and release it onto someone else's property. Alternatively, where legal and safe, you can shoot them as they forage across the lawn. They are generally active late at night and can be frustrating to spot. Therefore, trapping is generally recommended.

Do I have moles or gophers and how do I catch them?

Moles and gophers are both small mammals that burrow. However, the tunnels and damage they cause is distinct. Gophers are usually found in sandy soils. Their burrows are typically not visible, as they are several inches deep. But they leave mounds of soil where they push out their burrows. Gophers eat plant material and can damage turf, ornamentals and vegetable plants. Moles are usually present in loose, loamy soils and their burrows are immediately below the ground and visible. Moles eat insects and earthworms and are beneficial animals. However, their burrows can be unsightly and sometimes cause shallowly rooted plants to die. Both animals can be caught using various traps. Harpoon-style traps set over an active visible burrow is effective for moles. Gophers are more difficult to trap as it requires finding a burrow and setting a trap inside the burrow. To find the burrow, use a small diameter rod (such as a piece of rebar) to probe near a recent mound. Once located, carefully dig a hole exposing the burrow. Set a body-gripping trap specific for gopher/mole in the burrow. Place a piece of tarp or board over the hole to keep it dark. Check the traps every day. For large areas of gopher infestation, poison

bait (typically containing zinc phosphide) can be used. Check local ordinances on legality of various toxicants. If using toxicants, they MUST be placed underground. Check the area daily for gopher carcasses aboveground and bury them deeply to prevent non-target poisoning. Soil insecticides are not recommended for gopher or mole control.

How do I get an animal out from under my house or out of my attic?

Skunks, armadillos, opossum, raccoons and groundhogs commonly enter home crawlspaces. Raccoons, opossums and squirrels sometimes enter attics. First, identify where the animal entered the house. Place a live-catch cage trap (6 inches x 6 inches or 12 inches x 12 inches, depending on size of animal) at the entrance and block off other entrances. For skunk, opossum and raccoon, bait the trap with sardines. Squirrels can be baited with peanut butter and oats. Once captured, either euthanize the animal or call an animal control operator (<https://www.wildlifedepartment.com/law/nwco-operators>). Check OWDC regulations carefully, as some species can be trapped and killed without restrictions (e.g. armadillo, coyote and striped skunk), while others have closed seasons during portions of the year (e.g. raccoon, fox squirrel and opossum). There may be more than one animal in your home. Once all animals are removed, seal the entrance to prevent other animals from entering the crawlspace. When trapping skunks, they will often spray. Use a tarp to shield yourself and place it over the trap. If they spray, the scent will dissipate within a few days.

How do I keep packrats from chewing wires?

Packrats and other rodents often chew electrical wiring on vehicles, causing expensive damage. Some newer wiring has special coatings that are not attractive to rodents. For vehicles prone to damage, there are a few things that can be done. Storing the vehicle inside a well-sealed garage often solves the problem. Also, consider opening the hood of the vehicle at night, as this seems to help reduce damage. Placing a light under the hood also may help. Traps or toxicants can be used in garages to help control rodents. Be sure to pick up dead carcasses and keep pets away from the toxicants.

How do I reduce Canada geese damage?

If geese are on a crop field, contact USDA Wildlife Services for assistance. If the damage occurs during the regular hunting season, consider allowing goose hunting to move the geese off the field. If damage is occurring to urban areas such as municipal lakes, golf courses and green spaces, other options are possible. Allowing grass to grow tall and rank will reduce its attractiveness. Use trained dogs to harass the geese – this can work well on golf courses. Plant trees around ponds to make them less attractive to geese, as they need large open spaces to land. If a human health issue is present from large amounts of fecal matter in public spaces, contact USDA Wildlife Services (<http://www.ag.ok.gov/wildlife/>).

How do I reduce beaver damage?

Beaver cause damage by girdling trees, impounding water, plugging culverts and burrowing into pond dams. If beaver are damaging a few trees around a pond, consider wrapping the tree with poultry wire (at least 30 inches tall) to protect the tree. The wire should be at least 1 inch from the tree surface. If beaver are plugging culverts, there are several types of devices that can be installed on the culvert to prevent plugging (<http://icwdm.org/wildlife/beaver/BeaverPipes.aspx>). For unwanted impoundments and pond dam burrowing, trapping likely will be required. Consider calling a professional trapper for beaver, as they can be difficult to capture and quickly become trap shy (<https://www.wildlifedepartment.com/law/nwco-operators>).

How do I deal with woodpecker damage to my house and/or trees?

Woodpecker damage to homes is one of the most difficult urban wildlife damage issues to control. Woodpeckers are federally protected and cannot be killed legally. Most home damage is from the northern flicker woodpecker. Downy, hairy, pileated and red-bellied woodpeckers rarely damage homes. Noise making, flashing and moving devices are generally not effective. There are no effective repellants for woodpeckers. If the woodpeckers are damaging rotten wood that has insects, replace the wood. If woodpeckers are damaging structurally sound wood, exclusion is by far the most effective management. This is accomplished with bird netting which can be purchased from many online sources. When damage is confined to a small area of the home, netting can be nearly 100 percent effective if properly installed. Make sure to install the netting a few inches from the wood to keep the woodpeckers from reaching the structure. The netting should be fairly taut as well. Most woodpeckers only damage trees that are either dead or dying. However, the yellow-bellied sapsucker damages living trees. This small woodpecker is only present during the winter months and it creates small circular damage that is often numerous along the trunk and large stems. The damage is typically superficial and rarely kills the tree. However, limbs and small trees are more susceptible to death. Maples, fruit trees, pines and viburnums are most often damaged. Little effective control for this issue is available, and for most situations management is not warranted.

Is this snake poisonous or beneficial?

There are several species of venomous snakes (pit vipers) in Oklahoma. Technically, none are poisonous, which means it would make you sick if you ingested it. Pit vipers typically have diamond-shaped heads, although some nonvenomous snakes (such as the harmless hog-nosed snake) will often flatten their head in a defense posture. Rattlesnakes, as their name implies, have rattles, however, they do not always rattle to provide warning. Various species of rattlesnakes are found statewide. Cottonmouth (water moccasins) are found in eastern Oklahoma. These snakes are typically found near water, but many other nonvenomous water snakes occur across Oklahoma and are commonly confused with cottonmouth. Cottonmouth often open their mouth when threatened exposing a white mouth lining. Copperheads are typically found in eastern and central Oklahoma. These cryptic snakes rely on camouflage, therefore often go unnoticed. Look for the diamond-shaped head. All snakes are beneficial regardless of whether they are venomous. They help control rodents and add diversity and interest to people's lives. Snakes are rarely aggressive and most bites occur because the person was either harassing the snake or was not watching where they put their hands or feet. The website <http://oksnakes.org/> is a good resource for snake identification. In the extremely rare instance of a bite, do not apply a tourniquet, use electrical shock, cut the wound, use suction on the wound or panic! Simply elevate the wound, stay calm and get to a hospital immediately. Do not try to kill the offending snake because that often results in another bite.

How do I trap feral hogs?

Trapping feral hogs can be effective at controlling their numbers. Use large traps that can hold at least 8 to 12 hogs. Small traps that only allow a few hogs to enter are counterproductive as they educate groups of hogs to avoid traps. Cattle panels are useful to construct traps. Make sure to make the trap round, as corners can allow hogs to escape. Panels should be securely attached to each other and to t-posts planted firmly in the ground. Various types of baits are effective, but corn works fine. Bait should be placed outside the trap until animals start using it, then gradually move the bait inside the trap and away from the door. Various triggers can be used to drop the door, but remote doors (using a motion activated trail-camera linked to your phone) are most effective. Avoid using doors that hogs have to push open, as this limits success. Suspended traps that can be remotely dropped on hogs are very effective where cell service is good. Visit <https://www.noble.org/news/publications/ag/wildlife/feral-hog-in-oklahoma/> for various trap designs.

Is hunting effective at reducing feral hog damage?

No, not typically. Hunting can remove some individual hogs, but most of the sounder (a family group of hogs) will simply become educated and harder to remove. Hunting can move hogs off a property for a limited time, however. Aerial gunning in open landscapes can be effective.

Is there a poison for feral hogs?

There are several toxicants under development for feral hogs. At this time, none of them are legal in Oklahoma, but this will likely change in the future.

Are there mountain lions in Oklahoma? Are there any black ones?

Yes, mountain lions are found in Oklahoma. They typically are encountered in western Oklahoma, including the panhandle. However, mountain lions are uncommon across the state and are very uncommon in the eastern part of Oklahoma. Mountain lions are large and have a tail that is near the length of their body. Many mountain lion sightings are actually bobcats which have a very short stubby tail. There have NEVER been any documented melanistic (black) mountain lions. Other large cats, such as jaguars, do occasionally exhibit black coloration, but these cats do not occur in Oklahoma. Most reported black mountain lions are either dogs or cats seen in low light (nighttime or in shadows) when color was not apparent. The likelihood of an attack from a mountain lion is extremely low. If you see what you believe to be a mountain lion, remain calm. The cat will almost certainly flee when it sees you. If not, make yourself look large and threatening. If you have a confirmed sighting of a mountain lion (photographic evidence), contact the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (<https://wildlifedepartment.com/contact>).

How do I deal with black bear damage?

Black bear occasionally raid garbage cans and dumps, food stores and beehives. First, keep the area as clean as possible of food and garbage. Use bear-proof containers when camping. Use heavy duty metal trash bins with the lid secured or keep garbage inside a sturdy building. Protect beehives with electric fencing. Contact ODWC if damage continues (<https://wildlifedepartment.com/contact>).

How do I keep raccoons out of my garbage?

Use metal or dense heavy plastic garbage containers. Raccoons are adept at opening garbage bins, so consider using a heavy rubber cord to latch the lid on securely.

How do I deal with prairie dog damage?

Prairie dogs create habitat for many other species of plants and animals. They also provide food for many predatory animals. However, they can cause damage to forage. See [NREM-9014 Prairie Dog Ecology and Management in Oklahoma](#) for information on prairie dog damage and control.

Should I be concerned about aflatoxin?

If you provide supplemental feed for wildlife, then yes, you should be concerned about aflatoxin. Aflatoxin is produced by a specific fungus that often grows on grains, such as corn and milo. Aflatoxin can cause many health issues, including death, for wildlife if they consume enough of it. Birds, especially wild turkey, are particularly susceptible. Aflatoxin is most problematic during warm, moist periods and is worse on corn than milo. To reduce aflatoxin risk: avoid placing grain out from March through October. Use

milo rather than corn. Keep the grain dry and properly dispose of moldy grain. Purchase only USDA certified grain that is tested for livestock ("deer corn" is often not tested). Place only enough grain on the ground that could be consumed within a couple of days. See [NREM-9021 Aflatoxins in Wildlife Feed: Know How to Protect Wildlife](#) for more information.

Should I be concerned about chronic wasting disease?

At this time, there is no evidence that chronic wasting disease (CWD) affects humans. However, it is possible that CWD can affect humans due to the long dormancy period of the disease. Due to this risk, if you harvest an animal in a known CWD area, have it tested before consuming the meat. Do not consume bone marrow, brain tissue or lymph nodes of any deer. CWD is a serious disease in deer and the risk of it affecting deer populations in Oklahoma is high. The distribution of CWD in the U.S. suggests that captive deer facilities and the transport of captive deer may facilitate CWD spread.

Is this animal rabid?

Determining if an animal is rabid is impossible without a brain/spinal diagnosis examination by a veterinarian. Rabid animals can display symptoms, which are similar to other diseases, such as distemper. However, if you see an animal that appears feverish, confused, agitated or unusually bold, consider it rabid and keep your distance. Seeing an animal active during the day does not mean that it is rabid. Skunks, raccoons, fox and other mammals often are active during the day.

Can I get a disease from handling wildlife?

Yes. There are several zoonotic diseases that are transmissible to humans. Feral pigs in particular harbor diseases that pose a risk to humans. When handling any wildlife, wear latex gloves and glasses to keep fluids from contacting any potential open wounds or your eyes. If you have been in close contact with wildlife and develop an illness, be sure to discuss this with your doctor so that they know there is a potential for a zoonotic disease. Doctors generally assume a fever is caused by a common cold or flu, not brucellosis or tularemia. Communication is critical for accurate diagnosis in the small chance you contract a disease from wildlife.

What is bluetongue?

Bluetongue is a generic name to several closely related diseases that affect white-tailed deer. The disease usually occurs in late summer due to the seasonal abundance of the biting midges that transmit it. You might observe deer that appear feverish, lethargic and underweight. Infected animals often are found around water. This disease can lead to localized reductions in the deer population, but it is not a risk to humans. The disease does not appear to be related to deer density, and deer populations typically recover within a few years following an outbreak. There is no method of control for this group of diseases.

Are lead bullets, pellets and sinkers an issue?

They can be in some situations. Lead is one of the most toxic substances on earth. It has long been known to

cause wildlife injury and death from ingestion. Some of the more common sources of ingestion include: scavengers consuming animal carcasses and gut piles; birds mistaking shotgun pellets for seeds and grit; and aquatic birds ingesting lead sinkers. To minimize the risk to wildlife, consider the following: use nontoxic sinkers for fishing when possible, never intentionally throw lead sinkers in the water, bury carcasses shot with lead bullets and shotgun pellets and use nontoxic shot when shooting high volumes on a concentrated dove field. For more information, visit [NREM-9015 Impacts of Lead Ammunition and Sinkers on Wildlife](#).

Are eye-worms causing the quail decline?

Eye-worms have long been identified as a parasite to quail. Numbers can reach high levels in some wild quail populations, causing significant eye inflammation. Eyeworms can impair vision and lead to quail being at higher risk of predation. However, there is no evidence that eye-worms have caused any population reductions in quail, and current incidence rates appear similar to earlier studies. At this time, no action is recommended to control eyeworms. Note that Oklahoma and Texas appear to have higher incidence of eye worms than most other areas of the country. Oklahoma and Texas also have some of the highest quail numbers in the country.

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