

The need for nuisance animal control services is increasing, and as development continues, more and more people have conflicts and interaction with wildlife.

By Mike Goldstein

A GROWING MARKET

Presently more and more people are experiencing issues concerning wildlife. Raccoons, skunks, groundhogs, squirrels, deer and other wildlife seem to be invading suburbia, and even urban areas, on a regular basis. As proof of this, raccoons are now five to six times more prevalent in suburbia than they are in the wild. And squirrels are the No. 1 wildlife problem in the United States.

These animals are referred to as "nuisance wildlife" for several reasons. These critters are getting into attics of homes and doing damage. They frighten homeowners, get into garbage,

eat pet food that has been left out, and carry diseases, just to name a few.

Due to the increasing development of farmland for homes, people are partly to blame for this proliferation of wildlife problems. These animals learn quickly to adapt and actually thrive in their new environment among people. They have plenty of food available, as well as artificial denning sites such as attics, chimneys or crawl spaces. Also allowing these animals to thrive is the lack of natural predators. The only remaining predators (if you want to call them that) are our vehicles.



Wildlife control can be financially rewarding if done in a professional and efficient manner. Education regarding the target animals and equipment are vital to success.

The more you know, the quicker you will resolve the problem, which puts more money in your pocket.

EDUCATION. One place to start is your state game commission (or the authority that regulates wildlife in the area in which your company will operate). Check to see what licenses are required or regulations followed. (See story about additional resources on page 44.)

These authorities will also tell you what to do with the animals after they're captured. Options include relocation, releasing on site or euthanizing the animal. Euthanizing or destroying certain animals is becoming more popular due to rabies and other wildlife diseases as well as over population.

Study the biology and habits of the common nuisance animals in your area. (See chart on page 43.) Learn their primary activity period, when they give birth, litter size and age of independence. This will

help you with identification as well as the appropriate trapping methods.

TRAPS. One-door professional cage traps are the preferred trap for many due to their strength, superior performance, lower cost and ease of use.

Selecting the correct size trap for your target animal is important. Using the wrong

size trap will affect your success rate. A trap too small will allow the animal to trigger the trap, back out of the trap and evade capture. If that happens, you have educated the animal regarding traps and it will be more difficult to catch in the future. This

happens often with raccoons.

A trap that's too large may allow a captured animal to injure itself. It may also allow non-target animals to be caught.

When handling traps with animals, it is imperative that you protect yourself by wearing animal-handling gloves. This will prevent you from being bitten or scratched. Another good piece of equipment is a snare pole, which allows you to grab and handle an animal.

Traps should be placed only after performing a thorough inspection of the property and determining the areas of pest activity. For squirrels and raccoons, set traps in attics near entry points or along travel paths. Another good choice is to place and secure traps on the roof. This keeps them out of reach of people and pets. It also provides the technician complete access to the traps at all times.

Some other trapping tips include:

- Place traps out of direct sun. If you must place a trap in the sun, then provide a trap cover to shade the animal. This will also protect the animal from rain or snow.

- Stabilize trap at all times. It should not move when the animal enters.

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• Use the correct number of traps to match the pest problem. You will save time and money every time.

• Put leaves or grass on the floor of the trap. Animals will be more comfortable touching this natural material vs. the metal

wire. This is critical when dealing with groundhogs.

• In the attic, secure the trap and place

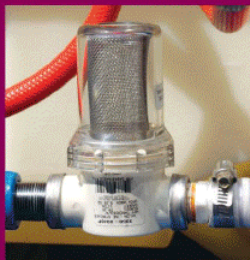
BIOLOGY OF COMMON NUISANCE ANIMALS

SPECIES	PRIMARY ACTIVITY PERIOD	BODY LENGTH	BODY WEIGHT	LITTERS PER YEAR	TIME OF BIRTH	LITTER SIZE	AGE OF INDEPENDENCE
OPOSSUM	Night	26-28 inches	2-12 pounds	1-2	Feb. to Oct.	5-13	12-14 weeks
RACCOON	Night	24-46 inches	12-25 pounds	1	April to May	3-6	10-14 weeks
SPOTTED SKUNK	Night	12-14 inches	1-2 pounds	1-2	May to June; Sept. to Oct.	2-6	7-9 weeks
STRIPED SKUNK	Night	19-24 inches	2-6 pounds	1	May to June	2-10	7-9 weeks
FLYING SQUIRREL	Night	8-10 inches	2-4 ounces	2	March to April; Aug. to Oct.	3-8	10-12 weeks
GRAY SQUIRREL	Day	15-19 inches	0.8-1.3 pounds	2	Feb. to March; June to Aug.	1-5	10-12 weeks
RED SQUIRREL	Day	10-15 inches	5-10 ounces	2	March to May; Aug. to Oct.	3-8	10-12 weeks
WOODCHUCK	Day	18-27 inches	7-12 pounds	1	March to April	3-8	8-10 weeks

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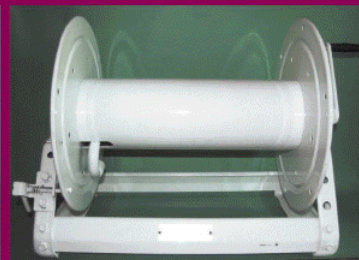
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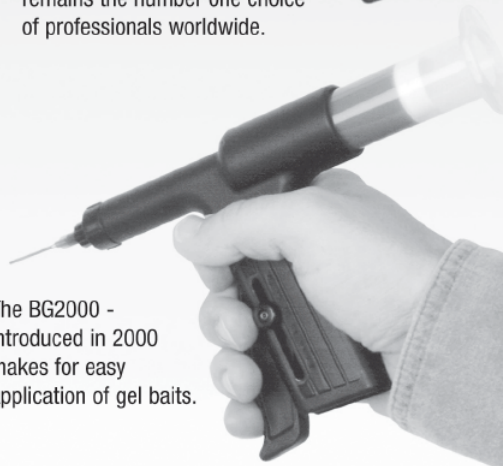
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WILDLIFE CONTROL

a piece of plywood under it. This prevents the animal from doing damage such as scratching or grabbing and destroying insulation. Do the same when placing the trap outdoors on the ground to prevent soil from being brought into the trap or damage to the lawn.

- For raccoons, set the trap inside an overturned garbage pail so they feel comfortable. This works great if they are raiding garbage pails.

- Whenever possible, keep traps out of public view to prevent trap theft, tampering or release of animals.

- For skunks, always place traps so they can be easily retrieved once you have a catch. After capturing a skunk, do the following to prevent being sprayed: Slowly approach the trap holding a blanket in front of your feet and legs. At the same time talk nicely to the skunk. You want to let the animal know you're approaching rather than surprise it. Once at the trap cover it with the blanket to provide security to the animal and prevent the skunk from spraying.

- Prebait traps when you have a trap shy or a difficult-to-capture animal. To prebait, just wire the trap door in the open position to allow the animal to enter, take the bait and leave. Prebait twice and then set your trap the third time to capture.

BAITS. Selecting the correct bait or lure is also critical to success.

Raccoons like sardines, cat food, marshmallows and grape jelly on bread. By using marshmallows or grape jelly, you will not catch the neighbor's cat. Skunks love greasy chicken bones, bacon or smoked fish. Squirrels go for peanut butter on bread with broken peanuts or walnuts leading them into the trap. Groundhogs like cabbage, sweet corn and peanut butter on bread. If these food baits don't work then invest in some of the commercially available lures and they will do the trick.

Placement of your bait is also critical. Place your bait at the rear of the trap and elevate it off the ground to provide a clear scent line.

THE REWARDS. The need for nuisance animal control services is growing. As development continues, more and more people have conflicts and interaction with wildlife. The business is rewarding when performed in a professional and efficient manner. The true reward comes from working with wildlife and satisfying the customer. It's an opportunity and natural add-on service for any existing pest control business as long as you are dedicated and willing to outfit and educate yourself properly. 🦋

The author is sales manager, professional products, Woodstream Corp. He can be reached at mgoldstein@giemedia.com.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

There are state and national wildlife control associations you can join if you're interested in learning more about nuisance wildlife control. One national association is the National Animal Damage Control Association (nadca.unl.edu). Another is the National Wildlife Control Operators Association (www.NWCOA.com). The National Pest Management Association (www.pestworld.org) provides support also.

An excellent online resource is the Internet Center for Wildlife Damage Management from the University of Nebraska. Information is available on CD or book form by contacting the university at wildlifedamage.unl.edu.

There is also a trade magazine devoted to wildlife control: Wildlife Control Technology (www.wctech.com).