

## **Coyotes**

The coyote is generally a slender animal, very similar in appearance to a medium-sized dog and much smaller than a wolf, a species not currently found in Ohio. The majority of coyotes are gray, though some show rusty, brown or off-white coloration. It has a bushy tail which is usually tipped with black. Coyotes are most active at dawn and dusk, but may be seen frequently throughout the day.

### **What to Do if a Coyote is in Your Backyard**

1. Understand that coyotes are common throughout Ohio's 88 counties in both rural and urban settings. There are no wild wolves living in Ohio.
2. Identify that the canine is truly a coyote and not a stray dog. If you determine the animal is a stray dog, contact your animal warden.
3. If you do have a coyote on your property, remove all "attractants" to possibly deter the coyote from returning. This includes removing garbage and pet food before nightfall and cleaning up around the grill. Coyotes prey primarily on small mammals, such as rabbits and mice. Small pets may also be taken. Keep small dogs and cats inside. Coyotes are curious, but generally fearful of humans. Clap your hands and shout in a stern voice to scare off coyotes that are investigating your yard.
4. If the coyote visiting your yard seems to lack a fear of humans or is presenting a conflict even after removing attractants from your yard, contact **Strongsville Animal Control Officer Keaton at (440) 580-3180**.

## **Raccoons**

Raccoons are well adapted to urban living. Raccoon damage typically involves raiding gardens, upsetting trash cans and taking up residence in chimneys, attics or other unwanted areas. Control is not difficult, but requires persistence.

Garden fruits and vegetables can be very appealing and accessible to raccoons. For smaller garden plots, a single strand of electric fence can be strung eight inches above the ground.

An inexpensive radio that is turned on, placed under a garbage can and left in the garden overnight, will also often discourage raccoons from approaching.

The easiest solution for garbage can raids is to store the cans inside the garage or a shed overnight. Raccoons may also be repelled by coating the outside of the can with a weak solution of cayenne pepper in water or by placing a small dish of ammonia in the bottom of an empty can.

Uncapped chimneys are appealing nest den sites to raccoons. When this occurs they may be evicted by noise, combined with bright lights or a pan of ammonia sealed in the fireplace. Once the raccoon vacates the chimney, install a chimney cap. Identify and seal other attic entries after evicting the

raccoon. Overhanging tree limbs provide easy access to your roof. Inspect your house and trim tree limbs where needed.

Occasionally raccoons will enter a house through a pet door. Since they can cause considerable damage if panicked, it is advisable to quietly open windows and doors through which the animal may exit and close doors that provide access to other parts of the house, before leaving the room. Wait quietly for the animal to escape.

Raccoons can transmit rabies, canine distemper, and parvovirus to domestic animals and humans. You should avoid any raccoon that is active during daylight hours, has lost its fear of humans, or appears uncoordinated, confused or listless. If you encounter such an animal, report these observations to the District Office; if exposed to a potentially sick animal, contact your local Health Department and/or your personal physician.

Nuisance or sick raccoons may be trapped without a permit, but it is illegal to live trap and relocate them to a new area. In order to prevent the possible spread of raccoon diseases in Ohio, all live trapped raccoons must be released again on the homeowner's property or humanely euthanized. Consult Strongsville [Animal Control Officer Keaton @ 580-3180](#) for more information.

### **Skunks & Opossums**

Skunks and opossums seldom cause damage to property other than raiding garbage or eating pet food. They sometimes reside under buildings or in rock and wood piles. Discourage visits by taking appropriate precautions:

In confined spaces skunks or opossums may be driven away by placing an ammonia-soaked towel in the den.

Install a one-way door until you are sure the animal(s) have left, then permanently seal the entrance.

An animal that becomes trapped in a window well will climb out if you place a rough board in the well that extends to the top.

If an animal gets into the house, open a door and calmly allow it to exit.

Never chase or excite a skunk.

### **Squirrels**

Squirrels are never found far from the shelter provided by trees. They are opportunistic foragers feeding on acorns, nuts, fruits, berries, corn, fungi, flower bulbs, and bird seed. They readily adapt to suburban and urban areas.

Chasing a frantic squirrel inside your house can result in additional damage. If a squirrel is trapped, open a door or window, block off the room it is in and quietly wait for the squirrel to exit. Once the squirrel is gone, identify where the squirrel entered and seal the access. If the squirrel is in the fireplace, close the

damper, block off the room and open an exterior door or window to provide an escape route for the squirrel.

Squirrels trapped inside the chimney flue can be freed by closing the damper and lowering a 1/2-inch diameter rope into the chimney from the roof. The rope must be long enough to reach down to the damper. Anchor the upper end and wait for the squirrel to climb out, then cover the chimney. Before evicting a resident squirrel from the attic determine if young are in the nest and where the female's entrance is located. If there are no young, scare the squirrel out by banging on the rafters inside the attic or wait until the squirrel leaves for the day.

Seal the entrance with 1/4- inch hardware cloth or with sheet metal. Extend the seal at least six inches beyond the hole. If young are present, locate the entrance and install a one-way door until all have left the nest, then proceed as previously described.

### **Canada Geese**

Canada geese are probably the most adaptable and tolerant of all native waterfowl. If left undisturbed, they will readily establish nesting territories on any suitable pond, be it located on a farm, backyard, golf course, apartment or condominium complex, or city park.

Most people will welcome and start feeding the first pair of geese on their pond, but these geese will soon wear out their welcome. In just a few years, a pair of geese can easily become 50 to 100 birds. The feces will foul the areas around the pond and surrounding yards and also damage the lawn, pond, and other vegetation. Geese that are fed will lose their fear of humans and attack adults, children, and pets during the nesting season (March through June). **DO NOT FEED GEESE.** Feeding bread, corn, potato chips, popcorn, and other human food items harms the geese and sets the scene for goose attacks on people.

Canada geese are protected under both the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Ohio state law. This protection extends to the geese, goslings, nests, and eggs. Non-lethal scare and hazing tactics, which do not harm the geese, are allowed. These tactics include: pyrotechnics, dogs, barriers, a grid on the pond, laser pointers (at night), distress calls, or grape-flavored repellents such as Flight Control.

If non-lethal tactics have been used in the past, without success, the Division of Wildlife may issue a lethal permit to allow the landowner to destroy nests, conduct a goose roundup, or shoot geese. These permits can only be used March 11 through August 31. Hunting in the fall, outside city limits, is also a good method to reduce the goose population, feed people, and further scare the geese away.

Landowners should consult with **Strongsville Animal Control Officer Keaton at (440) 580-3180** for more Information.

### **Groundhogs**

Groundhogs, also known as woodchucks, usually are viewed as a nuisance animal for homeowners and farmers. The major problems that they cause are the large holes they dig and the damage that occurs

from this animal. Their holes can be 8-12 inches in size. This animal creates two, sometimes three holes, with a large tunnel system that runs from one hole to the next. They usually will have a large mound of dirt in front of the hole called a porch. Groundhogs use this to stand high to get a good view of their surroundings before making their move to venture around. Farmers get crop damage to corn, soybeans, and other crops planted in fields. Groundhog dens are a major concern for farmers because of the large tunnel system they build under the ground. Farmers have been known to sink tractor tires in the ground because of the big hole that lies below the surface of the field. Most home owners deal with groundhogs denning under their porch or shed, and damaging their gardens. A den that is built next to a building or house can cause structural damage as their burrows can weaken foundation. Contrary to what most people believe, groundhogs will climb trees. Tree nurseries can face problems with them gnawing on their ornamental or fruit bearing trees. Other wildlife such as fox or skunks will take over groundhog holes when left vacant.

If you are dealing with a nuisance groundhog on your property there are a few things you can try to prevent damage. Placing fencing around the garden or underneath your porch is a way to keep them out. However, groundhogs are good climbers and diggers. Fences should be at least 3 feet tall and made of heavy, thick wire such as hardware cloth. Burying the lower portion of the fence into the ground at least a foot should help to prevent them from digging underground. At tree nurseries, placing metal flashing or tree guards around the trees at least 3 feet high will prevent wildlife from stripping the bark and destroying the trees. Once a groundhog is present and living on your property, they are hard to get to move along. The best way to get rid of them is to physically remove them. Nuisance groundhogs can be live trapped and relocated with permission of the landowner. If you choose not to relocate the groundhog, they can either be released on site where the animal was originally trapped or you may humanely kill it. Refer to the American Veterinary Medical Association for guidelines on euthanasia. Landowners who chose to set traps themselves to catch groundhogs should remember that they are responsible for the animal in the trap. Each trap must be labeled with your name and address, checked every 24 hours, and animals removed within 24 hours of being trapped. This is especially important to note when you are trapping within city limits. If you are trapping within city limits, you should always check with [Strongsville Animal Control Officer Keaton AT \(440\) 580-3180](#) to determine if there are any ordinances governing trapping.

### **General Prevention**

Don't feed wildlife. If you choose to feed songbirds, place the feeder where it is inaccessible to other wildlife species.

Use a feeder with a gravity-operated treadle to discourage squirrels, and don't let spilled food accumulate.

Trim tree branches that extend over your roof or install a three-foot-wide band of sheet metal (six feet above the ground) around the trunks of trees which overhang your house. This will reduce the access raccoons have to your roof.

Cover window wells with grates, bubbles or hardware cloth.

Keep pet food inside.

Seal up holes around and under home foundations.

Bury 1/4-inch mesh hardware cloth one to two feet deep in places where animals might gain access through digging.

Store garbage in metal or plastic containers with tight-fitting lids. Keep the containers in the garage or shed and put trash out only when it is scheduled for pick up.

Fence gardens and cover fruit trees and berry bushes with netting. Screen fireplace chimneys and furnaces (from February to September) as well as attic and dryer vents. Keep dampers closed when not in use (consult a knowledgeable source to prevent fire or safety hazards).

Decks built less than two feet off the ground should have 1/4-inch mesh hardware cloth nailed from the top of the outside joists to the bottom of a 10-inch trench, leaving about six to eight inches of extra hardware cloth at the bottom to form an L-shape. Wooden lattice can be added for aesthetics.

Seal all holes and cracks in your foundation, siding or stucco that are larger than 3/8 inch wide to keep rats, mice, bats, and snakes out. Common entry points include chimneys; gaps around window air conditioners, water pipes or electric outlets; openings in interior walls that lead to the attic or ceiling; loose or shrunken siding boards; and loose vent covers.

Repair broken, weak or rotted areas on the roof, soffit and fascia of your house.

Mark large windows with strips of white tape or raptor (hawk) silhouettes to avert birds from flying into the window.