

Assistance with Nuisance Wildlife

Becky McPeake

Professor and Extension Wildlife Specialist

Several options are available for anyone who has problems with wildlife in the state. These can range from advice over the phone, a site visit by a professional, or permits for removing nuisance animals. Options vary by species and the problems they cause.

The newest option for assistance is a 24/7 hotline at **833-345-0315** for guidance and assistance. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission in partnership with the USDA Wildlife Services Program is offering this service. The hotline provides “a streamlined response to public reports of the occasional wild animal that poses a threat to people, livestock and property.” The hotline currently features selections for alligators, bears, and all other requests.

For those needing help with common wildlife removals around their home and garden, options include hiring a professional or doing it yourself. A list of [Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators](#) is available at the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission’s website. Those who want to tackle the problem themselves can check the UA Cooperative Extension Service’s website [Dealing With Wildlife](#), or the [Nuisance Wildlife](#) website at the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.

For certain species which pose a threat to people, livestock, or property, no permit is necessary to shoot them during daylight hours or trap them. This includes a limited list of nongame wildlife (such as moles), beaver, muskrat, nutria, coyote, opossum, raccoon, squirrel, or striped skunk. When conducting these activities at night, a Depredation Permit is required. Contacting your local wildlife officer is advisable to alert them about your activity and especially if it is a nongame animal to verify the legality of your activity. You might also want to take a few pictures to document their damage as evidence.

- Some bird species which are damaging agricultural crops or personal property may be taken. Call the hotline 833-345-0315 or USDA APHIS Wildlife Services (501-835-2318) about options.
- According to the [Code of Regulations](#) (See Section 05.10), bats which have bitten or otherwise potentially exposed a human, pet, or livestock to rabies may be killed provided that they are submitted to the Arkansas Department of Health for rabies testing. Call the hotline 833-345-0315 for additional information.
- Live trapping and removing nuisance animals is legal according to the [Code of Regulations](#) (See Section 05.10). Property owners or someone they designate can use live traps to remove nuisance wildlife. These animals must be released unharmed on private land with the landowner’s permission in the county of capture, or an adjacent county, outside the municipalities’ boundaries within 24 hours. Such trapping must be conducted in accordance with local ordinances or statutes.

Note that some research indicates predators which fear people and cause no problems can help protect crops, livestock, and other property. Wildlife such as coyotes will defend their territory against others of their kind. If a coyote isn’t causing problems, their removal opens a habitat vacancy, which their successor may cause damage. Therefore, it is not advisable to shoot or trap a predator just because it is there. “Hazing” such wildlife to fear people and livestock is

recommended when given the opportunity. This can include making loud noises, installing electric fences with flagging, or other deterrents. However, sometimes lethal removal of animals is the only option once they learn and continue to cause damage to crops, livestock, or other property. Feeding wildlife is never advised and should be avoided. An example are black bears once they learn that pet food or table scraps are an easy source. Unfortunately, “a fed bear is a dead bear,” as one which loses its fear of people becomes a threat and cannot be “untrained.”

A Depredation Permit issued by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission enables those with agriculture crop damage, loss of livestock, or other property damage to take game and nongame animals by shooting during the day or night or with trapping. The landowner needs to contact the nearest Arkansas Game and Fish Commission regional office to obtain one. The user must have a hunting license. Call the state Arkansas Game and Fish Commission office for the regional office nearest you (833-345-0325).

A [Predator Control Permit](#) aids landowners in the management of bobwhites, wild turkey, and other prey species from predation by bobcats, coyotes, foxes, opossums, raccoons, or striped skunks. Note that wildlife scientists recommend that improving habitat for prey species such as bobwhites and wild turkey is more effective than simply removing these predators. Without adequate food and cover, wildlife populations cannot be sustained regardless of the presence or lack of predators. Applicants must possess appropriate permits such as a Resident Trapper Permit, and must be the owner, immediate family of the owner, lessee, or have written permission from the landowner for this permit to be valid.

If black vultures are a problem, a [Black Vulture Depredation Permit](#) is available as a sub-permit from the Arkansas Farm Bureau. Black vultures are a protected migratory bird species which can sometimes prey upon livestock, and in particular vulnerable cows and their calves when birthing. Interested livestock producers who apply for a sub-permit must agree to follow permit requirements. The application will be reviewed within two business days and an initial three “takes” may be issued. All approved applicants are required to report the date and number of birds killed and follow protocols for the Arkansas Farm Bureau to continue performing this service.

Rules and regulations do change, and local laws can take precedence over state or federal laws, so it is best to start by calling the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission’s hotline and local authorities particularly about legal methods before removing wildlife. Contact your state specialist Becky McPeake at 501-671-2285 or RMcPeake@uada.edu if you have specific questions or would like to brainstorm ideas regarding particular strategies.