

Common mistakes to avoid in vertebrate pest management

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For the most part, people and wildlife tend to get along. However, when the occasional conflict occurs, here are some common mistakes to avoid.

Mistake #1: having pet food, table scraps, or other attractants available to wildlife. Be proactive and avoid attracting wildlife to easy food sources, whether accidentally or purposefully. For example, don't feed corn to deer at the back of your property and expect them to stay away from your yard. Take down bird feeders for a while if raccoons or squirrels become too pesky.

Mistake #2: not properly identifying the culprit. It is important to identify the animal causing the problem, because control methods can differ. For example, different trap types and sizes are available for controlling moles versus pocket gophers. If plants are being nipped, installing a 2" x 4" welded wire fence may keep out deer but not cottontails.

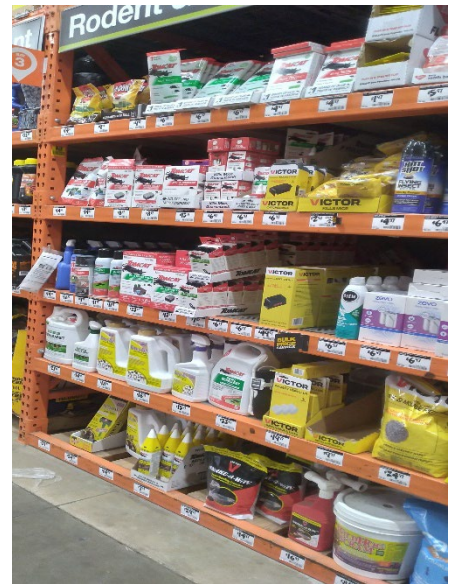
Mistake #3: using only one type of control method. Studies indicate using multiple methods can be more effective than a single method. For example, if deer are eating plants in the yard, use both fencing (exclusion) and repellents. If squirrels are in the bird feeder, trap and relocate them where legal (population control), and sprinkle hot pepper on the seeds to make them less attractive (repellent).

Mistake #4: setting the trap where it is convenient. If armadillos are causing problems, don't set the trap in the middle of the yard. Place the trap alongside a fence or building where armadillos are funneled into the trap naturally. For rats and mice, set two snap traps side by side with the triggers facing the wall where rodents are most likely to travel.

Mistake #5: purchasing an ultrasonic device to repel vertebrate pests. For many years, marketers have promoted using devices which emit sounds purportedly heard only by the intended animal (e.g., moles, gophers, rats, mice, deer, squirrels, skunks, birds, feral hogs) which causes them to leave. However, no reputable studies have shown these devices to be effective.

Mistake #6: using toxicants to control wildlife. Toxicants can be purchased in stores or online but are illegal to use in Arkansas except for rats and mice around homes. Even then, using toxicants for rats and mice can be problematic. Toxicants can harm or kill non-target species including pets which consume the bait or a weakened poisoned animal.

Mistake #7: being unfamiliar with laws and regulations governing nuisance wildlife. Before conducting some options such as live trapping or electric fencing, check with your homeowner's association and/or city ordinances to make sure these are in compliance. For questions regarding nuisance wildlife including state and federal regulations, call the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's nuisance wildlife hotline at 833-345-0315, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Many products are available commercially for addressing wildlife problems, however their effectiveness and even legality is sometimes questionable. Photo credit: Becky McPeake

For more information, check out our "Dealing with Wildlife" website at <https://www.uaex.uada.edu/environment-nature/wildlife/dealing-with-wildlife/>.