

RACCOON & SKUNK DETERRENTS

Hundreds of different species of animals coexist in the hillsides and open fields of our communities. As we bulldoze and cement these areas to make room for more homes and bigger roads, animals of all types: skunks, raccoons, opossums, feral cats, mice, foxes, gophers, lizards and dozens more are displaced and involuntarily forced to live among us.

It is time we lived peacefully with the new wave of immigrants. With a little patience, a good dose of compassion, some old fashioned common sense and a few simple and non-lethal tricks, you will be able to keep your garden intact, the garbage lid on, and get a good night's sleep.



How to Evict



Locate a skunk or raccoon's entryways and close off all but one. One exit must remain open for the animal to make his final getaway. If you are unsure of the animal's entryway, spread baking soda or cornstarch around likely places. Skunks and raccoons are nocturnal and will leave tracks upon returning to the den. A skunk or raccoon living in your chimney will leave sooty paw prints on downspouts and trim. Check for animal hairs on the edge of holes on roofs and foundations to determine their use as possible entryways and exits.



If the raccoon or skunk is living in the chimney, **DO NOT SMOKE THEM OUT.** Both adults and their young may die of smoke inhalation.



To eliminate the darkness favored by these animals, light the den continuously. A common household flashlight should do the trick.



Disturb the den with noise during the day, such as a radio with music near the den entrance.



Dens under porches or stairs may be dampened (NOT FLOODED) with a hose at night when the animals are out.

Infants in the Den – Special Steps to Take:



Follow suggestions above but allow mothers to evacuate their young. This may take up to one week.



Check the den every evening between 8-11 pm. When you are certain raccoons and skunks of all ages have, seal the remaining entryway.



Never approach a den where the mother is present with her young. If she feels compelled to defend her offspring, a mother raccoon or skunk can be dangerous. If the single remaining entryway to a den is closed off with the babies in it and the mother is absent, the mother will stop at nothing to return to her young. They may cause severe damage to the building by chewing, clawing and/or digging her way back to her babies. In addition to the noise and destruction these activities cause, they are extremely inhumane. If a mother is unsuccessful in returning to the den, the infant carcasses can ultimately cause problems such as attracting rodents and other scavengers.

An Extra Note of Caution:



Before you seal up cracks and crevices, be sure no animals will be trapped inside your home. When you are closing a hole, a good way to make sure the premises are empty before sealing is to sprinkle a layer of flour on the area outside the opening. Once you see a set of footprints in the flour that face away from the opening, you know your tenant is out and about and it is safe to proceed. You should avoid sealing holes in the spring and summer when animals are raising their offspring, unless you are absolutely certain that there are no babies inside. If you cannot be certain, wait to take action until any possible youngsters are grown and have struck out on their own.

How to Discourage Raccoons and Skunks In and Around the Yard

-  If raccoons or skunks are digging up your lawn in pursuit of insects, spread cayenne pepper over the area and install pinwheels to scare them.
-  If the unwanted animals are crawling through grass, spray the grass with vegetable oil. The fastidious creatures do not like to get their coats oily.
-  Secure all garbage cans with “bungee cords”. Use metal trash cans since they are impervious to chewing.
-  Rubber snakes or 18” pieces of black hose placed near the area are effective because they capitalize on the animals’ fear of their natural predator. (Do not suspend from a tree, as snakes do not naturally hang).
-  Bury several empty soda bottles (mouth up) in the ground. As wind blows over them, they create an eerie sound inaudible to humans but very annoying to skunks and raccoons.
-  On nights when the moon is full, fill a large clear jar or jug with water and place it in the area favored by the raccoon or skunk. Water reflected in the moonlight frightens this normally bold animal.
-  Remove all pet food, especially at night. If your neighbors are leaving pet food out as well, ask for their cooperation in this matter.
-  Wild animals are suspicious of moving things. From string, or a clothing line strung across a fence, hang balloons, strips of cloth or aluminum foil. These will frighten the animals and encourage them to leave the area.
-  If the raccoon is trapped inside a dumpster or similar container, leave a large stick in the container as an exit. Leave the area and come back later to make sure the animal has climbed out.

Prevention

-  Remove or cover all possible food sources. Seal food in tightly closed containers of glass or metal.
-  Screen all attic, porch and foundation vents with heavy duty wire mesh. Hardware cloth bent into an ‘L’ shape will discourage tunneling under repairs. Close off areas beneath porches or under crawl spaces.
-  Prune or remove trees limbs hanging over the roof; cut back vines clinging to walls and trees. Remove any unnecessary clutter from your property such as old newspapers and woodpiles.

Ideas That Do NOT Work

Trapping and killing skunks and raccoons is illegal in many communities. Trapping and killing is also ineffective because it does not address the animal’s presence (i.e. habitat, food source, etc.).

Trapping and relocating these animals is also often a death sentence for them. Almost half of all raccoons that are relocated die within the first three months.



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