

CRITTER PROOFING YOUR HOME AND YARD

Securing Your Home

Go over the entire home, checking all openings where wildlife may find an opportunity to enter your home.

Chimneys: Make sure your chimneys are securely capped with hardware cloth that has been bolted down. Remember, raccoons have little "hands" that can easily dislodge loose screens or covers. If your chimney is not capped, check with area chimney sweeps or roofing companies to have this done.

If an animal is already living in your chimney **DO NOT TRY TO SMOKE IT OUT!** Lighting a fire in your fireplace may overcome the animal and cause it to drop into the fire. Instead, place a dish of ammonia inside the base of the chimney and open the damper 1/2 inch. The ammonia vapors will force the occupants of your chimney to leave.

Attics: Check vents, gables and eaves to be sure screens have not been torn away. To repair holes in walls or torn screens use mortar or metal hardware cloth at least 26 gauge in thickness. Tack down hardware cloth securely.

If the animal has gained entry into your attic repair the opening where the animal gained entry to your home. Make sure all young animals are out of your attic before you close the entry way. Ammonia will induce the animals to leave but are not a permanent solution to the problem.

Dryer vents and exhaust fans: Make sure screening is securely fastened around these areas. Use heavy screen or metal hardware cloth of at least 26 gauge in thickness. Clear out any nests prior to screening to prevent fires.

Pipes entering homes: Check areas where pipes enter homes. If there is any space between the pipe and wall, stuff with coarse copper wool. This will also work in bat proofing your home as bats can enter through very small openings.

Outside of home: Eliminate access to your home by pruning tree branches that overhang roofs. Tacking sheet metal around areas where animals tend to climb will prevent the animals from getting footing they need to go up walls and trees.

Securing your yard

Garbage cans: Never place plastic bags in your yard. They can easily be shredded by dogs, cats, raccoons, skunks and opossums. Massachusetts law requires that garbage must be placed in watertight, rodent and insect proof containers with tight fitting lids. It is recommended that garbage not be placed on the curb until the day of pickup. Tie lids of garbage cans down with straps or chains and attach them to the handles of the cans.

To further discourage animals such as raccoons and opossums from entering garbage cans, try the following suggestions:

1. Add a rag soaked with ammonia to the garbage each time you add a load of trash to the can.
2. Sprinkle the contents of the can with cayenne pepper.

Gardens:

1. Sprinkle your plants with Epsom salts. Animals find it distasteful as it causes them to have a stomach ache or diarrhea. It also adds magnesium to the soil and will make your plants greener.
2. Place a rag soaked in ammonia on posts placed at various intervals around the garden. The odor is enough to deter most "visitors to the garden".

Protecting your pet

1. Never feed your pet outdoors. Food left in dishes in the yard attracts all sorts of wild animals and insects. If you cannot feed your pet indoors, make sure all uneaten food is removed. Feed only during daylight hours and supervise your pet while it eats.
2. Make sure your pet is current on its rabies shots. As of February 24, 1993 cats are also required to be inoculated against rabies.
3. Try to keep your pet indoors at night. Since raccoons are nocturnal and roam for food in the evening, your pet stands a greater chance of encountering wildlife in the evening than during the day.
4. Don't scatter food for birds or squirrels in your yard. This will attract all sorts of "Beasties". Place bird food in proper receptacles.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT TRAPPING.....

Although trapping may seem to be the ideal solution to dealing with "problem animals"; the following facts must first be considered:

1. Raccoons usually travel and live in groups. Although you may catch one or two in a trap, there are usually more in a neighborhood.
2. Sick raccoons will rarely be attracted to the food in a trap and are usually too disoriented to even enter the trap.
3. By trapping scores of healthy raccoons and subsequently destroying them, more room is available for sick raccoons to move in and take over your backyard.

4. During the height of a rabies epidemic, 30% to 50% of the raccoons may carry serum neutralizing antibodies (be immune to rabies) and can therefore be considered harmless to the community.
5. Trapping healthy raccoons or those with the serum neutralizing antibodies can create a rebound phenomenon. Trapping can actually prolong rabies outbreaks among raccoons.
6. In Massachusetts, the law requires that trapped animals must be either released at point of capture or humanely destroyed. The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife requires permits/licensing of private persons who trap and remove "problem wildlife" for a fee. A list of permit holders is available from the Division at (978) 263-4347.

Not all wild animals harbor the rabies virus. The animals that are the primary carriers of rabies in Massachusetts are raccoons, skunks, foxes and bats. But not all raccoons have rabies. To protect your family and your pets from rabies keep the following in mind:

1. Don't feed any wild animals except birds. Only feed birds in the proper feeders.
2. Keep food supplies protected. Tie down garbage cans and lids if necessary to keep out raccoons, opossums and rats.
3. If you see a normally nocturnal animal, such as a raccoon, out during the day and acting abnormally, moving slowly and erratically, appearing overly friendly or lethargic, or exhibiting obvious signs of illness call the Brookline Police Department immediately. Make sure someone stays in visual contact with the animal at all times.
4. If you are bitten by an animal, wash the wound in warm water and soap for at least 10 minutes and then contact your physician immediately.
5. Keep your pets indoors as much as possible. Walk your dog on a leash. Make sure dog and cat rabies vaccinations are current.

For more information on rabies or any wild animal problem call the Town of Milton Animal Control Office at 617-698-0455 or the Milton Board of Health at 617-696-5170. We will be happy to assist you with the problem.

ABOUT THIS BROCHURE-..

This brochure was adapted and updated from a document produced by The Animal Welfare League of Arlington, Virginia with assistance from Guy Hodge of the Humane Society of the United States.