

## COEXISTING WITH WILDLIFE

Wildlife populations and/or nuisance activity relates directly to the availability of food, water and shelter. The key to preventing conflicts and/or costly repairs to your home is removing food attractants and taking some simple steps to protect your home.

### **Why Not Humanely Trap and Re-locate Wildlife?**

Provincial law prohibits the relocation of wildlife beyond 1 km and without removing food attractants or making repairs to your home another animal will fill the vacancy and become a nuisance. Trapping is not only ineffective it may also cause animals to suffer. Trapping and relocating a nursing mother will cause her young to die and relocating an animal in the fall or winter may cause that animal to starve. Studies have shown that many relocated animals die and relocation has also been linked to the spread of disease, like rabies. Finally, traps can catch non-target wildlife and if you cause an animal to suffer or die during the trapping process you could face criminal charges of animal cruelty.

Here are some simple tips to reduce nuisance wildlife activity and protect your home.

## REMOVE FOOD ATTRACTIONS

**GARBAGE** *Attracts both mammals and birds, including coyotes, raccoons, skunks, rodents and more.*

- Keep garbage in wildlife proof containers and place at curb on morning of collection
- Report dumping of garbage, feeding of wildlife or property standards issues

**YARD COMPOST** *Improper composting can lead to rodent infestations and nuisance wildlife*

- Screen bottom of your composter with 16 gauge steel mesh (1cm mesh max) to prevent burrowing rodents
- Secure with a lid or cover
- Do not compost meat or palatable human food
- Layer with grass clippings, leaves and dirt to accelerate decomposition

**GARDENS and FLOWERS** *Gardens and flowers will attract wildlife naturally such as rabbits, deer and squirrels*

- Fence gardens to prevent burrowing animals if permitted
- Install motion sensor sprinkler
- Make flowers and vegetables unpalatable with a natural and safe repellent
- Place wildlife deterrent mats in the garden
- Install permanent mesh over bare soil in the spring will prevent digging but allows plants to grow

**DIGGING OF LAWNS** *Grubs are a favourite of raccoons and skunks and digging usually occurs in spring/fall during wet season when grubs are close to the surface of the lawn and actively eating the roots of the grass.*

- Consider letting the animals mechanically rid your lawn of grubs and re-seed/sod afterwards
- Speak to garden experts about what type of grubs you have and how to establish an effective grub prevention program – grubs can take several years to eradicate
- Try deterrents when grubs are active such as motion sensor sprinklers, wildlife deterrent mats, blood meal fertilizer, a radio playing on a talk station with sweaty clothing or human hair nearby, “pure” soap flakes watered into the lawn

**FRUIT TREES** *Fruit and nut trees can attract raccoons, skunks, squirrels, birds, foxes, coyotes and deer.*

- Try natural and safe repellents applied on the fruit
- Remove windfalls daily
- Wrap tree trunks to prevent climbing – must be smooth and tall wrap

**DECORATIVE PONDS** *Decorative ponds attract raccoons, skunks, beavers, muskrats, herons, rodents and herons as a water and food source.*

- Try deterrents such as motion sensor sprinklers, wildlife deterrent mats, radio playing on a talk station with sweaty clothing and or human hair in the location
- Netting may be useful but animals may become tangled or injured

### **BBQ'S**

- Clean grease tray and drippings after every use
- Remove BBQ utensils and food, periodically check under BBQ cover for wildlife activity

**BIRD OR WILD ANIMAL FEEDING** *Bird feeding can attract rodents and predators like foxes and coyotes.*

- Limit the use of bird feeders to winter months, try planting natural attractants for summer months
- Bird feeders must be elevated off of ground, preferably away from decks
- Remove seed spillage daily or prevent seed spillage
- Discontinue bird feeding if rats or mice are present
- Feed pets indoors or remove uneaten food immediately
- DO NOT FEED WILDLIFE or throw table scraps outdoors, this is prohibited under the Animal Care and Control By-law 0098-04 Part IV Section 10.

## THINGS YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOUR HOME

**HOUSE EXTERIOR** Semi-annual inspections should be part of regular home maintenance. Inspect your house exterior regularly for defects or damage. Here are some key areas that deserve special attention.

**CHIMNEY** *Raccoons may nest in chimneys, squirrels and birds become trapped and will die if not released*

- Install chimney caps made of 16 gauge steel mesh, they should be tightfitting, no gaps, a squirrel can squeeze through a one inch gap
- Check the cap annually for damage or gaps, replace if failing
- Check chimney flashing – replace missing or damaged pieces

**ROOF** *Raccoons look for damaged shingles and rotted wood to gain easy access to attics*

- Inspect shingles annually - replace any curled or loose shingles
- Replace roof deck where rotted – raccoons can locate rotted wood under new shingles
- If it is not possible to replace wood right away, install 16 gauge steel mesh inside the attic over these areas. The mesh must extend well beyond the rotted area and be secure enough that it cannot be ripped away.

**ROOF VENTS** *Raccoons and squirrels may damage or remove roof vents to gain access into attics*

- Install 16 gauge, tight mesh steel inside the attic under each vent, it should reach well beyond the vent hole.

**SOFFIT, FACIA AND EAVES TROUGH** *Raccoons and squirrels look for rot, damage or unsecure soffit to gain access into attics*

- Clean eaves troughs regularly to prevent water damage to soffit and fascia
- Repair/replace rotted or damaged wood, animals can detect rot and will chew to gain access
- Check for gaps or holes around corners of the roof, particularly where roof sections meet, fill gaps if necessary
- Secure loose soffit with screws or screen area with mesh if you cannot secure soffit due to location

**BATHROOM, KITCHEN AND DRYER VENTS** *Cavity nesting birds such as starlings and sparrows look for vents to make their nests. Squirrels may gain access into the home through an unscreened vent.*

- Screen vents with 16 gauge steel mesh
- Use caution with dryer vents as improper or plugged screens create a fire hazard

**LIGHT FIXTURES AND PLANTERS** *Birds like to build nests around light fixtures. Planters are great attractions for raccoons, squirrels, nesting birds and rabbits.*

- Inspect light fixtures and planters in early spring, screen areas where possible
- If nest is present, simply wait a few weeks until babies have left the site

**WINDOW WELLS** *Skunks fall in and cannot climb out, raccoons may use them as a latrine or nesting site.*

- Screen with 16 gauge steel mesh or cover with window well cover

**TREES, VINES, T.V. ANTENNAS** *Wildlife can use all of these as ladders onto your roof.*

- Remove old TV towers if not in use
- Trim tree branches at least 15' away from home or roof
- Try to minimize climbing vines on your home

**GARAGE** *Wildlife looks for opportunities an open garage door is an invitation to wander inside.*

- Keep garage door closed both day and night
- Repair damage, replace draft guards if necessary

**DECKS and ENTRANCE AREAS** *Decks or porches are a favourite, hiding and denning location for wildlife.*

- If deck is 3' off of the ground or higher, this is usually too open for wildlife to feel protected
- If deck or porch is enclosed or is flush with the ground, wildlife may squeeze or burrow underneath- use screening method below to prevent wildlife issues. **DO NOT SCREEN IF WILDLIFE PRESENT**

**YOUR PROPERTY** *The less cluttered your yard the less attractive your property is to wildlife.*

- Keep grass trimmed, remove clutter, dead leaves, woodpiles, hockey nets, tires, old doghouses etc.

**BALCONIES** *Birds, raccoons and squirrels all like to nest on balconies*

- Inspect balconies weekly, particularly in the spring
- Remove clutter or storage items to prevent hiding or nesting opportunities
- Check flower planters and do not store food on balcony

### **SCREENING SHEDS AND DECKS TO PREVENT A BURROWING ANIMAL**

Dig a trench 12 inches deep and at least 12 inches wide (18 inches is better), around the base of the structure. Bury 16 gauge steel mesh in the trench by screwing to the base of the structure going down 12 inches and then bending outwards at a 90 degree angle (like a backwards L shape) away from the structure. Backfill the trench, re-seed/sod. Leave the lawn area above the screen free of solid objects like rocks or blocks. **Do not screen or enclose if animals are inside, seek guidance.**

**Information provided by Mississauga Animal Services, visit [www.mypetmississauga.ca](http://www.mypetmississauga.ca) for more information.**