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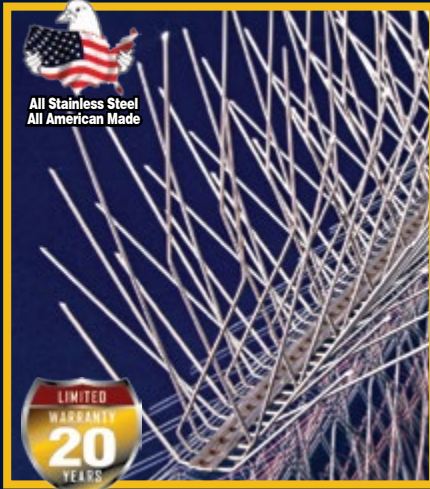
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## FROM THE EDITOR

**ERIC ARNOLD, EDITOR**

**P.O. Box 357 ■ Sharon Center, OH 44272**



Once again, I'm about to get on my soapbox regarding how much to charge for a service. One of the most common issues for any business is deciding what products or services it will offer and at what price. Frequent readers know that I have covered this topic multiple times over the years; however, I haven't discussed pricing ethics much.

What do I mean by pricing ethics? Ethical pricing is charging a fair rate for your services and products. Pricing has an ethical component and a legal component.

To set a fair price, you must know the cost to provide the product/service. I've discussed this before, so I won't go into details. Still, for those new to the pricing issue, usually, you can look at what you are paying for the product/service (merchandise + delivery + expenses) and add how much profit you wish to make on it to generate a price. However, there will always be unexpected expenses, such as additional fuel, equipment, or materials. For these unexpected items, I suggest making them additional charges that can be added to the job instead of trying to incorporate them into your basic pricing strategy.

Ethically, you should offer your customers the same services at the same rates. Are you going outside your normal service area? Charge for the extra time and distance, but keep your service charge the same. Are you accepting a credit card for payment? Have a cash discount price if you don't want to add 3% to the bill to cover costs. When

you wish to give a customer a discount, you are lowering the profit from that product or service. I've said this before, but I will repeat it. You can't change what the product or service you are offering costs, so the only wiggle room available is with the profit. Take a couple of breaths and let that sink in. If that is acceptable, give the discount. If not, don't, but first understand how much room you have to negotiate with.

If you have to make \$150 every time you do a service call to cover costs and your rate is \$175, the maximum discount you can afford to give is \$25. At that rate, you are providing the service call to the client at your cost. Should you give more than a \$25 discount, you are now paying your client for the privilege of providing that service for them. Anything less than \$25 means you are still making a profit on the service call, but not as much as possible.

Those who have attended my training sessions where I discuss pricing know that this is a hot button for me. Too many times, I've heard operators and clients talk about how the price changed during the sales pitch. Not only is this bad for the operator and our industry image, but it can quickly become unethical and even illegal. The following are two examples to stress my point.

**Example A:** An operator performs a bat inspection on a structure and quotes \$2,700 for bat removal and \$10,000 for guano cleanout and insulation replacement. The prospect refuses and receives a counter bid of \$2,200 for bat re-

moval and \$10,000 for additional services. Again, the prospect declines the offer and hires another operator for a second opinion. While the second operator is performing their inspection, the first company calls the prospect with another reduced bid of \$1,100 for bat removal and \$2,500 for the additional services. The second operator bid \$1,750 for bat removal and doesn't see the need for any guano removal. If you were the prospect, how would you feel about this situation?

**Example B:** An operator gives a cleanout bid for raccoon feces and damage for \$26,000 to a prospect so they can submit for insurance reimbursement. Another operator contacted to produce a bid for this project requests the other operators bid so "they can be similar" and produces a bid of \$22,000 after the request is denied. Both bids are submitted to the insurance company, which has decided it will only cover \$15,500 of the project cost. The second operator then adjusts their bid to \$15,500 so the prospect "won't have any out-of-pocket expense." Setting aside the matter of insurance fraud by the second company, while some would welcome the \$6,500 savings, others would question how it would be possible to adjust the price by that much.

Now, some additional information on both examples. Example A's structure is approximately 1400 sq ft with two dormers. The attic cleanout was an area of 30 ft x 15 ft. No bats were found during

**Continued on page 4**

## EDITORIAL:

Continued from page 3

either inspection, and the amount of guano noted with the insulation was approximately 100 pieces. In Example B, the attic area was 55 ft x 20 ft, with a working height on the high point of 24 inches and 18 inches on the low end. The first quote included removing contaminated material, disinfecting the area, replacing the ceiling and two walls, rewiring the circuit panel (to be brought up to code), and installing insulation. The second quote only included removing the contaminated material, disinfecting the area, and installing insulation. Not only is that quite a bit different with the scope of work between the two, but consider how much more the second company charges for their services even though their price is lower. With this additional information, did your opinions change?

Let's look at both examples to see what is happening. In Example A, the operator that kept reducing

their price could only do so because of the staggering fee they initially charged. Every time they did so, the only thing that changed was their profit margin. Since they stated they could perform the job at their last bid, totaling \$3,600, their original bid of \$12,700 had a whopping markup of over **350%**. This is an example of what I'd consider price gouging. It is similar to gas prices jumping up at several gas stations right after 9/11, which resulted in charges and fines against some individuals and companies.

In Example B, several issues exist. First, requesting a competitor's bid to make a like bid, in my book, is highly unethical. If you are a professional, you should know what needs to be done based on your training and experience, not someone else's. Second and of more note, insurance fraud was performed by adjusting the bid to the amount covered by insurance without submitting it again for review. It is illegal to offer a discount to a customer without providing the same discount to the insurance

company. This allows the insurance company to adjust their payment accordingly, as most claims are paid on a percentage basis of the actual cost minus deductible. Prospects will always try to get a discount for themselves, and some will go so far as claiming the job rests on receiving the discount, usually with the added requirement that the operator not inform the insurance company of the deal. Again, when an operator does this, they are committing insurance fraud.

What business exists where the company is responsible for helping the client pay for services? There isn't any. A business can decide to help ease the payment burden by accepting credit cards or offering financing, but they don't have to adjust their price. If the client wants the service, they need to find a way to pay for it. When you go to any restaurant, if you say, "I want this entrée but will only pay X dollars for it," don't be surprised when you don't get it. The price is the price! ■

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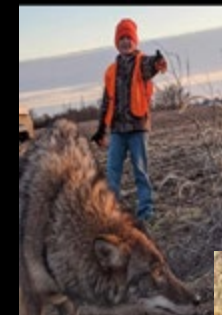
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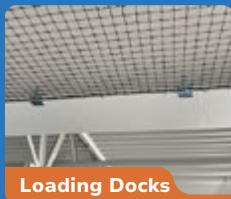
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# WCT RECAP: ENGLISH SPARROWS

BY HUNTER BODENCHUCK

(Editor's note: This article first appeared in the May/June 2013 issue of *Wildlife Control Technology Magazine*.)

English sparrows are an excellent example of an invasive species. Introduced in New York in 1950 by a well-intending poet who wanted this continent to have all the species written about by William Shakespeare, the English sparrow quickly colonized the continent. The small, chunky bird (about 5 1/2 inches) is found in almost all habitats but excels in human-dominated landscapes. The male sparrow has a distinctive black bib, buff to white colored cheeks, and chestnut-colored feathers on the upper wings. The female and young have a dingy-grey breast and a streaked back. Because these birds are primarily granivorous, both sexes have thick, short beaks designed for cracking seeds.

English sparrows may nest at any time of the year in warmer climates, but nesting is most active between March and August.

Loose material is gathered and added to the nest, often located in open buildings. From 3-7 eggs per clutch are laid and brooded for 10-14 days, mainly by the female. Young remain in the nest for another 15 days, and both sexes feed the young. Young may continue to be fed by the adults for another two weeks after fledging, but the original pair may begin reneating. Multiple clutches are expected. The nesting of sparrows is the largest complaint wildlife control operators have to deal with. I tend to categorize sparrow conflicts into three types—nesting conflicts, sparrows inside big, open buildings, and sparrows in livestock feed. In all three cases, the problem usually involves sparrow droppings and other conflicts, but the way to solve these problems is vastly different.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act does not protect English sparrows; no federal permit is required to manage their damage. Likewise, most states recognize the English sparrow as a nuisance species and do not provide state-level protection. However, many local

jurisdictions consider themselves bird sanctuaries, and local regulations may dictate how English sparrow conflicts may be resolved. As always, you need to know the local laws as well as be proficient in identifying native sparrows as well as English sparrows to avoid unintentionally running afoul of the laws.

## Nesting Problems

Sparrows nest in almost any type of space, but they frequently build the nest in a small space to eliminate the chance of nest predation. Sometimes, these spaces are behind lighted signs or are in rafters in carports, office buildings, barns, or shops. In all cases, sparrow nests are made from combustible materials, which may be a fire hazard. Almost without exception, sparrows leaving and returning to the nest leave droppings on anything nearby, including cars, other equipment, or even food materials.

The only permanent solution to nesting problems is to exclude sparrows from sensitive areas. In some cases, such as an open carport, exclusion may be as simple as nailing up thin strips of plywood to prevent sparrow access. In other instances, netting with mesh smaller than 3/4-inch may be necessary to prevent access. Some of the more difficult exclusion cases are those where access is needed for service, such as behind lighted signs. In these cases, porcupine wires may be installed, again not allowing any space larger than 3/4-inch. Be sure to coordinate with the service company or maintenance workers when designing sparrow exclusion. Some pieces of equipment are very vulnerable and need a certain amount of ventilation to function properly. You may be able



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to exclude sparrows with a solid surface completely, but if it interferes with ventilation, it will not be a practical solution.

Nests may be removed at any time without a federal permit, but removing the nests can be disturbing to sensitive viewers. During nesting season, you can expect eggs and nestlings in every stage of development, and in an office setting, it seems that there is always some sensitive person who objects. Schedule the event after hours if you intend to remove active nests from a public space. Nests and nesting materials should be removed before installing exclusion, as even inactive nests may be a fire hazard. The sparrows will rebuild nests, so nest material needs to be removed entirely from the site, or they will simply reuse the same material. Nest removal should be conducted every two weeks to prevent successful nest-

ing.

### Open buildings

With few exceptions, architects don't consider wildlife conflicts when they design open public buildings. In some cases, such as a warehouse or aircraft hangar, a large space is necessary for the size of the materials housed inside. In other cases, such as a shopping center or airport building proper, the open space may just be for looks. Nonetheless, sparrows inevitably find their way inside these buildings and make a home. If food is available, there may even be a colony of sparrows developing over time.

Excluding sparrows from open buildings may be impractical or even downright impossible. Clear hanging strips may be somewhat effective in keeping out birds while allowing vehicle access, but these will never be 100% effective. Heavy winds may permit bird access, and

the hardware holding the strips up may fail. Still, these can effectively reduce much of the conflict if the buildings have limited openings.

Removing sparrows from these buildings can be time-consuming and always delicate. In a public space, individual sparrows may be hand-netted (if you're very lucky) or trapped, but both methods take time and planning. Food-baited traps must be placed out of sight of the public to avoid tampering. Netting **may** be possible in a warehouse setting if the lights can be completely shut off and the bird is effectively approached. I have had poor success with this method unless the ceiling is closed off and less than 10 feet high.

Funnel traps are effective if other food sources can be controlled. Commercial traps are available, or you can make one from 1/2-inch

*Continued on page 8*

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**WCT RECAP:***Continued from page 7*

hardware cloth. Baiting a funnel trap with grain (chopped corn is my favorite) and allowing the sparrow to find it is the best option. The trap is even more effective if another live sparrow is placed inside as a decoy. Traps should be checked daily in public buildings but can be checked every two to three days elsewhere. *Editor's note: Check local and state laws for trap check requirements even if the targeted animal is not protected. Most trap check laws are based on the set trap, not the target animal.* The bait serves as ample feed for captured sparrows.

Sparrows may be removed effectively with a small caliber air rifle in an agricultural or industrial setting. Again, timing the control when sensitive viewers are not present is important. Also important is selecting the proper rifle/ammo combination. You need to look at the

situation and ensure a missed shot or a pass-through will not damage the building. I prefer a .177 caliber pellet rifle and flat-nosed pellets to minimize pass-through. I also sight the rifle in for the exact distance I expect and pass on a lot of potential shots if I'm uncomfortable. I prefer to shoot the sparrow in the center of the breast to try and maximize the chance that the pellet will not exit, or at least if it does, it will do so with minimum energy.

Night shooting sparrows is effective, as they are reluctant to fly in pitch black. If you can control ambient light, turn off all lights and locate the sparrows by flashlight. I minimize the time the flashlight is on once the bird is found. The technique is very effective for two people when one has the air rifle and the other has the flashlight. On signal, the light is turned on one bird, a shot is quickly fired, and the light is turned off. Another target may be found, and the process may be repeated. One person can

do the same alone if they use a light affixed to the rifle and turn it off and on briefly.

The toxicant Avitrol® is registered as a frightening agent and may effectively remove sparrows in some settings. Avitrol-treated corn chops are mixed with untreated corn chops, with the idea that one in ten birds will get a lethal dose. When these birds die, they often give frightening calls and behave erratically, which should frighten other sparrows. In practice, if other feed is unavailable, sparrows will continue to feed on the mixed grain regardless of the actions of the poisoned birds. Eventually, all of the sparrows may consume a lethal dose. This may be a solution in something like a hangar, where sparrow droppings on costly aircraft paint may be an expensive source of damage. Sparrows poisoned with Avitrol generally die very close to the feed source.

**Livestock Feed**

Keeping English sparrows from livestock feed is probably the hardest of the sparrow conflicts. Sparrow droppings in livestock feed can spread salmonellosis and toxoplasmosis. Fortunately, animal feeding situations are primarily rural, and shooting and trapping are less sensitive. Unfortunately, these are rarely cost-effective, and sparrows can quickly learn to avoid shooters. Trapping, shooting around agricultural buildings, and repeated nest removal are necessary to keep sparrow populations in check. Livestock feed operations often have other bird damage, and some long-term management may be required to keep damage to an acceptable level.

While English sparrows are considered invasive, they are here to stay. Understanding the damage they cause and the solutions may make them one of the bread-and-butter species for nuisance wildlife operators. ■

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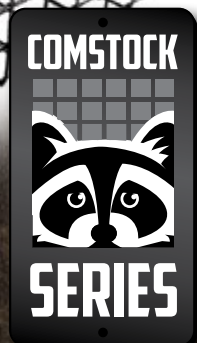
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# ***DON'T FORGET THE TELEPHONE***

*by Jim Snead*

(Editor's Note: This article first appeared in the July/August 1998 issue of *Wildlife Control Technology* magazine. While the equipment and pricing may no longer be relevant, the concepts discussed are as relevant today as they were 26 years ago.)

Everyone in the ADC business constantly works on their animal control skills and service vehicles. I found myself giving these two areas top priority, too, but in the last couple of years, I have moved a third item into that top priority area. It's the telephone. As a business tool, it can make or break my company.

I divided our telephone priorities into two areas: technique

and equipment. In the area of technique, I resolved to personalize my telephone usage and try to have a knowledgeable person tend to the phone as many hours a day as possible. Your sales will increase noticeably when your phone calls are answered by a live human who knows the ADC business and can understand the problem, reassure people, and arrange a time for the job. Callers feel a weight has been lifted off their shoulders when someone knowledgeable immediately takes action on their problem.

In our first years of business, I worked with an old tape answering machine and would call in every few hours for messages. I longed for the days when I could have

someone knowledgeable, taking each call as it came in and selling the jobs. Through the years, I have not enlisted the services of a live answering service because the one in my area couldn't supply a person informed about ADC on the receiving end.

Last year, I wrote an article on telephone technique/usage (*Emergency Calls*, Jan/Feb '97 issue), so I will only dwell on a few points that I feel are an absolute must. First, have the person answering the phone convey a friendly greeting with clear company identification. Also, make sure to get the caller's name during the first few minutes of the call.

Next, get the caller talking and listen as much as possible.

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Reassure them that the problem can be resolved. Make it a point on every call to give pricing, an idea of the total cost, and acceptable payment methods. Finally, let the caller know whom they are talking to and who will make the initial face-to-face visit.

When I zeroed in on our telephone technique, I soon realized my equipment was nowhere near what I needed to be efficient. I replaced our old cord phone with a compact 900 Megahertz cordless phone with a keypad and speaker base. The cost of this unit was approximately \$150. This enabled me to take the remote phone to the garage and service the vehicle while preparing for the day's work.

At the time, I was using a combination phone/tape answering machine that was messing up more messages than it was taking. For \$11.95 per month, my local telephone company made available a voicemail program where I could place my message and control the number of rings before it picked up. I still try to keep a knowledgeable person answering the phone, but when this isn't possible, the voicemail picks up the calls. This service also has the ability to pick up calls when someone is on the line, so instead of getting a busy signal, the caller gets voicemail. We lose fewer callers this way. I have a whole file drawer full of defective tape answering machines, and I'd be afraid to put a dollar figure on the business they lost me.

The local phone company also provides call forwarding, and I signed up to receive incoming calls at other locations. The call forwarding service is just \$3.74 per month. At the end of 1997, I installed caller ID and found it very useful. I even embarked on a call tracking program, described in a separate article, *Caller ID*, in the May/June 1998 issue of WCT.

In 1997, I trained a woman to

take calls on certain days, which freed up more hands for fieldwork. Before I put her on the phone, I had her travel in the service vehicle to learn about the ADC business. I was surprised at the number of well-qualified women who wanted to earn money in their homes who answered my ad. I ended up with a very qualified, strong telephone salesperson. I also have her handling customer mailings and invoicing during downtimes between calls.

I bought two combination wireless radio/cell phone sets four years ago. I got in on the ground floor of this technology and had terrible growing pains the first 24 months, but the carrier backed me every inch of the way. The last 12 months have been trouble-free, and the wireless system works well for me. I now have a private radio to the service vehicles from the home base.

Each wireless unit has a cell phone, so if needed, we can phone ahead to customers. Each unit costs \$30 monthly, with 250 minutes of free air time. The cell phone rate per minute is competitive with all other cell phones in the area. The whole system gave my outfit a lot of flexibility, as we could cut down to one unit during slow months and add more units in high-volume months.

One piece of telephone equipment I was forced into was a fax machine. One of my property management customers advised me that they would be faxing all their work orders to their vendors. They gave me a deadline to put the fax in if I wanted to keep their business. I was lucky to find a good used fax machine with a three-year supply of paper for \$150, and now I have four property management companies faxing me work orders.

I never thought I would use the fax as much as I do to order supplies and conduct other customer

correspondence like quotes and invoicing. The fax machine also provided me with copying ability and saved me at least two weekly trips to the copy outlet. In addition, I use the fax telephone line for all outgoing calls, which leaves my other line with the voice mail open for incoming calls. As a result, the fax phone line has allowed me to enjoy both cost savings and a greater number of outgoing calls.

It's hard for me to over-emphasize the emphasis that must be placed on telephone techniques and equipment for an ADC business. To conduct business properly, we have to put the phone up in importance with animal damage control knowledge and service vehicle operation. ■

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## ***FROM THE TOOLBOX***

**JACK AMMERMAN**

**5104 Woodstock Drive ■ Swartz Creek, MI 48473**

### ***I IMAGINE THAT RACCOONS ARE TERRIBLE SNUGLERS***

**W**ildlife control is an amazing occupation. You deal with the same animal species six times a day, yet every job differs greatly from the others. For this reason, being good at troubleshooting is a plus. If you're not the problem-solver type of person, this career isn't for you. And yet, even as a skilled problem solver, I've had a few animals test my limits. These jobs usually take longer to complete, but the client's trapping bill stays the same. It hurts my wallet, but the satisfaction and education I get when the case is closed easily make up for the extra time I spend. The satisfaction (of not being outsmarted) weighs a bit heavier than anything that animal taught me.

The phone rang one morning, and I actually thought it was a prank call at first. The lady spoke fast, and I listened intently. "I have a raccoon in my bed! I woke up and saw a lump under the covers. I flipped the blankets off, and it just stared at me!" "Where's the raccoon now?" I asked as I needed more information. She replied, "I have no idea! I imagine it's still in the bed. I threw the covers back over it and ran." I instructed her to close the bedroom door, but she had already done that.

When I got to her house, naturally, the raccoon was nowhere to be seen. Almost every house I go into brings an apology for the mess. People, myself included, tend to leave dresser drawers

askew, clothes on the floor, and closets that need some attention. I searched the bedroom, top to bottom, and could not find the raccoon. I couldn't even find signs that there was a raccoon, which had me asking questions to see if she really did see a raccoon. In all my years of working, I don't remember ever hearing of a raccoon that climbed into someone's bed. This was a strange job! The woman's fear made me believe her story, but this would be a time-taker.

I didn't find a way for a raccoon to get in. The woman said she slept with the bedroom door mostly closed but not all the way. The raccoon might have entered the room via the door, so I searched the rest of the house for an entryway. I found a small hole near a basement window that might provide ingress, but I had my doubts. It looked like a previous spot for a dryer vent. I put some masking tape strips over the hole to provide a visual indicator.

There wasn't a chance in Hades that this woman was spending another night in the house until I caught the invader. I placed a cage trap in her bedroom and a trail camera to take a picture of the captured animal and send it to me via cell signal. That night, I was rewarded for my efforts with pictures of a raccoon standing on top of my cage trap. This told me that the woman's fear was real and that I missed something. Unfortunately, the raccoon took my free samples (appetizing morsels I had

scattered in front of the trap opening) but did not enter the cage. I returned to scour the room and go "hand-to-hand" with the raccoon the next day. He had to be in there. The door was shut and I ashamedly must have missed him.

Once again, I pulled everything from under the bed. I pulled out all the dresser drawers a raccoon might have climbed into from behind. The closet was a messy one, but once again, I started pulling out clothes, shoes, and boxes. Staring into the closet after almost everything was out, I went for broke as I was running out of ideas. I removed the last two or three containers. They were small plastic totes that I had left alone before. They were clear, and contents aside, I could see right through them. The contents had betrayed me! They stopped me from seeing a hole in the closet floor that appeared to be the size of a heat register. Upon closer inspection of the hole's edges, I found a few raccoon hairs. AHA!

I placed a Tomahawk All Purpose trap over the hole and repositioned my camera. The next night, the raccoon was in the cage, but my work was not done. Although I didn't inspect the attic previously, I knew that I had to do it now. That animal was getting in somehow. My initial exterior inspection didn't turn up any alarm bells, or I would have entered the attic on day one. When I did pop my head through the scuttlehole, I could see daylight at the far end near the attached garage.



There was a hole in the roof on the backside of the chimney. This made it impossible to see from the ground. Had I thrown a ladder up and walked around the roof initially, I would have seen it, but human nature being what it is, I didn't think I needed to get up on the roof while I was perusing the exterior. It was a ranch, and most everything was visible. "Most everything" are keywords here!

I spent the rest of the day patching the hole in the basement, the hole in the closet, and the hole in the roof. The client could have gotten off a little bit cheaper by not having me close off the rectangular hole in the closet, but she was adamant that it was sealed. I tried to convince her to stack a box on top of the hole or keep her closet door closed, but her frightening

experience demanded that it be sealed permanently. Although the chimney flue was innocent, she asked me to cap it. She even had me cap the dummy flue next to it, even when I told her it was filled with mortar.

Reflecting back, I still shake my head when I try to envision a raccoon actually climbing under someone's blankets as they slept. I also can't believe I didn't check the attic or the roof while I was there the first time. I don't think it would have made much of a difference in trapping the animal, but it might have turned the job into a two-trip job instead of a three- or four-trip job.

How these animals find the weaknesses in roofs always baffles me. How they find their way into a bedroom via an attic amazes

me. A raccoon climbing into a warm bed—I guess it's one of those "you had to be there" moments because I still have my doubts!

\*\*\* Note\*\*\*

Because of the close contact, I submitted the raccoon for rabies testing and advised the client to contact her physician. The raccoon tested negative. ■



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## ***BE PREPARED ALWAYS***

**D**uring the last couple of weeks, before my article is due every other month, I start thinking about what I want to write about. Recently, a friend and I were talking about my success over time in trapping coyotes and his success in pursuit of trophy whitetail deer hunting. The conversation led us to conclude that ultimate success at anything, whether it's coyotes or deer hunting, is followed by how well you are prepared. I have found that the preparation process is just as enjoyable as catching the coyotes themselves.

Twenty-five years in business, providing wildlife control services for multiple species of animals in all kinds of situations demanded a

certain amount of organization and preparedness. It was not hard for me to adapt organization into my lifestyle, as that is how I grew up. I rather enjoyed having everything in its place and the challenge of planning for some job, interesting event, or passion. I believe that depending on how successful you want to be will depend on how prepared you are. I have found it to be indispensable.

This past January, a customer who lives on approximately 100 acres of prime Iowa whitetail deer hunting ground called. He asked me to remove the family group of coyotes that were currently frequenting the property to help minimize predation and wanted to continue that service yearly so that he

had as healthy of a population of deer, turkey, quail, and other animals he and his family and friends frequently like to pursue. Just coming off three weeks in the field full-time trapping coyotes for my local farmers and keeping up my skills, I said sure, immediately smiling to myself, thankful I had made the right decision to keep some wax dirt on hand.

Sometime in June of 2023, I was asking myself at my shop what I needed to do to prepare for my upcoming coyote trapping season in November and was thinking of everything that needed to be done. While going over all the usual things I do every year to keep prepared—trap prep, baits, lures, urine supplies, backup gear, that type of thing, the thought crossed my mind about waxed dirt. My first thought was, no, I'm not going to make any because I usually don't do coyote trapping in the frozen ground and in the deep of winter, but then another thought crossed my mind. Because I'm starting to do more and more coyote removal projects, I might want to make some and have it on hand just in case I need it. Well, I needed it!

The end of June into July is usually the best time I have found, in my part of the country, to get the driest dirt because the rain has stopped. Usually, several weeks go by without rain, making dry dirt







easy to come by. It's not usually necessary to further dry it before the waxing process. I knew if I needed some, I wouldn't need a lot, so I got six 5-gallon buckets, thirty gallons, to make waxed dirt out of and keep it stored in the event of a need. I'm glad I made that decision because he was very anxious for me to get started immediately because of what he was seeing while in his tree stand, and his wife was complaining she was seeing them on her early morning walks.

It was mid-December 2023, and the weather here in the Midwest was still relatively mild, with no snow on the ground and no ground freeze. The weather forecast showed a big change in weather coming our way in just over ten days, so I thought I could at least get started and then pick up where I left off when the storm had passed. This storm was supposed to bring over 20 inches of snow over a few days and send our mild temperatures into subzero. It did just that, dumping approximately 26 inches on the ground, making things miserable around here.

Anybody who knows me knows I do not like bringing any type of foreign material into a trap set location. Using just what's native to that particular location is much better and more successful in trapping

canines. Not that it can't be done, as it does work, but I don't believe it works as well as using what's already on location.

Although the ground wasn't frozen yet, I knew the temperatures would drop over the next ten days, thus bringing the nighttime temperatures below freezing, so I decided using the waxed dirt right off the bat was prudent.

Utilizing satellite imagery and boots on the ground, I found the main travel corridor where the coyotes were coming in and out of the property on the North side, where the main gravel road separated my client's farm from the adjoining farm on the other side. A gate there allowed the UTVs access along the creek line, in the wooded area, and a brushy grassy field on the other

side. Tracks and droppings, all the indicators you like to see, told me this was the location to set up. The only thing I cringed about was that it was just that, right alongside the creek, meaning that the abundance of raccoons and other non-target animals would be an issue. Wading through all of them to pick up the coyotes would be more irritating than anything.

I set it up with my killer ridge hole sets, and after catching a few raccoons, the first coyote showed up. A young female that was very vocal but healthy. The second coyote showed up after a few more raccoons and other non-target animals. Another female a little bigger and a little older. I had a few more days before the storm was going to hit, and I went ahead and reset. Again, a few more raccoons and I had to pull up everything because of the storm.

At the time of this writing, I am still working on that particular project, as I have not gone back to catch the rest of the group, but I will very soon. The story's point and moral is that you must always be ready. Reasonable planning ahead and keeping things organized and prepared have always served me well, and it made me much better at what I do in all areas of my life. It's just a good habit. ■







## ***AROUND THE CAGE TRAPS***

**PAUL WINKELMANN**

8041 West Mequon Rd. ■ Mequon, WI 53097

### ***TIPS N TRICKS***

**W**hen I was a kid, you had to drive north for an hour and a half before finding a red squirrel. In those days, mature evergreens were few and far between. My wife will tell you I never quite matured, but the evergreens did, so now we have red squirrels. My very first ADC job was a red squirrel job on the shores of Lake Michigan.

Last month, I got a call from a customer who told me that the mice had chewed up the wiring in one of their cars, and I told him I'd be right over. When I got there, he told me that his wife went to start her Beemer, and nothing happened. When they opened the hood, they could see frayed wiring. His wife loved her Beemer and was very unhappy, "And when the Mrs. is unhappy, everyone is unhappy," I told him. He said, "You understand the



problem perfectly, young man." (I love it when people call me "young man" 'cause so few can do it.)

The first thing I told him was that mice can and do chew on wiring, but since we have caught so many red squirrels on his property, I suspected that they were the culprit. A quick stroll around the barn where they kept their vehicles confirmed my suspicions. Two sets of tracks leading into the crack in the sliding barn door was all the evidence I needed. In the next three days, I caught those two little red guys, and the order was once again restored. Auto repair guys must love those friggen squirrels much more than the rest of the population.

And speaking of car mechanics, my son's father-in-law, Gene, is an excellent technician who has a Shell station in town. Yesterday, he called me and told me this story. One of his customers was driving on the expressway in her 2002 Ford Explorer. As she was driving, she was unable to decelerate. Nearly causing a serious accident, she had enough sense to turn the key off and coast over to the emergen-

cy lane. When her car was towed in, Gene discovered that a red squirrel had placed a black walnut between the throttle cable linkage and the intake plenum, which held the throttle open. (I guess he was storing food in there just in case he got hungry while chewing on the wires.)

This makes for an interesting story, but since Gene gave his customer our number, I think we will be wreaking vengeance on her red squirrel population in short order. ■



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## PLAN AHEAD FOR THE FUTURE

by Gordon Betts

**P**lan ahead. Anybody in business needs to plan ahead. From ordering lures and baits to replacing equipment to scheduling jobs. It's all planning ahead. What a lot of small business owners and young people today fail to do is plan ahead for the future. There are way too many people without a retirement plan. This will lead to a huge domestic problem in the not-too-distant future. I'm not going to talk about that at any length, though. What I will say is if you don't have a retirement plan, get one. The government will not take care of you under any administration.

How many of you are finding that it is getting harder to climb that ladder or even handle it, for that matter? How many of you are finding that it is getting harder to crawl under that deck or up into that attic? Getting older is a fact of life, and health issues generally go along with it. I'm now 68. My mind still says, "Yes, you can," while my body says, "You'd better not," or just plain, "No, you can't!"

I'm lucky that our son has an interest in the business and is also a licensed NWCO. He helps me out on his days off from his real job. He does most of the high ladder work and all of the roof jobs and attic inspections. I handle all of the ground jobs and work and the lower ladder work. Accordingly, though, I have to plan ahead when we have jobs requiring his help. In several cases, I have turned down jobs and referred them to other NWCOs. I don't like doing this for a couple of reasons.

One is I don't know these other NWCOs, and I make that clear when I'm referring people to them. Two, it is putting my business in decline, which means less income. As I have stated before, I'm not trying to make a living off of being a NWCO. That doesn't mean I can afford too much of a decline in the business. If you are trying to make a living off of the business, any decline will have an adverse effect on your quality of life. So, what do you do?

A good friend of mine had de-

bilitating arthritis. He climbed ladders and went into attics right up until he sold his business and even after when doing estimates and training for the new owner. How he did it day after day is still a wonder to me. His well-established business continues to be very profitable under the new owner. He planned ahead and had a nest egg for retirement, as well as what he got from the sale of his business. It all went to his wife at his passing so that she was taken care of. How many can say that they are so well prepared? He planned ahead.

My business is nowhere near as lucrative as his was, and I'd be lucky to get half the return on the cost of my inventory. That's not bad, though, with the depreciation of equipment for tax purposes and having had most of it pay for itself many times over already. As for the sale of my business as a whole, I doubt that I would get much, if anything, above the value of the equipment, lures, and tools. It seems to me that there was an article some time ago in this magazine on the



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value of your business or putting a value on it. With that said, do I sell my business and stop being a NWCO in the next year or so? Or do I continue to keep my hand in and limit the calls I take, even though it will eventually hurt the business as a whole? As a side note, a new NWCO LLC. business has opened up within six miles of me just within the past six months, which is already affecting my bottom line. What would you do if it were your business?

There are options for those getting older, and a few are as follows. Hired help to enable you to continue to do aerial and attic work is a possibility if you are not fortunate enough to be like me. Hired help presents its own set of problems, which are topics for entire articles in themselves. Another option is to take on an apprentice. Again, legal and employment regulations can be a problem. Additionally, can your business afford the added expense of doing something like this? Another is to sell your business and continue to work for the new owner. It wouldn't work for me. I've gotten independent in my old age and would have a hard time working for someone else again. Luckily, I don't have to. It's still an option for others. Yet another spin on things is to sell your business to someone, like my friend did, and agree to show them the ropes for a fee, of course. It is like the apprentice program, but the apprentice is also the new owner. If this is the chosen way, there needs to be something in writing pertaining to the duration of the agreement and the selling price. It can be an hourly rate or, more usually, a percentage of the jobs being done. My friend did the latter on a sliding scale that declined by percentage over a couple of years.

The bottom line is to have a plan for the future. Social Security seems to average around \$1,000

in actual spendable money based on my talking to people. About \$150 of that is wiped out by the cost of Medicare, so don't count on living on it. Look at your present household expenses and see how far \$850 a month will get you. My and my wife's Social Security together doesn't cover our mortgage and property taxes, much less put food on the table.

At the beginning of this article, I said I wouldn't spend time talking about putting money away. There are books on savings, retirement plans, investments, etc. What I would say is to make sure that whatever account you choose is a secure or stable account.

Back a few years ago, when there was a huge drop, make that an adjustment in the stock market. A friend of mine lost \$50,000, and another friend lost \$30,000. One had just \$2,000 left, which can really ruin a retirement plan. They were told to ride it out. In that same adjustment, I lost all that I'd gained on my investments over several years. Fortunately, I maneuvered my original investment into a secure, stable account fast enough, so I didn't lose that. At any rate, my friends lost considerable amounts of their retirement funds. All three plans were with different companies and were supposed to be top-of-the-line. An adjustment happened once and will happen again. The interest rates for secure or stable plans are not as good as other plans, but the money you put in and the interest is relatively safe.

Don't wait until the last minute to start planning ahead for the future or even a disabling injury or illness. Hopefully, these never happen. Old age, however, comes along faster than you might think, and it is very easy to put things off until it's too late to ready your business and yourself for retirement.

Plan Ahead for the (your) future. ■

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## PRESS RELEASE



### A New Way to Protect Your Home From Wildlife

Minneapolis, Minnesota - January 4th, 2024 - Skedaddle Humane Wildlife Control is proud to announce the launch of their latest franchise location in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The newest franchise owners are Twin Cities residents Brett Robertson and Matt Sanders, who are excited to bring humane wildlife removal and exclusion services to home and business owners in Minneapolis.

Before becoming business partners, Sanders and Robertson began as colleagues working in a Fortune 500 company. The corporate world provided each of them with valuable skills and experience but also fueled a desire to one day go into business for themselves. They began looking for a business opportunity that would allow them to have a more direct and positive impact close to home. After evaluating a number of concepts they decided to take the plunge into entrepreneurship with Skedaddle.

As an industry leader for the past three decades, Skedaddle has pioneered humane and effective wildlife control techniques designed to last. Instead of trapping and relocating wildlife, Skedaddle uses a unique hands-on approach to remove wildlife, clean up the mess animals have left behind, and install barriers to prevent re-entry. After Skedaddle has secured all the vulnerable areas of a home, they provide clients a lifetime guarantee on their workmanship and materials against future wildlife entry.

It can be stressful for homeowners when raccoons move into their attic or mice can be heard chewing behind walls. Sanders and Robertson look forward to bringing Skedaddle's humane approach to wildlife to Minneapolis.

"We are excited to see our wildlife services implemented in the community, and witness how they help homeowners during extremely stressful times. We understand that homeowners are looking for a permanent solution, and we are proud to provide them with trustworthy services from local technicians who understand the area and the wildlife," said Robertson.

Skedaddle was founded in Canada in 1989, and has since expanded operations to the United States. Minneapolis joins existing US Skedaddle franchise locations in Wisconsin and Maryland, and signals the growing need for humane, long-lasting wildlife removal services across North America.

With a growing demand for ethical and effective wildlife management in cities nationwide, Skedaddle aims to address this pressing need through passionate local entrepreneurs. By leveraging their proven methods and business systems, Skedaddle presents an exceptional chance for franchise partners to tap into a growing industry.





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If you intend to be or have been in this business for any length of time, there will be a time when, in the spring of the year, you encounter a female raccoon that has had young in your client's attic. You have caught the female and located the young, but they are in a spot in the house that will require you to rent a bulldozer to tear down the house to retrieve those young! This is not a feasible option! In these cases the only option is to release the female and try to harass her to move the young, either to a more accessible location that you can retrieve them or out of the dwelling completely. Don't waste your time on radio's and moth balls. About one ounce of this product will make the female remove her family from the dwelling in no more than 48 hours. It almost always works on the first night but has not taken over two days yet. You must enter the attic to apply this liquid. Place the liquid on a tennis ball, then screw the ball to a large nylon piece of rope. Toss the ball in those hard to reach places near the den and retrieve. Do this in every spot of the attic except near the exit hole. In two days mark the hole to make sure there is no activity. Then seal up the hole. I hate to leave a job without the animal, but there are some situations you just can't control.

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Tuti Fruit (raccoon)	Checita (raccoon & skunk)
Big Time (raccoon)	Bacon (raccoon, skunk, opossum)
Raspberry (raccoon & opossum)	Anise Paste (raccoon)
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## ***DAMAGE TO CRANBERRY FIELDS***

by John R. Consolini

It's late September, and it's time to harvest the cranberries. The farmhands turn on the water valve to flood the fields the night before the work starts flooding acres and acres of ground. The fields are flooded with sixteen to eighteen inches of water.

Day one comes, and one to three farmhands jump up on the Ruby Slipper water wheel called the Egg Beater machine. This machine drives through the bog and knocks the cranberries off the vines, where the berries float to the water's surface. The other farmhands put on waders and step into the bog, ready to go to work. They grab the drag boards and pull the cranberries to one side of the pond. From here, the berries are sucked up by a pump and loaded onto the truck. The trucks are headed down to the processing plant from the field, where the cranberries will be cleaned and processed into juices and other products.

But before this can happen, we must fall back a year or two to grow and care for those fields. One of the problems one would never think about is damage from wildlife,



both large and small. Cranberries are grown on small bushes/vines, and several animals like them, such as black bear, elk, deer, and even beaver. Beavers don't eat any of the vines; they use them for dam-building material, whereas the larger animals do the bulk of the damage.

It is a costly adventure to get into the cranberry business. If you weren't brought up in it as a family business, I have heard farmers say they wouldn't go into the busi-

ness because of the cost of making those cranberry bogs. So, what is a bog, and what is it made of? A bog is just a small area in size, ten to forty acres per shallow pond. It is dug up to six feet deep and filled with sand and peat moss, lots of peat moss. Cranberries thrive in this mixture. Knowing what the cost is to go into the cranberry business, wildlife is the last thing they need damaging their plants.

Beavers are the easiest to control. If seen, they will be shot on sight, or they will hire a trapper to come solve that small problem. They cannot afford to lose any cranberry plants and have the fields flooded before their time.

The problem with deer is they wander throughout the field and foliage on the vines more than the berries. They say deer will eat a couple of barrels of berries in a season but, in the process, cause damage to the vines, which is a bigger problem. The best part about deer is they usually don't congregate in big herds. Most of the time,



*Continued on page 26*



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## ***CRANBERRY FIELDS:***

*Continued from page 24*

there is only a single deer. When it is a herd, they tend to have less than ten deer in it, but I have seen bigger herds on occasion. One of the easiest ways to control them is to run out and scare them out of the fields or shoot some pyrotechnics in their direction.

Elk are more destructive to the bogs than deer. Elk do more damage from their behavior than just eating the berries. Yes, they like cranberries, but since elk come in large herds, their behavior is to spread out and walk all over the fields, grazing plus laying down on the vines, doing thousands of dollars in damage. Sometimes, you don't see the damage for several days, with some of it out in the middle of the fields because of the amount of acreage you have or out on the back forty acres where you don't get to for several weeks. The problem with elk damage is it will destroy the cranberry vines and berries for the following year's crop, costing the farmer thousands of dollars in revenue. It takes two to three years for the plants to produce berries.

Both deer and elk are classified



as game animals and are protected under hunting laws throughout the states, including Washington State, and you just can't go out and shoot them any time unless it is hunting season or you applied for and received special permits. Some cranberry farmers will allow hunters during hunting season to harvest a few from their fields, but here again, dragging a dead deer or elk through the field can damage the vines. Most hunters will process the animal in the field and take everything out with them, including the entrails.

Here in Washington State, if it's not hunting season and the damage is high, the farmer can put in

for a special request for damage control where he can have a few taken to disperse the herd. Besides the broken vines and lost berries, don't forget that those two animals leave behind piles of their pebbles, which will come out in the wash at the processing plant.

Now, let's talk about black bears and cranberries. Talk about an eating machine, especially when the berries are ripe in September and early October, just before harvesting. At that time of the year, bears need to put fat on for winter hibernation. It is not unusual to see a female bear with two, three, or more young in a field eating to their heart's content day and night.

In the wild, bears will search out bee hives, wild blackberries, old wild apples, plum and cherry trees, serviceberries, dogwood berries, wild plums, strawberries, huckle/blueberries, and raspberries, to name a few. The black bear will also feed on ants, wasps, yellow jackets, grass, and Douglas tree bark for protein. Bears do a lot of damage to Douglas trees in spring, but that is another story.

Black bears are a little harder to handle. Here again, they are protected under hunting laws as game animals, and harassing wildlife is against the law except when it comes to getting crop damage un-





der control. One thing that we have here in the state of Washington is Bear Hunting season, which opens on August 1, so taking out one bear or two in August or September is legal. The only problem is that we cannot take females with young, so here again, the farmer will fall back to the pyrotechnics to scare them out of the bogs. Black bears feed at any time of the day, and if they are being harassed enough, they will feed after dark all night, costing the farmer thousands of dollars. Fencing off the bogs is not feasible, and the department does not have a program for this like

they do for fruit orchards. The Fish and Wildlife Department uses bear dogs to chase or harass bears; sometimes, they will step in and help the cranberry grower.

If only one bear is doing damage, the Department of Fish and Wildlife will bring out a bear trap and trap the bear. Once the bear is trapped, it will be taken miles away into timber company or state land and released. The department will tranquilize the bear and put on an ear tag; some will have a radio collar on their neck. The department has a dog chase program (the first in the country) where they



chase bears with dogs. The dogs are Karelian Bear Dogs. They are trained to chase bears once they are released from the bear trap. The intention is to scare the bear with hopes that it will put two and two together and stay away from the cranberry bogs; if not, the dogs will chase you again, or the bear will be trapped and euthanized.

Opportunity is always knocking for the WCO, and with cranberry fields like any other agriculture industry, wildlife damage needs to be controlled and managed. So next time you grab that cranberry cupcake or have cranberry dressing at Thanksgiving, remember what it took to get it to your dinner table. ■





## RACCOON TRAPS AND LURES

by Dirk Shearer

If you have ever given a presentation, you eventually get to the point where you ask if anyone has any questions. I have talked at State Trappers Conventions, National Trappers Conventions, WCT/NWCOA Conventions, Little Old Lady Conventions, and a host of others. Invariably, one question almost always comes up. "What is the best trap and lure for raccoons?"

Talk about a tough one! I could give a two- to three-hour class on this topic. First things first. What is available to you? If you only own cage traps, that will obviously be your best choice. But most of us in this business have options.

On most jobs, we use a gravity door cage trap. I prefer these traps as compared to the spring-loaded door traps. They are easy to set and maintain and are virtually indestructible. I have had people smash these traps and still be able to get a floor jack inside of them, pry them apart, and make them functional. They don't look as pretty as they did when they were new, but they now go to our high-risk locations. Gravity door traps are typically less expensive than spring-powered doors and more easily repaired should someone damage the wire shell.

As for lure and bait in cage traps, we prefer to start with sweet-smelling lures. We typically use marshmallows hanging on a wire in the back of the trap for lure holders. This not only provides a way to keep the lure up higher, but it also gives eye appeal. As a general rule, we never start a job using cat or dog food as bait unless the raccoons are already actively feeding on pet foods. Remember, our target is not cats and dogs (we



don't get paid for them, and it costs time and money to let them go).

A quick note on lures. My favorite lure is not the same as my employees' favorite lure. I had one tech that couldn't catch a thing on the lure I have used to make thousands of dollars. I couldn't catch a cold with his favorite! Try several different lures. Find what you have confidence in, and then experiment. I don't use grocery store lures (i.e., peanut butter, apples, etc.). Today, lure makers formulate a fantastic product that will outlast and out-catch anything you can get off the shelf.

Some situations call for the use of specialty traps. We had a job where the neighbor didn't want any raccoons trapped. He set off our traps regularly and even released several raccoons. The client was frustrated, we were frustrated, and the raccoons were getting an education. The nature of the structure did not allow us to set traps on the

roof. The risk of capturing pets was too high for body grip traps. Our solution was to pull out dog-proof traps.

Dog-proof traps have a limited place in our business. We rarely use them due to the potential damage a caught raccoon can cause in the area around the trap, but it got the job done; our client was happy, and the neighbor couldn't figure out how to let our catch go free.

Here are some tips on using dog-proof traps. Slide a hollow fishing tube (soft plastic) on the trigger and use some of the same sweet lures used in your cage traps as bait. Make sure the trap is set where the captured animal can't reach anything you don't want to be damaged. Let your client know that they should expect damage to the turf and anything they move close enough to the trap the raccoon can grab.

Having mentioned neighbors who released raccoons from our

traps, it is not uncommon to encounter animals that have been relocated or released from cage traps. These animals can be challenging. Our preference is to use lethal body-gripping traps in a positive control setting for these jobs. In a positive control situation, the animal is forced to go through the trap when entering or exiting the structure. We will enclose an attic fan or roof vent and create a nose cone that forces the animal to pass through the trap. In this situation, lure is not even a part of the equation.

If we can't create positive control, we resort to baited cubby boxes with 5-inch body grip traps. ***Check your local laws to ensure this type of set is legal before using it.*** This is a lethal set, so we never put baited cubby boxes on the ground in an urban or suburban setting. Since the traps are set in the attic or on a roof, you can switch from sweet to fish or meat-based bait. But consider the seasons when choosing your bait. Fish and meat won't last long in an attic or on the roof during late spring through early fall. You don't want a disgruntled client because your bait is rotting. If your traps are on

the roof, ensure they are as out of site as possible. Just because it's legal doesn't mean you won't be ostracized for your actions.

We do some commercial jobs where we place a multitude of body grip cubbies throughout the property when it is fenced and has restricted access. To maximize our efficiency, we pre-bait the traps for up to one month, once a week, with dog food mixed with restaurant grease. This allows the animals to feed, get grease on their feet, and layout scent trails to our sets wherever they walk. The first night we set traps several years ago, we caught 24 raccoons and 14 opossums in 52 traps! Talk about efficiency. I have also heard arguments that the 5-inch body



A raccoon cubby with a 155 body-gripping trap.

grip is too small for raccoons.

If you've been doing this for any time, you know almost any raccoon can force its way through a hole about the size of your fist. Another argument is that the trap is not strong enough. Baloney! I caught a 28-pound raccoon in one. The major drawback is the four-way trigger system. I don't want a trap that goes off if the trigger is moved side to side. That is commonly a result of animals reaching into the trap rather than putting their head through it. We remove the stock triggers and replace them with the style that will only swing into or out of the trap. This eliminates misfired traps due to "reachers."

To increase your efficiency, you also need to build the right type of cubby box. It should be at least 14 inches deep (to reduce reaching), the top should extend at least two inches past the bottom, and it should have a two-inch step plate that raises the opening above ground level. Slots are cut in the sides to accommodate the springs and help stabilize the trap.

Okay, you stuck with me to the end and found contradictions in my article, so here's your answer to "What's the best trap and lure for raccoons?" **It depends on the situation! ■**



A 17 lb boar raccoon put down by a 155 body-gripping trap.



## Questions & Answers

Have a question on Wildlife Control work?

Email us at [ask@wctmagazine.com](mailto:ask@wctmagazine.com) or write us at PO Box 357, Sharon Center, OH 44274

**Q:** As the snow was melting, we got calls from customers noticing significant damage to their lawn, which appears to be caused by voles and moles. When I was researching how to resolve this, everything kept saying to poison them. I don't have a pesticide license, but my client doesn't want pesticides used on their property even if I did. Is there a way to control them safely without toxins that are also safe for pets and small children? **C.T., MI**

**A:** Voles and Moles can both be controlled by trapping. The easiest way to tell damage apart for these two creates is to look at their trails/tunnels. The easiest way to explain this to a client is to use the veins on your hand. If you raise your hand above your head for 30 seconds or so, the veins will become flat with the surface, and the blue/green color can give the appearance that they are depressed. This is what vole trail damage looks like. If you hold your hand for 30 seconds below your waist and then grip the wrist tightly, the veins will be raised above the skin. This gives the appearance of surface tunnels, which are caused by moles.

The majority of calls for moles and voles start after the snow melts and exposes the damage.

Voles create approximately two-inch wide cuts or trails through the blades of grass. As the snow melts, the trails are exposed, and so are the voles. Many are captured by predators such as cats, hawks, owls, foxes, coyotes, and skunks. Follow the trails and locate the burrows and other places where the trail begins, ends, or goes under structures.

Trapping can be done with

mouse traps, glue boards, or cage/box traps. I chose the trap based on the set I'm making. If I will be setting traps on vole trails, I prefer the regular mouse snap traps. These can be set in several different ways.

The most effective seems to be placing them close to a tunnel entrance with the trigger facing the opening and then covering the traps and hole with a piece of K gutter. I usually use two traps on either side of the opening when setting like this. Another way I have used snap traps for voles is to position them right against a hard structure, like the building's foundation. You can either do the same method as mentioned previously, but with the triggers facing away from each other, or you can place a piece of material at an angle to cover the trap and place it with the trigger facing the foundation. I don't use bait for any of these methods, but I always cover the trap with something to keep nontargets out.

When setting specifically in a mulch bed, I prefer the Safeguard 3 x 3 x 10-inch metal traps. I like to bait the trap with peanut butter and cover all but the opening. This set is practical not only for voles but also for house mice, deer/white-footed mice, chipmunks, as well as shrews, and some other critters.

When dealing with situations involving pets and kids, it is usually advantageous to place a baited T-Rex-style trap in a protective box to avoid any unwanted problems. I've used the landscape rock styles and regular bait boxes equally successfully. As long as the box can hold the trap and be anchored to the ground, it is more of a choice of aesthetics than function.

The most effective method I've found for moles is to target the travel tunnels. I like the No-Mole traps for inserting the trap into the surface tunnel, which is my preferred method. Some operators have problems with this trap, but since 95% of our mole work is with Star-Nosed moles, I've yet to find a better trap for that species. The downside to the No-Mole traps is that they rust easily, even if they've been powder coated, and you need to use two traps per set.

While once popular spike-type plunger-style traps have primarily been replaced with other options, however, they can still be effective, provided they have strong enough springs. The key to using this style of trap is to create multiple holes for the spikes to travel down and depress the area right below the trigger. These traps can be hazardous to kids, pets, and non-target wildlife and require special care when used. Additionally, due to the mole's nature, the trap may fire, killing the mole, but the mole may escape before expiring if it can wiggle free from the spikes.

Lastly, the Out-O-Sight mole trap. This trap can be set on surface tunnels by cutting trenches for the jaws and, similar to the spike-style trap, depressing the tunnel directly below the trigger or set below ground. When setting below ground, ensure that the mole tunnel walls are compacted to help guide the mole and place a 1-inch lump of dirt directly below the trap's trigger. Cover the trap with the dirt removed at a minimum to keep air from entering the mole tunnel. One nice thing about this trap is that a single trap can be used regardless of the direction the mole travels. ■



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## ***SPECIES PROFILE - COYOTE***

In body form and size, the coyote (*Canis latrans*) resembles a small collie dog with erect pointed ears, a slender muzzle, and a bushy tail. Coyotes are predominantly brownish-gray in color with a light gray to cream-colored belly. Color varies greatly, however, from nearly black to red or almost white in some individuals and local populations. Most have dark or black guard hairs over their back and tail. In western states, typical adult males weigh 25 to 45 pounds (11 to 16 kg) and females 22 to 35 pounds (10 to 14 kg). In the east, many coyotes are larger than their western counterparts, with males averaging about 45 pounds (14 kg) and females about 30 pounds (13 kg).

Coyote-dog and coyote-wolf hybrids exist in some areas and may vary significantly from typical coyotes in size, color, and appearance. Also, coyotes in the New England states may differ in color from typical western coyotes. Many are black, and some are reddish. These colorations may partially be due to past hybridization with dogs and wolves. True wolves are also present in some areas of the coyote range, particularly in Canada, Alaska, Montana, northern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Relatively few wolves remain in the southern United States and Mexico.

### **Habitat**

Many references indicate that coyotes were originally found in

relatively open habitats, particularly the grasslands and sparsely wooded areas of the western United States. Whether or not this was true, coyotes have adapted to and now exist in virtually every type of



habitat in North America, from the Arctic to the tropics. Coyotes live in deserts, swamps, tundra, grasslands, brush, and dense forests, from below sea level to high mountain ranges and at all intermediate altitudes. High densities of coyotes also appear in the suburbs of Los Angeles, Pasadena, Phoenix, and other western cities.

### **Food Habits**

Coyotes often include many items in their diet. Rabbits top the list of their dietary components. Carrion, rodents, ungulates (usually fawns), insects (such as grasshoppers), livestock, and poultry are also consumed. Coyotes readily eat fruits such as watermelons, berries, and other vegetative matter when available. In some areas,

coyotes feed on human refuse at dump sites and take pets (cats and small dogs).

Coyotes are opportunistic and generally take prey that is the easiest to secure. Among larger wild animals, coyotes tend to kill young, inexperienced animals, as well as old, sick, or weakened individuals. With domestic animals, coyotes are capable of catching and killing healthy, young, and, in some instances, adult prey. Prey selection is based on opportunity and a myriad of behavioral cues.

A coyote often takes strong, healthy lambs from a flock, even though smaller, weaker lambs are also present. Usually, the stronger lamb is on the periphery and more active, making it more prone to attack than a weaker lamb at the center of the flock and relatively immobile.

Coyote predation on livestock is generally more severe during early spring and summer than in winter for two reasons. First, sheep and cows are usually under more intensive management during winter, either in feedlots or pastures close to human activity, thus reducing the opportunity for coyotes to take livestock. Second, predators bear young in the spring and raise them through the summer, which demands increased nu-

tritional input for both the whelping and nursing mother and the growing young. This increased demand corresponds to when young sheep or beef calves are on pastures or rangeland and are most vulnerable to attack. Coyote predation also may increase during fall when young coyotes disperse from their home ranges and establish new territories.

### General Biology, Reproduction, and Behavior

Coyotes are most active at night, during early morning hours (especially where human activity occurs), and during hot summer weather. Where there is minimal human interference and during cool weather, they may be active throughout the day.

Coyotes bed in sheltered areas but do not generally use dens except when raising young. They may seek shelter underground during severe weather or when closely pursued. Their physical abilities include good eyesight, hearing, and a keen sense of smell. Documented recoveries from severe injuries are indicative of coyotes' physical endurance. Although not as fleet as greyhound dogs, coyotes have been measured at up to 40 miles per hour (64 km/hr) and can sustain slower speeds for several miles (km).

Distemper, hepatitis, parvovirus, and mange (caused by parasitic mites) are among the most common coyote diseases. Rabies and tularemia also occur and may be transmitted to other animals and humans. Coyotes harbor numerous parasites, including mites, ticks, fleas, worms, and flukes. Mortality is highest during the first year of life, and few survive for more than 10 to 12 years in the wild. Human activity is often the most significant single cause of coyote mortality.

Coyotes usually breed in February and March, producing litters

about nine weeks (60 to 63 days) later in April and May. Females sometimes breed during the winter following birth, particularly if food is plentiful. The average litter size is five to seven pups, although up to 13 pups have been reported. More than one litter may be found in a single den; sometimes, these may be from females mated to a single male. As noted earlier, coyotes can hybridize with dogs and wolves, but reproductive dysynchrony and behaviors generally make it unlikely. Hybrids are fertile, although their breeding seasons do not usually correspond to those of coyotes.


Coyote dens are found in steep banks, rock crevices, sinkholes, underbrush, and open areas. Usually, their dens are in areas selected for protective concealment. Den sites are typically located less than a mile (km) from water but may occasionally be much farther away. Coyotes will often dig out and enlarge holes dug by smaller burrowing animals. Dens vary from a few feet (1 m) to 50 feet (15 m) and may have several openings.

Both adult male and female coyotes hunt and bring food to their young for several weeks. Other


adults associated with the denning pair may also help feed and care for the young. Coyotes commonly hunt as singles or pairs; extensive travel is common in hunting forays. They will hunt in the same area regularly, however, if food is plentiful. They occasionally bury food remains for later use.

Pups begin emerging from their den by three weeks of age, and within two months, they follow adults to large prey or carrion. Pups are usually weaned by six weeks of age and are frequently moved to larger quarters, such as dense brush patches and/or sinkholes along water courses. The adults and pups usually remain together until late summer or fall, when pups become independent. Occasionally, pups are found in groups until the breeding season begins.

Coyotes are successful at surviving and even flourishing in the presence of people because of their adaptable behavior and social system. They typically display increased reproduction and immigration in response to human-induced population reduction. ■




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# THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING YOUR INDUSTRY

by Robert Schmidt

**N**uisance Wildlife Control Operators (NWCOs) should be aware of the politics, controversies, and regulations regarding their profession. I recognize their frustration with the people and groups who work to regulate or ban trapping and lethal wildlife removal.

Trappers and hunters have similar laments. They worry about the demise of their recreational pursuits.

However, I argue that NWCOs have less to worry about than recreational hunters and trappers because society needs professionals to solve its wildlife-related problems.

NWCOs are in the customer satisfaction business. Raccoons in a chimney? Bats in the attic? Squirrels living in the walls? Solve these problems for your client, and you've created a happy camper. This makes you more like traditional Pest Control Operators (PCOs). Unlike PCOs, however, you are dealing with large warm fuzzies (rats and mice seem to fall into a different category). Cockroach traps, pesticide sprays, and the destruction of insect nests with their larvae don't seem to bother most people, and laws dealing with these methods are focused on human and pet safety, not ethics. Not so when mammals and birds are involved.

As you know, society has a system of laws, regulations, and policies to look after warm-blooded vertebrate animals (again, those pesky rats and mice are an exception). In various ways, these apply to food animals, non-food livestock, research animals, pets, and, yes, wildlife.

Hunters operate in this regulatory environment without thinking about it. They need to buy a license. There are limits and seasons. They must use non-lead shot when

hunting certain birds. There are education requirements. Certain guns and ammo cannot be used for hunting. And so on.

Trappers likewise work in a regulatory environment. There are trap restrictions and seasons for different species. Some states have education requirements. Sometimes, individual traps must be marked with identification tags. A license usually is required. In some states, traps must be inspected every 24 hours or less. In other states, there is no trap inspection requirement at all.

I mention these to remind readers that hunters and trappers are subject to laws, regulations, and policies. What about NWCOs?

NWCOs dealing with birds other than rock doves, European starlings, and house sparrows must know the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. If you use pesticides, you are probably familiar with the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act. Urban mammal management is often regulated differently than the management of these same species in the countryside. Foothold traps, neck snares, and firearms are usually not permitted. Some states require specific licensing and training. In urban areas, free-roaming dogs, cats, and sometimes free-roaming children dictate what tools are permitted and recommended.

NWCOs have always adapted. If one technique is restricted or banned, another technique is developed. The newer strategy might be more expensive. Conversely, it may be less expensive but less effective. And sometimes, a new technique may be more effective.

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*Continued on page 36*



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**KNOWING YOUR INDUSTRY:***Continued from page 34*

Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators may be hunters or trappers themselves or raised in a hunting or trapping community. But the NWCO profession is not hunting or trapping. Hunters and trappers are not in the customer satisfaction business. They are usually hobbyists. They don't have advertising or office staff. They don't drive vehicles with their business name plastered on the side. Few carry ladders, cage traps, and a receipt book. Fewer still have to deal with soffit repairs, removing dead animals from walls or crawlspaces, and preparing animals to be tested for rabies.

Over the past 100 years, the trend in animal protection has been for more protection, not less. In many cases, the results of this protection have been profound. Large whale populations are up. Few raptors die of DDT toxicity.

Large ungulates like deer and elk are abundant. The treatment of farmed and research animals has improved. I know of no one who argues that these gains should be reversed. Animal welfare organizations still fight against poisons and traps for wildlife, cage sizes for farmed animals, and threats to endangered species. This trend for increased animal protection will not diminish. And, as mentioned above, NWCOs will adapt.

What can you do to stay in front of changes to the nuisance wildlife control industry? Attend meetings and seminars that demonstrate best practices. Be aware of upcoming laws, regulations, and policy changes, and prepare yourself to adapt. Become an innovator. Act as an ambassador for your profession.

I used to work for Cooperative Extension, and my philosophy of extension was to predict the future for my clients and prepare them for that future. The future for NWCOs is that animal protection laws, reg-

ulations, and policies will not go away and will most likely increase. The future includes less emphasis on lethal management schemes and more on non-lethal. The future is a continuation of the need for well-trained NWCOs to solve urban wildlife problems. The future is NWCOs developing and using new, cutting-edge tools and technologies to help society.

I'm a wildlife biologist, and even though there are thousands of wildlife biologists, we don't dictate how wildlife is managed. We make recommendations, and those recommendations may or may not be implemented. NWCOs have a great deal more experience with urban wildlife than 99% of wildlife biologists and 100% of everyone else. If there is going to be innovation, change, and progression in the industry, let it come from you.

Society will thank you for it.

Robert Schmidt was an original columnist for **Wildlife Control Technology** magazine. He is now retired. ■



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