

Living with Bobcats

General information

Widely distributed throughout most of North America, the charismatic bobcat has adapted well to neighborhoods throughout Florida. In rural areas, bobcats are found in deep forest, swamps and hammock land. They den and rest in thick patches of saw palmetto and dense shrub. Bobcats weigh 12-28 pounds, have a short “bobbed” tail, and prey on small animals such as rabbits, rodents, birds and occasionally deer. Bobcats can be a positive addition to an area because they help control populations of other species that may be considered household or yard pests including rodents and rabbits. Unless an animal is sick or injured, bobcats are generally elusive and not aggressive toward people.

What can be done to prevent problems with bobcats?

- **Secure all possible food sources including pet food and garbage.**
- **Do not directly feed bobcats or other wildlife. Even if a bobcat is not eating the food you put out for birds or other wildlife, feeding stations can concentrate prey species and draw predators to your property.**
- **Haze any bobcat that is seen in a community or near homes or livestock. Yell, use air horns or throw rocks towards but not at the bobcat to discourage the animal from being in an unwelcome place.**
- **Properly pen small livestock such as chickens and quail in enclosures that cannot be accessed by bobcats or other predators. Completely enclosed pens are best, to prevent animals from jumping or digging their way into an enclosure.**
- **Do not leave small domestic pets out doors or on screened enclosures unattended and always walk dogs on leashes so they cannot run off or out of sight.**

Legal status

Bobcats are a native species with a legal hunting season in Florida (bobcat hunting regulations and season dates can be found on the FWC website at: MyFWC.com/hunting). A bobcat can be taken as a nuisance if it causes or is about to cause property damage, presents a threat to public safety, or causes an annoyance in, under, or upon a building. Euthanasia of any live captured bobcat is prohibited, they must be released per Florida Rule 68A-9.010, Taking Nuisance Wildlife.

Legal options to take nuisance bobcats

Bobcats are beneficial because they control populations of rodents, rabbits and other small animals. It is best to prevent or solve problems with bobcats by securing attractants and deterring the animals from becoming comfortable around residences and domestic animals. Removing one or more bobcats does not prevent others from moving into or using the same areas in the future.

However, if a bobcat

is a nuisance the animal can be captured or killed using legal and humane methods.

- **Nuisance bobcats can be shot on private property during daylight hours with landowner permission. Please check with the local sheriff or police department before discharging a weapon.**
- **Cage traps can be used for live-capture of bobcats.**

- **Snares can be used to capture bobcats that have a travel path or are digging under a fence. Remember:**

snares are not species-specific traps and the trapper is responsible for any animal caught in a snare.

- **Padded jaw steel traps can only be used with an FWC issued Steel Trap Permit. These permits are normally issued for situations where there is significant livestock loss or property damage and other alternative options have been tried or are not feasible. Applicants need to apply at the appropriate FWC regional office for this permit.**

Please note: All traps must be checked at least once every 24 hours. Captured non-target species should be released on site and all live-captured bobcats must be released alive, either at the capture site or on a property in the same county of capture that is 40 acres or larger. Written permission from the landowner must be obtained prior to release.