

## How to make peace with nuisance wildlife

Many wild animals are quite comfortable living in and around our urban environments. It is common for many kinds of wild animals, especially raccoons, woodchucks, and squirrels to try to make their home in or under a man-made structure.

Many well-intentioned people believe the most humane option is to use a live trap to catch and release the animal somewhere else, but this solution isn't as humane as it sounds. Trapping and relocating animals between March and October has the potential to separate mothers from babies. This leaves the mother distressed searching for her babies in the new area, and the babies are left to perish without her care. Even without babies, releasing an animal in a new territory leaves it not knowing where food, water and shelter are. Often these animals are caught by a predator or must fight for new territory with another of their own species. It is also illegal to release live trapped animals without explicit permission from the landowner to do so. This includes parks and wildlife areas owned by the state or county.



Instead of trapping and relocating, we encourage you to use humane exclusion techniques to encourage the animal to choose to move to a new location on its own. The first step to excluding an animal is determining why they are there in the first place. The two most common reasons animals inhabit an area include:

1. Source of food
2. Dark, quiet area to rest or raise babies

The goal of exclusion is to make the area less desirable for the animal. First and foremost, all sources of food should be removed, or made inaccessible to the animal. Stop feeding dogs or cats outside, fence in your garden, and secure lids on your compost piles and trash containers. Bird feeders attract more than birds. Even if the animal you are concerned about doesn't eat the food put out for the birds, they may prey on some of the small rodents that will come out to eat the bird food.

If the animal has made their home in an inconvenient location, you'll want to encourage the animal to move out by eliminating the dark and quiet that they find attractive with this location. There are many techniques you can try to humanely evict an animal resident, and often using a combination of them is most effective.

- Sound: Play a loud radio or leave a wind chime as close to where the animal is staying as you can. When you see the animal in your yard, make a racket by clapping your hands, yelling or banging on a pan with a wooden spoon.
- Sight: Reflective objects that move are best, so try shiny streamers or pinwheels that blow in the wind outside the entrance to the animal's burrow.
- Smell: Used cat litter, vinegar, ammonia, or even human urine all suggest to an animal that a predator has marked this territory. Especially when refreshed every day these can be very convincing in getting an animal to find a new home.



- **Light:** Eliminate the darkness in the den area by adding a shop light or some other bright light source near the entrance to the den.

Once you believe the animal has vacated the site, try placing something in the entrance to its den, like balls of crumpled newspaper or lightly filling the hole in with dirt. If the blockage remains undisturbed for two days, you can feel confident the animal is no longer using this entry point, and you can take steps to permanently close the entrance.

Permanent changes to the habitat are important to prevent another animal from moving into the space. Use of welded wire to close off spaces under a shed or deck, or in the soffit of your roof to prohibit re-entry is key to mitigating future problems.

Thank you for taking the time to humanely evict unwanted visitors in your home or yard.

**Additional Resources:**

- [HSUS Wild Neighbors](#)
- [Trapping is Not the Answer](#)