Coexisting With Raccoons

With their cat-like movements and masked faces, raccoons, especially kits, can tempt even the most wildlife-wary people in for a closer look.

But like all wildlife, raccoons should be left alone. They can transmit rabies, and while transmission to humans is rare, the risk should be taken seriously.

Raccoon Quick Facts

I saw a raccoon in my yard in the middle of the day and it wasn't afraid of me. Did it have rabies?
Not necessarily. While many animals are secretive and typically active at night, activity during the day and tameness don't always indicate rabies. In urban and surburban areas, raccoons and other wildlife might be accustomed to, and therefore less frightened of, the humans they encounter. Animals that appear sick may appear so for many reasons, including injury, parasites, stress or diseases other than rabies.

What can I do to prevent catching rabies?
It is extremely rare for a human to catch rabies, and even rarer for a human to die from the disease. The last rabies-induced human fatality in North Carolina occurred in 1953, before readily available pet and human vaccinations and post-exposure treatments for humans. However, humans can be exposed and treatments can be costly, so precautions should be taken.
About half of all rabies exposures are through pets. Have cats and dogs vaccinated against the disease. In addition, stay away from unusually aggressive, tame or disoriented animals. Animals showing these types of behaviors do not necessarily have rabies, but for precautionary reasons should be avoided. If contact does occur, seek treatment through your local health department.

Will the Wildlife Resources Commission trap and relocate raccoons that are causing problems in my neighborhood?
No. The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission provides technical guidance to people dealing with nuisance raccoons. Because raccoons are a rabies vector, they cannot be trapped and relocated under any circumstances. All trapped raccoons must be euthanized.

Can I trap a raccoon on my own?
Yes. If trapping season is open, you can trap and euthanize an animal yourself following N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission regulations. If trapping season is not open, and the animal is causing significant damage, you can obtain a depredation permit and trap and euthanize the raccoon.

How do I hire someone else to get rid of the raccoon?
Visit www.ncwildlife.org for lists of licensed trappers and Wildlife Damage Control agents who can trap and euthanize

Nuisance Raccoon Options

Raccoons can be pesky, tenacious critters, and people dealing with one are often desperate for a solution. Sometimes, the answer is as simple as clearing the area of any possible food sources. Other times, the answer may be more complex.

Non-Lethal Options:

- Eliminate all possible food sources by securing garbage cans with a bungee strap, ratchet strap or latch; feed pets indoors; take down bird feeders and clean up seed; and prohibit intentional feeding of wildlife.
- Consider a strand of electric wire around the area where you want to prevent raccoons from going. This option works best if you already have some type of fencing.

Lethal Options:

- If trapping season is open, trap and euthanize the animal yourself following Wildlife Commission regulations found in the ***N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Regulations Digest***, or hire a Wildlife Damage Control Agent or licensed trapper. A list of Wildlife Damage Control Agents is available at www.ncwildlife.org.
- If trapping season is closed, and extensive property damage has occurred, hire a Wildlife Damage Control Agent. Or, obtain a depredation permit from the Wildlife Commission and trap and euthanize the raccoon.
- If trapping season is closed, and extensive property damage has not occurred, use non-lethal options.

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