

Living with **Raccoons**

USFWS



General information

Raccoons are common throughout Florida in urban, suburban and rural areas. In Florida, they typically weigh 11-15 pounds and are most recognizable by their prominent black facial mask and a long bushy tail, striped with four to seven black rings. Raccoons are nocturnal but can be active during the day, which is not an indication of illness.

Raccoons are beneficial and help control populations of rodents and insects. They are commonly attracted to human areas by garbage, pet food, bird seed and gardens. Once accustomed to being fed, raccoons lose their natural fear of humans and move closer to food sources. Raccoons residing in your attic or outbuildings can be difficult to remove, so prevention is key.

What can be done to prevent problems with raccoons?

- **Never feed raccoons!** Placing food outside attracts wild animals and intentional feeding of raccoons is illegal as per *Florida Statute 68A-4.001*.
- Talk to your neighbors and children about not leaving out food or trash. **The best way to prevent problems is to secure attractants.**
- Remove fallen fruit, nuts and bird seed. If you have outdoor pets, place food dishes outside only for limited times.
- Secure garbage can lids with a ratchet strap. Store garbage in a garage, shed or caddy until pick-up.
- Supervise and leash dogs to reduce the risk of encounters. Healthy raccoons are unlikely to attack dogs unless threatened or cornered. Keep cats indoors to protect them from raccoons and other predators.
- Deter raccoons with water sprayed from a hose or motion-activated sprinkler. Enclose pools or try a visual deterrent such as a coyote or alligator decoy. Place a net over small ornamental fish ponds.
- Raccoons may enter structures via pet doors. Lock your pet door at night or install one that opens with an electronic pet collar.
- If a raccoon gets inside, stay calm and contain pets elsewhere. Close all doors to create a clear exit path. Gently nudge the raccoon using a broom or bang the broom on the ground to drive the raccoon towards the door. Never try to handle or corner a raccoon. Panicked animals may bite.
- Prevent denning under homes by securing entry points. To determine if an opening is an entry point, block the opening loosely with leaves or wadded newspaper. Items pushed out of place after several days indicate use.
- Raccoons may choose attics or chimneys as dens. Install chimney caps but first ensure no animals are present.
- To eliminate access, close off all but one entry. Evict raccoons using a combination of harassment techniques such as bright lights, loud noises and strong unpleasant smells. Toss ammonia-soaked rags into the space and continuously light the area with a flashlight. Play a radio loudly near the opening. After animals vacate, seal the access point using sheet metal, sturdy wire mesh or wood.
- Lethal control should be considered a last resort.



Legal status

The raccoon is a native species with a year-round hunting and trapping season in Florida. Hunting and trapping regulations can be found at MyFWC.com/hunting. A raccoon can be taken as a nuisance animal 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, per **Florida Rule 68A-9.010**.

Legal options to take nuisance raccoon

Raccoons are beneficial because they control populations of insects, rodents and other animals. It is best to prevent problems with raccoons by securing attractants and deterring them from denning in residences. Removing one or more raccoons does not prevent others from moving into or using the same areas in the future. However, if a

raccoon is a nuisance, the animal can be captured or taken as a nuisance animal using legal and humane methods.

- Nuisance raccoons can be shot on private property during daylight hours with landowner permission. Please check with the local police department or sheriff's office for firearm ordinances before discharging a firearm.
- Nuisance wildlife, as defined in **Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) 68A-9.010**, may be taken using live traps or snares, or, where allowed, firearms during daylight hours.

Please note: All traps must be checked at least once every 24 hours. Captured non-target species are required to be released on site. All live-captured raccoons must be euthanized, released on-site, or released on a property within the same county of capture that is 40 acres or larger with written permission from the landowner.

If you have further questions or need more help, call your regional Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission office:

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