



# Landowners' Guide to Wildlife Control and Prevention Laws in Pennsylvania

**T**his publication provides basic information for Pennsylvania landowners regarding their rights to control nuisance wildlife. Further information for many of the species mentioned here can be found in the Wildlife Damage Control fact sheet series, published by Penn State Cooperative Extension. Direct additional questions to a regional office of the Pennsylvania Game Commission or your county extension office.

## Control and Prevention Methods

Described below are various methods for controlling or preventing damage by nuisance wildlife. See the table to find out which methods may be used to control particular species. Remember that using more than one control method will give the most beneficial results.

### Habitat modification

Modifying habitat is adjusting practices at home or on commercial lands to deter wildlife habitation. Such practices include keeping lands well manicured, containing garbage and food properly, reducing food availability through the use of insecticides and herbicides, and installing fencing around potential nesting or feeding sites.

### Frightening

Frightening discourages habitation by causing the animal to leave on its own. Methods include shooting shell crackers; regularly detonating gas exploders to scare mammals or birds; and using predator or distress calls, electronic and vibration devices, and scarecrows.

### Repellents

Repellents are chemicals that, when applied, deter wildlife habitation and feeding.<sup>a</sup>

### Toxicants

Toxicants are chemicals that, unlike repellents, kill or harm the animal or bird.<sup>a</sup>

### Fumigants

Fumigants are substances or mixtures of substances that produce gas, vapor, fume, or smoke intended to destroy rodents. Because of the complex nature of rodent burrows, fumigants often are not effective when used alone.<sup>a</sup>

### Kill trapping and live capture

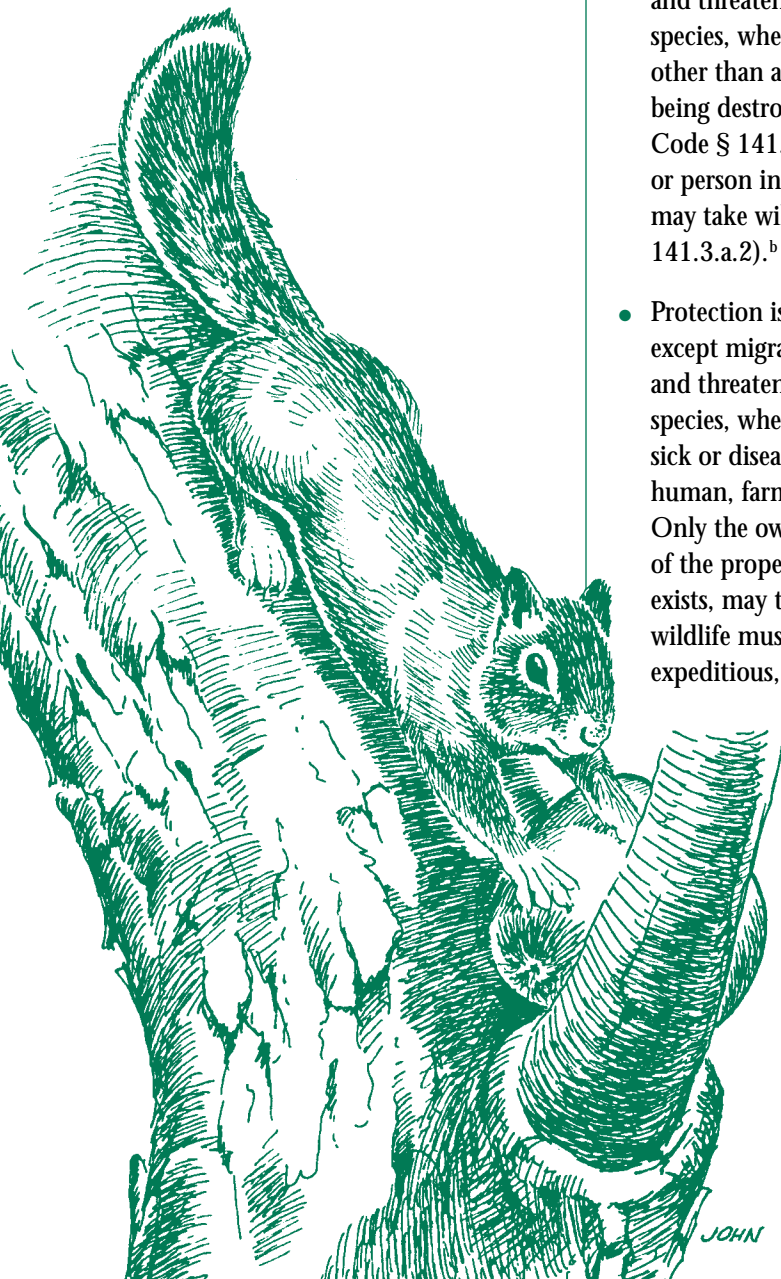
In most cases, the use of traps where permitted is most effective. Various traps are available, depending on the situation. Live capture traps, like cage traps or box traps, can be set and left alone until the target species triggers them. All traps must be checked every 36 hours. Kill trapping may require a furtakers' license or permit from the Game Commission.

<sup>a</sup>When using any chemical, read the label carefully for application methods and warnings. Use of certain chemicals requires permits and/or licenses. Contact the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Pesticide Licensing (717-783-3959).

## Shooting

Shooting live ammunition, whether to frighten or kill, has limited application. Generally, live ammunition may only be fired during hunting season or under permit. Discharge of cracker shells, firearms, or both may be regulated by municipality. Check your local ordinances.

All pest species can be excluded from an area to prevent infestation or damage before it begins. Check with your county extension agent for the proper exclusion methods to use for your particular pest.



## Landowner Control of Wildlife Damage: Laws and Regulations

The Pennsylvania Game Commission's regulations for wildlife protection and damage control are printed below. If you have any concern that a control method violates these regulations, contact your regional Game Commission office before taking action to control nuisance wildlife. Also contact the office to notify them of any wildlife damage complaints.

- Protection is removed from wildlife, except migratory birds, big game, and threatened or endangered species, when personal property, other than an agricultural crop, is being destroyed or damaged (58 Code § 141.3.a.1). Only the owner or person in charge of the property may take wildlife (58 Code § 141.3.a.2).<sup>b</sup>
- Protection is removed from wildlife, except migratory birds, big game, and threatened or endangered species, when an animal is obviously sick or diseased and poses a threat to human, farm animal, or pet safety. Only the owner or person in charge of the property, when the threat exists, may take these animals. The wildlife must be taken in a safe, expeditious, and lawful manner and

must be buried on the site where taken, destroyed by incineration or other proper disposal, or submitted for laboratory analysis (58 Code § 141.3.c-d).

- Wildlife taken to protect personal property must be taken in a humane and lawful manner (58 Code § 141.3.a.3).
- Wildlife taken to protect personal property must be turned over to a Game Commission representative as required in section 2125 (58 Code § 141.3.b.1).<sup>c</sup>
- No wildlife may be retained alive, sold, or given away (58 Code § 141.3.b.2).

Farmers may protect from wildlife damage farm crops, fruit trees, vegetables, livestock, poultry, or beehives on any farmlands under their control. They may kill game for harming crops or livestock but must report the kill to a Wildlife Conservation Officer. For further information on farmers' rights, refer to the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau publication entitled *Farmers' Rights and Obligations Pertaining to the Game and Wildlife Code*, or call your regional Game Commission office.

<sup>b</sup>To take, as defined by the Game Commission, means "to harass, pursue, hunt for, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, possess, or collect any game or wildlife, including shooting at a facsimile of game or wildlife or attempt to harass, pursue, hunt for, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect any game or wildlife."

<sup>c</sup>Section 2125 states: "Except as otherwise provided in this subchapter, the entire carcass, including the head and hide, of all big game animals and the entire carcass of any other game or wildlife, other than raccoons, shall be made available, unless otherwise directed by an officer of the commission, intact, less entrails, to any commission officer calling for them."

	Modifying habitat	Frightening	Repellents	Toxicants	Fumigants	Kill trapping	Live capture	Shooting	Other methods
<b>Bats</b>	X	0	X	—	—	—	X	—	X
<b>Beavers</b>	PGC	X	—	—	—	PGC	PGC	PGC	PGC
<b>Black bears</b>	X	X	X	—	—	PGC	PGC	PGC	X
<b>Blackbirds</b>	X	X	X	PGC	—	PGC	PGC	PGC	—
<b>Chipmunks</b>	X	0	X	—	—	X	X	X	—
<b>Deer</b>	X	X	X	—	—	PGC	PGC	PGC	PGC
<b>Field mice</b>	X	0	X	X	—	X	X	0	X
<b>Moles</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0	X
<b>Muskrats</b>	X	0	—	—	—	X	X	PGC	—
<b>Opossum</b>	X	0	—	—	—	—	X	X	—
<b>Rabbits</b>	X	0	X	—	—	—	X	X	X
<b>Raccoons</b>	X	0	—	—	—	—	X	X	—
<b>Shrews</b>	X	0	—	—	—	X	X	0	X
<b>Skunks</b>	X	X	—	—	X	—	X	X	X
<b>Snakes</b>	X	0	X	—	—	—	X	X	—
<b>House sparrows</b>	X	X	X	X	—	X	X	X	X
<b>Squirrels</b>	X	0	X	—	—	X	X	X	—
<b>Water fowl*†</b>	X	X	X	—	—	—	PGC	PGC	PGC
<b>Voles</b>	X	0	X	X	X	X	X	0	—
<b>Woodchucks</b>	X	X	—	—	X	—	X	X	—
<b>Woodpeckers†</b>	X	X	—	—	—	PGC	PGC	PGC	PGC

\* Ducks, geese, and swans

† Federally protected. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife permit is required in addition to the state permit before control measures can be taken.

X = Practice is lawful.

0 = Practice is lawful in all cases but may not be effective.

PGC-marked practices require authorization, permits, and/or the assistance of the Game Commission. Contact the Commission before using any of the PGC-marked methods.

Note: The Pennsylvania Game Commission is responsible for managing birds and mammals, while the Fish and Boat Commission is responsible for managing fishes, reptiles, and amphibians.



## For Further Information

### The Pennsylvania Game Commission

- Northwest, Franklin:  
(877) 877-0299
- Southwest, Ligonier:  
(877) 877-7137
- Northcentral, Jersey Shore:  
(877) 877-7674
- Southcentral, Huntingdon:  
(877) 877-9107
- Northeast, Dallas:  
(877) 877-9357
- Southeast, Reading:  
(877) 877-9470

Fish and Boat Commission  
(717) 705-7800

Pennsylvania State Extension  
Specialist  
(814) 863-0401

USDA Wildlife Services  
(717) 728-0400

Your county extension agent



Prepared by Cristin Conrad, extension assistant, and Gary San Julian, professor of wildlife resources, in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Game Commission

### Illustrations by John Sidelinger

Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences research, extension, and resident education programs are funded in part by Pennsylvania counties, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences research, extension, and resident education programs are funded in part by Pennsylvania counties, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

This publication is available from the Publications Distribution Center, The Pennsylvania State University, 112 Agricultural Administration Building, University Park, PA 16802. For information telephone (814) 865-6713.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of Congress May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Pennsylvania Legislature. T. R. Alter, Director of Cooperative Extension, The Pennsylvania State University.

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. It is the policy of the University to maintain an academic and work environment free of discrimination, including harassment. The Pennsylvania State University prohibits discrimination and harassment against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Discrimination or harassment against faculty, staff, or students will not be tolerated at The Pennsylvania State University. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Director, The Pennsylvania State University, 201 Willard Building, University Park, PA 16802-2801, Tel 814-865-4700/V, 814-863-1150/TTY.

© The Pennsylvania State University 2000

Rv5M12/00ps42030

