

# WILDLIFE SMART



*Raccoons are skilled climbers.  
Prevent raccoons from accessing bird feed.*

## COEXISTING WITH RACCOONS

*Raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) are an intelligent and highly adaptable wildlife species that can be found in Manitoba's urban, rural and wilderness areas. While primarily found in southern Manitoba, their range continues to expand northward in the province, past The Pas and beyond. Raccoons are easily recognized by their grayish brown fur, bushy banded tail and black masked face. The raccoon has a valuable role in Manitoba's ecosystems, but may come into conflict with people when they cause property damage, den in undesirable locations, or transmit disease to people or their pets.*

*There are things you can do to reduce the risk of conflicts with raccoons. This fact sheet offers some helpful advice to protect yourself, your family, your property, and raccoons.*

### THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RACCOONS

- Raccoons are nocturnal (most active at night), and will try to avoid interacting with people. However, like any wild animal, if a raccoon encounters a person and feels cornered or threatened it may become aggressive. They are also fiercely protective of their young.
- Raccoons belong to the order Carnivora, which also includes meat-eating mammals such as foxes and weasels. However, raccoons are best described as omnivores and frequent scavengers, meaning they eat almost any food item, whether it is animal or plant-based.
- Raccoons are attracted to food and food waste in people's yards, such as fruit, nuts, pet food, bird feed and garbage. They are also quite fond of sweet corn.

- Raccoons may prey on chickens, rabbits, fish, insects, eggs, mice and other small animals.
- Raccoons may seek cover and create dens in sheds, garages, attics, debris piles and chimneys.
- Raccoons can carry diseases and parasites that may infect people or their animals.
- Raccoons maintain latrines, where they repeatedly defecate. Their latrines can be anywhere, such as in a corner of a yard, a sandbox, the crook of a tree branch, or even a house attic.

*Cover your child's  
sandbox when not in  
use to prevent it from  
being used as a latrine.*



# THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE THE RISK OF CONFLICT

## Remove or secure things that can attract raccoons to your yard

- Never feed wildlife. When food is available to raccoons, either directly or indirectly (through feeding their prey), it may attract raccoons and other predators to an area.
- If you feed birds, prevent raccoons from being able to access the bird food.
- Feed pets indoors and never leave pet food dishes outdoors. Odours from the food dishes may attract raccoons and other animals.
- Store garbage in a secure building or wildlife resistant container. Be aware that raccoons have been known to tip over garbage cans to access the food inside.
- Compost food items where they are inaccessible to raccoons.
- In the summer and fall, remove all ripened or fallen fruit daily.
- Fully enclose backyard beehives and chicken coops. Electric fencing can be an effective deterrent when used appropriately.
- Prevent access to possible denning sites. Remove tree branches overhanging your house and any debris piles in your yard. Seal entry to your attic, chimney and under your shed or deck, as well. Chimney caps should be made of heavy durable materials and be well-fastened to the chimney to prevent removal by a raccoon.
- Sweet corn or other crops can be protected by the installation of a double-strand (both hot) wire electric fence. Wire should be spaced at 15 centimetres and 30 centimetres above ground level. Turn the fence on before dusk, and off after daybreak. Be sure to install warning signs for human visitors.

## Reduce risks for people

- Do not approach raccoons, especially if they have young present. Raccoons can be vicious when protecting themselves or their young.
- Teach young children not to approach any animal they encounter unless it is on leash and the owner says it is okay.

- Avoid physical contact with raccoons and their droppings.
- Safely dispose of any feces found in latrines on your property (see below). Cover sandboxes when not in use to prevent them from being used as a latrine.
- If a raccoon appears sick or injured, make note of its location and report it to a conservation officer. Contact the local district office or call the TIP line at 1-800-782-0076.

## Reduce risks for domestic animals

- Do not leave your pet outside unattended. Bring pets inside at night.
- Try to avoid walking your pet at night. Restrain (leash) your pet when walking it, to reduce the potential of it harassing a raccoon which could provoke a defensive attack in response. Unrestrained pets are at greater risk.
- Ensure your pet receives appropriate vaccinations. Talk to your veterinarian about your pet's vaccination needs.
- Ensure that outdoor structures for rabbits, poultry or other small animals are fully enclosed, including the sides, top and bottom. Wire mesh fence openings should be small enough to prevent animals from wiggling through. Be aware that raccoons have been known to reach through mesh fencing to try to pull animals out through the mesh.
- Place secured metal mesh screening over fish ponds.



*Feed pets indoors. If left outside, pet food bowls can attract unwanted wildlife to your yard and could allow the transmission of disease from wildlife to your pet.*

## THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REMOVE A RACCOON DENNING IN YOUR AREA

- Place bright lights, a loud radio, and/or employ repellents in or near the den to drive the animal out.
- If the raccoon is caught in a chimney or stovepipe, drop a rope down to allow it to climb out. Bright light and a loud radio in the fireplace will encourage the raccoon to leave. Cap the chimney/stovepipe once the animal is gone.
- If raccoons have gained access to an attic, replace insulation and disinfect the area (see below), since the raccoon scent will linger and attract others to the attic.

## DISEASES AND PARASITES

Raccoons are potential carriers of a number of diseases and parasites that may infect people or their pets. Some prominent infections include leptospirosis, canine distemper, and raccoon roundworm. Like any mammal, raccoons can also contract rabies from other infected mammals. Information on raccoon roundworm and canine distemper is provided below. Detailed information about leptospirosis and rabies is available online from Canada's Public Health Agency at [www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/infectious-diseases.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/infectious-diseases.html).

### Raccoon Roundworm (*Baylisascaris procyonis*)

- Raccoons infected with this parasite pass the parasite eggs in their feces. Once passed, excreted eggs become infective after two to four weeks.
- People may become infected with *Baylisascaris* by accidentally swallowing eggs after coming into contact with contaminated hands, soil, or objects that have been in contact with raccoon feces. People may also become infected by breathing in the microscopic eggs that may become airborne when dry.
- Health effects in people may include skin irritation, eye damage, brain damage, liver enlargement or coma. Death is rare.
- Dogs may also be infected with raccoon roundworm, but may not show symptoms. Take care to avoid contact with dog feces.
- Most chemicals will not kill roundworm eggs; however, extreme heat (such as boiling water) will usually kill the eggs instantly.



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### Canine Distemper (*Morbillivirus*)

- Canine distemper virus can easily spread between raccoons and dogs. Humans are not at risk from this disease.
- Infected raccoons act very disoriented or lethargic, with crusty eyes, excess mucus coming from the nasal area, and shallow or laboured breathing.
- Reports of affected raccoons tend to come from areas with typically high raccoon populations, such as the Winnipeg region near the Red and Assiniboine rivers.

### Latrine Cleanup

- Raccoons frequently defecate in communal sites, called latrines. Latrines may be found around trees, on raised horizontal surfaces, in attics, on decks or patios, or in sandboxes or flowerbeds.
- Raccoon feces should be cleaned up using proper materials to avoid personal contamination. Use personal protective equipment including disposable latex gloves, rubber boots that can be scrubbed, and if working in an enclosed space, use an N-95 rated respirator.
- Once removed, the feces should be buried or sent securely to a landfill.
- Treat areas soiled by raccoon feces with extreme heat, either by pouring boiling water on the area, or by using a propane torch.
- Detailed instructions for raccoon latrine clean-up are available online from the Centre for Disease Control at [www.cdc.gov/parasites/baylisascaris/resources/raccoonlatrines.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/baylisascaris/resources/raccoonlatrines.pdf).

## LETHAL RACCOON REMOVAL

- Raccoons can be harvested by a licensed trapper during the regulated season, where it is lawful to do so. All trapping regulations apply. Raccoon harvest is best conducted when their pelt is prime (mid-November to mid-March) to ensure the pelt is not wasted and its value is maximized. Make arrangements with a local trapper well in advance of the prime trapping season so that they can be prepared to harvest raccoons on your land at that time.
- In certain circumstances, under The Wildlife Act, a landowner may kill a raccoon to defend their property. They must report the killing of the raccoon to a conservation officer within 10 days. For additional information about this provision please contact Manitoba Government Inquiries at 204-945-3744, 1-866-MANITOBA or [mgi@gov.mb.ca](mailto:mgi@gov.mb.ca).
- Another option is to utilize the services of a pest management company that has been authorized to remove raccoons.

## WHY NOT JUST RELOCATE RACCOONS?

### **Relocating raccoons can create a new set of problems for other wildlife and people.**

- The relocated raccoon may carry disease or parasites to wildlife in the release area.
- The relocated raccoon may cause conflicts with new, surrounding landowners.
- Raccoons are abundant throughout their range in Manitoba. If an attractant that has led to conflicts with raccoons is not secured, the raccoon(s) that has/have been relocated will soon be replaced by another raccoon that can continue to cause conflicts.

*Store garbage where it can't be accessed by raccoons. Be aware they can tip over garbage cans to access the food inside.*



**For more information on reducing the risk of conflicts with raccoons and other wildlife, visit [www.manitoba.ca/human-wildlife](http://www.manitoba.ca/human-wildlife).**

**To report wildlife showing aggressive behaviour, or that appears sick, injured, or orphaned, contact a conservation officer at the local district office or call the TIP line at 1-800-782-0076.**