

# Raccoons

## Co-existing with raccoons

Like other wild animals, raccoons have the same basic needs as humans; food, water and shelter. Humans and animals often come into contact when they are trying to meet their needs. Conflicts can be prevented depending on how we think and act towards wildlife. It is our responsibility to educate ourselves and neighbours about living with wild animals, like raccoons.



## Raccoon Facts

Raccoons are found all over Ontario, in forests, towns and cities. They have adapted to a wide range of living habitats. Their predators include coyotes, foxes, wolves and owls. Malnutrition and harsh winter weather play an important role in limiting raccoon populations. They are mainly active at night, throughout the year. Raccoons have amazing dexterity and use their front paws to pry things open, turn knobs and handle objects.

## What do raccoons eat?

Raccoons will consume almost any food item, plant or animal. As omnivores, raccoons usually feed on insects, small animals, eggs, nuts, fruits and vegetables (like corn). They will also eat from garbage and compost.



## Where do raccoons live?

Raccoons are found in urban, rural and wilderness areas in almost all parts of Ontario. They are found primarily along streams and lake boarders near wooded areas or rock cliffs.

Raccoons are attracted to lawns and gardens, especially after a rainfall when grubs and larvae are near the surface. Raccoons have adapted well to life in the city. Because food and shelter are plentiful, and natural predators are limited, these animals will continue to live among us. Raccoons can survive just about anywhere, from North America to the tropics as long as there is readily available water. They have created homes in the wild, but also look for warm, safe places to live, in urban communities. Raccoons commonly find their way inside fireplace chimneys. Because of this, people should always have a chimney cap installed.

## Did you know?...

- Raccoons are commonly referred to as the “masked bandit” for good reason. Raccoons are very smart and can get into just about anything.
- In most areas, a majority of raccoons die from hunters and collisions with vehicles. In North America, the most common natural cause of death is distemper.
- The average life expectancy of a raccoon is about 2-3 years in the wild. In captivity, they have been known to live up to 20 years.

## How should I clean up raccoon feces?

Material contaminated with raccoon feces should be removed carefully and burned, buried or sent to a landfill. Care should be taken to avoid contaminating hands and clothes. The use of gloves and facemask will help prevent cross contamination. Treat decks, patios, and other surfaces with boiling water. Always wash hands well with soap and water to help reduce possible infections.



## Additional Information:

- Raccoons dig small round holes and in some cases, roll up large chunks of sod. The grubs feed on the grass root system, destroying the grass. To prevent raccoons from digging up lawns, apply natural remedies from garden stores (ex. microscopic worms called nematodes, which are effective in killing grubs).
- The raccoon can carry the rabies virus and transmit it through its saliva. Main symptoms of illness in animal, include: aggressive behavior, impaired mobility, a sickly appearance and abnormal vocalization.

## What if I encounter a raccoon?

Although all warm blooded mammals can carry the rabies virus, raccoons are a common carrier of the disease in Ontario. To avoid human exposure to rabies:

- Vaccinate all dogs and cats, since there is always a chance of a pet coming in accidental contact with a rabid animal.
- Always keep your distance from a raccoon.

## Raccoons can be avoided by:

- Storing garbage (in bins or boxes) inside the garage or basement until collection day.
- Using a repellent like mustard oil or mothballs in the bottom of the garbage can.
- Fitting garbage cans with tight lids and securing the cans so that they cannot be tipped over.
- Using enclosed-style composters and feeding pets indoors.

## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE

Ministry of Natural Resources:

Phone: (905) 713-7400

Website: [www.mnr.gov.on.ca](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca)

Hinterland Who's Who:

Website: [www.hww.ca/en/species/](http://www.hww.ca/en/species/)

Or contact the Town of Oakville at:

1225 Trafalgar Road, Oakville, ON L5H 0H3

Phone: (905) 845-6601

Website: [www.oakville.ca](http://www.oakville.ca)

Email: [environment@oakville.ca](mailto:environment@oakville.ca)

Oakville Wildlife Strategy & Conflict Guidelines:

Website: [www.oakville.ca/environment/wildlife-strategy.html](http://www.oakville.ca/environment/wildlife-strategy.html)