

The Town of Oakville Features...

Wildlife proofing your property

People who feed wildlife usually have the best intentions. However, feeding wild animals almost always results in negative consequences for both humans and the wildlife involved.

All wild animals 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.

A variety of wildlife are often found where many of us live — in cities, towns and suburban neighborhoods. Sadly, many people see these animals as pests that invade homes and gardens.



As our communities continue to grow, we destroy animals' natural habitat and force them to adapt to ours. Understanding the important role wildlife plays in the community and taking proper precautions to avoid conflict in the first place is a common sense approach to having a "wildlife free" home.

If you already have an infestation, removing the animal and whatever is left behind (waste materials, contaminated insulation, parasites, dead animals) is better left to a professional wildlife control company. The town offers a fact sheet on selecting a humane wildlife control vendor.

Wildlife proofing your home

Ideally, ensuring nothing gets into your home is the best option and this is something most homeowners can do themselves. An online and downloadable [checklist](#) is available on the town's website.

The checklist has detailed steps you can take to make sure you're covered. Copies are also available at Town Hall.

Some quick things you can do around your house:

- Make garbage and composting inaccessible to wildlife by using heavy garbage cans with locking lids.
- Keep BBQ grills clean and close BBQ lids after use.
- Protect your vegetable garden - use wire mesh or electrical fencing.
- Apply environmentally-friendly non-toxic pesticides to lawns in order to control grubs (a favourite snack of raccoons and skunks).
- Cut down or remove any overhanging branches or old TV antennas around the home. This helps remove access to roofs.
- Decks and attics make ideal nesting spots. Make annual inspections and repair any openings.
- Cover your pool with a solar blanket when you're not using it.
- Avoid using woodpiles, if possible. Many animals like to nest or hide in them.

Why not trap and relocate?

Trapping and relocation of animals is not advised for a number of reasons:

- Separating a mother from her babies often results in the death of the newborns.
- Animals can severely injure themselves trying to escape from a live trap.
- Removing wildlife from an area does not solve the problem. If there is suitable habitat, more animals simply move in to replace those that were removed.

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- Provincial laws prohibit moving wildlife more than one kilometre away from where it was trapped.

While wildlife can be fun to observe, having them living with you is not. To make sure you're not attracting unwelcome additions to your home:

Do

- Appreciate wildlife from a distance.
- Keep household waste or pet food away from wild animals.
- Attract wildlife in a positive way by improving natural habitat.
- Store garbage inside until collection day.

Don't

- Put out food to attract wildlife.
- Try to approach or touch wildlife.
- Feed pets outdoors or allow them to roam away from your field of vision.

What are the consequences of feeding wildlife?

Feeding is one of the main reasons conflicts can arise between people and wildlife. Besides causing problems for people, it's also not healthy for wildlife and can result in serious consequences, even death.

Threats to people

- Feeding wildlife may attract "unwanted" species to your property.
- Animals will learn to associate humans with food, which can become a problem to the community.
- Adapted animals may become aggressive.
- What goes in, must come out. Overfeeding of animals (such as Canada geese and pigeons) can cause excess waste materials which is both unhealthy and unsightly.

Threats to animals

- Animals can become dependent on artificial food supplies.
- They can lose their natural fear of humans and pets, which may cause more conflict.

- Artificial food sources are not healthy for wildlife to consume and can cause serious illness.
- Feeding animals roadside can increase their risk of being hit by vehicles.

The town has by-laws in place to address problem feeding issues. Oakville's Property Standards By-law (2007-100) covers conditions which might result in harbouring or attracting pests (such as leaving food out). The maximum fine under this by-law is \$25,000 for a first offense. Feeding wildlife leads to unwanted situations in public spaces as well, such as encouraging coyotes to approach people and excessive fouling of open space by geese. The town's Parks By-law (2013-013) prohibits the feeding of wildlife in all town parks.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE

The Toronto Wildlife Centre's "*Answering the Call of the Wild*" is a resource book that provides guidance on preventing conflicts and managing wildlife on your property. You can purchase a copy through their website at www.torontowildlifecentre.com or access a reference copy at any of Oakville's public library branches or Town Hall.



The town has a number of resources available on our website on wildlife and biodiversity at www.oakville.ca/environment where you can watch educational videos, access fact sheets and more. Or contact us at:
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