

Ag Column
Chris Ramsey
Monday, August 27, 2018

Too Many “Wild” Neighbors?

You probably know where I’m going with the title if you have a garden. Numerous nuisance wildlife calls each week to the Extension office have been more than enough evidence. The most common calls are about deer, groundhogs, skunks, moles, voles, bats, woodpeckers, rabbits and snakes. Complaints usually come from homeowners that live near or in the woods as they are close to wildlife habitat.

Often the concern is wildlife gaining entry into homes. According to Dr. Craig Harper, UT Extension Wildlife Specialist, the best recommendation is to exclude wildlife from homes by closing up openings around vents, garage doors, roofs, and other forgotten about places.

Late summer is the best time to inspect your home for possible wildlife entry points. Take the time to close up openings by doing simple needed home repair and using weather stripping.

When wildlife invades your garden, there is not a simple solution. You must employ a variety of measures to successfully deter wildlife from your garden and orchard. Repellents are good but quickly become ineffective due to exposure to the environment. Wildlife also will acclimate to specific smells or even tastes allowing the wildlife to damage your plants. When using repellents, you must continually switch to different smells or tastes. Wildlife becomes more difficult to repel during drought because of their desire to find food.

Electric fencing can also be an effective control mechanism for wildlife around gardens and orchards. The downside of fencing is the expense, labor, and inconvenience of limited access to the garden. Although fencing has its negative points, it can be very effective for wildlife control. Harper recommends coating aluminum foil with peanut butter and attaching it to the electric fence, which increases the effectiveness of the fence. It only takes one time for deer to learn after touching the aluminum foil.

Trapping or shooting is often the best means of control for wildlife such as groundhogs. Groundhogs are easily trapped when baited with apples, beans, corn, cabbage, and carrots. Traps can be purchased at farm supply stores. Trapping is the best method of removing skunks from your property. They are easily trapped when baited with cat or dog food, sardines, and meat scraps. If you don’t want to trap the wildlife yourself, you may call a professional to trap and remove your critter. Call 423-574-1919 for more information.

As we develop more residential and commercial property, we compromise wildlife habitat forcing wildlife to visit our doorstep in search for food. We must make an effort to coexist with wildlife when possible as they improve the quality of our lives. You shouldn’t feed wildlife as they will often build up to damaging levels.