

Biology of Common Nuisance Animals

SPECIES	PRIMARY ACTIVITY PERIOD	BODY LENGTHS	BODY WEIGHTS	LITTERS PER YEAR	TIME OF BIRTH	LITTER SIZE	AGE OF INDEPENDENCE
OPOSSUM	Night	26-28 in	2-12 lbs	1-2	Feb.- Oct.	5-13	12-14 weeks
RACCOON	Night	24-46 in	12-25 lbs	1	April-May	3-6	10-14 weeks
SPOTTED SKUNK	Night	12-14 in	1-2 lbs	1-2	May- June, Sept.- Oct.	2-6	7-9 weeks
STRIPED SKUNK	Night	19-24 in	2-6 lbs	1	May- June	2-10	7-9 weeks
FLYING SQUIRREL	Night	8-10 in	2-4 oz	2	March-April, Aug.- Oct.	3-8	10-12 weeks
GRAY SQUIRREL	Day	15-19 in	0.8-1.3 lbs	2	Feb.- March, June - Aug.	1-5	10-12 weeks
RED SQUIRREL	Day	10-15 in	5-10 oz	2	March-May, Aug. - Oct.	3-8	10-12 weeks
WOODCHUCK	Day	18-27 in	7-12 lbs	1	March - April	3-8	8-10 weeks

mals. The only remaining predator is the automobile. All signs indicate that these pests will be man's worst friend for some time to come.

State game officials used to control nuisance animals. Now pest control operators are getting into the business. Though it can be profitable, Kevin Clark, president of Critter Control Inc., Detroit, Mich., points out, "I've seen the good, the bad and the indifferent in this business."

Nuisance animal control can be financially rewarding, but only if the PCO first educates himself, uses the proper equipment and follows basic procedures for capturing and handling wildlife.

Start with education

One of the biggest mistakes some PCOs make is entering this business without sufficient knowledge. To get a jump on the competition, PCOs should talk to others in the business, educate themselves through audio and videotapes, and attend regional

and national meetings on nuisance animal control. The National Pest Control Association, for example, holds educational conferences on vertebrate animals every year.

Because of the growing wave of environmentalism, PCOs are controlling pests through non-toxic, mechanical means instead of chemicals. So they also need to know basic trapping techniques, safety rules and regulations.

PCOs should first study the biology of common nuisance animals (see chart), such as their primary activity period, time of birth, litter size and age of independence.

For example, the gray squirrel is most active during the day and bears its young February through March and June through August. Litter size is 1-5, and the age of independence is 10-12 weeks. With this information in mind, you'll have a better chance of nabbing that evasive squirrel in your customer's attic.

It's also important to check

with federal, state and local authorities about licenses and regulations that govern nuisance animal control. Some states allow licensed professionals to control only certain animals. New York, for instance, requires licensing to perform nuisance animal control, while New Jersey currently doesn't, although it is in the process of setting up licensing similar to New York.

These authorities can also tell you what to do after a pest is captured. Options include relocating the animal, releasing it on site or destroying it. The latter is becoming more popular because of rabies and increasing pest populations. Three reasons not to release or relocate the animal are:

- 1 Spread of diseases such as rabies to a healthy population.
- 2 Many parks and preserves are already at their carrying capacity, and can't tolerate additional animals competing for food and shelter.
- 3 The nuisance animal being re-