
Handling Conflicts with Wildlife

June 2013

Wildlife is an important part of Ontario's natural and cultural heritage. Wild animals are often a welcome addition to a landowner's property, but there are times when some wildlife can become a problem.

How can I prevent conflicts with wildlife?

Wild animals have the same basic needs as humans – food, water and shelter. Sometimes, humans and wildlife come into conflict when animals are trying to meet their basic needs. Often, conflicts can be prevented if we're willing to make small changes, such as storing garbage so animals can't get to it.

The best first step for dealing with unwelcome wild animals is to remove the food or shelter attracting them to your property. For more information about preventing and handling conflicts with different animals, visit ontario.ca/livingwithwildlife or contact your local district office at ontario.ca/mnroffices.

Who's responsible for managing problem wildlife on properties?

Landowners are responsible for managing problem animals on their property. The Ministry of Natural Resources helps landowners and municipalities by providing information on steps they can take to address problems with wildlife.

Using an agent

You may hire or ask someone to deal with problem animals on your property. This person is your agent. The following individuals are designated by the ministry to act as agents:

- Hunters with an H1 Outdoors Card.
- Licensed trappers.
- Employees or agents of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.
- Members of a landowner's immediate family acting on behalf of the landowner.
- A person whose main business is removing problem wildlife.
- Municipal employees with specific responsibilities for wildlife control (animal services).

Other persons may act as agents. Contact your local ministry office at ontario.ca/mnroffices for more information.

What actions can a landowner take?

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act sets out the legal actions property owners can take to deal with problem wildlife. Generally, landowners or their agents may capture, harass or kill problem wildlife to prevent damage to their property. There are important exceptions and requirements:

- White-tailed deer, moose, caribou and elk cannot be captured, harassed or killed in protection of property (see the section below on elk and deer and agriculture/airports.)
- You may not cause unnecessary suffering to any wildlife.
- Only persons specifically authorized by the ministry can live-trap a black bear.
- A person who kills a black bear in protection of property anywhere in Ontario must immediately report it either through registering for a Notice of Possession (if keeping the bear) or by calling their local MNR office (if not keeping the bear)

- A person who kills a wolf or coyote in protection of property in [central and northern Ontario](#) (roughly north of the Severn River, Bancroft and Pembroke) must immediately report it either through registering for a Notice of Possession (if they wish to keep it for personal use only) or by calling their local MNR office (in all other cases)

According to a regulation under the [Endangered Species Act](#), any animal listed as threatened or endangered cannot be captured, harassed or killed in protection of property without authorization from the ministry. The landowner must have reasonable grounds to believe the animal is damaging property and must enter into an agreement with the ministry describing what action may be taken to protect the property from that animal.

For more information, contact your local MNR office at ontario.ca/mnroffices.

Releasing captured animals

If you capture wildlife for relocation, within 24 hours you must release it as close as possible to the capture site (less than a kilometre away) in similar habitat wherever possible, unless otherwise directed by the ministry.

If the animal is injured or sick, you can take it to an [authorized wildlife rehabilitator](#). You may also take it to a veterinarian for temporary care and treatment (please note that many vets will not cover the cost).

The [fact sheet](#) on what to do if you find a sick, injured or orphaned wild animal provides more information.

Additional requirements

It is important to ensure that dependent offspring are not left behind when removing or relocating adults. In those cases, you should delay taking action until the young are old enough to fend for themselves or leave with the adults. If this is not practical or possible, orphaned animals can be taken to an authorized wildlife custodian.

If you must take action against wildlife, please consider all your options and follow all relevant laws and regulations. Property owners should check with their municipality regarding discharge of firearms by-laws. Only licensed trappers and farmers may possess and use body-gripping traps.

Farmers with problem deer or elk

If you are a farmer who is experiencing problems with white-tailed deer or elk, you can apply for authorization from the ministry to harass or kill the problem white-tailed deer or elk on your property. There are special requirements and conditions that govern authorizations. Contact your local MNR office for more information, or review the policies:

- [Issuance of Deer Removal/Harassment Authorizations for Agricultural Damage](#)
- [Policy for Protecting Agricultural Property from Elk](#)

Authorizations for harassing or killing deer are also available to airports where deer pose public safety risks. Contact your local MNR office at ontario.ca/mnroffices for more information.

LEARN MORE

- For more information on preventing and handling conflicts with different animals, visit ontario.ca/wildlife and choose the "Living with Wildlife" link or contact your local MNR office at ontario.ca/mnroffices.
- To learn more about preventing and handling conflicts with wild animals under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, please contact your local MNR office at ontario.ca/mnroffices.