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Controlling Raccoons

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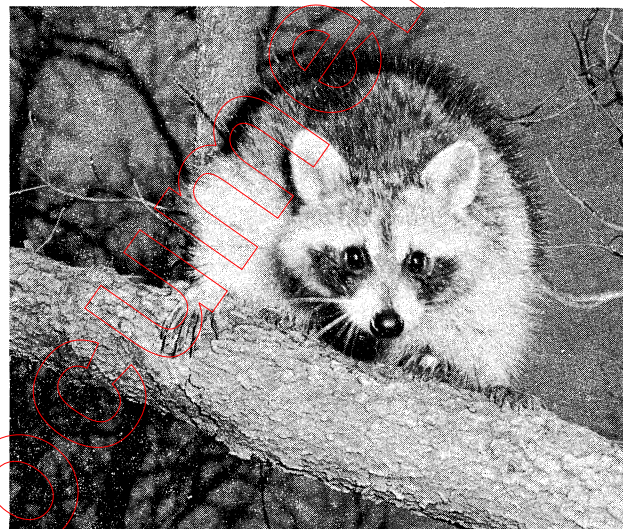
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controlling **Raccoons**

Prepared by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with Purdue University and Indiana agricultural, conservation and health agencies.



Raccoons are common throughout most of the United States, and are important game animals. They prefer areas around streams, lakes, or marshes, and require trees, brush, or other cover. Raccoons make their homes in hollow trees or logs, in rock dens, and sometimes in burrows. They sometimes enter the attics of houses. Because they are most active at night, they can be common in an area yet rarely seen. In colder climates they may hibernate in the winter. From 3 to 6 young are born in April or May.

Raccoons eat almost anything, but mainly insects, crayfish, mussels, frogs, fish, birds' eggs, grain, fruits, berries, and nuts. They are especially destructive to cornfields, particularly when the ears are in the milk stage. Where raccoons become so numerous that they are a serious pest to agriculture, their control is essential.

Control Methods

Trapping is the most satisfactory method of controlling raccoons. Hunting is restricted to established seasons and seldom removes enough offending animals to stop damage.

Raccoons are easy to trap. The No. 2 double coil-spring fox trap is best suited for this purpose. To remove the factory oil finish and to prevent rusting, the traps, trap wire, and other metal materials should be boiled in a solution of water and staining materials, such as, oak, maple or hemlock bark, walnut hulls, or logwood chips (obtainable at most drug stores.) Hang the traps up until dried (rubber gloves should be used to avoid contamination) and then dip each trap into a molten purified beeswax bath. Hang the trap up again until the wax has dried. New traps should be treated this way, also after extensive use, or if they become contaminated.

Several kinds of "sets" are successfully used to catch raccoons. The "dirt-hole" set is one of the best. Set the trap about 1/2 inch below the ground, one or two feet from the side of a trail, and cover lightly with sifted soil. Cover trap pan with a piece of tissue or canvas to prevent dirt from getting under it and locking it open. Dig a small hole --- about 6 inches deep and 3 inches across -- at a slant just behind the trap. Raccoons are attracted to a dirt hole set by the use of a gland lure in the dirt hole in the winter and early spring and by the use of a food lure the rest of the year. Both lures are available from trapping equipment suppliers. Be sure the trap chain is securely fastened to a stake or a drag (small open end metal links are good for this purpose.)

The "cubby" set is especially useful in winter because it protects the traps, but it may be employed at any season. Make a triangular "house" with large sticks or small logs about 1 foot high and 2 feet deep. Cover the top with boughs or sticks, and leaves. Hide the trap just inside the open end and place the bait behind it. A cubby set may also be made with two open ends, with a trap in each end and bait in the middle. The use of a drag, instead of a stake, is desirable so the cubby set will not be destroyed by a trapped animal. A live trap or box trap is an almost identical substitute for a cubby trap set.

"Water" sets are popular in many places, particularly in marshy areas and along streams. The main advantage of a water set is that it is easy to place the trap without arousing the suspicions of a raccoon. Place the trap 2 or 3 inches beneath the surface, either in a ruffle or similar shallow place, or 5 to 6 inches from shore, or at the entrance to a water cubby. Cover the jaws and trap chain lightly with fine silt -- do not use bait. Attach a bright shiny object (such as a bright button or aluminum foil) to the pan of the trap. The raccoon's curiosity causes him to investigate the shiny object on the trap pan. Such a lure can also be used on land sets near raccoon trails.

Ordinary fencing will not keep raccoons from gardens or poultry ranges. If they cannot go under it or through it, they will climb over it. However, raccoons, and most other small predators, may be repelled by adding a single electrified wire strand to a fence. The wire should be 8 inches from the fence and 8 inches above the ground.

Burrowing beneath a fence can be prevented by burying a 2-foot wire mesh so as to extend 6 inches below the surface and 18 inches outward at that depth.

12/73