



3. Animal Behavior and Handling



Animal Control
Officer
Training Manual
Zoonosis Control



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

Module 3.1



Introduction

This chapter will give you an overview of animal behavior, introduce you to the equipment commonly used by animal control officers (ACOs), and discuss pursuit techniques and alternatives. Domestic animals and wildlife respond differently, as do animals that are fearful or aggressive. This chapter contains the following modules:

Module 3.2 Animal Behavior

- Activity Patterns
- Fight or Flight Reaction
- Territoriality
- Sociability and Socialization

Module 3.3 Animal Handling Equipment

- Extension of Arms
- Physical Barriers
- Traps
- Other Equipment

Module 3.4 Animal Pursuit and Management

- Domestic Animal Pursuit
- Wildlife Pursuit

The sidebar contains definitions of bolded words in the text, as well as "sticky notes" that contain tips and ideas to remember. Warning boxes in the text contain safety or behavioral notes. "What do you do?" insets test your knowledge with real-world scenarios.

Sometimes you must think like an animal to catch the animal. You have a better chance of catching an animal if you can guess what the animal might do next and you know how to correctly use the right equipment for the job. If you can "outthink" an animal instead of trying to "outmuscle" it, capture will be easier.

Understanding how an animal behaves will help you know what equipment to use and what pursuit strategy to choose.

Module 3.2



Animal Behavior

Ethology is the study of animal behavior. If you understand an animal's behavior, you may be able to predict what it will do next, which can make your job as an **animal control officer (ACO)** easier. This module covers the following topics:

3.2.1 Activity Patterns

- Normal activity patterns
- Abnormal activity patterns

3.2.2 Fight or Flight Reaction

3.2.3 Territoriality

- Home range and territory
- Space needs

3.2.4 Sociability and Socialization

- Social behavior in wild animals
- Social behavior in domestic animals
- Asocial behavior

You will be a better ACO if you understand animal behavior because you will be able to choose the pursuit technique that best fits the behavior (normal vs. abnormal, or social vs. asocial).

An animal's activity pattern is the starting point for understanding animal behavior.

3.2.1 Activity Patterns

Animals are creatures of habit. Knowing what patterns an animal follows, and being able to identify abnormal behavior, is an important part of an ACO's job.

There are three basic activity patterns for all living creatures.

Normal Activity Patterns

Different animal species are active at different times of the day. Table 3.2.1 provides a summary of the time periods and examples of which animals are active at that time.

Table 3.2.1 periods of normal activity



Diurnal animals are most active during the day.

Squirrels, chipmunks, and copperhead snakes are diurnal.



Crepuscular animals are most active during the twilight hours at dawn or dusk.

Foxes, coyotes, deer, and bobcats are crepuscular.



Nocturnal animals are most active during the night.

Racoons, skunks, bats, opossums, and feral pigs are nocturnal.

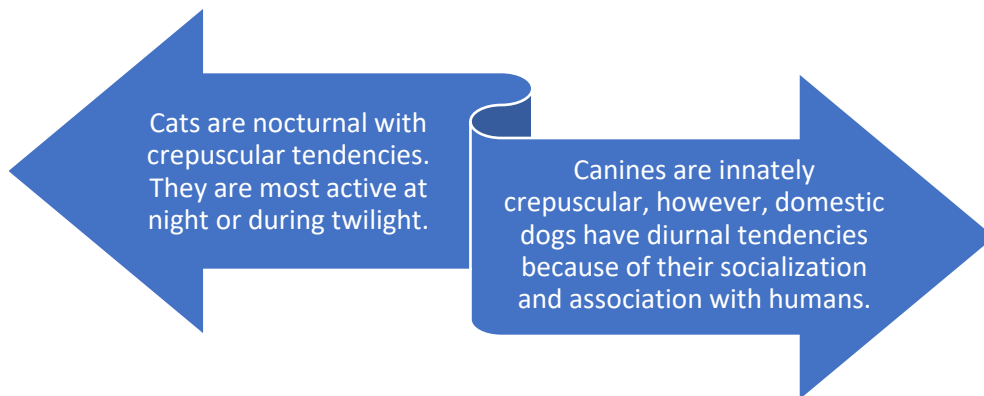


Figure 3.2.1 cat and dog periods of normal activity

Once you understand normal activity patterns, you will notice abnormal activity patterns more easily.

Ethology: The study of animal behavior.

Animal Control Officer (ACO): Local government employees (usually) who enforce animal regulations and humane animal care regulations.

Diurnal animals: Animals that are most active during the day.

Crepuscular animals: Animals that are most active at dawn or dusk.

Nocturnal animals: Animals that are most active during the night.

Abnormal Activity Patterns

An animal's activity patterns can tell you a lot about its health or physical state. For instance, if you see a nocturnal animal roaming during the day, it may be in distress and need your assistance.

Many factors can disrupt an animal's normal activity pattern, including

- illness
- injury
- hunger
- thirst

Any time you see an animal displaying an abnormal activity pattern, you must proceed with caution and take all necessary precautions to keep yourself safe and healthy. Use personal protective equipment and the correct tools to capture and manage the animal. We discuss animal handling equipment in Module 3.3.

In addition to understanding animal activity patterns, you need to know how animals react to threats.

3.2.2. Fight or Flight Reaction

All animals, wild and domestic, have a **flight reaction distance**. This is the closest you can get to that animal before causing a reaction. When you reach this distance, an animal will react with one of the **four F's of threat response**:

- **Fight**: attack or defend its space
- **Flight**: run away
- **Freeze**: do nothing
- **Fawn**: submit

Animals may fight out of aggression or fear, or fawn out of fear or passivity. See the section titled Asocial Behavior for more information.



Figure 3.2.2 threat response in animals

Most animals will try to run and avoid a confrontation instead of fighting when you approach them. If you enter the animal's critical distance, however, it will usually attack you to escape.

An animal's critical distance is a factor of its territoriality.

Flight reaction distance: The closest you can get to an animal before causing a reaction.

Four F's of threat response: Fight, flight, freeze, or fawn.

Fight: Threat response where an animal chooses to attack or defend its space, either out of aggression or fear.

Flight: Threat response where an animal chooses to run away.

Freeze: Threat response where an animal chooses to do nothing, usually out of fear or passivity.

Fawn: Threat response where an animal chooses to submit, either out of fear or trust.

Remember:

"Normal" behavior can change if an animal is lost, chased, scared, sick, hurt, in heat (estrus), hungry, cold, hot, or stressed in any other way.

3.2.3 Territoriality

All animals, including domestic house pets, are territorial. The size of the spaces they claim vary but each one has a home range, territory, and various levels of personal space requirements. As an ACO, you need to understand animal space issues to effectively capture or manage them. Your goal is to approach the animal while minimizing its desire to flee.

First, you need to understand the differences between an animal's home range and its territory.

Home Range and Territory

Animals have both a home range and a territory.

Home Range This is the area in which the animal will roam. It shares this space with other animals and will not usually defend it against intruders.

Territory This is a smaller area within the home range and animals will usually defend it against intruders. An individual solitary animal or a pack of social animals can claim a territory. Territories usually exclude all other members of the same species.

Home ranges and territories vary in size based upon the type of animal.

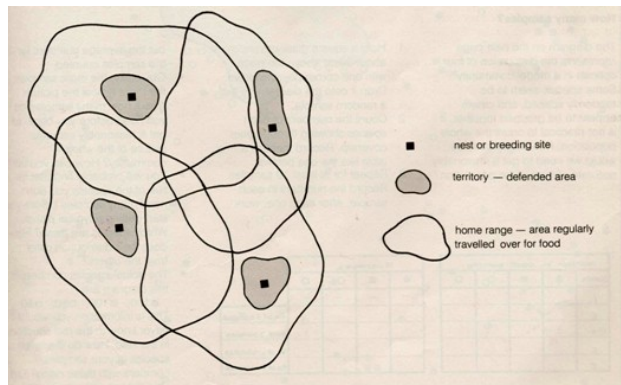


Figure 3.2.3 animal home ranges and territories. From intraspecific interactions by Priscilla Manning.

In addition to home range and territory, animals have varying "comfort zones."

Space Needs

Although any of the four flight reactions are possible at any distance, figure 3.2.4 shows normal reactions. Every animal's space requirements are different, but generally the following applies:

Home Range: An animal's roaming area, shared with others and usually undefended.

Territory: An area within the home range that an animal will defend against intruders.

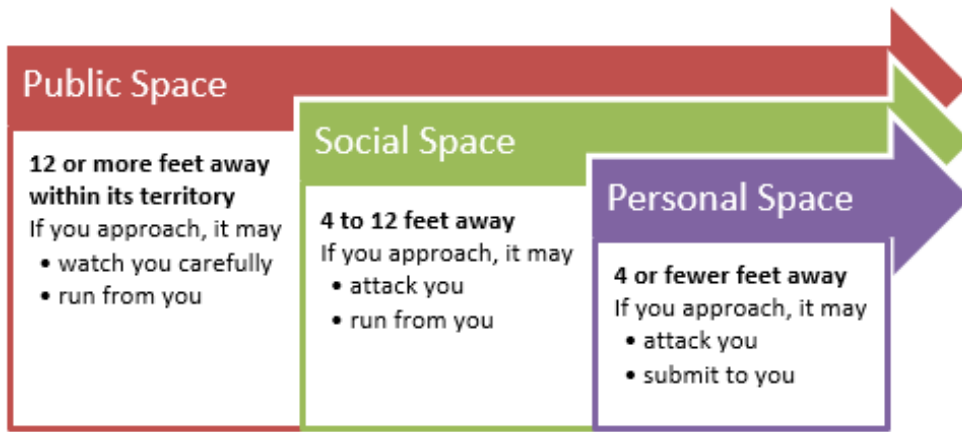


Figure 3.2.4 general animal space requirements

Even though animals are territorial with personal space needs, there is also a social aspect to animals.

3.2.4 Sociability and Socialization

Sociability in animals is a measure of how animals interact with each other. **Socialization**, on the other hand, is a measure of how well animals interact with us. This section covers social behavior in wild and domestic animals, asocial behavior in general, and specific examples of asocial behavior in domestic dogs and cats. First, we will discuss the social behavior in wild animals.

Social Behavior in Wild Animals

Wild animals vary greatly in their social characteristics. Pack animals are social and tend to stay together in familial or social groups. Solitary animals are loners and rarely interact socially with other animals unless they are searching for a mate or defending their territory.

Wild and stray dogs are very social in their behavior and tend to form packs that travel together. In contrast, wild and feral cats are generally solitary unless breeding or part of a feral colony, in which case they are social by necessity.

Domestic animals have an additional level of social behavior.

Social Behavior in Domestic Animals

Many domestic pets behave differently than their wild counterparts. This is because house pets have undergone **domestication** and socialization, which alter the wild behavior patterns. Contact with people and other animals helps to socialize animals; they learn how to behave and become familiar with people and other animals. Domestication is an evolutionary process that takes generations. Socialization is possible with some wild animals, but it is much easier and a more natural process with domesticated animals.

Public Space: Generally, twelve or more feet from an animal; it may watch you or run away.

Social Space: Four to twelve feet from an animal; it may react by either running or attacking.

Personal Space: Within four feet of an animal; it may attack or submit.

Sociability: A measure of how animals naturally interact with each other.

Socialization: Exposure of a young domestic animal to a variety of people, animals, and situations to minimize fear and aggression and promote friendliness.

Domestication: the adaptation of an animal from a wild or natural state to life in close association with humans.

Humans bred domesticated animals to live with and interact with us, but they still need to be socialized. The younger an animal undergoes socialization, the more well-tempered and tolerant they are. To be a good pet, an animal must be socialized.

Socializing dogs and cats early helps them become well-adjusted family pets:

- Adopt animals soon after weaning (six to ten weeks of age).
- Begin socialization early (less than four months of age).

A puppy or kitten that has not been socialized by 14-16 weeks of age will be harder to socialize and may not make a good pet.

Now that you understand social behavior, it is time to learn about asocial behavior.

Asocial Behavior

Just like people, young neglected and abused animals may behave strangely when they are older. These animals are **asocial**, which means that they are not as friendly around people as socialized pets. It is important to note that wild animals have not been socialized and therefore display asocial behavior as a rule.

There are three main kinds of asocial behavior in pets: submissive, aggressive, and fearful or "**fear biting**." You can recognize these asocial behaviors by carefully observing the animal's body language. Knowing the signs of different behaviors will help you decide how to handle the animal.

Since dogs and cats are the most popular household pets, we will cover them here.

Asocial Behavior in Dogs

A dog's body language can tell you a lot about what it is feeling. Being able to decode a dog's ear, tail, and back position is an important skill for ACOs. Table 3.2.2 and figure 3.2.5 summarize typical actions and body language in asocial dogs.

Table 3.2.2 asocial behavior in dogs

A submissive dog might:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• whine and whimper• tuck its tail between its legs and hold its ears down• roll on its side or back• urinate when touched or lifted
An aggressive dog might:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• snarl, growl or use a more menacing bark• raise its hackles (hair standing-up on the neck and/or back)• move its tail slowly from side to side (flagging)• adopt a fight stance
A fearful dog might:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• have their ears and tails down• lean away from you as you get closer to them• snap or bite at you if you get too close

Asocial behavior: Behavior shown by wild and domestic animals that have not been socialized.

Fear biting: Biting as a reaction to fear, not aggression.

Remember:

Even though an animal is a pet or appears domesticated, some animals may behave oddly because they were never socialized.

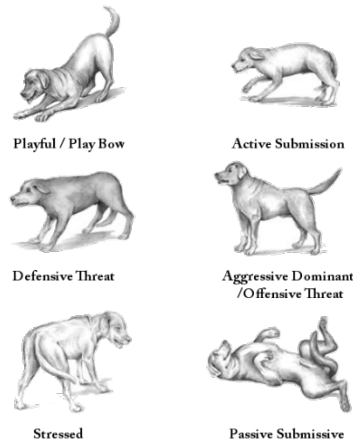


Figure 3.2.5 dog body language. From warpaintjournal.com.

The more you learn about typical asocial behavior in dogs, the more prepared you will be to deal with them effectively when you encounter them as an ACO.

Cats can also display asocial behavior.

Asocial Behavior in Cats

A cat's body language is more subtle than a dog's, but there are still tell-tale signs to look out for when determining a cat's possible reaction to your approach. When an alert cat notices you approaching, it will probably

- stop in its tracks
- hold its back level
- hold its head, ears, and tail erect
- stare at you with an even, close-mouthed expression

As you continue to approach, it may respond with either submission, aggression, or fear. The following table summarizes typical actions and body language associated with asocial behavior in cats.

Table 3.2.3 asocial behavior in cats

A submissive cat might:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lean away from you as you get closer to them • crouch low to the ground • pull its tail to its side and flatten its ears • look like a fearful cat
An aggressive cat might:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lower its head and hold its ears to the back or to the side • arch its back • fluff its tail and hold it erect • growl and hiss
A fearful cat might:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • crouch low to the ground and pull its tail to its side • dilate its pupils and flatten its ears • growl and hiss • claw, snap, or bite at you if you get too close

Cats are notoriously unpredictable, so be careful and observant of any cues they may give off when you are handling them.



Fearful cats will try to escape by climbing anything available, including people.

As figure 3.2.6 shows, a cat's ears can be the most telling part of their body in determining their mood. Although cats have evolved to show little emotion or vulnerability, when taken in context with the rest of the body, the ears can give you your best insight into a cat's mood.

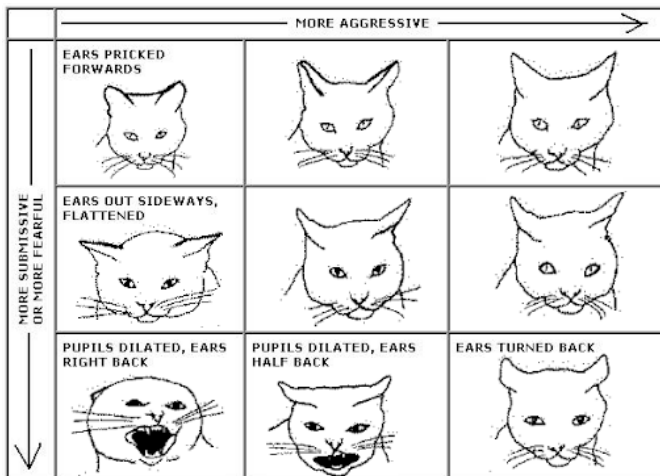


Figure 3.2.6 cat "ear language." From messybeast.com.

3.2.5 Conclusion

Experience and knowledge of animal behavior will help you predict how different animals will respond to your approach and pursuit. If you understand the signs an animal is displaying you can better plan your pursuit and will be more prepared to handle the animal once captured.

What do you do?

You are on patrol and see a stray dog in the middle of a roadside field. You stop the truck and get out. The dog stares at you but does not move. It appears malnourished and is not wearing a collar. As you get closer, the dog becomes increasingly anxious. You are about 10 feet from the dog when it crouches down and bares its teeth. What should you do next?

Remember:

Do not assume that simply because a cat appears fearful or submissive that it has surrendered to inevitable capture and that you can handle it with no risk of injury.

A seemingly submissive cat may suddenly roll onto its back and attack with both sets of claws.

Module 3.3



Animal Handling Equipment

As an animal control officer (ACO), it is your responsibility and duty to know how to use all the capture and restraint equipment available to you. This module will give you an overview on the advantages, disadvantages, use, and care of the most common animal control equipment. This module covers the following topics:

3.3.1 Extension of Arms

- Catch poles, snares, and tongs
- Ropes
- Nets

3.3.2 Physical Barriers

- Gloves
- Bite sticks
- Blankets
- Muzzles

3.3.3 Traps

- Leghold/jaw-like traps
- Box-type live traps

3.3.4 Other Equipment

- Chemical injections
- Firearms

The equipment used for animal capture and restraint does, by its very nature, cause some amount of discomfort or pain to the animals. You must take every precaution to minimize the pain or damage to the animals you encounter.

Extension of arms equipment is the most used type of equipment in animal control.

3.3.1 Extension of Arms

Extension of Arms equipment allows you to control an animal without getting too close to the animal. Catchpoles, snares, tongs, ropes, and nets are extension of arms equipment. You will use catchpoles, snares, and long-handled tongs often.



Never use extension of arms equipment to lift an animal! Support the animal's body with your free arm.

Catch Poles, Snares, and Long-handled Tongs

Catch poles, snares, and long-handled tongs are all extension of arms equipment. **Catch poles** have a long, stiff handle with an adjustable loop of rope or cable at one end. **Snares** have a shorter handle with a large adjustable loop at one end. You can use both catch poles and snares to capture stray and runaway dogs, as well as large wildlife such as coyotes or cougars.

Long handled tongs have a long, stiff handle with a rounded or adjustable clamp at the end to catch the animal around the neck or body. Use long-handled tongs to capture cats, smaller dogs, snakes, large lizards, and small alligators.



Figure 3.3.1 catch pole capture. From marketplace.animalsheltering.org.



Figure 3.3.2 long-handled tong capture. From domyown.com.

Advantages and disadvantages. Catch poles, snares, and long-handled tongs have several advantages:

- Catch poles and snares come in a variety of lengths, strengths, and materials
- Snares fit in small or tight spaces that catch poles may not reach.
- Catch poles and snares can be purchased or made by hand.

Conversely, there are also disadvantages:

- Catch poles may be too cumbersome to fit into some areas.
- Catch poles and snares can choke the animal if used improperly.
- Long-handled tongs can be easy for the animal to avoid.

Extension of arms:

Equipment that allows you to control an animal without getting too close to the animal.

Catch pole: Equipment with a long, stiff handle and an adjustable loop at one end.

Snare: Equipment with a short handle and an adjustable loop at one end.

Long-handled tong: Equipment with a long, stiff handle and a rounded or adjustable clamp at one end.

Remember:

It is important for ACOs to recognize that all animals can feel pain. Animals cannot always express their discomfort and suffering, even if they are sick or injured.

Animal control officers are morally, ethically, and legally obligated to minimize the pain and suffering of the animals they handle.

Be sure to take these advantages and disadvantages into account when choosing to use catch poles, snares, and long-handled tongs.

Techniques for use. Always refer to the manufacturer's instructions for proper use and care of your equipment. Practice all the techniques until you find one that works best for you and the animal you are attempting to capture. The following is just one method for using catch poles, snares, and long-handled tongs:

1. Slowly slide the equipment along the ground towards the animal.
This will appear less threatening than coming in from above.
2. Gently stroke the animal with the end of the equipment.
3. Carefully capture the animal, taking care to not choke or injure it.
If using a catch pole or snare, apply the loop around the animal's neck and one forelimb and tighten the loop to restrain it.
If using long-handled tongs, close the tongs around the animal's neck or torso to restrain it.

Proper technique makes capturing animals easier and minimizes the chance of injury to you or the animal.

Care and maintenance. Keep catch poles, snares, and tongs clean and store them properly. Be sure to inspect them frequently and repair or replace them as needed.

Ropes are another example of extension of arms equipment.

Ropes

You can use ropes, like catch poles, to capture large stray and runaway dogs, as well as large wildlife such as coyotes or cougars.

Ropes come in numerous combinations of material, strengths, and flexibility. Good ropes for general animal control use are those which have a strong nylon center core and a woven cotton outer covering. This combination provides the necessary strength while reducing the possibility of choking the animal or causing rope burns. Table 3.3.1 summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of different rope types.

Table 3.3.1 different kinds of ropes

	Material	Advantages	Disadvantages
Soft Ropes	cotton	inexpensive	too flexible
Hard Ropes	manila, sisal, other fibrous materials	strong	less flexible rope burns
Synthetic Ropes	nylon	strong flexible	stretch severe rope burns

Advantages and disadvantages. Ropes have some advantages over other equipment:

- Ropes can be thrown farther than catch poles reach.
- Ropes can be thrown during a chase if needed.

At the same time, there are some disadvantages:

- Ropes can choke an animal if you are not careful.
- Ropes will not keep an animal from attacking you.
- Ropes may cause rope burns or other serious injuries.

Make sure choose the best equipment for the scenario at hand.



Figure 3.3.3 wild pig capture using a rope. From wobm.com.

Techniques for use. Make sure you are using a rope that is strong enough for the animal you are pursuing, and is of a material that reduces choking or rope burns.

1. Determine if you need to throw the rope or if you can place it.
To throw it, use a short underhand or sidearm throw.
To place it, gently lift the loop over the animal's head.
2. Tighten the rope as needed, being careful not to choke or harm the animal.
3. Pull the rope slowly to bring the animal closer to you.

Practice your rope technique under controlled conditions so that you can effectively handle one during an animal encounter.

Care and maintenance. Keep ropes clean and store them properly. Be sure to inspect them frequently and repair or replace them as needed.

Finally, nets are effective extension of arms equipment.

Nets

Scoop nets are nets attached around a hoop on the end of a handle or pole to scoop an animal up. **Throw nets** are nets with weighted edges you throw over an animal to cover it. Nets are useful tools for capturing birds and smaller animals.

Advantages and disadvantages. Nets offer some advantages:

- Nets are easy to carry and to use.
- Nets contain the animal once captured.



Figure 3.3.4 net used to catch a large goose. From www.hsa.org.uk.

However, they have some important disadvantages that should not be ignored:

- Nets are easily avoided by most animals.
- Nets can cause animals to panic and tangle themselves in the net.
- Nets are difficult to store and require continual maintenance.
- Throw nets may take some time to learn how to use.

Use nets only in situations where the benefits will outweigh the disadvantages.

Techniques for use. Make sure you are using the correct kind, size, and strength of net for the animal you are pursuing. Scoop nets work best for flying or slower land animals. Throw nets work best for faster land animals.

If using a scoop net, do the following:

1. Bring the hoop of the net over the body of the animal.
2. You may need to "scoop" the animal to get it into the net.
3. Close the net by either retracting the hoop or twisting the net.

Scoop net: Nets attached to handles or poles with hoops to scoop an animal up.

Throw net: Nets with weighted edges you throw over an animal to cover it.

If using a throw net, do the following:

1. Using the proper technique, throw the net over the entire body of the animal
2. The net should cover the entire animal like a blanket, with the weighted edges on the ground surrounding it.

Use care when using a net on an animal, and do your best to reduce the probability of injury or trauma in the process.

Care and maintenance. Keep nets clean and store them properly. Be sure to inspect them frequently and repair or replace them as needed.

Instead of extending your reach, physical barriers place something between you and the animal.

3.3.2 Physical Barriers

Physical barriers are pieces of equipment that provide you with physical protection against contact with animal bites, scratches, or bodily fluids. Keeping yourself protected from injury or disease is just as important as making sure you treat the animal safely and humanely.

Common physical barrier equipment used in animal control are gloves, bite sticks, blankets, and muzzles.

Gloves

Gloves come in many different materials and in many different lengths. It is important to choose the correct gloves for the animal you are handling. Wear gloves whenever you need to physically handle an animal.

Advantages and disadvantages. Gloves are advantageous in most situations:

- Gloves can help to protect you from animal bites and scratches.
- Gloves can help protect you from animal saliva.

There are disadvantages to wearing gloves, however:

- Gloves may hinder your ability to handle an animal correctly.
- Gloves may not be the correct thickness or length for your needs.

If you wear the correct gloves for the situation you are in, then these disadvantages no longer apply.

Physical barrier: Equipment that provides physical protection against contact with animal bites, scratches, or bodily fluids.

Remember:

You must have proper training to carry and use a bite stick. An agency approving the use of bite sticks should have a written policy regarding their training and usage.

Never use a bite stick to hit, strike, or harm an animal or another person.



Figure 3.3.5 gloves. From spy.com.

Techniques for use. Be sure you are using gloves that are appropriate for the situation you are in.

- If capturing an aggressive or fearful dog, be sure to wear thick gloves that cover your forearms.
- If capturing a small or delicate animal, wear thin gloves that protect you from bacteria while allowing you to feel as much as possible.

Always keep an assortment of gloves available to you so that you will be prepared for any animal encounter.

Care and maintenance. Keep gloves clean and store them properly. Be sure to disinfect them after contact with an animal, inspect them frequently and repair or replace them as needed.

To prevent or end a dog bite, many ACOs carry bite sticks.

Bite Sticks

Bite sticks gives the attacking animal something to bite besides you. Many ACOs prefer to carry expandable batons that they can easily carry on their hip. You can use bite sticks on domestic dogs and other biting wildlife.



Never use bite sticks to hit, strike, or otherwise harm an animal or a person.

Advantages and disadvantages. Bite sticks offer tremendous advantages to an ACO:

- Bite sticks can distract a dog and prevent it from biting.
- Bite sticks can pry a dog's mouth open if it has already bitten.
- Bite sticks can be a *defensive* tool for aggressive animals.

Bite stick: Equipment used to give an animal something to bit besides a person.

However, be aware of these disadvantages:

- Bite sticks require training to use.
- Bite sticks can be used as offensive weapons by unethical ACOs.

Only use your bite stick as a defensive tool.

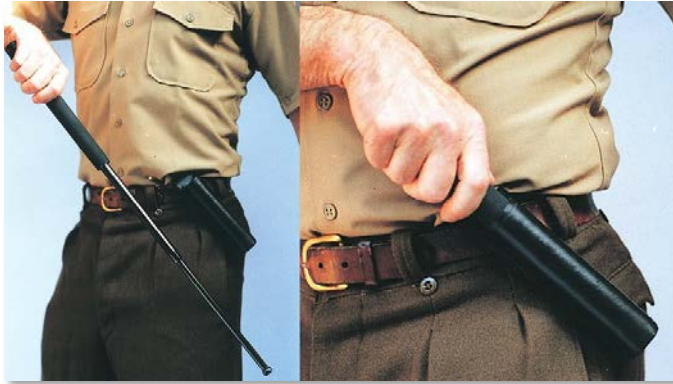


Figure 3.3.6 telescoping bite stick. From animal-care.com.au.

Techniques for use. If you are attempting to capture an aggressive or fearful dog or other animal, there is a big chance the dog will try to bite you. Be prepared with your bite stick out and ready for use.

- If the animal tries to bite you, place the bite stick in its mouth so it bites the stick instead of you.
- If the animal has already bitten you, wedge the end of the stick between its molars and gently pry its mouth open.

Be careful not to injure the animal when performing either of these procedures.

Care and maintenance. Keep bite sticks clean and store them properly. Be sure to disinfect them after contact with an animal, inspect them frequently and repair or replace them as needed.

Blankets can also be a useful physical barrier.

Blankets

Blankets, large towels, or other heavy cloths can completely cover an animal. You can use blankets with large birds or large, slower land animals.



Figure 3.3.7 bald eagle rescue using a blanket. From ohiobirdsantuary.com.

Advantages and disadvantages. Blankets offer several advantages:

- Blankets can have a calming effect on many animals due to the darkness and sensory deprivation.
- Blankets are large, flat surfaces that animals are less likely to attack.
- Blankets are especially useful when handling large birds because they completely cover the wings, talons, and beak.

On the other hand, there are some important disadvantages.

- Blanket throws are easily outrun by most animals.
- Blankets can be easily bitten or clawed through or ripped.

Weigh the pros and cons of using a blanket before use.

A muzzle can also be a very effective physical barrier.

Muzzles

Muzzles physically keep an animal's mouth closed so they cannot bite you. Your agency can purchase commercial muzzles, or you can make muzzles yourself. Commercial muzzles come in different sizes and materials. Many are nylon with buckles or Velcro straps. Homemade muzzles are cheap, comfortable, and easy to make using rope, cloth, nylon stockings, or cotton gauze. ACOs mainly use muzzles on stray and runaway dogs, but you can muzzle cats and other wildlife as well.



Never leave on a muzzle on unattended animal.

Advantages and disadvantages. Once placed, muzzles can be very helpful to an ACO:

- Muzzles can prevent an animal from biting you.
- Muzzles can sometimes make an animal calm down and behave better.

Muzzle: Equipment used to physically keep an animal's mouth closed so it cannot bite.

However, there are disadvantages:

- Muzzles can be tricky to put on.
- Muzzles do not prevent dogs from biting you while putting it on them.

Be very careful and observant of cues when placing a muzzle on an animal.



Figure 3.3.8 muzzled dog. From vanisvetvet.com.

Techniques for use. Homemade muzzles are cheap, comfortable, and easy to make using rope, cloth, nylon stockings, or cotton gauze. To tie a homemade muzzle, do the following:

1. Make a loop in the material.
2. Stand behind the animal and swiftly yet calmly place the loop over its snout.
3. Tie a single knot at the top of the nose to keep its mouth closed.
4. Bring the ends down and tie a single knot under the chin.
5. Bring the ends behind the ears and tie a slip knot or bow behind its neck.

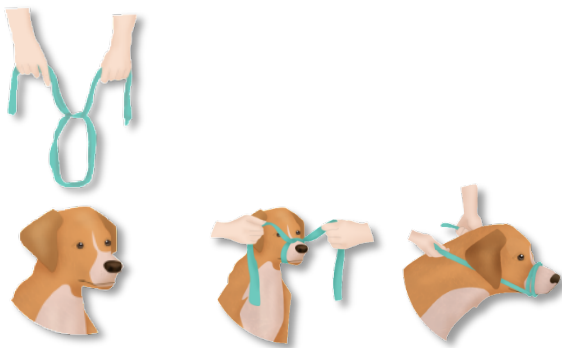


Figure 3.3.9 creating a homemade muzzle. From firstaidforpets.net.

Always ensure you can quickly release the muzzle using a slip knot or scissors in case the animal becomes distressed.

Remember:

Do not leave a muzzle on an **unattended** animal. If the animal vomits while wearing a muzzle, it could choke. Also, the animal will not be able to cool itself by panting and may experience heat exhaustion and/or heat stroke.

Care and maintenance. Keep muzzles clean and store them properly. Be sure to disinfect them after contact with an animal, inspect them frequently and repair or replace them as needed.

When you cannot pursue or locate an animal, traps are a good solution.

3.3.3 Traps

There are two very different types of traps: leghold/jaw-like traps and box-type live traps. Although we will discuss both types, only the box-type live traps are suitable for animal control purposes.

Leghold/jaw-like Traps

Leghold/jaw-like traps trigger when an animal steps onto a spring, which causes the trap's "jaws" to slam shut, clamping onto the animal's leg. These traps cause incredible pain and the potential for serious injury or death to the animal and have *no place in animal control*. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AMVA) considers them inhumane.



Never use leghold/jaw-like traps on any animal.

Check the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department regulations and your local ordinances concerning possible restrictions on the use of steel jaw leghold traps.

There is a humane alternative to leghold/jaw-like traps.

Box-type Live Traps

Box-type live traps are generally aluminum and wire or wire mesh and are available in a wide range of sizes from "large dog size" to "small rodent size." You can make box-type live traps yourself or purchased them. Live traps are useful for capturing animals with a strong flight response or nocturnal animals that cannot be immediately pursued such as skunks, raccoons, and opossums.

Advantages and disadvantages. Aside from being a humane alternative to leghold jaw-like traps, box-type live traps offer other advantages:

- Live traps are useful for capturing animals with large public spaces or strong flight responses.
- Live traps are useful for capturing nocturnal animals such as skunks, raccoons, and opossums.

Trap: Equipment that can be set and left alone, later triggered by an animal.

Leghold/Jaw-like trap:

Inhumane trap that clamps onto an animal's leg, causing pain and potentially serious injury or death.

Box-type live trap: Humane trap that confines an animal in an enclosure.

Remember:

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) considers leghold/jaw-like traps *inhumane*. These traps have no place in an animal control environment.



Figure 3.3.10 raccoon capture using a box-type live trap. From aaanimalcontrol.com.

There are disadvantages, though:

- Live traps must be set, left alone, and checked frequently.
- Live traps are easily recognized and avoided by most animals if they have already been caught in one.
- Commercial traps are expensive and sometimes stolen or vandalized.
- Larger traps, if not collapsible, are harder to store.

Be sure to take these advantages and disadvantages into account when choosing to use box-type live traps.

Techniques for use. Live traps of any size work in basically the same way. The open door is connected to a metal plate on the floor of the trap (the treadle). When an animal enters the cage and steps on the treadle, the trap triggers and releases the door which closes and latches behind the animal.

Make sure you use the right size trap for the animal you want to capture. To use a box-type live trap, do the following:

1. Put bait in the trap that will attract the animal you want to catch.
Hint: cat food will attract cats, raccoons, opossums, and skunks.
2. Set the trap by attaching the door to the treadle.
3. Check the trap for animals at least once a day, and more often in the summer.

Consider placing fire ant or other insecticide granules around the trap to minimize the animal's potential for harm or discomfort.

Care and maintenance. Keep box-type live traps clean and store them properly. Be sure to disinfect them after contact with an animal, inspect them frequently and repair or replace them as needed.

In addition to the equipment described prior, there is other equipment to consider.

Tip:

When talking to the public about traps, be sure to use words like "box trap," "humane trap," or "live trap" so they will know that you do not use steel jaw leghold traps. This will ease their concerns and improve your agency's reputation.

3.3.4 Other Equipment

This manual does not contain in-depth coverage of chemical injections and firearms. Refer to your local agency for more information on its usage policies.

Your agency may or may not allow the use of chemical injections in animal control.

Chemical Injections

Use **chemical injections** to capture an animal only as a last option. There are many disadvantages of chemical injections. For one, using them requires special training. Also, some drugs do not affect the animal quickly, and the drugs can also be difficult for ACOs to obtain or administer.

As with chemical injections, your local agency may limit firearm usage.

Firearms

Firearms, including handguns, shotguns, rifles, and other firearms, have very limited emergency field use in animal control activities. Check with your agency to learn about the local firearm policy.

3.3.5 Conclusion

This module has detailed the most popular animal handling equipment and given you tips on how to use them. Table 3.3.2 on page 14 provides a summary.

Table 3.3.2 summary of animal handling equipment

Equipment Type	Example Animals	Advantages	Disadvantages
Extension of Arms			
Catch Poles, Snares	dogs raccoons coyotes cougars	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• many varieties• maneuverable• purchased or DIY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• may not fit in space• choking hazard
Long-handled Tongs	cats small dogs snakes large lizards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• maneuverable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• easily avoided
Ropes	large dogs feral pigs livestock	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• far throw reach• useful during a chase	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• choking hazard• will not stop attacks• risk of rope burns
Nets	birds rabbits raccoons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• easy to carry and use• contains the animal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• easily avoided• risk of panic/tangle• high maintenance• learning curve

continued on page 14

Chemical injection: Injection of chemicals to slow, incapacitate, or euthanize an animal.

Table 3.3.2 summary of animal handling equipment, continued from page 13

Equipment Type	Example Animals	Advantages	Disadvantages
Physical Barriers			
Gloves	dogs cats raccoons snakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protection from injury and disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may hinder handling
Bite Sticks	dogs coyotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • useful distraction • bite prevention • bite pry bar • defensive tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training required • potential weapon
Blankets	birds cats raccoons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • calming effect • easier capture • covers entire animal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easily avoided • limited bite protection
Muzzles	dogs cats coyotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prevents biting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bite hazard • choking hazard • overheating hazard
Traps			
Live/Box-type traps	cats skunks raccoons opossums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • useful for skittish or nocturnal animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time-consuming • frequent checks • easily avoided • expensive • may be hard to store

What do you do?

You are responding to a call from a local farmer who left a pen open and one of his pigs escaped. You find the pig in the woods but it is moving quickly and hard to capture. It keeps running through between trees and through bushes. What equipment might you use?

Module 3.4



Animal Pursuit and Management

Animals behave differently when people are around. Similarly, wildlife and domestic animals react differently when pursued. This module covers the following topics:

3.4.1 Animal Reaction to Humans

3.4.2 Domestic Animal Pursuit

- Approach tips
- Alternatives to pursuit

3.4.3 Wildlife Pursuit

- When to respond
- How to proceed

Once you understand animal behavior and are familiar with the use of animal control equipment, the next step is to combine your knowledge to successfully pursue or manage the animals you encounter.

If you understand how animals react to humans, you will be more successful as an ACO.

3.4.1 Animal Reaction to Humans

Animals react to visual (sight), auditory (sound), and olfactory (smell) signals.

Avoid behavior that appears threatening to the animal:

- Do not make any sudden movements.
- Do not use and flailing gestures.
- Do not speak in a loud or forceful voice.
- Do not tower over the animal.

Avoiding this behavior will increase your chances of a successful pursuit and capture.

Remember, all animals, wild and domestic, have a **flight reaction distance**. This is the closest you can get to that animal before causing a reaction. When you reach this distance, an animal will react with one of the **four F's of threat response**:

- **Fight**: attack or defend its space
- **Flight**: run away
- **Freeze**: do nothing
- **Fawn**: submit

Animals may fight out of aggression or fear, or fawn out of fear or passivity. See the section titled Asocial Behavior for more information.

Most animals will try to run and avoid a confrontation instead of fighting when you approach them. If you enter the animal's critical distance, however, it will usually attack you to escape.

There are differences between domestic and wild animal pursuit. We will discuss domestic animal pursuit first.

3.4.2 Domestic Animal Pursuit

Because pets are around people on a regular basis, they may be easier to catch than a wild animal. Approach animals correctly, and know the alternatives to pursuit. There are a few tips that can help your approach.

Approach Tips

When approaching a domestic animal, try to soothe the animal and establish trust:

- Speak in a soft, soothing tone.
- Crouch down to the animal's level as best you can.
- Move slowly and methodically, especially within the animal's personal space.

Flight reaction distance: The closest you can get to an animal before causing a reaction.

Four F's of threat response: Fight, flight, freeze, or fawn.

Fight: Threat response where an animal chooses to attack or defend its space, either out of aggression or fear.

Flight: Threat response where an animal chooses to run away.

Freeze: Threat response where an animal chooses to do nothing, usually out of fear or passivity.

Fawn: Threat response where an animal chooses to submit, either out of fear or trust.

Remember:

As a professional ACO, you need to "outthink" the animal so that you can capture it before it can escape.

When you are dealing with an aggressive dog, act calmly and quietly:

- Do not move quickly; sudden movements might cause the dog to attack.
- Never attempt to run from an aggressive dog.
- Do not stare into an aggressive dog's eyes; it is threatening.

When you are dealing with a fearful dog, be on the lookout for "**fear biter**" behavior. If a dog does show "fear biter" behavior, try the following:

1. Move towards the dog slowly.
2. Talk to the dog in a soft, reassuring voice.
3. Squat down on one knee and turn sideways to make yourself appear less threatening.
4. Pat your thigh softly to call the dog closer.
5. Reach out to the dog carefully and touch it under the chin; do not try to touch it on top of the head or on the shoulder.
6. Touch and pet the dog gently to calm it.
7. Slip a snare or leash carefully on the dog while petting it.

Move away slowly if or when the animal does not respond or is still acting like it might bite. Try a different tactic or wait and try again a bit later. If you still cannot approach or pursue the animal, there are alternatives.

Alternatives to Pursuit

Sometimes it may not be a good idea to pursue an animal that is running away from you. First, an animal that escapes capture will be even harder to catch the next time. Second, you may be in an area or situation with high risk of injury to yourself or the animal. Lastly, people may be watching who will think you are not in control which can damage your and your agency's image.

If an animal does run away, there are other ways to handle the situation without chasing it:

- Follow the animal until you locate where it lives.
- Issue a citation to the owner.
- Set a live trap to try to capture the animal later.

These non-pursuit tactics can be very effective.

Fear biting: Biting as a reaction to fear, not aggression.

Remember:

Only chase an animal if you think you will capture it **quickly** or you will be able to **follow** it home.



Figure 3.4.1 Animal control officer citation. From gettyimages.ae.

Wildlife pursuit has its own practices and regulations.

3.4.3 Wildlife Pursuit

As our cities grow and expand into once-rural territory, there will be increased interactions between humans and wildlife. While we are settling into our new homes and neighborhoods, displaced wild animals are trying to find new territories and areas to survive.

Populated areas are very attractive to wildlife because there is food, water, and shelter available to them. Many times, people will leave garbage or pet food or shelter outside. This is a prime opportunity for wildlife to take advantage of. Wild animals can also make their homes in attics and chimneys, which can cause problems and damage to the building.

As a result, ACOs regularly receive calls from citizens for help with wildlife problems. You must know when to respond and how to proceed once you have captured a wild animal.

When to Respond

You can classify a wild animal as either low-risk or high-risk depending on whether they are simply a nuisance to citizens or a threat.

Low-risk Wildlife

Some animal control agencies help citizens with nuisance, or **low-risk wildlife**, problems, and some refer citizens to private pest control companies or wildlife rehabilitators. Your local agency should have or should develop a policy to deal with these issues.

Low-risk wildlife: Wildlife that is merely a nuisance to the citizenry.

Tip:

Commercial live traps are expensive. If lent out to the public, they may **steal, damage, or vandalize** them.

Your agency might consider requiring a deposit from citizens who want to borrow your traps to use on their property. This will help reduce the monetary loss if the traps are damaged or not returned.

If your agency does assist citizens with low-risk wildlife problems, box-type live traps are usually the most effective tool. You may set the trap yourself, or lend the traps to the citizens to use themselves.



When providing traps to the public, ask them not to set the trap until they can attend to and care for the animal in a timely manner once captured.

You should always discourage people from having contact with wildlife. Wild animals can cause injury through bites and may expose humans or pets to rabies. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and many cities have laws pertaining to keeping wild animals as pets. Know the laws regulating wildlife.

You may also get calls regarding high-risk wildlife.

High-risk Wildlife

Answer all calls for help with **high-risk wildlife**, which includes sick and injured animals, and animals that are high risk for spreading rabies (skunks, bats, raccoons, foxes, and coyotes). Nocturnal high-risk animals that are active during the daytime may have rabies.

There will be times that you will have to set live traps to capture a wild animal. Think before acting and always consider your safety, the safety of others, and the protection of private property. Always remember to wear protective gloves to handle traps containing animals.

Your skills will improve with each successful trapping experience. You will learn how to identify the problem animal by its signs and tracks, and you will know what bait to use and where to place the trap.

If you have captured a high-risk wild animal, you need to know how to proceed.



If a high-risk animal had direct contact with a human or domestic animal, you must capture or kill it (without damaging the brain) for rabies testing.

How to Proceed

Once you have captured a wild animal, you will have three options: relocate, rehabilitate, or euthanize. The easiest option is to relocate.

High-risk wildlife: Sick or injured wildlife, or wildlife that poses a threat or harm to the citizenry.

Relocate

Much of the time you can simply **relocate** a wild animal to a new area and released back into the wild. Before you do this, consider the following:

- Is it legal?
- Are you doing what is best for the animal?
- Does the animal appear healthy and able to survive on its own?
- Is there water, food, and shelter available?
- Is there a potential of spreading disease?
- Are you not just relocating a problem to someone else?
- Do you have permission from the property owner to release the animal?

If you can answer yes to all these questions, relocation is likely the right action. If not, you may be able to rehabilitate the animal.

Rehabilitate

If an animal is sick or injured, you may be able to **rehabilitate** it. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issue permits to some trained wildlife rehabilitators to care for and release certain animals. If not prohibited by area rabies quarantine, rehabilitators can also transport these animals. Rehabilitators will probably not be able to take all your wildlife, but it can benefit your agency to establish a working relationship with one or more rehabilitation organization.



Figure 3.4.2 Texas Parks & Wildlife logo. From tpwd.texas.gov.



Figure 3.4.3 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service logo. From fws.gov.

Having a cooperative relationship with rehabilitators is important from a public health standpoint. If your agency's policy is to euthanize sick, injured, or orphaned wildlife instead of placing them with a rehabilitator, many people who find such animals will decide to personally care for them rather than have them destroyed.

A public citizen rarely understands the risks of rabies and other zoonotic diseases and is likely not trained on bite avoidance techniques. They have also probably not received preexposure rabies vaccinations. Therefore, it is preferable to place wildlife in the hands of responsible, trained rehabilitators whenever possible.

Relocate: Releasing a captured wild animal into a new area.

Rehabilitate: Caring for a sick or injured wild animal.

If relocation and rehabilitation are not feasible options, you may have to euthanize the animal.

Euthanize

Releasing, instead of euthanizing, captured wild animals is a very good public relations policy for an animal control agency. The public will appreciate your efforts and your caring attitude. However, relocating and releasing all captured wildlife is not always possible or responsible.

Depending on the circumstances, you may have to **euthanize** some captured animals. You can use a syringe pole to euthanize wild animals while still in a trap. You can purchase a syringe pole or make one yourself.

3.4.4 Conclusion

As an animal control officer, making the correct decision regarding the fate of a captured animal is essential. Your department's policies, along with your experience in the field, will ultimately lead you to the correct choice.

Euthanize: Humanely killing an animal.

What do you do?

You notice a large raptor struggling on the ground and you realize that this is abnormal behavior for large birds of prey. As you approach the bird you notice that it appears to be favoring its right wing. It does not fly away as you approach, so you believe that the bird cannot fly. What do you decide to do? What equipment do you use?

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on three important topics for animal control officers: animal behavior, animal handling equipment, and animal pursuit and management. Success as an animal control officer (ACO) begins with understanding animal behavior. If you understand how and why an animal acts the way it does, you will be better able to predict its actions. Furthermore, knowing which equipment to use, how to use it correctly, and how to care for it will make your job easier and reduce the risk of injury or damage to you and the animals. If you combine your knowledge of animal behavior and proper equipment usage, you can successfully pursue and manage the animals you capture.

What do you do?

You receive a call from a concerned citizen that there is a large raccoon wandering around the neighborhood at 2:00pm. She states that it does not seem afraid of humans and appears lost or confused. She is worried it might be sick or injured. Your department does not usually respond to nuisance wildlife calls but does respond to sick or injured wildlife calls. How do you proceed?

Tip:

For more information on animal behavior, handling, and wildlife management, visit the following resources:

• • • •

National Animal Control Association Training Guide
P.O. Box 480851
Kansas City, MO 64148
(913) 768-1319
www.nacenet.org

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Restraint of Animals, 2ed
John R. Leahy, Pat Barrow
Cornell Campus Store, Inc.
Ithaca, NY 14853

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Texas Parks and Wildlife
Department
www.tpwd.state.tx.us

• • • •

United States Department
of Agriculture (USDA)
Animal and Plant Health
Inspection Service, Wildlife
Services
[www.aphis.usda.gov/
wildlife_damage/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/)