

*Raccoons are intelligent, fascinating and highly adaptable mammals. As wildlife habitat is destroyed, raccoons are forced to come into closer contact, and occasional conflict, with people. Most of these conflicts occur in the spring and summer as raccoons take advantage of cavities in our homes to raise their young. There is no need to panic as most problems are easily resolved with some simple advice and household materials.*

## **A Raccoon's Legal Status**

Raccoons are classified as furbearers. These animals can not be trapped or hunted without a license issued by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF), except on your own property. Unfortunately, by law raccoons trapped by homeowners or licensed nuisance animal trappers must be euthanized and not relocated. Animal Control does not loan traps for trapping raccoons and can not pick up trapped raccoons unless injured.

VDGIF maintains a list of professional wildlife trappers that are available for hire on their website [www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov) or you can call their regional office at (804) 829-6580 for more information.

## **What is Raccoon Proofing?**

In most instances, food from poorly maintained garbage containers is the attraction around buildings. Keeping tight fitting covers on garbage cans around camps and homes and keeping the garbage area clean and odor free, will usually prevent raccoons from becoming a nuisance. Placing mothballs, a few drops of turpentine or ammonia in a garbage can will discourage raccoons from getting into them in search of food.



## **Raccoon Habits**

Raccoons that are seen during the day are not necessarily a cause for concern. Although raccoons are considered nocturnal, mother raccoons often forage during the day when they have nursing cubs, which depletes their energy. Coastal raccoons are often seen during the day as they take advantage of the tides in gathering food. Raccoons are omnivorous, eating both plant and animal food.

Raccoons breed mainly in late winter/early spring. The gestation period is about 63 days and most litters are born in April or May. Average litter size

is three to five young, and family groups remain together for the first year, separating the following spring, as the young become independent.

Raccoons do not hibernate but they do "hole up" and become inactive during severe winter weather. This period of inactivity may extend for weeks at a time.

## **Health Concerns**

Raccoons may carry rabies or become ill due to the Distemper virus. Caution should be taken with them as with any other wildlife. Always avoid overly aggressive raccoons, or any wild animal, which approaches people without hesitation.

Raccoons showing abnormal behavior such as partial paralysis, circling, staggering as if drunk or disoriented, self-mutilating, screeching or exhibiting unprovoked aggression should be reported to Animal Control or Virginia Department of Game and Inland fisheries.

## **Finally**

Raccoons are indigenous to Hampton and were here long before people came. They fulfill an ecological niche, helping to regulate rodent and other pest populations. Under Virginia law, they may not be relocated, needlessly killed or harassed.

## Raccoon Eviction Measures

### Raccoons in Chimneys

- ❖ Keep the damper closed and put a blaring radio (rock or rap music) in the fireplace. Then put a bowl of ammonia on a footstool near the damper. Apply these deterrents just before dusk, as mother raccoons will not move cubs in daylight. It may take several days for the mother and young to move. Once they are gone, install a mesh chimney cap with a stainless steel top so that the situation will not recur.



### Raccoons in Attics

- ❖ Leave all the lights on, place a blaring radio on and rags soaked in ammonia around the attic. You can enhance the deterrent effect by adding cayenne pepper around the attic, and hanging an electrician's drop light over the nesting area. Apply these deterrents just before dusk, as mother raccoons will not move cubs in daylight. Once the raccoons are gone, seal any entry hole so the situation does not reoccur.

### Raccoons in Dumpsters

- ❖ Place some strong branches or wooden boards in the dumpster so the raccoons can climb out. **It is strongly recommended that dumpster lids remain closed to avoid this problem.**

### Raccoons Around the House and Yard

- ❖ All food material, especially pet foods left outside will attract raccoons to your home and yard. Make sure all pet food is kept in a closed secure container.

# KNOW YOUR RACCOONS



**GENERAL INFORMATION**  
**727-2818**

**CALLS FOR SERVICE**  
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