



Extension FactSheet

School of Natural Resources, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210

Dealing with Nuisance Woodchucks (Groundhogs)

Amanda D. Rodewald, Assistant Professor of Wildlife Ecology and Extension Wildlife Specialist

Woodchucks are members of the squirrel family. They generally prefer open farmland and the surrounding wooded or brushy areas adjacent to open land. Burrows are commonly located in fields and pastures, along fences or walls, or near buildings. A woodchuck burrow will have a 10–12 inch diameter opening with a large mound of excavated earth at the main entrance. Woodchucks are herbivores and feed on a variety of vegetables, grasses, and legumes. They especially prefer soybeans, beans, peas, carrot tops, alfalfa, clover, and grasses. Sometimes the woodchuck's habits can pose problems for crops, gardens, lawns, ornamental trees, or even underground power cables.

Before you try to control woodchucks on your property, you should first consider what level of damage is occurring, how long it may persist, and if it requires an immediate response by you. Tolerance of some nuisance activity may be the easiest course of action if the damage or nuisance level is minor. However, you must ultimately decide what level you are willing to accept.

Damage Prevention and Control

Exclusion

Fencing is most useful in protecting gardens or other small areas. Fences should be at least 3 feet high and made of heavy poultry wire or 2 inch mesh woven wire. To prevent the woodchuck from burrowing under the

fence, bury the lower 10–12 inches of the fence in the ground either straight down or bending the lower edge at an L-shaped angle leading outward. Bending the top portion of the fence outward at a 45 degree angle will prevent the woodchuck from climbing over the fence. Electric wiring can also be added at 4–5 inches above-ground and outside the fence. Sometimes an electric wire alone can deter woodchucks from entering a garden.

Scare Tactics

If moved regularly, visual devices like scarecrows can provide temporary relief from damage. Human activity can also be a good deterrent.

Repellents, Toxicants, and Fumigants

No repellents or toxicants are registered for woodchuck control. However, carbon monoxide gas cartridges and aluminum phosphide can be used to treat burrows. Check with USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services (614-469-5681) about the use of these methods.

Trapping and Shooting

Woodchucks can be trapped with both steel leghold (No. 2) and live traps. Shooting also can be effective at reducing a small population of woodchucks. Check with local and state authorities for current regulations and permits.

Visit Ohio State University Extension's web site "Ohioline" at: <http://ohioline.osu.edu>