Breadcrumb

1. Home
2. Print
3. Pdf
4. Node
5. Entity Print

Don't Feed the Wildlife

Last Modified:

Help keep wildlife wild and healthy. Wildlife Services encourages you to avoid feeding wildlife such as ducks, geese, gulls, raccoons, deer, squirrels or coyotes. One way you can help reduce wildlife conflicts with people is by not feeding wildlife near human populations and in parks.

The Problem with Feeding Wildlife

Wildlife Services experts are often asked to assist with wildlife damage problems related to animals that have been accidentally or intentionally fed by people. Feeding wildlife can lead to a number of serious problems:

- Human food is not healthy for wild animals, and they do not need food from humans to survive. Wild animals have specialized diets, and they can become malnourished or die if fed the wrong foods. Also, animals cannot distinguish food from wrappers or foil and can get sick eating these items.
- Feeding leads to public health concerns. Too many animals in one place increases the chance of disease transmission to people and among other wildlife.
- Animals accustomed to people often lose their fear of people and can become aggressive. Those that become too aggressive may have to be destroyed to protect people and property.

- Birds gathering near or on airports can become victims of bird-aircraft collisions, potentially causing flight delays, damage to aircraft, and loss of human life.
- Animals fed along roads tend to stay near roads, increasing the chance of vehicle-animal accidents.
- Large concentrations of ducks and geese can pollute nearby waterways, backyards and athletic fields. Some waterfowl species drop up to a pound of feces every day!

How You Can Help

Many people enjoy living near and watching wildlife. You can help keep animals wild by keeping the following tips in mind.

- Do not encourage wildlife by feeding or leaving food for them.
- Don't allow bird food to accumulate on the ground.
- Don't place food scraps in gardens or compost bins, and use a closed compost bin.
- Keep pet food and water containers indoors, especially at night.
- If you have fruit trees, harvest or dispose of fruit when it is ripe.
- Use metal or durable plastic trash containers with tight fitting lids.
- Enjoy viewing wildlife at a distance. Respect their space and remember they are wild animals that should stay wild.

For more information or assistance with a wildlife damage issue, please call your WS state office at **1-866-4USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297).**

Resources

- Living With Wildlife: Canada Geese
- Living With Wildlife: Raccoons
- Feral Swine Damage Management Program

Research

- An Analysis of Deer-Vehicle Collisions: the Case of Ohio (241.28 KB)
- The Costs of Bird Strikes and Bird Strike Prevention (132.88 KB)
- Human-Bear Conflicts

Signs for Airports, Parks, and Public Areas

All Wildlife Feeding is Discouraged (Aviation Safety)

(PDF, 50.41 KB)

Download and post this 'Don't Feed Wildlife' poster at/around airports.

All Wildlife Feeding is Prohibited (Aviation Safety)

(PDF, 42.57 KB)

Download and post this 'Don't Feed Wildlife' poster at/around airports.

All Wildlife Feeding is Discouraged (Parks and Public Spaces)

(PDF, 42.68 KB)

Download and post this 'Don't Feed Wildlife' sign in parks and public spaces.

All Wildlife Feeding is Prohibited (Parks and Public Spaces)

(PDF, 42.65 KB)

Download and post this 'Don't Feed Wildlife' sign in parks and public spaces.

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