

Key Points from the Jan. 2017 Uvalde County Lunch & Learn

Wildlife Damage Management for Residents and Landowners by Dr. Maureen Frank

1. The first step in managing any type of wildlife damage is to identify the species causing damage.
 - Sometimes, you can see or hear the animal that is causing damage.
 - Tracks and scat are helpful for identifying secretive species.
 - The type of damage can be a clue to identification.
2. Good management is based on an understanding of the species' life history.
 - All animals need habitat: food, water, shelter, and space. Damage can occur when wildlife use your house, yard, garden, pets, or livestock as part of their habitat.
 - Modifying the habitat can be a great way to prevent damage. For example, keeping your attic well-sealed prevents squirrels, raccoons, or bats from seeking shelter there.
3. Integrated pest management (IPM) uses a combination of strategies to manage damage and prevent future issues.
 - a) *Biological strategies* take advantage of a species' natural predators. For example, if you have problems with squirrels and rabbits in your garden, you could install an owl box to encourage great-horned owls to nest on your property.
 - b) *Cultural strategies* are choices you make so that your property is less attractive to wildlife. Some types of plants are more palatable to deer than others. A cultural practice would be choosing to plant shrubs and flowers that are less palatable to deer.
 - c) *Mechanical/physical strategies* remove or exclude animals from an area, such as traps. Netting to prevent swallows from nesting under the eaves is another example of a physical technique.
 - d) *Chemical strategies* are the use of a repellent or toxicant to reduce damage. Only a few toxicants can legally be used for a few species, and some require a license. If you are interested in using chemical methods, read the label carefully and only use the product in the manner(s) specified. Use caution with chemicals that are advertised to repel wildlife, as most do not work.

Integrated pest management is designed to provide long-term, sustainable damage control. Continue monitoring your property for damage after you have used control strategies. Catching problems early is a key to success – trapping one or two mice is much easier than waiting until you have an infestation! Also, continue to educate yourself about the biology and ecology of your local wildlife. Understanding wildlife habitat will help you be a better manager, and you will also learn about the benefits of sharing your land with Texas' diverse array of wildlife species.