

Dealing with Raccoons

-- Stefan Hunt, Texas Wildlife Services

Question from NWACA: What advice do you have for keeping raccoons off our roofs? Many neighbors have these critters trying to invade the attic, and sometimes they succeed!

Raccoons are probably one of the most adaptable animals around. They survive and thrive very well in urban situations, and typically prefer to live around houses rather than in rural areas. The reason is that we provide many opportunities for food and shelter.

One of the biggest issues with raccoons is damage to roofs and attics. They cause losses in the thousands of dollars by tearing up the roof, vents, or eaves of houses while trying to access the attic. Most of the time this damage occurs in the springtime when the adults are looking for places to have their litter of young.

When accessing the roof areas of homes, raccoons prefer the easiest method of travel. For them, it is trees. Any tree branches above or near the roof need to be trimmed at least 4-5 feet away. Raccoons can jump and cover very large gaps, so trim the trees as far back as possible. They can also climb up on the corners of the house as well as gutter spouts, but there are not many effective exclusion methods for these parts of the house.

It is wise to screen off any vents or grating that if removed by the raccoon, would give them easy access to the attic. Usually, if it is a difficult task to access the attic, they move on. If you see raccoons on your roof repeatedly, they have probably already found some type of shelter there. As with most urban wildlife, harassment goes a long way. If they are continually harassed with water hoses and noises, raccoons tend to not stick around very long.

Austin/Travis County provides technical assistance only over the phone for raccoons through Texas Wildlife Services. Feel free to contact us with any questions at 512-854-9613. If you require someone to trap and remove a problem raccoon, you would need to go through a pest control company.