

Non-chemical Control of Woodchucks

Woodchucks are also known as ground hogs and whistle pigs and are one of 14 species of marmots. Woodchuck problems usually relate to burrowing under buildings or damaging garden crops. Digging under buildings can lead to problems with weakened foundations and unwanted water drainage.

There is a great deal of variation between states regarding the legal status of woodchucks. Be sure to check your state's regulations before employing control methods.

Exclusion

Fencing can sometimes exclude woodchucks. They are, however, good climbers and can easily scale wire fences if electric wire is not included in the design. Fences should be at least 3 feet high and made of heavy poultry wire or 2-inch mesh woven wire. To prevent burrowing under the fence, bury the lower edge 10 to 12 inches in the ground. Place an electric wire 4 to 5 inches off the ground and 4 to 5 inches away from the fence.

Repellents and Frightening Devices

There are no repellents effective for woodchucks.

Scarecrows and other effigies can provide a few days relief from woodchuck damage. Move them regularly and incorporate a high level of human activity in the susceptible area.

Trapping

Cage trapping can sometimes be effective for small-scale woodchuck problems. Live traps should be at least 10 by 12 by 32 inches. Bait traps with apple slices or vegetables such as carrots and lettuce, and change baits daily. Locate traps at main entrances or major travel lanes. Place guide logs on either side of the path between the burrow opening and the trap to help funnel the animal into the trap. Check all traps twice daily, morning and evening, so that captured animals may be quickly removed. A captured animal can be relocated at least 10 miles away if regulations allow. Drowning is an effective method of dispatch.

When non-target animals are not concern, body-gripping traps (also known as Conibear® traps) are effective in some situations. Place the traps over the main entrances of the burrow system. No bait is necessary. Conibear 110's will handle young, small animals, while 160s and 220s will also handle larger adults.

Conibear traps are designed to kill the animal. Care should be taken to avoid trapping domestic animals such as cats and dogs. Some state or local laws prohibit the use of Conibear traps and some allow their use only in water. Consult your state wildlife department for regulations regarding the control of woodchucks.

Other Methods

Shooting is a way to kill a few woodchucks but it is seldom an effective method of population elimination. If state and local regulations allow, and if conditions provide a

safe shooting situation, a .22 rimfire rifle or a shotgun can be used to dispatch woodchucks.

Acknowledgments

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