

# Critter control options

*There's a wide variety of remedies for nuisance pests.*

**L**andscape Management reader advisor Jerry Coldiron of Boone Links/Lassing Pointe golf courses, Florence, Ky., says he's had problems with many species of critters that plague the turf, thanks to the courses' rural location.

"We have a definite geese problem, and we've tried all kinds of things as remedies," says Coldiron, "like stringing piano wire or fishing line along the lakes, and letting the grass around the edges grow up higher, which goes with our back-to-nature approach anyway. The geese don't feel safe in long grass areas, so they tend to stay away."

Jerry's also had to deal with skunks and raccoons. He says raccoons are easy to trap, and are set free away from the course.

"We've also used 'Hav-a-hart' traps, which resemble the animal carriers used by airlines. The critter is lured in with food."

For deer control, Coldiron says he's used ropes, aluminum pie pans, human hair and soap as repellents.

For more information on pest control, see the accompanying sidebar. □

## Controlling nuisance wildlife

Armadillos, opossums, raccoons, skunks, foxes, wild pigs and various birds may damage turf by digging in search of webworms, cutworms, white grubs, earthworms or other juicy prey. Often you can put a stop to this by eliminating the food supply—controlling the insect infestation.

Other pests, such as moles, and pocket gophers damage turfgrasses by burrowing and pushing up ridges and unsightly mounds of soil. Getting rid of these pests requires patience, persistence and knowledge of their habits.

Note that in most areas, urban wildlife is protected under state and local laws. Professional turf managers should always check with the local conservation officer or state wildlife agency before controlling nuisance wildlife, especially if lethal methods are to be used.

**Birds:** Except for starlings and a few other pest species, birds are considered beneficial and are protected by federal and state laws. The only appropriate or effective tactic for reducing bird damage to turf is to eliminate the pests that are attracting them.

**Canada geese:** Steep-sided ponds are less attractive than those with shallow shorelines or open beaches. Geese can be excluded by erecting a three-foot woven wire fence around the pond at water's edge. Or, a two- or three-strand fence made from 20 lb. test or heavier monofilament fishing line. Hang narrow strips of aluminum foil every 3 to 6 feet to make the barrier more visible.

RejeX-IT AG-36 is registered for use on turfgrass and is effective for repelling geese and other waterfowl.

**Chipmunks:** Hardware cloth is effective. Use 1/4-inch material, and bury it 6 to 8 inches deep to keep chipmunks from burrowing under sidewalks, in gardens and other sensitive sites. Wire mesh live-traps can be purchased or sometimes rented from animal shelters. Good baits include a mixture of peanut butter and oatmeal, nutmeats, pumpkin or sunflower seeds, raisins or prune slices or grain-type breakfast cereals. Place the trap close to the burrow entrance or along pathways where chipmunks are active.

**Moles:** Trapping is the most effective method for controlling moles. Trapping is usually most effective in the spring or fall, when moles are active near the surface. You must first locate the active, main surface runways.

**Raccoons:** Controlling white grubs reduces the food supply and usually discourages raccoons from digging. Unlike moles, raccoons like a varied diet and can easily forage elsewhere.

Live trapping is the most effective, non-lethal method of getting rid of raccoons. Use Tomahawk, Hav-a-hart or similar type traps of the appropriate size. Effective baits include chunks of corn-on-the-cob in the milk stage; sardines and other fish; and fish-flavored canned cat food. Melon, prunes, fried bacon, or peanut butter, syrup or honey on bread may also work.

Raccoons are often quite wary about entering a trap. They can often be made less cautious by providing a natural footing on the trap floor. Do this by pushing the wire cage back and forth on the ground until the bottom mesh is covered by soil. Twist-tie the door(s) open for several days so that the raccoon can get used to the "metal object that gives free food." □

Source: *Destructive Turfgrass Insects: Biology, Diagnosis and Control*, by Daniel A. Potter, 1998, Sleeping Bear Press, Inc. For more information, contact Ann Arbor Press, 121 S. Main St., Chelsea, MI 48118; 734-475-8787.