

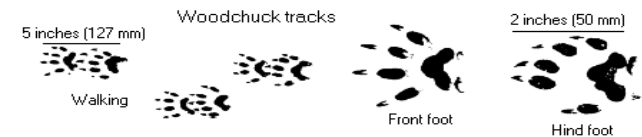
NWRI ... Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc. ... is a 25+ year old, not-for-profit (501c3) organization whose mission is to *rehabilitate and release orphaned and injured wildlife, and through education, preserve and protect the natural habitat and species indigenous to Nebraska and the Great Plains. The means to accomplish this mission is to educate the public to an understanding of our Great Plains ecosystem and its component parts.*

P.O. Box 24122
Omaha, Nebraska
68124



Living with...

Woodchucks



Urban Wildlife Series

PO Box 24122
Omaha, NE 68124-0122
Hotline (402) 341-8619
www.nebraskawildliferehab.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



About Woodchucks

The woodchuck, or groundhog, is one of the most common mammals in eastern Nebraska, but is still improperly identified by many people as a gopher or a beaver. Some people who do recognize the woodchuck realize this rodent is a member of the same family as the squirrel and the marmots.

People in the United States, hoping for an early spring, are always happy if the woodchuck does not see his shadow in February.



The woodchuck resides in pastures, meadows, old fields, and along the edges of wooded areas. As more and more trees are cleared in the urban areas, we see an increase in their numbers in the city. At the same time, the numbers of tree-dwelling mammals, such as raccoons, are decreasing in the same urban areas.

This sun-loving creature is active by day, especially in early morning and late afternoon. The woodchuck is almost a complete vegetarian, eating leaves, flowers and soft stems of various grasses, of field crops such as clover and alfalfa, and of many kinds of wild herbs. Woodchucks are agile climbers, often climbing trees to reach berries or nuts.

Although woodchucks have large teeth, they are not a threat to humans if they are left alone. Woodchucks will not fight with your family pets unless they are cornered and desperate to get away. Woodchucks do not attack other animals unprovoked.

Nebraska Wildlife Rehab fields many calls every year asking that we trap and relocate woodchucks that are raiding garden vegetables and perennials, or digging burrows under sheds and decks. Woodchucks, like most other animals, usually do not survive relocation, as they are unable to find food, water and shelter, and are unable to avoid predators in a

new environment. Also, demand for relocation of woodchucks usually peaks during the time when young woodchucks are still in the burrow. Relocating the mother means certain death to the young left behind.

Discouraging Woodchucks

In Gardens: As woodchucks are fearful of humans and generally cautious. Making more frequent visits to your garden, and adding an object that will blow around in the wind—such as a beach ball—will usually discourage visits.

Another approach is to lure woodchucks away from your garden by planting a swath of wildflowers, grasses and beans a distance from your house. They will prefer to feed at the farther, safer distance from humans. Even a typical suburban lot can usually accommodate a small patch of meadow. You can also plant some species of flowers that appeal to you, but not to woodchucks. Gardeners report that lobelia, gallardia, daylilies, and columbine do not appeal to the woodchuck's palate.

Coyote urine, available at most hunting stores, may also be used as a repellent around your garden to deter woodchucks.

Finally, you might consider installing a fence around your garden. The fence should be three to four feet above ground and extend one foot below ground for best results. Use wire mesh with openings that are two inches by four inches. Leave the top portion of the wire mesh unattached to fence posts. A woodchuck does not like to climb an unstable fence. Finally, fold the bottom six inches of the underground portion outward to discourage persistent diggers.

Underneath Buildings: If you wish to exclude a woodchuck from a burrow under your house, porch, or outbuilding, wait until late summer, after any young have been weaned. One humane harassment technique is to partially dig out the entrances to the burrow, and clear away surrounding vegetation. Another approach is to place quantities of used kitty litter inside all burrow entrances. A third possibility is to place a one-way door at the main entrance to the burrow; this lets the animal safely leave but not return. Playing a radio near the burrow entrance will always discourage the woodchucks from returning.

After the animal has left the burrow, pack the entrance lightly with hay. If it remains undisturbed for three to five days, you can assume the burrow is unoccupied. To permanently close the burrow, excavate the area around the entrance and bury a three-foot-square section of heavy-gauge welded wire (three-inch squares) one foot deep across the entrance of the burrow.

Top 10 Reasons NOT to Trap and Relocate Wildlife

10. It is not an effective solution. If you remove one animal from your property, another will come to take its place.
9. You will never succeed in eliminating wildlife from your property. As long as you have a source of food or shelter (e.g. accessible trash, pet food left outside, grubs in your lawn, uncapped chimney, holes in your eaves) they will come. Eliminate, fix or secure the source of your problem, and you will solve it with much less wasted effort.
8. Trapping is indiscriminate—you may trap your neighbor's cat or another animal completely unrelated to your nuisance problem.
7. It's not fair. Where do we expect wildlife to exist? Never-ending expansion of urban areas to accommodate the ever-growing human population has left wildlife no choice but to adapt to us. Don't we owe them a little tolerance?
6. It's illegal in the off season. Although it is widely ignored, all forms of trapping are legally limited to designated hunting and trapping seasons. These seasons are defined to allow animals to breed and raise their young during non-hunting and trapping seasons, free from harassment.
5. It is highly stressful to an animal to be trapped and to be relocated. Most animals do not survive in unfamiliar territory. Resident animals will drive off the intruder, or the animal will not know where to find food or shelter, if it is even available. A recent study notes that over 90% of relocated raccoons die within a short period of time.
4. "Humane" traps are anything but humane. Frequently animals do serious injury to themselves trying to escape during the hours they are confined in a live trap.
3. Fear, as a reason for trapping, is irrational. Wild animals have no interest in attacking you, your pets, or your children. Their only reason for aggression is self-defense, and their first choice is always to escape the perceived danger.
2. With just a little effort, we can coexist peacefully with wildlife. If they cause you minor inconvenience, please remember their only motivation is survival. They have no concept of property or damage. There are many more effective and less disruptive alternatives to trapping.**

And the #1 reason NOT to trap and relocate... When you trap and relocate someone's mother might not come home. From early spring until late fall, chances are 50/50 that the animal you trap is a mother, whose babies depend on her for their survival. Taking a mother away from her babies condemns them to a very cruel fate - starvation and death.