

## Critter and Pest Control

Wildlife is all around us. A few precautions can keep you and your family safe and eliminate property damage. You should not approach or feed any wild animal. While rabies is rare in our area, animals carry fleas, ticks, and other parasites and pests that can transmit diseases to humans.

All animals need three things to survive: food, water and shelter. Removing just one of these will drive an animal out of the area.

Do not feed pets outdoors. This is easy food for wild animals. If you have to have water and/or food outside during the day, bring them in before nightfall.

Raccoons: Raccoons can cause considerable damage to roofs, attics (they like to nest in attic insulation), lawns and gardens. Eliminate access points into attic. Keep lawn and garden areas free of insects, snails and grub worms as these are significant raccoon food.

Skunks: Skunks can spray up to about 10 feet. They eat fruits, berries, insects, small rodents and reptiles. Eliminate lumber piles, rock piles and debris as skunks will use these as shelter. Changing the time you run your sprinklers can also help keep skunks away.

Opossums: Opossums are not much danger to humans. They will play dead when threatened (an involuntary reaction to fear). They feed on carrion, rodents, insects, snails, slugs, birds, eggs, frogs, plants and fruits. They compete with rats and mice for food and will also eat rats and mice.

Mosquitoes: Mosquitoes can pass many types of diseases to humans. Of most concern in Orange County is West Nile Virus. West Nile is deadly to most animals – a horse can die within a few days of infection. If you get bit by a mosquito call Orange County Vector Control so they can look for and control the source of the mosquitoes. Mosquitoes breed in dirty standing water – eliminate if possible. The Orange County Vector Control will provide Mosquito Fish (that feed on mosquito larvae) for free to place in non-natural water sources (e.g., backyard ponds and fountains).

The Orange County Animal Care Service will generally only respond and impound an animal that is injured, sick, dead, or has had intimate contact with humans or domestic animals. Otherwise, homeowners need to call a professional pest control company.

The Orange County Vector Control handles only mosquitoes, rats and red imported fire ants, outdoors only. For inside problems homeowners need to call a professional pest control company.

By California law, homeowners' association must provide prior notice and post the area before spraying any pesticides or using poison bait at or around the common areas.

Homeowners should be careful when using poison bait (for example snail bait) as many of these products are also very tempting to dogs and cats.