

# Springtime animal FAQs<sup>1</sup>

Barb Ogg  
Extension Educator

Springtime is the time that animals are preoccupied with mating and rearing young. Along with these activities some species have a variety of behaviors that seem to be odd, annoying or even frightening. These are some of the most frequently asked questions that people call us about.

**Q.** Why are woodpeckers beating on my house?

**A.** In the spring of the year, male woodpeckers mark their territory and attract females with a rhythmic pecking sequence, known as *drumming*. Drumming is usually done on resonant dead tree trunks or limbs, but occasionally buildings can be used. Drumming substrates are based on the basis of the sound generated. Woodpeckers may select metal surfaces such as metal gutters, downspouts, chimney caps, TV antennas, plumbing vents and metal roof valleys. Drumming causes little damage to the building, but is annoying because it often occurs in the early morning hours when inhabitants are still sleeping. Drumming is predominantly a spring-time activity that will stop once nesting behaviors begin. Woodpeckers do not hurt themselves with this activity.

**Q.** I have birds repeatedly banging into my picture window. Why are they doing this? Will they hurt themselves?

**A.** In the early spring, male birds are trying to establish territories for nesting sites. Their behavior results in attacking other male birds that are invading the territory. When a male bird flies into a large picture window, it is trying to attack

another male bird, which actually is a reflection of itself. A bird may knock itself out by this repeated window attack. Cutting down on the reflection on the window will prevent these window attacks and injury to the bird. Placing a sheer cloth or crinkled plastic wrap in select places on the inside of the window will help cut down on window reflections.

**Q.** Grackles are putting droppings in the birdbath (swimming pool). Why?

**A.** Grackles are very tidy after the young have hatched to prevent predators from finding the nest. Fecal matter from the young birds is covered with a sac-like membrane which enables the adults to dispose of the waste easily away from the nest. Bird baths and swimming pools are often used to dispose of feces.

**Q.** Swallows have been attacking our cat and have even swooped down on us? Why are they doing this? How can we protect ourselves from these dive bombing birds?

**A.** Birds are very territorial when they have a nest of babies. When a cat, dog or human comes anywhere close to their nest, they see a predator that is a threat to their babies. This dive-bombing behavior is an effective scare tactic meant to drive the predator away from their nest of young. Until the baby birds are on their own, you may want to stay away from the nest site. This may mean using other entrances around your house. The dive bombing is very effective, but the birds are very unlikely to hurt you. Wearing a hat may make you feel safer or carry an umbrella.

**Q.** My children found a

baby bird that fell from a nest. Will the parents abandon the bird now that we've touched it?

**A.** Birds have a very poor sense of smell. The parents cannot smell human scent so the best thing is to put the baby bird back in the nest as soon as possible. The parents should take care of their baby again.

**Q.** We've found an injured (abandoned) bird/animal. Who can take care of it?

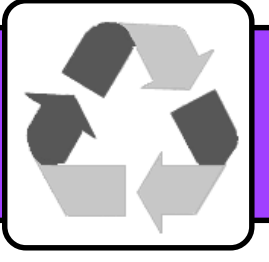
**A.** Wildlife Rescue Team, Inc. provides care for orphaned and injured animals for release into the wild. Call 473-1951 for more information.

**Q.** A skunk has moved into my garden shed. The animal is in there now and I want it removed. Who do I call?

**A.** You can call a pest control operator that works with wildlife (vertebrate pests). Check the yellow pages in your phone book. In addition to trapping and removing animals, some pest control operators help you examine your property and make suggestions and/or physical alterations to reduce repeat visits by a particular type of pest. Or, you can contact Animal Control (if you are in Lincoln) at 441-7900. Animal Control will pick up skunks or bats on your property for free. Other wildlife (including snakes) can be removed for a cost of \$15/each animal. "Roaming cats" can be trapped and picked up at no charge. Animal Control also rents out live traps in certain situations— all for 441-7900 for more information. (Source: Animal Control Division, Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department.) (BPO)

<sup>1</sup>FAQ's are frequently asked questions.

## Environmental Focus



# Upcoming household hazardous waste collections

Residents of Lancaster County can bring household hazardous wastes to the following collection sites.

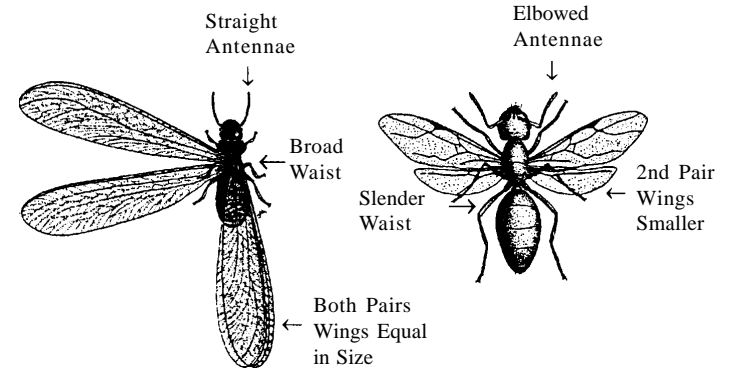
- Saturday, April 17, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, 3140 "N" Street, south parking lot
- Friday, May 14, 3 - 6 p.m., Hickman, 2<sup>nd</sup> & Main
- Saturday, May 15, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., State Fair Park, parking lot, northwest of Ag Hall, (includes latex paint exchange)

Items that you can bring for disposal:

- Heavy metals: items containing mercury such as thermometers and thermostats.
  - Solvents: mineral spirits, turpentine, paint strippers and thinners, oil-based paints and varnishes.
  - Pesticides: weed killers, garden sprays, wood preservatives, roach powder and rat poisons. You may also bring banned products, like DDT, chlordane, 2,4,5-T, pentachlorophenol, silvex.
  - PCBs: Ballasts from old fluorescent fixtures.
- Leave products in their original container and keep the label intact. Opened, leaking or rusted containers should be placed in a clear plastic bag during transport. Do not mix chemicals.

Do not bring medicines, explosives, fertilizers, used oil, general household trash, antifreeze, batteries or latex paint (except on May 15 for the latex paint exchange). For more specific information, call the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department at 441-8040. (BPO)

# Be on the lookout for flying termites!



After a long winter, termites are active. . . and hungry.

Nebraska homeowners should be on the lookout for swarming termites. Although swarming is somewhat related to environmental conditions, termites typically swarm in our area in mid-April. If homes are infested with termites, these winged swarms may pour out from behind woodwork in the home. Swarming termites that are found inside the home, often indicate a serious termite problem. It is also common to see winged termites swarming in the yard during April, but this situation is less serious to the homeowner. It means that there is a termite colony in the area, but not necessarily in the home.

Termite swarms are black and have wings that are longer than their body. Some people think they look like black ants with large wings. Persons finding unfamiliar insects in and around their home, may bring their insects to the Lancaster County Extension Office, 8 a.m.- 4:30 p.m., weekdays, for identification.

What steps should homeowners take after finding termites in their home? Find out at a "Termite Control Workshop

for Homeowners" on Tuesday, May 11, 6:30 - 9:45 p.m. In the last four years, workshops in Lincoln and Omaha have helped over 400 persons make better decisions about termite control options.

Presenters will include Barb Ogg, Dennis Ferraro, Extension Educators and Clyde Ogg, Pesticide Education Specialist, Environmental Programs, UNL. Dennis and Clyde have many years experience in the pest control industry and have treated homes for termites. Both are eager to share what they know about termite control with the public. Come and learn from experts!

Participants will be given unbiased, objective criteria to help understand how a proper treatment should be done, why it costs so much and how to determine which companies will treat their home properly. Presenters will also discuss the pro's and con's of new baiting technology currently being done by several pest control companies in Nebraska. There will be a \$15.00 fee per household for this workshop that will include easy-to-understand reference materials. (BPO)

# Where do you go for wildlife removal?

Soni Cochran  
Extension Consultant

We get a lot of questions about trapping and removal of wildlife and "roaming" pets. First, you can call the extension office to get information on how to manage your property so that you reduce the possibility of recurring visits by wildlife/strays. This information also covers control options. We have information on most animals found in and around Lancaster County.

If you have an animal that must be removed, you do have choices:

• **Work with a pest control operator.** Check the phone book for pest control operators that work with wildlife or vertebrate pests. These businesses will trap and remove the animal. Many pest control operators will work with you to provide assistance in excluding animals from certain areas to make sure the problem doesn't reoccur.

1) Call several companies and compare services and prices.  
2) Check with the Better Business Bureau and ask for references.

3) Make sure you get the explanation of services to be performed, prices and pesticide information (if needed).

4) Plan to be there when the services are performed. It is OK to ask lots of questions.

• **Lincoln/Lancaster County Division of Animal Control.** This agency does provide a variety of services to Lincoln/Lancaster County residents. Here are some available services, for more information contact Animal Control at 441-7900.

(Source: Lincoln/Lancaster County Division of Animal Control 3/28/99)

1. Removal of wildlife, without indigenous rabies and not a threat to the health and safety of the public, from the home, garage, or yard:  
- Fee - \$15, during regular working hours.  
- Fee - \$20, after regular working hours.  
- No charge for skunks or bats.

2. Rental of animal traps to the citizens of the City of Lincoln including the subsequent removal of trapped animals:  
- Deposit: \$20. Deposit is returned with return of trap. No trap rental fee is required for individuals trying to catch cats, skunks, animals exhibiting bizarre or unusual behavior, or

animals adjudged to be a threat to the public.

3. Rental of animal traps to individuals residing within Lancaster County but outside the city limits:

- Skunk & cat refundable deposit \$30 non-refundable fee \$0
- Raccoon refundable deposit \$30 non-refundable fee \$5
- Squirrel refundable deposit \$20 non-refundable fee \$5

4. Removal of trapped wildlife within the county during daylight hours \$25

**Other sources (as per Animal Control):**

- **Animal Control** handles trapped wildlife out of the city limits and in Lancaster County.  
- **Humane Society** does rent dog traps to Lancaster County residents out of the city limits. The Humane Society will remove dogs trapped out in the county. Check with the Humane Society for fees.

- **Lancaster County Sheriff's Office** will respond to stray animals outside the city limits and located within Lancaster County - **402-441-6000**

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