

A Guide for Choosing an Ethical and Humane Wildlife Control Company

By Brad Gates, BSc

WILDLIFE REMOVAL companies are not government licenced. Without any form of regulation governing the needed requirements to start a wildlife control business, homeowners are being exposed to fear mongering, incompetent advice, poor workmanship, health and safety issues and inhumane treatment of wildlife. The following guide will assist the townhouse



homeowner, manager and board in choosing an ethical and humane wildlife control company.

1. **Request a referral contact from your local animal welfare (Humane Society, OSPCA, etc.) or animal care and control agency to obtain a referral for a humane wildlife removal company.** These organizations should also be able to give information on the few legal stipulations governing wildlife removal in Ontario.

2. **Knowledge of wildlife.** Ask the wildlife removal operator to describe the lifecycle of the animal causing the problem. An experienced operator will have an in-depth knowledge of the intruding animal's biology and behaviour at that particular time of year.

3. **Years in Business.** Make sure the company has been in business for more than five years. This inquiry is not to be confused with how many years in the pest control business, since controlling insects is very different from controlling wildlife.

4. **Insurance Coverage.** Be very sure that the company

has at least a two million dollar business liability insurance policy and the employees are covered by the Workers Safety Insurance Board. Verifying this will protect you from any personal liability claim.

5. **Company Size.** Only companies with sufficient staff and resources will be able to safeguard the lives of animals and meet customer expectations. Humane wildlife control is labour intensive as it requires frequent follow-ups of the work in progress. Small sized operations often take on too much new work in the spring, finding it difficult to effectively follow-up on their work in progress.

6. **Awareness of wildlife birthing seasons.** Verify if the company is aware of the fact that dependent offspring could be present during the period from March to October. Raccoons give birth once a year (March to May) and spend nine months training their young to survive on their own. Squirrels give birth twice a year (March/April and August/September) and spend three months with their young.

7. **Don't hire trapping companies.** Contrary to popular belief cage traps are not necessarily more humane than kill traps. Wildlife can sustain serious self-injury as they attempt to escape the confines of the trap. Trapping companies often relocate wildlife outside the Ministry of *Natural Resources Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act* Regulations. Also, trapping and relocation of adult animals (especially during the spring and summer) will in many instances separate mothers from babies, and will result in the death of dependent offspring.

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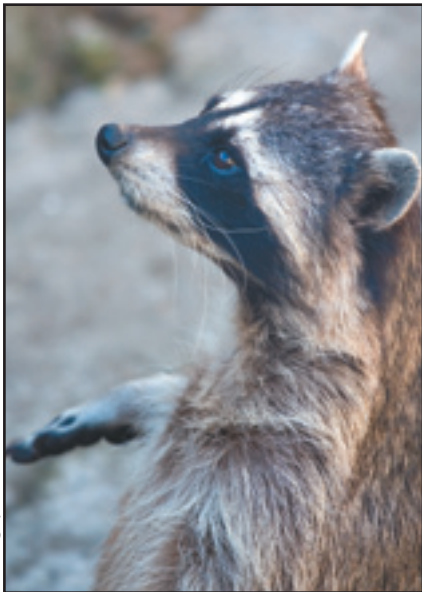
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resident wildlife from the building while preventing re-entry. While this method appears to be a simple and effective means of solving wildlife intrusions, it can prove to be as inhumane as trapping and relocation. Inquire as to the design of the device (non-spiked), that a search for offspring will be undertaken and that the entire process will be frequently monitored. Failing to do so may result in the inhumane treatment of the animals.

10. On-site Release Methods. Leaving animals on-site in their familiar territory allows uninterrupted access to known food and secondary shelter resources. This also allows for close monitoring of the adult female, especially during the birthing season, as her distraught behaviour will indicate if babies have been overlooked during the removal process. If offspring are present, they should be placed in a weather protected, heated release box, allowing the mother to return and relocate her young to a predetermined alternative den site.

11. On-site Estimate. Will the company arrive on location and provide a

no charge written estimate, outlining the work required to solve the problem. Furthermore, does the company discuss the option to animal proof other potential wildlife entry areas.

12. Provide Guarantee. Will the operator outline in writing the specifics of the guarantee. Usually a one year guarantee on the serviced area will suffice. Guarantees are only as good as the companies that offer them. If they go out of business, the guarantee means nothing.

13. First Impression of Company. Professional wildlife operators will invest in staff training, equipment and well-marked service vehicles. An established company will promote its public image through uniformed staff, brochures, business cards and invoices with the name of company, business address and phone number. ■

Brad Gates, BSc is owner/president of Gates Wildlife Control and an ACMO Associate member. Visit www.gateswildlifecontrol.com for more animal-proofing tips.

8. Inspection of Attic. Verify that the company intends to investigate the attic. A systematic attic inspection is vital to determine the intruding species, the presence of offspring and to explain to the customer the extent of the damage caused by the wildlife.

9. Passive Removal Techniques. More companies are using one-way-doors to permit the free exiting of the



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Greg Ross
416-252-7259 Ext.104
greg@enerplan.net

HAMILTON
Keith Bryant
905-318-5988 Ext.103
keith@enerplan.net



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