

Woodchucks



Woodchucks, also known as groundhogs or whistle-pigs are a commonly seen species near human development. They dig extensive burrows which are often used by other wildlife after the woodchuck has moved on. However, their burrows can result in the undermining or weakening of foundations, driveways and rock walls. Woodchucks are strict vegetarians that feed on a variety of grasses, forbs and small woody vegetation. If given the opportunity they will happily dine on ornamental, garden and agricultural crops. They can climb trees and wooden fence posts usually staying less than 10 feet off the ground. They have been known to chew on underground wires, outdoor furniture and decks. There are several ways to address woodchuck conflicts.

Protect Your Pet

- Monitor your dog when outdoors, woodchucks are most active in the early morning and late afternoon but can be active throughout the daytime period.
- Woodchucks are not aggressive, but they do have sharp teeth and will confront a threat when cornered.

Discourage Woodchucks

- Exclude woodchucks from gardens using fencing. Woodchucks can climb and dig so the fencing should be at least 18 inches above ground and buried 6 inches with an outward facing apron. Electric fencing with a wire approximately 5 inches above the ground can also exclude woodchucks. Please check your municipal ordinances before installing an electric fence.
- Scare tactics by a motion-sensitive unit that emits noise or water spray are useful tools to keep woodchucks leery. Overtime they will likely become accustomed to this level of harassment and it will be less effective.
- There are repellents available at garden-type stores for application to ornamental plantings; none are available for plants or products that will be consumed by humans. Please thoroughly review the label before applying any repellent or pesticide.
- If all else fails, woodchucks can be captured in a live trap with 10x12 inch access door, which are readily available at garden or farm supply type stores. A good bait to use is sliced apples or lettuce. Keep in mind after capturing it must be dealt with in one of two ways. Relocation is an option, however permission from the property owner must be granted before the woodchuck can be released. It is illegal to relocate animals to state-owned property. The second option is euthanization, which should be done by someone who is familiar with firearms and done in a location where firearm discharge is legal. Another option is to contact a nuisance wildlife contractor to assist with resolving your conflict.



Quick Facts

- **Woodchucks are one of only a few species in Wisconsin that are true hibernators, dropping their body temperature to as low as 37 degrees Fahrenheit and their heartbeat to 5 beats per minute.**
- **Because of the level of wear and tear on groundhog teeth from eating so much vegetation, they are able to grow upper and lower incisors about a sixteenth of an inch each week.**
- **Woodchuck trapping and hunting is legal year-round on your own property. However, many municipalities in Wisconsin have specific regulations regarding the discharge of firearms. Please check with your local government to ensure adherence to local ordinances.**

For more information, visit our webpage:

dnr.wi.gov

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Urban Wildlife Factsheet: Woodchuck

