

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS...

- As a last resort, trapping can be an effective method of dealing with troublesome wildlife. The most commonly used device is a live-trap which captures the animal physically unharmed. Traps should be checked twice a day (morning and evening) to replenish bait or to humanely deal with captured animals. Raccoons, opossums, and skunks cannot be released off-site, they must be euthanized or released on the same property. Contact the ODNR Division of Wildlife (1-800-Wildlife) for additional trapping regulations.
- Do not use poisons. Poisons are illegal, inhumane and may result in secondary poisoning of raptors, wild scavengers and neighborhood pets.

PETS AND COTTONTAILS

Cats are fascinating pets, but they are deadly hunters. Though cats hunt instinctively, they are not part of the natural food chain. Puncture wounds from cats cause serious infections, and treatment is rarely successful. Please take responsibility for your cat if you care about wildlife:

- Keep your pet indoors or on a leash, especially during the baby season
- If confinement is impossible, allow your pet out only under your direct supervision.

The above also apply to dogs. A state-wide leash law prohibits free-running dogs

PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS

Cottontail rabbits may occasionally carry tularemia bacteria, which can be transmitted to humans. As with all wildlife species, it is best to avoid contact if at all possible. Otherwise, wear light gloves when handling an injured or orphaned cottontail. Afterwards, wash your hands with soap and water.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you find a wild animal and are concerned, leave it alone and call Brukner Nature Center at 937-698-6493, seven days a week, 24 hours a day.



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Brukner Nature Center is a non-profit, privately funded organization promoting the appreciation and understanding of wildlife conservation through preservation, education, and rehabilitation.

The purpose of our wildlife rehabilitation program is to educate people regarding the natural history of Ohio's wildlife, to offer help and advice when wildlife and people conflict, and to care for, rehabilitate, and release native Ohio wildlife expected to survive in their natural environment.

Living with Eastern Cottontails

in Miami County



Brukner Nature Center

Lawns and Gardens in suburban neighborhoods provide excellent habitat for eastern cottontails. Cottontails vary in color from gray to brown and have large ears and hind feet and a short, fluffy white tail. Female cottontails will reproduce three to five times each year from March – October. Gestation is approximately 28 days, and during peak breeding season, females will be both pregnant and nursing. The average litter size is four to seven young. Don't expect to catch a glimpse of the mother cottontail; she visits her young only once or twice each night to feed. The young are weaned and on their own between 14 - 21 days of age; at that time they will be approximately 4 to 5 inches in length and fully furred with open eyes and upright ears.



Cottontails are an extremely important part of nature's food web. Nearly 80% of rabbits born each year do not survive their first season. They are consumed by predators that need this natural food for their survival and that of their young. Injuries caused by natural events or predators are nature's way of providing food. Humans should not interfere with that system.

COTTONTAILS NESTING IN YOUR BACKYARD

Cottontail nests are small depressions in the ground that are lined and covered with grass and the mother's fur. The female will dig a new nest for each litter. It is strongly recommended that you leave the nest alone and allow the mother to raise her young. Remember, the young are able to care for themselves by the time they are 14 - 21

days of age, but can continue to utilize their nest for the next seven weeks.

Do not relocate the nest; the mother visually knows where the nest is located, and she will not be able to find the nest if it is moved.

If the nest is in an area where a pet dog commonly stays, such as a backyard or a dog run, place a laundry basket, secured with a heavy object such as a large rock, over the nest during the daytime. Remove the laundry basket at dusk so the mother can return to feed at night; then replace the basket over the nest again in the morning. Repeat this until the young are on their own. The mother rabbit only feeds her young once or twice within a 24-hour period, typically at night.

NEVER MOVE YOUNG FROM THE NEST

It is illegal to keep wild animals, even for a very short time. They have specialized nutritional, housing and handling needs that you are unlikely to be able to provide. Inexperienced individuals who attempt to raise or treat them inevitably produce unhealthy, tame animals that cannot survive in their normal habitats.

Native wildlife are legally protected. It is illegal for anyone to possess a native wild animal unless permitted by the ODNR Division of Wildlife. Wildlife rehabilitators have a permit to care for orphaned or injured wildlife.

REUNITING YOUNG WITH THEIR MOTHER

If you have mistakenly removed the young from the nest because you thought they were abandoned, they can be reunited with their mother if they have not been separated for more than 36 hours. Place the young back into the nest, and cover them

with the grass and fur lining. Leave the nest area alone; frequent activity around the nest can force the mother to abandon her



nest. Simple ways to mark the nest while observing for the mother are: placing a detailed pattern (i.e. tic-tac toe pattern) over the nest or sprinkle baking flour around the perimeter. If either of the described methods is disrupted in a 24-hour period then confirmation of reunion should be assumed. It is always in the best interest of the young to be raised by their own mother.

GARDENS

Exclusion is always the best way to keep cottontails out of your garden. Build a 2-foot-high chicken-wire fence around the garden. It is important to secure the bottom of the fence either by burying it 6 to 8 inches underground or by driving stakes into the ground at even intervals to prevent cottontails from pushing their way underneath. Planting onions or flowering onions, garlic, fritillaria, or tropaeolum (nasturtium) around the perimeter of your garden may help deter cottontails. These plants have either an unpleasant taste or smell.

Other taste deterrents also work; however, they need to be reapplied after a heavy dew or rain. Recommended deterrents include spraying a mixture of one gallon of water and two teaspoons of hot sauce onto the plant or spraying garlic puree onto the plant. You may wish to visit a nursery or home center for commercial products.

PREVENTING PROBLEMS

Use welded wire to prevent animals from accessing opening under decks, elevated sheds, concrete slabs and porches. Secure outside access to crawl spaces

