

## Vertebrate Pest Management

**Position:** The Edmonton Humane Society (EHS) does not support methods of vertebrate pest management that cause undue suffering, pain, or distress of an animal. While EHS acknowledges that under certain circumstances, pest control and/or extermination may be required, EHS recommends using the most humane methods available.

### **Definitions:**

The terms “pest” and “nuisance” are commonly used to describe animals who cause disturbances or inconveniences to other animals and environments. Instead of these terms, EHS encourages the use of language which does not carry negative connotations or demean animals. These phrases are used throughout this position statement for ease of understanding.

### Summary

- Vertebrates are sentient animals whose welfare should be considered when choosing a method of pest control.
- Preventative measures and non-lethal solutions should first be taken to eliminate pests, and if lethal extermination is required then the most humane methods should be utilized.
- Potential harm to non-target species and the environment should be minimized when selecting a pest management method.

### Rationale

- Vertebrate animals regarded as pests or nuisance animals include (but are not limited to): coyotes, raccoons, skunks, rabbits, squirrels, prairie dogs, gophers, rats, moles, and mice.
- EHS acknowledges animals can cause disruptions in the environment or pose zoonotic risks. Regardless of the concerns these animals cause, they require the same level of consideration for their welfare as animals in other contexts.
- Lethal methods may not address the root cause for animals being attracted to a space. While lethal methods may temporarily cease the presence of animals at a site, other animals are likely to enter an unoccupied space and become a concern if the root cause is unaddressed.
- EHS encourages deterrent measures and modifying the environment first, before considering extermination. Non-lethal methods and preventative measures can often be sufficient to rectify certain pest problems. These include:
  - motion detectors
  - alarms and sensor lights
  - filling cracks in buildings
  - erecting fences
  - securing garbage and compost in animal-proof containers
  - keeping potential pest infestation sites clean, sanitary, and free from food

- The need for extermination should be justified with evidence, and only used when non-lethal methods have failed to resolve the concern. Justified reasons for extermination can include significant health or safety harm or threat to people, animals, or the environment which cannot be remedied by preventative or deterrent measures.
- When extermination is justified, the method should be:
  - species-specific;
  - humane and ensure a quick death that eliminates or minimizes pain, suffering, and distress;
  - a substance that does not remain in or damage the environment, or the least toxic option;
  - placed in a location that does not endanger other animals;
  - ensure that tamper-proof containers are used, and carcasses are quickly removed to prevent non-target animals from interacting with the trap or bait; and,
  - ensure that a plan to prevent the need for future extermination is created.
- While use of rodenticides is regulated and justified under certain circumstances, rodenticides should not be the default extermination method as Canada currently has no options for fast-acting or pain-free rodenticides.
  - Rodenticides typically cause a prolonged and painful death.
  - Poison can affect non-target species through direct and secondary poisoning. For example, sodium fluoroacetate (Compound 1080) is highly toxic to dogs, who may be poisoned should they consume a Compound 1080 poisoned animal.
  - If preventative measures and more humane extermination methods have not been effective and rodenticide must be used, then efforts to minimize the chances of direct and secondary poisoning should be minimized, and a fast and humane death for poisoned rodents found alive should exist.
- EHS does not support inhumane methods of extermination which cause undue, prolonged suffering and distress, including:
  - Glue traps
  - Electrocuting traps
  - Traps which utilize limb or body restraint (e.g., steel jawed leg hold traps)
    - Snap traps which ensure an instant death are considered more humane.
  - Poisons and baiting strategies (e.g., cyanides)
  - Inhumane burrow clearing and fumigation techniques

## References

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