

Chipmunk Control

Cooperative extension service
the university of georgia college of agricultural and environmental sciences

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The Eastern Chipmunk is one of the smaller members of the squirrel family, measuring 8 to 10 inches long. Chipmunks are primarily ground dwellers, but they do climb trees and shrubs for food and protection when necessary. It may be identified by the three dark dorsal stripes on the otherwise reddish-brown coat and by its habit of running with its tail sticking straight up in the air.

Chipmunks are quick in movements and very alert to danger. They prefer open wooded areas with plenty of food-producing trees and bushes. Food and protection offered by shrubbery, flowers, gardens and various types of landscaping attract chipmunks; and it is in these conditions that most problems arise. The cute, playful little creature then becomes a pest that threatens the appearance and the well-being of a home.

The Eastern Chipmunk has an extensive burrow system that may be 30 feet or more in length with one or more hollowed out cavities where young are reared. Openings are usually at the bases of stumps or fallen logs or beside large stones or walls. Entrances and exits of the burrow system are kept free of excavated dirt.

Chipmunks eat grain (corn), nuts (acorns), seeds (sunflower or other seed in a bird seed mix), mushrooms, insects (caterpillars) and some carrion (dead animal tissue), although this is a rare item in their diet.

DAMAGE: Chipmunks are territorial and rarely become abundant enough to cause a lot of damage. Individuals will gnaw into bags containing dog food or bird seed. They will also dig up and consume flower bulbs. Occasionally they will gnaw the bark from shrubbery.

REPELLENTS: Naphthalene crystals ("moth balls") may repel chipmunks from sheds, attics or summer cabins. The quantity required is usually so great that the odor is offensive to humans. There are no registered repellents for chipmunks. Taste repel-

lents containing bitrex thiram or ammonium soaps of higher fatty acids can be applied to landscape plants. Products such as Ro-Pel[®], Hinder[®], Big Game Repellent[®] or This-1-Works[®] are commercially available from garden supply stores, feed stores and forestry catalogs. There are no fumigants or toxicants registered for controlling chipmunks.

TRAPPING: Trapping is the easiest method to control chipmunks. The large wooden base snap traps used in rat control are effective in chipmunk control. Peanut butter alone or mixed with oatmeal makes good bait. Place traps along runways at burrow openings or in other areas of chipmunk activity. Place snap traps perpendicular to the wall or near burrow entrances. Homeowners can use live traps such as Havahart (No. 0) or Tomahawk (No. 102). Garden and feed stores generally sell these traps.

EXCLUSION: Exclude chipmunks from buildings whenever possible. Seal holes where gas lines, cooling lines or cable TV enter the house. Use caulking or ¼ inch welded wire. Attach a homemade screen to the bottom of a clothes dryer vent if the vent is near the ground.

POISONING: Poisoned grain is one of the most effective agents for controlling chipmunks. Scatter baits in teaspoonful quantities along runways and near burrow entrances used by chipmunks. Do not place it on loose or littered ground or where domestic animals or livestock might eat it.

In baiting where children and pets are active, expose bait in stations for added protection. A box with a 3-inch hole cut in each end or a board leaned against a wall and secured are typical stations. Any enclosure that will permit chipmunks to enter but restrict children and pets is satisfactory for this purpose.

Poisoned baits containing strychnine in ½ percent bait formulations should be used. Check local sources for these or check with your county extension office.

SHOOTING: If safe to do so, shooting can be effective. Use only a .22 caliber rifle with pellets or an air rifle (BB gun). Check local ordinances. It is often illegal to discharge any firearms inside city limits.

LEGAL STATUS: ALL non-game wildlife is protected in Georgia. Therefore, it is illegal to kill any species unless specifically permitted by regulations

such as hunting and fishing laws. Check with your local conservation office. Generally, homeowners can protect their property from mammals causing or about to cause damage. This does not allow citizens to kill wildlife out of season or in violation of federal, state or local laws or ordinances. Contact police or local Wildlife Resource Division personnel.

Attention: Pesticide Precautions

1. Observe all directions, restrictions and precautions on pesticide labels. It is dangerous, wasteful and illegal to do otherwise.
2. Store all pesticides in original containers with labels intact and behind locked doors. "Keep pesticides out of the reach of children."
3. Use pesticides at correct label dosage and intervals to avoid illegal residues or injury to plants and animals.
4. Apply pesticides carefully to avoid drift or contamination of non-target areas.
5. Surplus pesticides and containers should be disposed of in accordance with label directions, to contamination of water and other hazards will not result.
6. Follow directions on the pesticide label regarding restrictions as required by State and Federal Laws and Regulations.
7. Avoid any action that may threaten an Endangered Species or its habitat. Your county extension agent can inform you of Endangered Species in your area, help you identify them and, through the Fish and Wildlife Service Field Office, identify actions that may threaten Endangered Species or their habitat.

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