

Controlling BADGER Damage



Badgers (*Taxidea taxus*), a member of the weasel family, are found throughout most of Texas. They prefer open country with light to moderate cover and are usually found in pastures and rangelands where there is an abundance of burrowing rodents.

Badgers are not aggressive but will defend themselves if provoked. They have a ferocious appearance and will growl, hiss or snarl when cornered or fighting. Badgers are most active at night but are often seen at dawn or dusk and occasionally during the day.

The badger is a tireless burrower and spends much of its time digging. Its diet consists mainly of pocket gophers, moles, ground squirrels and other small rodents. Badgers are solitary, except during the mating season or when rearing their young. The young are born in an underground den. Dens usually have a single entrance with a large mound of dirt in front. These entrance holes are wider than they are high because the dimensions reflect the shape of the badger.

Damage

Indications of badger activity include the presence of a den, holes dug in search of rodents, and burrowing under fences or through the floor of a poultry house. The open holes left by badgers may create a hazard to livestock, horseback riders and machinery. Badger damage is usually extensive, and large areas of land will show dig-

gings. Badgers may also prey on chickens and young turkeys and may occasionally kill small lambs.

Biology and Reproduction

Adult weight: Average 18 pounds.

Total length: 24 to 29 inches.

Color: Gray with black patches on cheeks and muzzle, distinct white stripe extending from the nose over the top of the head.

Body: Medium-sized. Stocky with broad head, short thick neck, short legs, and a short bushy tail.

Feet: Black with prominent front claws.

Reproduction: Mates in late summer, egg implantation delayed until winter. Young are born approximately 5 weeks later.

Litter size: One to five, average three.

Life span: 14 years in the wild.

Control Methods

Trapping

Badgers can be removed by using cage traps, leghold traps and neck snares placed near the entrance of an active den. A leghold trap should be attached to the middle of a drag, such as a strong limb or fence post, so the badger cannot pull the trap down into the den.

Shooting

Badgers can be controlled by shooting. The best times for shooting are early morning, late evening, and after dark with the use of a spotlight. These times are when badgers are the most active.

Habitat modification

Controlling rodents, a food source for badgers, may aid in reducing badger damage and cause them to move elsewhere to search for food.

Frightening

Bright lights may discourage badgers from approaching areas such as farmyards and poultry houses.

Exclusion

Fencing is not effective for excluding badgers.

Repellents and toxicants

There are currently no repellents or toxicants registered for use on badgers.

Restrictions

Badgers are classified as furbearers in Texas, but it is legal to trap them. Under state law a person may trap a furbearing animal at any time if it is causing damage; however, the pelt may be sold only during the furbearing season and then only with proper licenses. Other furbearers include otter, mink, ring-tailed cat, beaver, skunk, nutria, weasel, raccoon, opossum, muskrat, fox and civet cat.

Landowners wishing to live trap badgers and relocate them after they have been caught must notify a representative of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

For additional information, contact the nearest office of Texas Cooperative Extension-Wildlife Services.

TCE—Wildlife Services

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