Business Techniques

Understanding Attractants
Make A Better Website

Product Information

Cougar Paws
Body Gripping Traps

Biology & Control

American Alligator
Woodrats

Departments

Pricing Ethics
Vermiculite Insulation
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Apr 5-9  OH - WCT Bat Management Workshop
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One of the most common questions for any business is what price should I charge. Frequent readers know that I have covered that topic multiple times over the years; however, what I haven’t discussed much is pricing ethics.

What do I mean by pricing ethics? Simply put, it is charging a fair rate for your services and products. Not only is there an ethical component to pricing, but there is also a legal component as well.

To set a fair price, it is imperative that you know what the cost to provide the product/service is. I’ve discussed this in the past so I won’t go into details, but for those new to the pricing issue usually you can look at what you are paying for the product/service (merchandise + delivery + expenses) and add how much profit you wish to make on it to generate a price. However, at times there will always be unexpected expenses such as additional fuel, equipment or materials. For these unexpected items, I suggest making them additional charges that can be added to the job instead of trying to incorporate them into your basic pricing strategy.

Ethically, you should be offering all your customers the same services at the same rates. Going outside your normal service area? Charge for the extra time and distance but keep your service charge the same. Accepting a credit card for payment? Have a cash discount price instead of adding 3% to the bill to cover costs. When you wish to give a discount to a customer, understand that what you are really doing is accepting less profit. You can’t change what the product or service you are offering costs so the only “wiggle” room available is with the profit generated. If that is acceptable, give the discount. If not don’t, but first understand how much room you have to negotiate with.

If you have to make $100 every time you do a service call in your service area to cover cost and other expenses and your rate is $125, the maximum discount you can afford to give is $25. At that rate, you are providing the service call at your cost to the client. Should you give more than a $25 discount, you are now paying your client for the privilege of providing that service for them. Anything less than $25 means you are still making a profit on the service call.

Those that have attended my training sessions where I discuss pricing know that this is a hot button for me. Too many times I’ve heard operators and clients talking about how the price changed during the sales pitch. Not only is this bad for the operator and our industry image, it can easily become unethical and also may be illegal. Following are two actual examples to stress my point.

Example A: An operator performs a bat inspection on a structure and quotes $2,700 for bat removal and $10,000 for guano cleanout and insulation replacement. The prospect refuses the bid and receives an immediate counter bid of $2,200 for bat removal and $10,000 for additional services.

Example B: An operator gives a cleanout bid for raccoon feces and damage for $26,000 to a prospect so they can submit for insurance reimbursement. Another operator contacted to produce a bid for this project requests the other operators bid so “they can be similar” and produces a bid of $22,000 after the request is denied. Again, if you were the prospect, how would you feel about this situation? As an operator, what do you think about what is happening?

After both bids are submitted to the insurance company, which decides it will only cover $15,500 of the project cost, the second operator then adjusts their bid to $15,500 so the prospect “won’t have any out of pocket expense.” Do you feel this adjustment is “good business” on the company’s part or not?

Here is some additional information on both examples. In Example A, the structure is approximately 1400 sq ft with two dormers. The
After rabies, white-nose syndrome is probably one of the most publicized diseases that effects wildlife control operators. Unlike rabies, operators are not at risk for contamination but they are at risk to have additional regulations placed on services they offer.

Discovered in 2006 close to Albany, New York, by Al Hicks of the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, white-nose syndrome has spread to 19 states and 4 Canadian provinces killing over an estimated 5.5 million bats. With no end in sight for this bat onslaught, it is very possible that several species of bats will be wiped out. In most populations this isn’t possible because of the wide array of mutations each population has. This allows surviving individuals to pass on their resistance to the infection to their offspring allowing survival of the species. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

Some infections are so infective that either no individuals are capable of surviving or the survivors population levels are too low to allow rebuilding of the species. Take for example Colony Collapse Disorder or CCD (the loss of a honey bee colony due to the sudden loss of the colony’s worker bee population). A recent discovery shows that the parasitic Varroa mite, which has been an issue with honey bees, carrying the Deformed Wind Virus (DWV) can increase the DWV infection rate of the hive from a normal 10% to 100% causing not only CCD but also collapse of an entire geographic region.

While this is currently not the case with all 47 species of bats found in the United States, it is a problem for specific species such as the little brown bat, big brown bat, eastern small-footed bat, northern long-eared bat, Indiana bat, tricolored bat, cave bat, gray bat, and the southeastern bat. Add to this the fact that most female bats only have one pup per year and that pup mortality rates are 60% - 100% per colony and you can see how difficult it will be for some species to recover.

Although a lot is still not known concerning white-nose syndrome, researchers have made several breakthroughs and observations.

Named for the white fungus that appears on body, wings, and muzzle of infected animals, white-nose syndrome (WNS) is a disease that affects hibernating bats. Testing has shown that WNS is caused by the fungus Geomyces destructans. Unlike most funguses, G. destructans can burry into living tissue causing damage and irritation. As a cold-loving fungus, G. destructans cannot grow at temperatures above 75 °F (24 °C) with optimal growth around 39 °F – 59 °F (4 °C – 15 °C).

Geomyces destructans and several species of infected bats have been found in Europe; however, since European bats tend to hibernate in small groups there does not appear to be the same devastation to their bat populations from WNS as is being experienced in North America.

Recently, Canadian researchers were able to grow G. destructans in a laboratory setting from European samples showing that the most likely cause of the North American infection was from spores transported from an infected cave in Europe on equipment.

Bats hibernating in caves are most at risk of WNS for several factors. First, the temperatures found during hibernation are the temperatures needed for optimal growth of G. destructans. Second, research is suggesting that the a bat’s immune system tends to slow down dramatically during hibernation. So any type of infection that occurs during the hibernative state could potentially be well established before the bat’s body would even be capable of fighting it.

Transmission appears to be primarily through direct contact making hibernating gregarious bat species high risk for infection leading to hibernacula mortality rates of 90 to 100 percent. This is the main concern for species such as little brown bats, northern long-eared bats, and Indiana bats. As these species tend to collect together at certain hibernacula by the thousands, a single infected bat could potentially destroy the entire species. It is interesting to note that little brown bats have been observed roosting in a more solitary fashion since the onset of WNS, but it is not known if this is a defensive response to the...
disease or if population levels are so low it is not possible to have the once large hibernating groups.

What is known is that more research needs to be conducted regarding WNS. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently announced grants awarded to 30 states for white-nose syndrome projects (see complete announcement below). For wildlife control operators, the best help in fighting WNS is performing low stress bat exclusions and offering supplemental living areas for excluded bats. Exclusion tubes can be disinfected by submerging in hot water (122°F) for a minimum of 20 minutes.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Awards Grants to 30 States for White-Nose Syndrome Work
July 9, 2012

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) today announced grant awards totaling $962,981 to thirty states for white-nose syndrome (WNS) projects. State natural resource agencies will use the funds for surveillance and monitoring of caves and mines where bats hibernate, preparing state response plans and other related projects.

“Grants like these provide essential support to our state partners in responding to white-nose syndrome,” said Dr. Jeremy Coleman, the Service’s national WNS coordinator. “Responding to the rapid spread and severity of this disease has been difficult for state agencies and other partners. Providing funds directly to states helps to improve capacity for response within those states, but also provides support for critical research projects and strengthens our national response effort overall.”

The Service is leading a cooperative effort with federal and state agencies, tribes, researchers, universities and other non-government organizations to research and manage the spread of WNS. In addition to developing science-based protocols and guidance for land management agencies and other partners to minimize the spread of WNS, the Service has funded numerous research projects to support and assess management recommendations and improve our basic understanding of the dynamics of the disease.

Funding for grants was provided through Endangered Species Recovery funds. Proposals were received from 31 states requesting $1,183,480. All eligible requests were given at least partial awards, ranging from $14,646 to $50,000, for a total of $962,981 in grant funds.

Additional information about WNS, the international disease investigation, and research can be found on the new partner-oriented WNS website, http://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/. The site contains the most up-to-date information and resources from partners in the WNS response, current news and links to social media.

America’s fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. We are working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. Learn more about the Endangered Species Program at: http://www.fws.gov/endangered/.

WNS Grants to States 2012 Final Awards

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<th>State</th>
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<td>Alabama</td>
<td>$26,250.00</td>
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<td>Delaware</td>
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<td>Hawaii</td>
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<td>Maine</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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61. Working In Your Comfort Zone: What is your comfort zone? It’s how far you will travel from your base of operations and still feel comfortable. Now don’t get me wrong on this. I know many of you will go quite a ways under the right conditions. I’m not talking here about clean outs or bat jobs or large bird jobs. I’m talking about how far you will travel to get that squirrel or woodchuck or raccoon.

I’ll tell you right now that our company will rarely go more than a half an hour in one direction. That means if I have a raccoon in a cage at the farthest point in one direction and a squirrel in a cage at the farthest point in the opposite direction, my travel time will be one hour. That’s way too much! When you have more than one employee, of course, this excessive travel time can be avoided.

I’ve taken some mental notes over the years and this seems to be one of the biggest complaints that my competitor’s clients have. “He didn’t check the cage. He didn’t check the bait. He didn’t come and get the animal.” And of course, the one I hear most often, “He won’t call me back or even answer his phone.” And we all know why. He lives between 60 and 160 miles away and took the job because things were slow. Now he’s got lots of work and doesn’t even want to think about that long drive anymore. Just between you and me, there seems to be some companies that never have a comfort zone.

62. Hiring New Help II: Let’s put it this way; I’m one of those naïve guys that sees the good in serial killers. This has not been a huge problem in my life outside of having to pay my guardian angel big bucks to watch my back. Here are some of the things you can and can’t do when hiring new help. Since our job usually requires a large amount of driving, it would be very prudent to check his or her driving record. This information may be gotten from your motor vehicle department. You may check his Workman’s Compensation record but only to the extent that his injury could interfere with his position (bad back versus heavy lifting).

Criminal background checks are legitimate only in conjunction with the job. Carrying a gun, for example, would be illegal for a felon. Licensing may also require a clean record. Here is what is recommended; your absolutely best bet is to ask for permission for a background check from your applicant. This will allow him or her to withdraw from the running if there is something that they would rather you didn’t see.

63. Here’s something that I should probably do more of. I have an on-going job (more than a decade) that mostly requires raccoon and red squirrel removal. Well, after watching the squirrel cages constantly tripped and the well baited raccoon cages ignored I decided to try something different. I removed the squirrel cages and replaced them with the 9X9X26 inch Tomahawks with the ½ inch mesh. I placed them on the ground and filled the back with pine cones, black walnuts, and some squirrel paste. I set the pan so light that even an animal as light as a red squirrel could set it off. Now I’ve got a cage that will catch both species. Today I had my first catch, a squirrel bait loving raccoon.

64. Customers: This is one of those things that doesn’t work for me nor anyone else for that matter. I want you guys to imagine this because it really happened. Think about your worst competitor and this story. One of our techs gets a job and goes to talk to the customer. The customer tells our technician that her first choice was company X and most of you are saying “Yeah, I know company X.” Okay, she is telling our competitor what the problem is when he stops her and says “Sorry, you’ll have to stop now. I’m up to the speaker and I have to order my food now.”

Well, needless to say, when this representative of his company was done ordering his food, the line was dead. (I like to think it’s because she was busy calling us) Now I like to be a gracious competitor and always give my competition the benefit of the doubt but what do you say to address something like this? About the best you can do is apologize and tell your customer that most of your competitors are upstanding people who will go out of their way to help a customer and not to think badly of our group as a whole because of one moron. And then do the best job for this lady that you know how!

65. Lunatics: Okay, truth be told, a lot of you read my column because I tend to be nuts! Plain and simple. I would like you to know that my lack of sanity is starting to rub off on the rest of this company.

The other morning, I’m listening to the boss with one ear (it’s pretty early in the morning). She’s saying, “Yes, we will pick up your dead dog and take it away.”

About an hour later the phone rings again; “Yeah, come and get
the dog, but I gots to warn you, he ain’t small’. Well, by now we all know which lucky employee was sent to go get this deceased canine! When I got to the address, I was instructed to go through the alley and pull right into the yard. Now for the benefit of those of you who do not know what a Neapolitan Mastiff is, I invite you to Google it like I did. I assure you that less than half of the dead deer we pick up, weigh less than this freaking dog! The only redeeming part of this story is that I found a crematorium that would get rid of my deer-like dog for only $25. Never fear, I told them that I would gladly pay $50 for this particular animal and they were actually waiting for me to arrive! I have no idea how many animals and what size they will take, but you can bet your boots I’m going to find out!

66. The Nova Rich: These are the people in your area that own everything (and sometimes everybody). Because of our particular business, we’ve met most of the wealthiest people in the state. I don’t think I am any more proud of myself than when I have held up my end of a conversation with a graduate of Harvard, Princeton, or Yale.

These people understand that you are probably not going to be able to keep up an intelligent conversation on what’s happening in the cultural centers of Europe, but you will earn their utmost respect if you can tell them something they don’t know about the animal that they have called you to remove. Here’s my example: “Did you know that in Wisconsin, we have never had a raccoon test positive for rabies?” Of course, if you’ve got some dirt to dish out on the even wealthier neighbors down the road, don’t think for a minute that they won’t be interested in that as well! Ha!

67. Appearance: You all need to feel comfortable as well as presentable to the customer. I have never made any fashion statements but I would like to throw out some things that work for me. For footwear I prefer loafers. I wear clean socks every day so I am not embarrassed to kick my loafers off inside a residence. Most customers will tell you that removing your shoes is not necessary. This is my usual reply; “Sorry Ma’am, I’ve been trained. I can’t wear my work shoes in my home, so I certainly shouldn’t be allowed to wear them in yours!”

Winter footwear is fairly easy for me. They sell a very reasonably priced, insulated, side zipper boot at Kohl’s and elsewhere, that is easy to get on and off. If I go through a pair in a year, no big deal. I’m one of those guys who would rather wear a $30 pair of boots for one year than a $150 pair for five years. Now keep in mind that I am no longer allowed on roofs and that I live in a northern state. Buy your own footwear accordingly.

68. Apparel: Okay, what about the rest of the ensemble? That’s a very good question, especially this year. This has been the hottest, driest, summer since we’ve been in business. We all have short sleeve shirts that are embroidered with the company name. Combined with a pair of decent looking blue jeans, it’s not too bad. I do believe; however, that a pair of short sleeve poplin coveralls would allow more circulation. I wore them for years but this year I wanted to be “one of the guys”.

Winter in Wisconsin usually means a heavy duty pair of monogrammed coveralls for me and heavier insulated jackets for the guys. Once the weather gets frigid, everyone is on their own. Whatever you have that keeps you from freezing to death is fine with us as well as the customers! Mild winters, like our last one, were really appreciated.

69. Weasels: This is one animal that has really surprised and amazed me. When I was a kid, they told me that the lack of weasels in southeast Wisconsin was due to all the hardwoods being chopped down and that weasels did not do a good job of adapting to agriculture (except for chicken coops). Well, I’m here to tell you that “they” were wrong. Some of our weasel stories include one lady who was sad to see him go. “We haven’t seen a mouse or a dropping since he moved in. We just can’t have him running upstairs and scaring the kids!” This was not an inexpensive home.

We’ve had a couple of instances where Mrs. Weasel found a hole into the basement and decided to give birth and raise her family there. To say these were fun jobs would be an understatement. Most of our mink depredation jobs turn out to be weasels. If you ever have the opportunity to study a family of weasels close up, like I did, you will love it! Oh, and here’s a tip, we have caught nearly all our weasels on a fish flavored can of cat food.

70. Stories; There is nothing that compares to a good story when talking to a customer (just make sure that they don’t have something on the stove or are already late for work). As you get more involved in this business, the stories become more frequent until sometimes it becomes important to write some of them down.

Last week I was sent to an opossum in a house job. Now here is something that I can handle. The owners had already left for the day but their teenage daughter let me in and showed me where they had screened in the opossum under a low piece of furniture. She also introduced me to their two golden retrievers although introductions didn’t really seem necessary. These dogs loved me at first sight. I went down on my knees to shine my light on the opossum and the dog on the left got excited and knocked me over. I laughed, went back to a kneeling position so that the dog on my right could do the same thing. Well the opossum was about as big as my fist so the capture was nothing to brag about. Now the daughter wanted to get some good pictures so I held the little guy up by his tail.

Just to show you guys my serious lack of education, I did not know that small opossums can easy climb up on your hand when you are holding them by the tip of the tail! I kept flipping him like he was a yo-yo. Between the dogs, the opossum, and the girl trying to control the situation, it was just hilarious. I can’t wait for the next customer to ask me about opossums!
Throughout this series, I’ve been talking to you about humorous aspects of commercial wildlife management and I hope that at least some of it has been helpful to you. In this final chapter, let’s talk about your reports – both monthly and annual reports that you provide to your commercial entities regarding the services that you’ve been providing.

If for no other reason than it just being a report about wildlife, your commercial contact will be interested to know what services you’ve been providing, animal captured, their disposition and so on. Although there are other aspects of the report that you will be talking about, the specific animals by species and disposition will be the most interesting to your contact.

I provide monthly reports for those we provide ongoing wildlife management to because that is the billing cycle. Almost all the contacts at my commercial accounts have remarked that they appreciate these ongoing reports as it helps them to most importantly, justify why they are paying you to be there. Your commercial contact has to justify and explain the need for wildlife management services to his bosses and the people who approve your purchase orders. This money is usually budgeted for a year at a time, sometimes two years. You may provide as much detail in these reports as you like but again, the simpler the better, straightforward and to the point, with maybe an end report explanation of services and/or recommendations.

So let’s talk about what I think are the most important aspects of the report.

Of course you want to provide the dates on site.

I also like to provide the total amount of man hours – not just hours but man hours expended to provide services throughout that billing cycle and reporting period.

The amount of animals captured, removed, relocated or transferred to wildlife rehabilitators – listed by species.

The dates, times and number of emergency services provided after hours or outside the scope of your normal work routine.

And then a separate batch of information directly related to the emergency services, animals by species and disposition and/or any recommendations.

If you are using cameras, provide the locations of those cameras and any related photographs that may be of interest to your customer like beavers swimming around in the canal and then photos of beavers captured and removed. Company heads love photos! So support your work with a few photos of the work you are doing for them! Please note though, always ask permission to use your cameras on company property – some companies forbid this.

Provide the amount of equipment being used on the property and where it is located. Your maps coordinating your efforts on site should be updated monthly.

At the end of the report you will want to comment on any recommendations that you have for the company to further reduce or eliminate problems in specific areas or explain as to as many animals are captured one month in relation to
other months. Or why you only spent 32 man hours in this billing cycle in relationship to the last billing cycle, etc.

Customer reports are not only good business; they are absolutely critical in tracking your services and giving a clear indication of how successful you are being. Most importantly, these reports justify your existence and are relied upon for future contacts in this management role at the company. Remember that the person that you are dealing with one year is not necessarily the person you will be dealing with the next year. So being able to provide detailed reports of your activities shows your success rate and makes it easy for your next contact to see what you are doing and why.

Finally, upon finishing your report, they usually like that emailed to them directly along with your invoice for services for that billing cycle. Your year end is the same as your monthly report although all the aspects of your monthly report are totaled up and provided at year end. I also usually like to bring that report to my commercial contact, in person so that we can discuss the previous year’s work activity, successes and any recommendations that you have going forward. These meetings are usually just 15-20 minutes and sometimes may happen over a friendly lunch.

At this point they should be aware of the differences and problems associated with wildlife in relation to prior contact with your services. It’s also a good idea to explain the ongoing need for maintenance services to keep things under control. This is probably one of the hardest things for them to understand so it’s our job to help them understand! ■
Two species of crocodilian animals are native to the United States: the American alligator (Alligator mississippiensis) and the American crocodile (Crocodylus acutus). Caimans (Caiman spp.) have been imported from Central and South America and released in some parts of Florida where they have adapted, survived and reproduced. Alligators and crocodiles are roughly similar in size, but caimans typically are 40% smaller. Alligators possess a rounder snout and they are black-yellow or black-white in color, whereas crocodiles and caimans have pointed snouts and olive-brown color. All three reptilians are limited to the southeastern parts of the United States.

Of the two native crocodilians, the American alligator is by far the most abundant and widely distributed. American alligators occur from the Great Dismal Swamp in North Carolina down to the Everglades in Florida, and west to the southernmost tip of Texas. Their presence is confirmed in 10 states: Alabama, Arkansas, North and South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas. Florida and Louisiana have the most alligators, with populations in each of these two states estimated between 1-1.5 million alligators.

The American alligator is a large animal. Adult males may reach lengths of 12 feet, with adult females usually 8-10 feet long. Alligators are massive animals, and mass may exceed 1,000 pounds! The thick, massive and powerful tail accounts for half the length of an alligator, and it is the primary mode of aquatic propulsion. Extremely rapid in water, alligators are much slower on land, although short bursts of speed on land can reach 20 mph.

Alligators breed in late May and early June. Because they have no vocal cords, males bellow loudly to attract mates and scare other males. Roughly a month after
breeding, females will lay 30-50 eggs in a nest made of vegetation gathered into a mound. Alligator eggs are similar in size to a goose egg. Females will guard this nest and protect it from potential egg predators. Brooding females typically display and hiss before attacking, so attacks on humans by females defending nests are rare. Eggs hatch after 65 days, and in late August / early September, young alligators measuring 9-10 inches in length emerge from the eggshells. Females may protect the young for up to a year, but the young are on their own by the time the next breeding season arrives. Mortality is high during the first years of life, and many of the prey that alligators consume as adults are young alligators. Among the most important predator of young alligators are snapping turtles, snakes, raccoons, largemouth bass, and other alligators. Young alligators reach breeding maturity at about 6 to 10 years of age, at which time they are about 5-7 feet long.

The alligator is a versatile predator with a diet that is exclusively carnivore. Juveniles start by eating smaller animals such as crustaceans, snails and small fish, and fully-grown adults can eat a wide range of prey from fish, turtles, snakes, amphibians, birds, mammals of all sizes, even other alligators. In Louisiana’s coastal marshes, nutria (Myocastor coypus) is the main prey of alligators whereas rough fish and turtles dominate the diet of Florida alligators. Alligators are opportunistic, and larger mammals such as cats, dogs, raccoons, feral pigs, white-tailed deer or domestic animals are preyed upon if encountered. In alligator waters, any animal living in the water or coming to the water to drink is potential prey. Although they hunt mostly in water, alligators may sometimes venture onto land and hunt a few hundred feet from water, ambushing animals near trails or roads.

Attacks on humans occur from time to time, probably as a case of mistaken identity. Records report almost 300 attacks on humans in Florida since 1948, of which at least 17 resulted in death. Included in those deaths are the three Floridians killed in the same week in 2006. The most serious attacks are normally made by alligators greater than 8 feet in length and are most likely the result of predatory behavior. Unprovoked attacks by alligators smaller than 5 feet in length are rare. Alligators quickly adapt to humans, and public feeding of alligators is the start of many problems.

Other than attacks on humans, alligators often generate nuisance complaints because of the risk they pose to children, the simple fear they instill, or by their predation of pets or domestic animals. In some areas, alligators excavate extensive burrows or dens for refuge from cold temperatures or drought and their diggings can damage dikes in impoundments.

Alligators are commercially raised on farms for the meat, leather, teeth and skulls. At least five states, Florida, Louisiana, Georgia, South Carolina, and Texas have problem or nuisance alligator control programs that allow permitted hunters to kill or facilitate the removal of nuisance alligators. Other states require that state wildlife officials be called to remove problem animals. Florida has the most pressing nuisance alligator problem and currently harvests about 4,000 alligators per year.
everything you read above is true, except the tombstone, which I will someday have. Fortunately, that day has not yet presented itself to me. I did indeed fall, unexpectedly, 23 feet to the hard concrete while trying to catch a raccoon. It was a simple job that I’ve performed 100 times without error. You’ve done it as well.

The noose of the snare pole was around the raccoon’s head and I recall mentioning to my son that I’d like a better grip on it, perhaps getting one leg through the loop as well. It wasn’t to be, so I gave the cable a stiff yank and that’s when all hell broke loose.

I remember the unexpected weight shift and the soffit breaking. I remember dangling - holding onto a truss, suggesting that my son pull me up. He tried and tried but there was no budging me upward at all. I quickly discussed a few options and called out for help. I didn’t want him falling as well. My arms, with 230 pounds of dangling body weight, started to lose all feeling. I could sense, feel, and even watch my arms lose the battle to gravity as they started to lose their grasp. I’m not proud of my almost final words. It was a statement, and then an exclamation. I’m glad they weren’t my last.

I don’t remember hitting the ground. I don’t remember being conscious or unconscious. I don’t remember asking my son, repeatedly after he brought me back to consciousness, “What happened?” “You fell, Dad.” “How’d I fall?” “You slipped trying to catch a raccoon.” He said we had that conversation at least fifteen times in the ten minutes it took for an ambulance to arrive. The paramedics took me to the nearest Trauma specialty hospital, and the trauma emergency room is where my memory starts to fade back into black and white. I don’t recall the CT scans, the X-rays, or even the IV fluids they were pumping into me. I don’t recall my sister, a paramedic, asking me to move my toes and fingers. Just knowing that she was there though, made me feel better than the dilaudid (narcotic pain reliever) that they were pumping me full of on a regular basis. I trust her and can read her facial expressions like a book. I knew the dire straits that I was in by her regular assessments. My wife was an hour away and when she arrived at my bedside, she tried to comfort me and then had to leave the room for fear of passing out. I must have looked pretty banged up.

How this happened, I don’t know. Not the fall – that part I know about! I’m speaking about living to be able to tell my story to you. A fall like that should have killed me, or at
least severely crippled me or even paralyzed me. Everything went my way and then some. My broken bones will heal. My body will mend. I’ve had four doctor appointments in the last two days - a Trauma Surgeon, an Ear Nose Throat specialist, an Orthopedic doctor or two, and of course, my family physician – whom I was in the middle of doing a job for when this all happened! There will be many more doctor visits and at least one surgery.

Originally, I wanted to tell nobody about this terrible accident. I didn’t want to be singled out as a dumbass that wasn’t careful. I didn’t want people to say “Why didn’t he just put a trap out for the raccoon?!” (If you saw the situation, you would know why it was unfeasible.) But instead, I figured that I would tell my story and hopefully get some people talking about me. By doing that, perhaps just ONE other guy will remember that bad things can happen when we least expect them to, and he’ll take the extra minute to be more careful than I was.

Stay tuned for a few future articles on safety. I know it can sometimes be a boring subject and we’d all rather hear about “the hot new lure” or “the latest innovation in live trapping” but without someone keeping safety in our forefront, someone’s going to get hurt real bad. Or worse.

For those of you that know me, you know that this is the second time I have fallen from over twenty feet. I wrote an article for WCT about the first fall. After that incident, I became a stickler for ladder safety. Now that I have taken a plunge from an attic directly to the pavement below, you better believe that attic safety is at the forefront of my concerns. I have replayed the job over and over, searching for a safer way to traverse and work in attics.

Many of my close colleagues think I suffered a permanent head injury because I called OSHA on myself. I wanted to know exactly what OSHA required and I wanted to make sure that I knew about any better or safer way of performing attic work. As it turned out, despite the fall, I was in full compliance. The Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration senior safety officer that discussed the fall with me is a licensed electrician and very familiar with attic work. He agreed that even though attic work is inherently dangerous, using fall arrest equipment in an attic can be even more dangerous. He even told me that he charges “through the wazoo” when he is required to work in an attic because of the danger factor.

In the past, for the most part, my biggest concern while working in an attic was putting a foot through somebody’s drywall ceiling. The majority of the time spent in attics had three point contact (two feet and one hand on the trusses or two hands and one foot) so falling all the way through was only a remote possibility. However, since May 1, 2012, damaging drywall is the very least of my concerns when we get an “animal in the attic” call.

Jack Ammerman – still alive and kicking.
What's good coon bait? Or, what is the best lure to catch the most fox? Or, what is the best squirrel bait? These are questions I hear at all the conventions and any time two wildlife control operators get together. It is almost like asking about the weather. I was one of those asking these questions until I learned more about the subject and understood how unanswerable these questions really are.

My hope is for you to understand why smells do what they do and help you understand lures, baits and other attractants. I want you to be able to elicit the desired response in an animal and make it do what you need it to do using these lures, baits and other attractants.

I have read a few other articles that describe the terms baits, lures and usually urine. Most that I have read I consider to be incomplete. These articles discuss in detail what the word means to the author and tell very little about the responses to these products. It is my view that if you understand the animal and basic instinctive responses you will be 100% more efficient in using the tools that trigger these responses.

Some consider baits only those products that have food as an ingredient, and some consider lures anything that lures the animal to your trap. Others only consider a product that contains a gland formulation a lure. Some further confuse the issue by discussing call lures as lures that are used away from the set but contain the same ingredients that are placed at the set or in the hole. I say forget about it, call them all smells and learn what response you want to achieve from them and give them any name you choose.

To simplify your understanding and avoid confusion we will refer to all of these products as smells. All of these smells can be placed in one of four categories. These categories relate to the responses desired by these smells. The four groups or categories are food, which appeals to hunger, gland, which appeals to territorial instincts, curiosity, and sex, which appeals to the mating urge. Any smell you purchase should be for one of these categories, to trigger that specific response in the animal, not that you have this response in your mind. I say this to emphasis that a smell doesn’t have to trigger this response or thought in your mind but in the intended animal. The smell of grilled steak smells good to you and may not be very attractive to a rabbit or groundhog.

For the sake of this article we will discuss one animal, the coyote, to clarify the point; however, the principles can be applied to any animal the same. We start with food smells.

First we must consider the time of year, the location we have to work with and the variables of the specific site. We have decided the coyote is visiting the area in search of food so we want to present it with a food smell. Rabbits, dogs, cats, raccoons and opossums also use this location. We cannot think of any food that will be attractive to coyotes and exclude the others. So we back away from this location and move away from the edges where these other animals travel and decide to limit our search for a smell that is not strong enough to draw attention from a distance.

It is fall and wild fruit is available; persimmon seeds are present in the coyote feces we have seen in the area. So we decide to use a fruit smell and place the trap in an open area used by the coyotes traveling on the way to the feeding area. What we have is a coyote traveling to an area with food on its mind. If the trap is in the line of travel, the coyote will smell the attractant and if it is attracted by this food smell you have used the smell correctly to trigger a food response. If you have set the trap correctly and placed the smell so the coyote triggers the trap while investigating the smell, you get paid. If not you hope your next set gets him.

When using food smells use a smell that is attractive to the animal you are trying to attract and less attractive to other animals in the area. If you are trying to attract raccoons in an area that has cats, use a fruit
based smell instead of fish based. However, if the raccoon is eating the cat food, use the cat food to attract it. Don’t try to change the animal’s mind unless you absolutely have to. If a raccoon has been raiding the trash can nightly then put trash in your box trap. If a raccoon is out hunting for whatever it can find, you have a lot of options. Learn your target animal’s habits and match them. Match the smell to the animal, location and specific situation and you will save a lot of time and money. If you are going to stock your truck with food smells then get two different smells for each of the animals you plan to attract and use according to the specific site evaluation.

Remember you are attracting the animal not trying to feed it. You don’t need a 4 ounce jar of smell to attract; the animal just needs to smell the smell. If the formulation is quality, then just a little dab will do ya. If the smells you are buying are from the grocery store you may need more.

Professionally prepared smells are formulated in a base that stands up in weather and holds the smell for a longer time. This means that a 1-ounce bottle of professional smell will outperform a quart jar of peanut butter. In summary, use food smells when the animal is thinking food; trigger an I-want-to-eat-that response by using smells that the animal has already associated with food; be aware of other animals that might also be attracted to the same smells and adjust your choice accordingly.

It’s very good to know how to trigger the territorial response. To utilize smells that trigger this response you need to know if the animal is a territorial type animal. Some are more responsive than others but all respond to some extent to the smell of other animals in their area or territory. This response will vary at different times of the year. In the time of the year that coyotes have well-defined territorial boundaries they will be very aggressive towards the presence of another coyote entering their territory. This is where the gland lures and urines really shine.

If you find the boundaries of your target coyote you can use a gland that simulates another coyote or any canine. These smells are formulated from glands of other animals. Urines are similar in there use as they are the smells from other animals. With canines and other animals the smell of another animal can trigger a urinary response, which is how these animals mark or claim the area.

These smells are most effective in areas marked by the target animal, anywhere you find accumulations of feces or toilet areas you can be assured that any smell of another animal will not go unnoticed.

Place the smell of another animal in a way that requires the animal to trip the trap or pass through the capture device and you have triggered a territorial response. Some of the gland lures are very strong smelling and some are used too generously and trigger a rolling response.

Have you ever wondered why your dog just has to roll in the worst mess you have ever smelled? It could not help it, the dog was responding to the smell. In a cage trap this response may not be a problem; however, it is very difficult to capture a coyote in a foot trap if it rolls over the top of it.

With other animals the response may not be as aggressive but a response still the same. If the smell of another animal in the target animal’s area will bring it to the capture device then you can use this to your advantage by using a quality gland smell. It may be the smell of the same type of animal or that of another.

Gland and urines are commonly used to simulate the smell of these attractive visitors. Don’t confuse the gland smell of a rabbit as triggering a food response or expect it to produce the same response as a chunk of rabbit meat. They are two totally different scents and they produce two totally different responses.

In summary, smells that simulate the smells of another animal, either of the same species or a competing species will trigger a territorial response. This may cause the animal to investigate and if your trap or device is properly placed you get paid.

The next type of smells that will trigger a response are categorized as curiosity smells. These are smells that the animal probably has never smelled before. An example might be a mixture of rattlesnake, lemon pie and alligator glands placed near a trail used by a coyote in Michigan. As the coyote comes near the smell it may think “What the hell is that?” and just have to check it out, or it may do a 180 and head to Canada. I would suggest not using loud smells of this type. These are also known as change-up smells because if you are dealing with a coyote that has been educated to a certain smell and is avoiding your sets you might try too trigger a response by offering a smell that it has never smelled before. Curiosity smells may contain glands of animals that are not found in the area or foods that are not common to the area, what they all have in common is the smell triggers a curiosity response. I would not recommend that you stock up to heavy on this type of smell for nuisance wildlife work; however, it is a good tool to have at your disposal if needed.

The last group of smells all trigger a mating response or what’s sometimes referred to as a passion response. I don’t see a lot of this type of smell on the market, partly

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because it is a hard smell to collect and formulate and partly because there is not much written on the use of this type of smell. I find it very useful in snaring situations on trails for coyotes or in trying to draw coyotes to a place off the normal trail.

Mainly gland based smells will have this type of smell and trigger similar responses. During the mating season this type of smell can be very effective for obvious reasons. The search for a mate is all the animals are thinking during this time of year and if you can put the smell they are seeking within their smell range they will respond. This goes back to the idea that it is always better to present a smell that is in line with the animal’s thoughts at the particular time of year and present location.

If the animal is hungry, use food smells to trigger the “I found food response.” If the animal is concerned with other animals in the area, use a gland smell to trigger the territorial responses, if it is mating season, use a smell that says “I found a mate.” If you are not sure and are having a problem, try a curiosity smell that triggers the “I better check that out” response. Many of these smells can be used together at the same location in different sets or traps and have increased results. It is very difficult to know exactly what an animal may respond to at any given time or place; however, you can increase your odds of capture by understanding the smells and responses that they should trigger.

I would not mix two smells together to make one; however, placing two different smells at the same set can work very well. For years fur trappers have added urine at the set along with every other smell. This is done in part to create the thought that another animal has been there and triggers a secure response or confidence that everything is all right.

Without getting too much into location an example of using different smells at the same site we will discuss a typical coyote set location.

Coyotes have been coming into a subdivision from the nearby fields and eating cats. Typically I would back track and find a set location that is on their line of normal travel and get away from the subdivision to avoid nontarget animals.

At this location I might set three foothold traps. One might be a gland smell that might trigger a urine response, so when it tries to communicate that it is aware of a new coyote in the area my trap would be set to intercept its foot as he investigates the smell.

The next trap may have a food smell since he is coming through with food on his mind. Again my trap is placed so when it tries to investigate the source of the food smell, my trap captures it. The third set may have a second food smell that gives it a choice and me a second chance to trigger the food hunger response. All three sets may have a squirt of urine added to trigger a confidence in the coyote and trigger a response that may cause him to check the area out because another coyote has been there. Apply these principles to any animal in any trapping situation and control the response of the animal. You will be able to trigger the proper response for any given situation and lead the animal to your traps more successfully. Now learn how to set the traps and you have got it all figured our, however that is another story.

Understand what you are looking for in a smell before you go shopping and ask the manufacturer what the lure was formulated for. They will not and you should not expect them to tell you the ingredients or formulation recipes; however, if the maker cannot tell me the intent or desired response I should expect from the smell, I will not buy it.

Buy all your smells from a person or company that you trust. Know that the bottle you buy today is the same as the bottle you bought last year because they are consistent in their formulation process. One more thing, don’t worry about if the smell you are buying is called a lure, bait, call lure or anything else – know what it does and why it does it. You should probably not ask for “smells” when you talk to the suppliers.
For those of you that might not know, Greg Smith is now the owner of Tomahawk Traps. A few weeks back he sent me a cage incorporating a new idea that he had for limiting destruction of pans and connecting arms by raccoons.

I naturally assumed that he chose me to test his product because he had heard of my great prowess for catching raccoons and he wanted to have an expert’s opinion! My wife said “Don’t be silly. He sent it to you to save on shipping costs and he knows you have a big mouth.” When your ego gets out of hand, it’s always handy to have someone to bring you back to earth.

This cage has a bar that runs all the way across the pan, the entire width of the cage. I know what you are going to say next. “What prevents the raccoon from standing on this bar and never tripping the cage at all?” That’s a good question and promptly got gobbled up by that very scary Internet Monster that devours stuff and you don’t know where it went to. Never fear; I took a picture of my cage after over twenty raccoons so that you could actually see that there is no damage. That stuff at the bottom of the cage is raccoon hair. They seem to shed a lot in this 100 degree weather.

I don’t know about the rest of the country but in Wisconsin it is not the big old male raccoons that usually make a shambles of a cage; it’s those crabby females! I caught five females in a row at one job and when the cage still looked as good as new I realized that Greg was on to something. What I had a hard time believing was that something so simple could work this well but isn’t that usually the case? If you’re in need of some new raccoon traps, I suggest you give this new Tomahawk a try. I’m sure you’ll be as happy with it as I am.
Our native woodrats (Neotoma spp.) commonly referred to as packrats or traderats, are not generally known to be a nuisance or an economic pest of any great significance, however, when local populations become high, woodrats can become a problem. The nature of these problems varies with the location and type of habitat in which a particular species thrives.

There are ten species and dozens of subspecies of woodrats in the 48 contiguous states. However, certain woodrat species are more highly furred than others and several species have tufts at the end. Their ears are large, lightly haired, and paper thin and their eyes are large, slightly bulging, bright, and shiny.

The different species may show marked difference in fur coloration; however, collectively they are light to medium brown with variations toward cinnamon, buff and gray. Their underside is almost always of a much lighter coloration—in shades of cream to white.

They are chiefly nocturnal, excellent climbers and highly active year around. Most species build large conspicuous conical or dome-shaped houses or dens with some standing more than six feet high off the forest floor. Forest or tree living species may also construct spherical-shaped dens high in trees. Desert loving species may build a den adjacent to the base of a cactus or among brush vegetation, only rarely using abandoned burrows. Woodrats will frequently utilize natural cavities in downed logs, rock outcroppings, cracks in cliffs, small or large caves, an abandoned mine or dry shallow well. When it comes to den building, they are highly opportunistic; this is why they sometimes take up space in attics and outbuildings of all kinds to build dens. Their dens are constructed of sticks, twigs, leaves, and whatever else is available in their environment.

Dens are typically occupied by a single individual, except when the female is rearing her young. A single den or house, however, may be used generation after generation of woodrats—each occupant or generation often adding to or remodeling the house.
These dens are an obvious sign that woodrats are thriving in the area, even though the animal may rarely actually be seen. Frequently their 3 or 4 inch wide trails will lead from their houses to currently used feeding grounds. Those rats living in tree dens may use arboreal travel routes; hence the absence of ground trails may be misleading.

They are essentially herbivorous, with a preference for a wide variety of plants largely determined by the habitat in which woodrats thrive. They consume the whole range of plant items, including leaves, flowers, seeds, fruit, nuts, small bulbs, bark—including fungi and cactus when available.

Woodrats are notorious for hoarding food items in substantial amounts, often far more than needed for winter survival. Gallon quantities of nuts or tree seed may be found stashed in a chamber of their dens. As collectors, these rodents are unmatched, and this is not limited to just food items. They are also noted for collecting other small and often shiny objects such as coins, pieces of glass, rifle shell casings, jewelry items, aluminum cans or their pull tabs. Dozens of such odd items may be found in a den. This trait is, of course, how they earned the name “packrats”. One of their other names is “trade rats”, which comes from the fact that woodrats will often set down an item they are carrying and then pick up another item to carry off—in effect, a trade.

Their breeding season extends from spring to fall, with the typical rodent gestation period of 3 to 5 weeks. Litters range from 1 to 4 young, with an average of about two. One to three litters are born annually; multiple litters are more prevalent in the southern regions. Young are born blind and naked, but develop rapidly and are weaned at about three weeks of age.

**Diseases** — Woodrats and their nests may be infested with insects, many of which are ectoparasites. Woodrats (e.g., dusty-footed) are highly susceptible to plague, which may be transmitted to pets or humans. A rapid die off of woodrats may decimate a local population and serve as a warning that plague is prevalent in the area. They are also hosts of spotted-fever carrying ticks and have been found infected with tularemia. They are also the primary hosts of the bloodsucking cone-nosed or kissing bugs (*Triatoma* spp.), which are vectors of the Chagas’ disease most prevalent in central and South American countries, but a few rare cases are reported in both the southeast and southwest U.S. When bitten by the kissing bug there is also some slight danger of having an anaphylactic reaction. Woodrats’ role in transmitting disease to man is considered minor, although dead or dying rats from unknown causes should not be handled with bare hands.

**Nature of Damage** — Woodrat damage is generally fairly local and intermittent. Calls received by WCOs generally relate to the rodents entering an attic, basement, or beneath a deck to take up residency and then feed on anything at hand, such as dog food, the kitchen garden or family orchard. They may prefer to take up residence beneath the hood of your stored RV, in the horse stable, or maybe some other outbuilding such as the pump house or an unused playhouse.

Where orchards are situated near woodrat infested habitat, the grower’s trees may suffer branch clipping, bark stripping, or young trees may be girdled. The woodrat propensity for hoarding food items can be destructive to all types of nut crops as well as to a variety of fruit crops. Damage is most severe along the margin of the orchard that lies adjacent to the wildlands. Forest managers are probably challenged by woodrats more than any other grower group because of the animal’s tree seed consumption and injury to a variety of trees at several stages of growth. Redwood seedlings are one of the species most susceptible to severe damage.

**Legal Status** — In most states woodrats are classified as nongame animals and can be taken (controlled) when they threaten or are causing property damage. The isolated and localized Key West, Florida population of a subspecies of the eastern woodrat, the Largo woodrat (*N. floridana smalli*), has been federally listed as endangered since 1991. Check with your local game officials before undertaking control of any type.

**CONTROL METHODS**

Considering that damage by this native rat was experienced by early settlers and has continued ever since, it is surprising how few control-type publications exist that include woodrats.

WCOs most commonly use live catch and/or kill trapping to resolve a woodrat problem. Woodrat calls are so infrequent that when a client reports a critter is running around in the attic, the WCO naturally suspects a squirrel or a roof rat—only

Continued on page 24
to be surprised to find it's a family of woodrats.

**Trapping** — Cage type live catch traps are most effective in catching woodrats. Spring closing single door traps work fine. Nut meats, raisins, oat groats, or oatmeal and peanut butter combined make for good baits, as do sunflower seeds or pine nuts. As a general rule woodrats are easy to trap, but occasionally one will try to outsmart you. It is then that you might want to try a totally different bait, such as crisp bacon.

Rat size traps with dimensions of about 4 x 5 x 15 inches made of sheet metal or wire mesh are recommended. I prefer the wire mesh trap, with mesh not exceeding 1/2 x 1 inch and have trapped dozens of dusty-footed woodrats over the years with Tomahawk traps (No. 102, chipmunk size). Remember, woodrats are not very heavy so trap triggers should be set very sensitive.

Rat size snap traps are also effective in taking woodrats. Both the trigger type and the expanded treddle type can be used. Studies have shown that the live catch are more efficient in catching woodrats than are snap traps but they take longer to set and must be inspected regularly. With snap traps you have many more tripped traps with no catch, which means more snap traps must be used to achieve the same number of catches.

Conibear traps (No. 110) can be used and are most suited for rural areas involving multiple acres with numerous dens. Out-of-doors, set traps at active den entrances or in well used trails. For greater nontarget protection the traps can be placed beneath tunnel-type trap covers made of wood, arched wire mesh or sheet metal. Scatter a small amount of oat groats (oats that have their hulls removed) or sunflower seeds in front of and in the trap box. This is the same principle the “old timers” used and called the stovepipe set—in which they set a No. “0” jump trap in a section of stove pipe.

Glue boards have been used with some success, but they are very low on my list of control methods because the entrapped animal is often not found dead—creating a potential public relations problem. Glue boards should always be anchored or secured to prevent an entrapped rat from dragging it off where the animal cannot be easily located and recovered.

Euthanasia with CO₂ is the common practice. Relocation of woodrats is not advised as survival in a new environment may be questionable and, most important; there is a risk of spreading diseases to other wildlife populations or to the individual conducting the relocation.

**Exclusion** — Woodrats can be excluded from residences, commercial, and other buildings using the same techniques as used to exclude Norway or roof rats. Remember that woodrats may enter buildings at either the ground or roof levels, as their dens or nests may be in the basement, beneath a deck, or in the attic. Woodrats will build their nest in any available partially enclosed space. When proofing with wire mesh use 1/4 inch mesh to also exclude house and deer mice.

Rarely are woodrat-proof fences considered or justified economically. If attempted, a 12 inch band of sheet metal should be placed at the top of a 4 ft. high wire mesh (1/2 x 1/2 inch) fence. Six inches of the bottom edge should be turned outward and buried to prevent digging beneath. Avoid placement near overhanging trees.

Foresters, with some success, often use plastic mesh cylinder tree guards to protect newly planted tree seedlings. These are used to protect the tree from a variety of rodent and rabbit pests. While they help, they are not totally effective, as rodents can gnaw them and some damage may still occur. Wire mesh cylinders are an alternative but are too expensive for most forestry uses and, in addition, anything wire must be physically removed as the tree grows. The plastic cylinders are designed to disintegrate from sunlight over time.

**Repellents** — None are sufficiently effective to justify their expense.

**Toxicants** — Woodrats are susceptible to the same anticoagulant rodent baits that are effective for the introduced Norway and roof rats. Check with your local pesticide enforcement authorities to determine if any of the commercial anticoagulant rodent baits are registered for woodrats under the Special Local Need 24c provisions in your state. Recently (July 2011) it was announced that J.T. Eaton’s bait block had received registration for woodrats in the state of Arizona. Use in accordance with the label instructions.

Anticoagulant baits are normally placed in tamper resistant bait stations, but woodrats have a strong tendency to fill them with twigs and sticks, so such stations must be visited frequently to clean and keep them functional. Besides filling the stations with sticks and other plant parts, woodrats are notorious for removing the bait and hoarding it elsewhere, especially whole grain, pelleted baits, and place packs. In years past, a meal bait was often recommended because it was more difficult for them to carry off.

Woodrats were one of the first of our native rodents for which warfarin paraffin bait blocks, once developed, were recommended for control purposes (Marsh 1962). A one pound bait block was too large and heavy for a woodrat to carry away.
Present day bait stations are designed to make it easy to secure the smaller sized anticoagulant bait blocks, but plugging the out-of-door stations with sticks remains a problem.

I have heard of woodrats (pack or trade rats) picking up pieces of toxic rodent bait and then stopping at the dog’s food dish, trading or exchanging the bait for a dog biscuit. While I question the frequency of such an occurrence, it is something you never want to experience. For this reason, the use of poisons should be considered with extreme caution and ruled out where pets or domestic farm animals may be exposed to carried or displaced baits left in an accessible area by woodrats. These rodents did not come by those alternate names, pack and trade rats, without reason.

Zinc phosphide bait, where registered and legal to use, has been employed for woodrats in forested areas and in larger more remote wild areas where high populations must be controlled. Control of woodrats with toxicants, where permitted, can be much faster and far less expensive than trapping. Past use of zinc phosphide bait has generally been for spot baiting, where a teaspoon of grain bait was scattered over an area of 2 or 3 square feet at the den entrance or in a well used trail leading to a den. Specific directions will appear on the bait label. Prebaiting with clean nontoxic grain of the same kind will enhance the degree of control once the zinc phosphide bait is applied.

**Shooting** — As a practice, shooting is not effective and should probably be labeled a sport rather than a control. Kicking, stomping, or a strong blow against a woodrat’s nest will often cause the animal to scurry for the nearest cover or tree where it becomes a challenge to the shooter’s skill.

**REFERENCE**

THE QUESTION:
WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE ANIMALS ONCE YOU CATCH THEM?

By Jack Ammerman

Last Spring I accepted a job for a business that had two families of raccoons in their attic. I had a carpenter accompany me on one of the trips to give me an estimate for the extensive repairs to the damage. As I was on the roof setting a trap, one of the employees, thinking my carpenter was a wildlife control guy, came out to speak with him. She asked the carpenter what we were going to do with the animals and he flatly and uncouthly stated, “Oh they’ve got to die. Those animals are destructive!” I didn’t know about the conversation at the time, but I sure heard about it later in the day. The woman had gone to her boss, and then to her general manager to complain that we were going to kill these cute raccoons. I thought I had lost the job. After a short discussion, the manager left the disposition up to me providing that I was able to speak with the woman and quell the fire. I left the carpenter at home for that conversation!

I dislike euthanizing animals. It’s the worst part of my job and it bothers me on occasion, but it is part of my job at times and I must perform. I understand nature and the way things work in the animal kingdom. We need to make sure our clients are informed as well.

“What do you do with the animals once you catch them?” It feels like I’ve answered this question at least a million times and I hope to answer it a million times more. For various reasons, our clients are genuinely concerned about what happens to the animals that we catch.

For some clients, there is a true and heartfelt empathy for the animals that they just hired us to remove from their property. Other clients ask this question simply because they do not want it coming back to their property – ever! I’ve had clients that were so financially hurt that they want assurance that this animal is going to die. Others, out of pure frustration and disruption of their daily lives, ask to have it euthanized. Some clients actually feel guilty for taking part in messing with the animal’s daily activities.

It’s important to judge the habits of the offending animal to determine what the animal is most likely to do again. In 1999, White Buffalo Inc. conducted a study involving raccoons that were living in chimneys. They monitored the raccoons after their evictions (via radio telemetry collars) and determined that 70% of the raccoons simply moved to another man made structure within two days. The urban environment is what the animals know and will return to! As I speak of animal habits, I am reminded of the time that my wife and I were sitting on our deck late one evening star gazing. Suddenly she said “What’s that on our roof?!” There was a raccoon, walking to each of our roof vents and giving each one a slight tug – checking for a weakness. This raccoon didn’t just happen to be checking roof vents. It KNEW to check the roof vents for access to an attic. It’s obvious that the raccoon had spent some time in an attic, either recently or as it grew up. This is an animal that would continue to be an attic dweller if trapped and trans-located.

I don’t believe that it’s necessary to euthanize every animal we catch if not required by law. Their habits will largely remain the same after translocation. The raccoon that is living in a tree, the squirrel that is eating bird seed, or the skunk that was sighted traversing the back property line are prime examples of animal calls that we get from nervous homeowners. Although these animals have made someone uncomfortable enough to spend their earnings to have them removed, the animals themselves have done little harm. Euthanizing them after cap-
ture, although an option, may not be the best alternative.

“What do you do with the animals once you catch them?” The question still remains for us to answer. I often know what course of disposition I intend to take with the animals that I capture, but I always answer with this statement, “Well, I’ll do whatever you wish. I can legally euthanize it or I can take it a long way away and legally release it. Since you asked and you are the paying client, I will do whatever you wish.” At that point I continue the reply with one of two statements:

“This animal hasn’t really done any damage, outside of making people feel uncomfortable with their presence. I intend to release it at a designated release area that I have that is at least ten miles away. You will never see this animal again if I release it, but it is your decision and I will do whatever you wish.”

Or

“I can release this animal if you insist, but I know that this animal will simply find another chimney or attic to live in, causing someone else grief. It’s used to living in nice, warm houses and it’s doubtful that it will be satisfied with living in a hollow log somewhere. I’m not comfortable costing another homeowner thousands of dollars in damage by releasing this animal, but you are the paying client and I will do whatever you tell me to.”

Ninety-nine percent of the time I get the response that agrees with my initial intention. Every once in a while though, I have a client that doesn’t want to take ANY chance that the animal will come back and upset them again. They ask for the euthanization. On that same note, most all of our clients have a compassionate heart when it comes to wildlife.

Every once in a while we get an animal that has done thousands of dollars in damage and the client asks that we not kill it. “It really wasn’t its fault. It was just trying to live like everyone else.” Although I don’t agree with their decision, I understand their thought process. At times like these I am faced with an ethical dilemma. Without fail, I make sure the client is comfortable and make certain that I am too.

Obviously, this whole euthanasia/release subject is a touchy one and must be approached with care.

Customer relations are an important part of the wildlife control industry. We must be professional, act professional, and be knowledgeable about the species and tactics that we employ.

Answering the question “What do you do with the animals once you catch them?” is never a straight forward and completely mind resting experience. Be as honest with your clients as you can and keep their best interests in mind (while keeping your best interests and the animals’ interests in the mix as well.)
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RACCOON EVICTION LIQUID: For that mission impossible. If you intend to be or have been in this business for any length of time, there will be a time when, in the spring of the year, you encounter a female raccoon that has had young in your client's attic. You have caught the female and located the young, but they are in a spot in the house that will require you to rent a bulldozer to tear down the house to retrieve those young! This is not a feasible option! In these cases the only option is to release the female and try to harass her to move the young, either to a more accessible location that you can retrieve them or out of the dwelling completely. Don't waste your time on radio's and moth balls. About one ounce of this product will make the female remove her family from the dwelling in no more than 48 hours. It almost always works on the first night but has not taken over 2 days yet. You must enter the attic to apply this liquid. Place the liquid on a tennis ball, then screw the ball to a large nylon piece of rope. Toss the ball in those hard to reach places near the den and retrieve. Do this in every spot of the attic except near the exit hole. In two days mark the hole to make sure there is no activity. Then seal up the hole. I hate to leave a job without the animal, but there are some situations you just can't control.
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Apple (mooon, woodchuck, muskrat)

Honey Grand (skunk & muskrat)
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On June 2, 2012, A All Animal Control’s CEO, Mark E. Dotson set out to be the Fastest NWCO on The Planet. After more than a month of building a stronger motor that would handle the extra nitrous power that the 2008 Suzuki Hayabusa would need to accomplish this feat, A All Animal Control Racing was set to make history.

The weather on that Friday was raining and miserably cold. The bike was tech inspected in the trailer and buttoned up for the rest of the day.

Saturday morning came and the weather was not exactly picture perfect for a land speed racing run. High cross and headwinds was more the flavor of the day in central Ohio but they were within the personal limits of Mark.

The bike was readied, tire pressures checked and adjusted, swing arm aired up and the bike was fueled. Some last minute setting adjustments and then the bike was pulled to the lanes to wait for our time run.

The Wilmington Mile is a closed runway at Wilmington Air Park and is a measured mile with a half mile shut down area. The bike would need to use every inch of this mile to get to speed before the speed traps flagged out mile per hour.

The wind continued to gust with 10-15 mph crosswind and would switch to a headwind every so often.

Our time had come and the East Coast Timing Associations safety crew performed the last safety checks, staged the bike and then cleared us for launch.

The launch was hard and aggressive and the rear wheel spun shortly down track which caused the rev limiter to be pegged. A quick button shift and the bike was rolling into second gear. After the throttle reached 90 percent the nitrous came on and the bike was picking up power quickly. The rev limiter engaged again in third, another shift and the next two gears were hit right on target.

Around 175 mph the wind become intense and Mark had to adjust to tuck every part of this body and helmet behind the small fairing. In land speed racing, this is called crawling under the paint.

As the bike was passing the ¾ mile markers, the vibration of the track caused the nitrous gauge to explode and the 5 pound bottle to immediately dump all the nitrous. Even with this issue, the bike ran through the traps at 211.700 mph!

Mark E. Dotson holds 3 land speed records and continues to set and break records at the East Coast Timing Associations Wilmington Mile.

“My sincere thanks go out to our team of wildlife management professionals at A All Animal Control for all their support for helping make the impossible, possible”, Dotson said. “We hope to see the bike in the 220 mph range soon and hold that record for as long as possible”. ♦
Over the past couple of years, I’ve been writing articles about how to get more people to your website using online video, social media, pay-per-click advertising, and on and on. This time I’m going to talk about what should happen when the person actually gets to your site. Today’s article is all about having an effective website that converts visitors into buyers.

The first thing you need to consider is who your visitor is. Too many people get caught up in web strategies before they even give their visitors a second thought. What are their wants, needs, and desires? If you know that, then you’ll be able to cater your site to THEM. Isn’t that what it’s all about?

So with that in mind, the three types of visitors who are most likely to show up at your website are what I call the “Researcher”, the “Do-It-Yourselfer”, and the “Damsel in Distress”.

I’ll start with the Damsel in Distress because this is the category we wish every website visitor fell into. (Plus I know, deep down, that you want to be the knight in shining armor.) Truthfully, this visitor isn’t necessarily a damsel. She can just as easily be a man.

The Damsel in Distress has a problem NOW and desperately wants your help. They don’t care about comparison shopping or weighing the pros and cons of your services. They have an unwanted animal in their house and it has got to go.

All you need to do to cater your site to the Damsel in Distress is prominently display your phone number and a direct call to action. Don’t hide your number on the “Contact Us” page. Stick it right up front, and include it on EVERY page of your site. Even though this is a simple idea, I see so many NWCO websites without a clearly displayed phone number or call to action. You have no excuses. If I see your site without both of these simple things, I WILL slap you.

Next, let’s talk about the Researcher. This is the type of person who wants to know the ins and outs of the industry BEFORE they call you. They will hire you, but they’ve got to do their due diligence first. They won’t simply call and ask you what their options are because they feel like you’ll just try to sell to them. Instead, they want to research their options on their own. Once they make a decision, THEN they’ll call you.

As you can see, a simple phone number with a call to action won’t be
enough for the Researcher. To appeal to this person, it’s a good idea to have helpful information on your site about how to hire a NWCO. What are the pitfalls? What questions should someone ask? How do you really know who is the best? In the Internet marketing world, we call this “setting the buying criteria”. (Ideally, this information skillfully excludes all other NWCOs except you. And why shouldn’t they hire you? You ARE the best, right?)

Lastly, you’re going to have to deal with the Do It Yourselfer. As the name suggests, this person is not likely to hire you on their first visit to your site because they believe they can...wait for it...“do it themselves”!

What should you do? Well, I have a solution that you might not expect. I recommend that you actually offer free information on exactly how to do it themselves. It can be in any format that is instantly downloadable (ie, a video series or an ebook). However, the actual information should NOT be on your web site out in plain view.

Instead, you’re going to ask for their email address in exchange for the information. Here’s why: the only hope you ever have of getting a die-hard Do It Yourselfer to become a customer is if he tries to do it himself, and fails. Then, and only then can you be waiting with open arms to accept his business.

But you’ve GOT to have the ability to “be there” when he’s ready. That’s where your email follow-up will work its magic. Without follow-up, there is an overwhelming likelihood that he never comes back to your site. It’s a proven fact that a very small (and I mean VERY small) percentage of your visitors will ever come back to your site after they’ve left. However, if you can send a simple follow up email that says something like, “Hi Bob, it looks like you got my ‘How to Get Rid of Skunks’ eBook last week. I just wanted to drop a line and ask how things are going with your situation?”

Can you almost hear Dr. Phil saying, “How’s THAT workin’ out for ya?”

Maybe Bob has succeeded in getting rid of the skunk. If so, he’ll be proud of himself and likely to give your eBook a big thumbs up. He’ll feel great about your company and refer you to others. However, if Bob realizes that he’s in over his head (the likely outcome), then he’ll ask you for advice. At that point, you’ve got him. You just step in and make the sale.

Sounds simple, but the process is part art and part science. Where should the opt-in form be? What should it say? What should you offer? What IS an opt-in form? What about the email follow up? How many emails should you send? What should they say? (etc., etc.) There’s a very specific strategy I use for this, but I’m just about out of space. Call me, mention this article, and I’ll tell you all about it.

The major takeaway today is this: you need to be aware of all the potential customer types that might be browsing your web site and why they’re there. Then, and only then, can you create a site that meets those needs and gives you the best chance of converting more of your visitors into customers.

Costas Peppas gives Wildlife Control Operators an advantage over their competition bringing them a steady stream of new clients with his done-for-you marketing strategies. He is the owner of www.NWCOsecrets.com and his average WCO client increases their income by well over $100,000 in the first year of working with him.

Costas Peppas can be reached at:
Office: (615) 378-6418
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E-mail: costas@nwcosecrets.com
WCT BASICS: BODY GRIPPING TRAPS

In the May/June Issue of WCT Magazine we discussed foot-hold traps. In this issue we are going to discuss their equally important partner, body gripping traps.

Whereas it is possible to perform wildlife control work without the use of body gripping traps, the loss of this tool can turn routine jobs into nightmares. What then is a body gripping trap?

For the purpose of this article, a body gripping trap is any trap designed to quickly kill an animal as it attempts to pass through the trap jaws or frame. It is because of how efficient body gripping traps are that animal rights groups are trying to get them outlawed. Their normal tactic is to refer to them as body crushing or indiscriminate kill traps that take thousands of pets each year. This purposeful deception of the truth is meant to play on the uninformed public’s emotions with the ultimate result of generating monetary donations for the animal rights groups.

The facts are that body gripping traps do not crush the animal nor are they an indiscriminate killing trap. Is it true that a non target animal can be killed by a body gripping trap? Yes, but that doesn’t mean that the trap should be classified as indiscriminate pet killer. Regardless of what is caught, it can only be caught if the animal passes through the trap. The trap is just one part of the animal capture equation and is just another type of tool for the WCO to use. What really determines what is caught is how the trap is placed and the set constructed that really determines what will be caught or not caught.

Body gripping traps are made by a variety of manufacturers and come in a large number different sizes, shapes, and styles. Some have two moving bars known as jaws while others have a single strike bar. They may be powered by one or two springs and have a one way, two way, or four way trigger. Most body gripping traps are meant for specific animals; however, there are several sizes that can be used for multiple species.

As always, before purchasing and using any body gripping trap make sure to check the state and local laws in the area you are thinking of using them. Ohio, for instance, has several laws regarding body gripping traps that include where the trap may be set, the size of the trap that may be used, and the timeframe it can be used in with even more restrictions in certain municipalities.

Before going on we need to discuss some of the most common body gripping sizes and styles. We will start with the common body grip trap (square jaw) designed by Frank Conibear where the trap jaws resemble two squares or rectangles held together when set but closes to a single square or rectangle when fired.

Single spring traps of this style include the 50, 110, and 150 (note that some manufacturers use their own numbering system so a Sleepy Creek 450 is actually a 110). Double spring traps of this style include 60, 120, 155, 160, 220, 280, and 330.

As confusing as this may seem, it really isn’t all that bad as you’ll see. We’ll start with the smallest trap (50) and go up from there. A 50 and 60 body grip trap have a jaw spread that measures 3 ½” x 4 ½”. Right away you can see that for the most part, once you know the base size of a trap the next number up means that is has two springs instead of one.

Next on the list is the 110 and 120 traps. These traps have a 4 ½”
x 4 ½” jaw frame. Again, the 110 trap is a single spring trap while the 120 is a double spring trap. The next size up is the 150 and 155 traps and they have a 5” x 5” jaw frame. From now on all the traps we will be discussing of the standard style have two springs. The 160 trap is a 6” x 6” trap, the 220 is a 7” x 7” trap, the 280 is an 8” x 8” trap and the 330 is a 10” x 10” trap.

Another style of body gripping trap is the round jaw. As the name describes, this style of trap has a round jaw instead of the common square jaw. They follow a lot of the same naming conventions and number of springs that we’ve previously discussed. So a 110 round jaw body gripping trap with still have a jaw spread of 4 ½” powered by a single spring. A 330 round jaw will have a jaw spread of 10” with two springs. Here are some round jaw traps that have different dimensions than we’ve previously discussed. The 40 round has a 2 ½” jaw spread, the 55 round has a 3 ½” jaw spread and the 440 has a 12” jaw spread.

The final style of body gripping trap to discuss here is the Naco trap. Although no longer produced, these traps bare special notice because unlike other body gripping traps they do not have jaws that come together and are still much sought after by WCOs. Rather, the trap is built right into the trap spring so that when the trap fires the trap jaws do not close but spring open striking the animal and holding it in place. Naco traps are the only body gripping traps we know of that use a directional one way trigger so that the trap is only fired when the animal goes through it from a specific direction. They come in three sizes, 350, 550, and 750 with openings 3 ½”, 5 ½”, and 7 ½” respectively.

That is a good start in the body grip trap world but as usual there are exceptions and of course specialty traps. Probably some of the most used specialty body gripping traps by WCOs are the mole and gopher traps. Some of the most popular of this category are the Victor Out-O-Sight, No Mole®, and the Gophinator. Based on manufac-

Body gripping traps are mainly used in what is referred to as “blind” sets. This means that the traps is set along the animals natural travel path without any bait or lure to cause the animal to investigate. What the operator wants to do is find a naturally occurring narrowing or restriction in the animals travel and set the trap at that location for optimum results. Just because body gripping traps are mainly used in blind sets does not mean that they cannot be used with bait. A lot of raccoons are caught every year with the help of bait as well as muskrats and beaver especially after the bodies of water have frozen over. Just keep in mind that the majority of
pets caught in body gripping traps are because of bait that was used with the set.

When using a body gripping trap WCOs must determine the potential for nontarget catches before they set the trap and make the set. No operator wants to tell their client that the raccoon wasn’t caught last night because the family cat beat the raccoon to the trap. Not only does it make for a hostile work environment (if you don’t get fired), it also leaves the operator in a potential financial retribution for the loss of the pet and potential legal issue. We are not going to say don’t set a body gripping trap when pets are present as we feel that only the operator can determine when they are appropriate. What we will say is that there are ways of preventing nontarget catches that operators should consider when using them.

The first method is to mount the trap right over the entrance hole the animal is using. At times a wire or wooden box may need to be constructed and mounted to allow for proper placement; however, this type of usage means that only animals using the entrance hole have a chance to be caught.

The second method is to set the trap in the tunnel of the target animal and then cover or fence off the entrance to the tunnel so that only an animal in the tunnel can be caught. Of course the down side to this method is that if the animal is not in the tunnel when the trap is placed it cannot enter the tunnel to get caught.

The third method is to “fence” down the pathway leading to and from the trap by placing objects beside the animal trail and over the trap leaving a small crawl space for the animal to use. This is particularly effective for preventing dogs from entering sets for raccoons. By taking advantage of a raccoons natural ability to enter a restricted area you can cause most dogs to go around or over your set instead of through it.

The fourth method is to use baited sets only in locations pets cannot access such as sealed crawl spaces, attics, roofs, or buildings. Keep in mind that if you’re in one of these areas an animal succeeded in entering it so there is a possibility that a pet may enter it as well unless you do something to prevent it.

The last method we will discuss is to use the smallest effective body gripping trap you can for the animal you have been hired to remove. Where it is legal, you can use a 220 to remove a ground hog but a 155 will do a better job. The reason is that the larger traps may only strike the animal with one set of the jaws, usually just below the ribs and when both jaws strike the animal (commonly called suit casing) the jaws around the animals throat cannot close as tightly due to the jaw around the midssection. However, with the smaller trap most catches occur with a single jaw striking directly behind the skull and on the throat resulting in faster kill times and zero to little struggling. Another side benefit is that if the trap is too small for the pet’s head to pass through the jaws it cannot get caught.

To show how effective body grip traps can be, unofficial testing we conducted on 53 raccoons over a three year period euthanized by 155, 160, and 220 body gripping traps in the same wire tunnel resulted in the following data. The average time it took for a raccoon to become unresponsive in a 220 was approximately 6 minutes. The average time it took for a raccoon to become unresponsive in a 160 was approximately 4 minutes. The average time it took for the 155 trap was 45 seconds. It should be noted that we did not test the 120 as we considered the jaw spread too small to ensure it would consistently strike behind the skull instead of on the skull. Test raccoons weighed an average of 15 pounds and included boars and sows. Times were recorded by starting once the trap was fired and stopping when we could no longer note any signs of breathing or struggling. We had a total of five (5) trap misfires (2 for the 220, 1 for the 160, 2 for the 155) during the three years showing that not only is size of the trap important, but trigger configuration and trap placement as well.

A raccoon wire cubby set with a 155. Cats can be kept away by placing a sweet bait at the back of the wire instead of a fish or meat type bait.
After watching a Tom Krause Bobcat video, I decided to try out his techniques on my trap line.

I made two sets as shown in the video, a “trash mound” and a “walk through”.

I used my “Sterling” double coil spring traps and my “Trap Smart” trap checking system.

To my surprise, after two days of trap checking, I had finally caught my first bobcat!

Thanks Tom Krause, Sterling and Trap Smart! You made my trapping adventure a reality!
Roofs are a daily work risk for the majority of WCO’s. Not only do you have to worry about getting on them in a safe manner, but you also have to worry about staying on them until you want to get down.

To combat this problem, a lot of operators will do anything to avoid working on roofs in the first place or they will use bulky safety equipment or unsafe practices. Instead of dreading roof work, operators need to embrace it and prepare themselves for working on them. One of the simplest and cost effective proactive approaches that can be made is to invest in a pair of Cougar Paws.

Cougar Paws are a patented traction-grip Roofing Shoe developed in 1996 by Dan Cougar, a roofer for nearly 20 years. Unlike tennis shoes or regular roof boots, Cougar Paws have a special traction grip pad sole that gives 2 times more traction on a roof allowing you to concentrate on work instead of falling or sliding.

One of the most unique features of this product is the ability to replace the traction-grip pad with a fresh pad when it becomes worn.

boot and replace it by pressing the felt material side, called the “loop”, into the boots sole. This simple process gives you a new boot for all practical purposes for just a couple of dollars.

The traction-grip pads wear will depend on multiple factors that include the wearer’s weight, pitch of the roof, roof material, and amount of time used. When you are doing a lot of work on semi-steep pitched roofs with very abrasive shingles pads may have to be replaced on a weekly basis. But when working on lower pitched roofs or smoother materials such as metal or slate the pads may last for a month or more.

Cougar Paws offers several different boot styles so you can find what works best for your situations and usage. I have been using the Hi-Top Shoe [pictured] style since 2004 but they also offer a style with better ankle support that I plan to go to, as well as a waterproof version. These are a piece of equipment that I use yearly, continually putting them through their paces. Now, I no longer feel safe on any roof greater than a 3 in 12 pitch and I won’t get on a metal roof regardless of pitch without them.

Replacement traction-grip pads run around $16.00 a pair while the boots themselves will run around $125 - $150 making them very economical. My pair are finally starting to show some wear and tear after almost 8 years of use making their current per year cost only $15.60 per year plus pads. I can’t think of another tool capable of saving your life that doesn’t required installation first for half this price. Even if you purchase a new set of pads per job it is easy to cover that expense in the job cost and it is much, much, much cheaper than any ambulance ride, doctor visits, hospital stay, operation, and physical therapy required from falling.

As good as this product is, they are not a catch all for 100% of roof work that WCOs do and have their limitations. They do not work on ice or snow covered roofs and don’t expect 100% traction on wet surfaces, cedar shake, extremely worn asphalt singles, or high pitched roofs. I have used them on an 8 in 12 pitch metal roof with excellent results but that is about as far as I’m willing to go without additional safety gear. To find out more about Cougar Paws and why they are one of the best tools you can own go to www.cougarpaws.com/movie or to place an order or find a distributor go to www.cougarpaws.com.

Since the pads are held in place by industrial Velcro called the “hook”, all you need to do is peel it off of the
attic cleanout was an area 30 ft x 15 ft. No bats were found during either inspection and the amount of guano noted with the insulation was approximately 100 pieces.

In Example B, the attic area was 55 ft x 20 ft with a working height on the high point of 24 inches and 18 inches on the low point. The first quote included removal of contaminated material, disinfecting of the area, replacement of the ceiling and two walls, rewiring of the circuit panel (to be brought up to code), and installation of insulation. The second quote only included removal of the contaminated material, disinfecting of the area and installation of insulation. With this additional information did your opinions change?

Here is what actually was happening.

In Example A, the operator that kept reducing their price was only able to do so because of the high fee they originally charged. Every time they did so, the only thing that changed was their profit margin. If they could actually perform the job at their last bid totaling $6,100 their original bid of $12,700 had a whopping mark up of over 200%. This is an example for what I’d consider price gouging. It is similar to gas prices jumping up at several gas stations right after 9/11 happened which resulted in charges and fines against some individuals and companies.

In Example B, several issues exist. First, requesting a competitor's bid to make a “like” bid in my book is highly unethical. You are the professional and you know what needs done. Second and of more note, insurance fraud was performed by adjusting the bid to the amount covered by insurance without submitting it again for review. It is illegal to offer a discount to a customer without offering the same discount to the insurance company. This allows the insurance company to adjust their payment accordingly as most claims are paid on a percentage basis of the actually cost minus deductible. Prospects will always try to get a discount for themselves and some will go so far as claiming the job rests on receiving the discount. Again, when an operator does this they are committing insurance fraud, a criminal offense.

It is not and has never been the operators responsibility to help the client pay for services. If the client wants the service, they will find a way to pay for it. When you go to any restaurant you can’t say “I want this entrée but will only pay X dollars for it” and expect to get it unless that is the price it is being sold for. The price is the price! Why should your clients be getting something you can’t?
Q: I am a Wildlife Control Operator and as such I remove raccoons and other animals from attics. Many times the attic insulation has been compromised to the point that it needs to be removed and replaced, either because of odor or feces accumulation.

Recently, awareness of the possibility for asbestos in insulation (Libby, MT) has come to our attention as an industry. I would like to know about the process that the EPA recommends to remove this type of insulation.

What I am looking for is the EPA’s specific guidance to those professionals or maybe lessons learned in Libby on clean up or protocols to use to remove insulation from attics.

T.J., IN

A: The type of insulation to be concerned about is vermiculite, which could be contaminated with asbestos. The brochure [see pages 38 and 39] provides EPA’s guidance.

Professional removal is recommended, although vermiculite samples taken from an attic may not show the asbestos when tested. That’s one reason they are still doing research in Libby, Montana, it’s hard to tell when there is a hazard or not.

EPA only recommends that certified asbestos abatement professionals be used to remove vermiculite or any other insulation that contains asbestos. In fact, the asbestos NESHAP (National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants) requires that certified asbestos professionals be used to remove asbestos-containing materials from buildings other than residences of 4 or fewer units. Some state laws extend the requirement to residences as well. It sounds like Wildlife Control Officers might fall under those requirements. You should check with the regulators in each state you’re working in. Here in Colorado, you’d have to be certified and licensed asbestos abatement contractors to do residences.

The folks removing vermiculite up in Libby, MT are certified abatement contractors working with EPA. They do the hands-on work but we are working closely with them to advise and approve their methods. I think they’re using equipment similar to yours but with additional safeguards to prevent asbestos fiber release. I’m not aware of any published information on the procedures they are using.

I would recommend that WCO’s wear a respirator when going into an attic with vermiculite.

However, even if all WCO’s became certified asbestos abatement workers or supervisors, the training doesn’t address the exact question you’re asking.

Vic Zielinski, Compliance Inspector
US EPA Region 8

Editors Note:

The following pages were formatted to allow for a tear-out brochure from the EPA on handling vermiculate insulation in attics.

This brochure is also available online from the EPA at:

www.epa.gov/asbestos/pubs/insulationbrochure2.pdf

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I NEED MY EYES EXAMINED?
Insulation

Vermiculite Attic

Current Best Practices for

Current Best Practices for

United States Environmental Agency (USEPA)

Vermiculite

What if I have work-related exposure to

Vermiculite?

Where can I get more information?

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Where can I get more information?
What is vermiculite insulation?
Vermiculite is a naturally occurring mineral that has the unusual property of expanding into worm-like accordion-shaped pieces when heated. The expanded vermiculite is a lightweight, fire-resistant, absorbent, and odorless material. These properties allow vermiculite to be used to make numerous products, including attic insulation.

Do I have vermiculite insulation?
Vermiculite can be purchased in various forms for various uses. Sizes of vermiculite products range from very fine particles to large (coarse) pieces nearly an inch long. Vermiculite attic insulation is a pebble-like, pour-in product and is usually light-brown or gold in color. The pictures in the center of this pamphlet and on the cover show several samples of vermiculite attic insulation.

Is vermiculite insulation a problem?
Prior to its close in 1990, much of the world's supply of vermiculite came from a mine near Libby, Montana. This mine had a natural deposit of asbestos which resulted in the vermiculite being contaminated with asbestos. Attic insulation produced using vermiculite ore, particularly ore that originated from the Libby mine, may contain asbestos fibers. Today, vermiculite is mined at three U.S. facilities and in other countries which have low levels of contamination in the finished material.

How does asbestos cause health problems?
Asbestos can cause health problems when inhaled into the lungs. If products containing asbestos are disturbed, thin, lightweight asbestos fibers are released into the air. Persons breathing the air may breathe in asbestos fibers. Continued exposure increases the amount of fibers that remain in the lung. Fibers embedded in lung tissue over time may result in lung diseases such as asbestosis, lung cancer, or mesothelioma. Smoking increases your risk of developing illness from asbestos exposure.

What should I do if I have vermiculite attic insulation?
DO NOT DISTURB IT. Any disturbance has the potential to release asbestos fibers into the air. Limiting the number of trips you make to your attic and shortening the length of those trips can help limit your potential exposure.

EPA and ATSDR strongly recommend that:

- Vermiculite insulation be left undisturbed in your attic. Due to the uncertainties with existing testing techniques, it is best to assume that the material may contain asbestos.
- You should not store boxes or other items in your attic if retrieving the material will disturb the insulation.
- Children should not be allowed to play in an attic with open areas of vermiculite insulation.
- If you plan to remodel or conduct renovations that would disturb the vermiculite, hire professionals trained and certified to handle asbestos to safely remove the material.
- You should never attempt to remove the insulation yourself. Hire professionals trained and certified to safely remove the material.

What if I occasionally have to go into my attic?
EPA and ATSDR strongly recommend that homeowners make every effort not to disturb vermiculite insulation in their attics. If you occasionally have to go into your attic, current best practices state you should:

1. Make every effort to stay on the floored part of your attic and to not disturb the insulation.
2. If you must perform activities that may disturb the attic insulation such as moving boxes (or other materials), do so as gently as possible to minimize the disturbance.
3. Leave the attic immediately after the disturbance.
4. If you need work done in your attic such as the installation of cable or utility lines, hire trained and certified professionals who can safely do the work.
5. It is possible that vermiculite attic insulation can sift through cracks in the ceiling, around light fixtures, or around ceiling fans. You can prevent this by sealing the cracks and holes that insulation could pass through.
6. Common dust masks are not effective against asbestos fibers. For information on the requirements for wearing a respirator mask, visit the following OSHA website:

What are the next steps?
The guidance provided in this brochure reflects the current testing technology and knowledge of precautions one may take regarding vermiculite attic insulation. EPA is initiating further studies on vermiculite attic insulation and pursuing other asbestos related issues. Additional information will be provided to the public via the EPA and ATSDR websites and through additional outreach materials as it becomes available.
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Ohio Wildlife Control Operators Association

The Board of NWCOA was gracious to grant me an audience for their July 16th Board meeting. We discussed the manner in which the funds we placed in trust with NWCOA can be returned to us. They have outlined a procedure and requirements we must meet to be able to get our money back. Some of these requirements (to be an affiliate) we may find untenable, as they would be cost prohibitive (a biannual audit of our books by an independent party, for example). I have not yet exhausted all available avenues of obtaining these funds.

Keep an eye out for correspondence, we are looking at having a meeting in late September or October for organizational purposes and creating our by-laws. We will also look at the changes we would like to see in the Administrative Code as HB 420 moves to the Senate and is enacted into law.

We are now officially incorporated and are working toward our non-profit status.

Charter memberships will be available for the first year only, at $150. This is the only membership classification available for the first year. We have always had a great core of leadership and encourage you to join us.

You may send your Charter membership dues to the temporary mailing address: OWCOA, PO Box 3152, Dublin OH 43016. Please include your Name, Company Name, Address, Phone Number, and email contact information.

Dirk E. Shearer, acting President.

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