

WILDLIFE, RODENT, & OTHER ANIMAL CONTROL BIOSECURITY TIP SHEET



Wildlife, rodents, wild birds, and other animals like cats and dogs can carry disease on their fur, feet, feathers, or in their feces. Keeping these animals away from livestock and poultry takes effort.

WILDLIFE

Wildlife can contaminate livestock areas. They can also expose your animals to diseases through bites, and nose-to-nose contact. It's not possible to keep all wildlife out, but steps can be taken to decrease their activity. Before taking any action, make sure that the wildlife you want to control are not endangered, threatened, or protected in your area.

- Keep buildings and fences in good repair. Seal holes where wildlife can enter. Repair screens and doors and replace rotting or damaged wood. Good fences can help keep out some wildlife species, such as feral swine, coyotes, and possibly deer.
- Buried fences or concrete aprons can be used to keep out burrowing and digging animals such as foxes, rabbits and groundhogs. Filling burrows and tunnels with stones or concrete may help discourage nesting areas. You may want to consult with a pest control company.
- Keep animal feeders and waterers where they can be monitored for wildlife activity (signs of urine, feces, animal tracks). If possible, keep farm animals away from the edges of wooded areas or habitat where wildlife are likely to be.
- If possible, keep feed in metal or other sealable containers. Clean up spills and excess feed daily.
- Move your animals away from areas where wildlife repeatedly visit, if possible. Avoid driving vehicles and equipment through these areas (such as raccoon latrines).
- Guard animals such as dogs or donkeys can also help keep wildlife away. Make sure these animals are up to date on vaccines and parasite control.



Interactions of livestock with wildlife poses potential disease threats. White tailed deer.
Source: Bob Nichols/USDA/Flickr, public domain



Feral swine with cattle.
Source: USDA/Flickr, CC BY 2.0

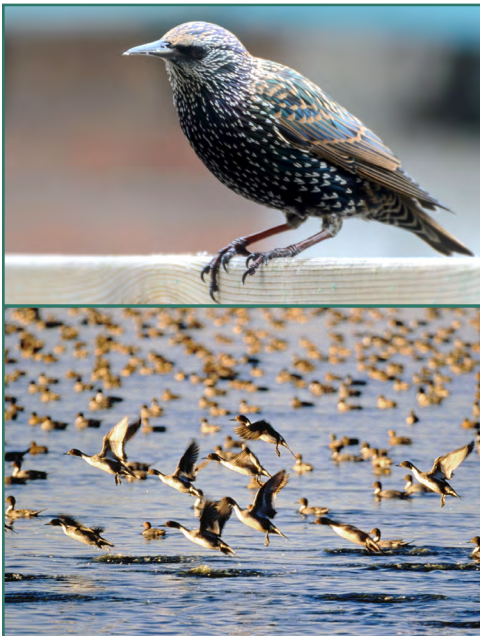
RODENTS

Rodents can spread some serious diseases like leptospirosis, salmonellosis, and hantavirus. A program that combines several different methods to control pests, also known as Integrated Pest Management (IPM), can help protect your livestock and poultry.

- Look for evidence of rodents such as droppings and nests. Focus on the inside of buildings and feed storage areas. Prevent access to these areas by repairing or blocking off small holes where rodents can enter.
- Tamper-resistant bait boxes allow rodent access but keep children and pets from accessing the bait inside. Use caution around dogs and cats, as some dogs can chew apart the boxes and reach the poison. Rodents can also move bait to other locations, exposing non-rodent animals to poison. Monitor these areas carefully. If baits are used, do not place them in areas with livestock or poultry. Trapping is another option for rodent control. Also consider hiring a pest control company to regularly monitor for and remove rodents.
- Eliminate areas where rodents hide. Keep grass mowed and remove weeds or shrubs within 3 feet around buildings. This will discourage breeding and hiding areas and help eliminate food sources. Keep trash in rodent-proof containers. Do not allow manure or other waste to build up in or around animal areas.
- Store animal feed in metal containers to prevent rodent or other unwanted animal access. Also, promptly clean up feed spills to avoid attracting rodents.



Rodents can spread disease on the farm. Top: Harvest mouse. Bottom: Plastic feed storage can crack allowing rodents in but metal keeps them out. Sources: Lex McKee/Flickr, CC BY NC 2.0 (top); René Dewell, Iowa State University (bottom)



Birds can spread diseases on farms. Top: Starling. Bottom: Ducks flying over the water. Sources: Bart van Scholl/Flickr, CC BY NC 2.0 (top); U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (bottom)

OTHER ANIMALS

BIRDS

Birds may gather in large numbers in and around your operation causing unsanitary conditions. Birds can spread germs such as *Salmonella* to livestock and poultry by contaminating animal feed and water through droppings, feathers, and dander.

- Identify areas where birds perch, nest, and bathe. Especially look for areas where they roost above livestock and poultry areas.
- Take steps to minimize bird contact and bird nesting. Options include installing netting or screens to prevent birds from entering through windows and doors. Install bird spikes on beams and rafters to discourage roosting or nesting. Remove excess feed and feed spills as these can attract bird flocks. Also, repair holes in buildings or barns to prevent entry.
- Consider contacting a pest control company to assist with wild bird problems. Most wild birds are federally protected. Contact your area U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Office, or your state agriculture or natural resources department before moving forward with plans to deter wild birds. They can help you determine your best options based on the species of bird.

PET ANIMALS

Dogs and cats can play important roles on livestock and poultry operations. They work flocks or herds as guard animals, and help control rodent populations. Pets can also pose biosecurity risks. To prevent disease spread, be mindful of where cats and dogs have access to on the property.

- All dogs and cats on the operation should be up to date on vaccines and parasite control. This will help keep them healthy and also decrease risks for spreading diseases such as leptospirosis, rabies, and tapeworms to livestock. Keep livestock and poultry up to date on vaccines and parasite control to prevent dogs and cats from getting diseases from them.
- Spaying and neutering dogs and cats will decrease roaming off of your property. Spaying and neutering will also reduce the attraction of strays and neighbor animals onto your property, which could be sources of disease and parasites.
- As much as possible, discourage dogs and cats from urinating or defecating in livestock and poultry areas, especially near feed and water sources. Some germs, such as certain parasites and bacteria, can be passed in feces and then stay in the environment for long periods of time. For the safety of all animals, prevent contact between dogs, cats, livestock, and poultry unless it is necessary, such as when herding or guarding animals.
- Prevent dogs and cats from having access to poultry and livestock feed to prevent contamination and disease spread through saliva, urine, or feces. For example, leptospirosis, toxoplasmosis, and tapeworms can be spread through these routes.
- Dogs are often used to protect other animals on your farm/ranch. Watch them for signs of illness or injury. Seek veterinary care immediately if signs are seen. Some diseases, such as *Giardia* or *Echinococcus* may not be obvious at first. This could result in dogs or cats spreading diseases to livestock.



Keep pets healthy, and when possible, away from livestock.
Source: Shutterstock



Farm cat with goat
Source: Shutterstock

ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Use the following checklist to determine areas where you are doing well and others that need to improve.

YES	NO	After answering, pick one or two “No” answers and make an improvement plan with the resources below.
		Do you have an on-farm person or professional company place and monitor rodent/pest bait and use according to package label directions?
		Is trash removed often?
		Are steps taken to minimize bird and rodent nesting around your operation?
		Are roaming dogs and cats prevented from entering animal areas?

MORE RESOURCES:

[Bird and Rodent Control Measures](#). Center for Food Security and Public Health.

[Controlling Birds around Farm Buildings](#). Penn State Extension.

[Controlling Rats and Mice around the Farm](#). University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (US/IFAS).

[Wildlife and Feral Animals](#). University of Vermont, Health Farms Healthy Agriculture.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Development of this material was made possible through grants provided to the Center for Food Security and Public Health at Iowa State University, College of Veterinary Medicine from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service through the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP) and National Institute of Food and Agriculture, under award number AWD-021794-00001 through the North Central Region SARE program under project number ENC19-176. USDA is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the USDA. Iowa State University is an equal opportunity provider. For the full non-discrimination statement or accommodation inquiries, go to extension.iastate.edu/diversity/ext.

