

# Disaster Relief

## *Minimizing Wildlife Problems after a Flood*

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Flooding and severe weather may drive wildlife out of their natural habitats and into homes, storage buildings, or other structures. Snakes and rodents, in particular, can cause problems and anxiety.

After a flood, carefully inspect areas in your home where wildlife may be hiding. Closets, basements, storage areas, bins, shelves, bookcases, and under furniture are excellent hiding places for wildlife.

Outside of the home, you may find snakes and rodents around piles of debris, stalled automobiles, and other structures that offer shelter (sheds, barns, and such).

Try to avoid cornered wildlife. Do not approach them. Leave an easy escape route. In some cases you may have to remove animals from your home.

### **How to safely remove snakes from your home**

You can safely remove snakes from your home with glue boards, which are available at hardware or farm supply stores, a sheet, and vegetable oil. Place the glue boards on top of a sheet in a place where the snake is likely to be. Be sure to keep pets safely away from the glue boards.

After capturing the snake on a glue board, roll up the sheet to carry the snake outside for release. Unroll the sheet and pour vegetable oil over the glue board to counteract the adhesive, releasing the snake. In some areas, animal control officers may be available to assist with snake removal.

Although snakebites can be dangerous, the risk of snakebite is relatively low if you take simple precautions. A snake can strike only within two-thirds the length of its body. For example, a 3-foot snake can strike up to 2 feet away. The best way to

avoid a snakebite is to stay a safe distance away. Most of the time, a snake bites when someone tries to handle it. If a snake bites you, try to identify it. Note the color, length, and head shape of the snake. Poisonous snakes leave two distinct puncture wounds, and nonpoisonous snakes may leave marks more like scratches.

Victims of venomous snakebites should get to a hospital as soon as possible. If you are not close to a hospital, wrap a constricting band between the bite area and the heart to slow down, but not stop, the blood flow. Do not apply a tight tourniquet. In general, it's better not to waste time with first aid; go immediately to the hospital.

### **How to control rodents in your home**

It is important to control the rodent population inside your home to prevent disease transmission and reduce the chance of snakes entering the home in search of prey.

Trapping or poisoning can eliminate rodents from a home. Common snap-type rat and mousetraps can be very effective if set correctly and routinely checked and reset. Many rodent traps and poisons are available, and most are available at local stores. Modern poisons that prevent proper blood clotting can be very effective but typically require a few days of successive feeding before having an effect. Leave poison baits in place for at least two weeks to maximize their effectiveness. Keep pets and children away from rodent traps and poisons. Bait stations, which are available commercially or can be made, greatly reduce the risk of poisoning to pets and children and make the poison more effective and easier to use.

## Insect and disease control

Insects such as flies and mosquitoes can multiply at alarming rates after heavy rains. It is important to remove standing puddles and empty containers filled with water to reduce transmission of insect-borne diseases after floods. Appropriately dispose of garbage and animal carcasses. Repair or replace screens, windows, doors, and vents as soon as possible to prevent insects from entering the home. Be on the lookout for displaced stinging insects after a major storm, especially fire ants. Fire ants are forced from their mounds during a flood and cling to each other, forming a floating mass.