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SCHOOL OF FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

# Chipmunk Control



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The Eastern Chipmunk is a small rodent measuring 8 to 10 inches long. Chipmunks are primarily ground dwellers, but they do climb trees and shrubs for food and protection when necessary. They may be identified by three dark dorsal stripes on an otherwise reddish-brown coat and by their habit of running with their tail sticking straight up in the air. Chipmunks move quickly and are very alert to danger. They are often found in open wooded areas with plenty of food-producing trees and bushes and can commonly be found along the edges of forests and in urban backyards. Food and protection offered by shrubbery, flowers and gardens attract chipmunks and allow them to become a pest that can threaten the appearance and well being of landscaping and flowerbeds.

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

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

Chipmunks are territorial and rarely become abundant enough to cause a lot of damage, although populations can reach 20 individuals in a single urban yard. Individuals will gnaw into bags containing dog food or bird seed. They will also dig up and consume flower bulbs. Occasionally they will gnaw the bark from shrubbery.

## Trapping

Trapping is the easiest method to control chipmunks. The large wooden-base snap traps used in rat control are effective in chipmunk control. Peanut butter alone or mixed with oatmeal makes good bait. Place traps along runways at burrow openings or in other areas of chipmunk activity. Place snap traps perpendicular to the wall or near burrow entrances. Homeowners can use live traps such as Hav-a-hart® (No. 0) or Tomahawk® (No. 102). Garden and feed stores generally sell these traps. Releasing live animals into unfamiliar territory is not recom-

mended and usually results in high mortality among the released animals. Homeowners cannot trespass on other property to release trapped animals. It is illegal in most states to release trapped animals on county, state or federal lands.

## **Exclusion**

Exclude chipmunks from buildings whenever possible. Seal holes where gas lines, cooling lines, electric cables, dry vents or cable TV lines enter the house. Use caulking or ¼-inch welded wire. Attach a screen to the bottom of a clothes dryer vent if the vent is near the ground. Chipmunks are especially troublesome in clogging rain gutter downspouts, which can cause water to back up along foundation walls and soffits. Exclude chipmunks from rain gutter down spouts with wire mesh coverings. These will need to be cleaned out regularly if you do not have gutter guards on the rain gutter.

## **Poison**

The chipmunks' habit of storing food generally means that poison baits are carried to the burrow and homeowners will not see any immediate effect. Use poison baits ONLY outside in areas protected from children and pets. Poisons and toxicants registered for use in Georgia against chipmunks are listed on the Georgia Pesticide Product Database (<http://state.ceris.purdue.edu/htbin/stalphap.com>).

## **Repellents**

There are no registered repellents for chipmunks. Home remedies such as naphthalene or “moth balls” are not labeled for use on mammals and it is a violation of pesticide laws to use them in a manner that is not consistent with their label.

Taste repellents containing Bitrex, Thiram or ammonium soaps with high fatty acids can be applied to landscape plants. Products such as Ro-Pel®, Hinder®, Big Game Repellent® or This-1-Works® are commercially available from garden supply stores, feed stores and forestry catalogs.

There are no fumigants or toxicants registered for controlling chipmunks.

## **Shooting**

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

## **Legal Status**

ALL non-game wildlife is protected in Georgia; therefore, it is illegal to kill any species unless specifically permitted by regulations such as hunting and fishing laws. Check with your local conservation office. Generally, homeowners can protect their property from mammals causing or about to cause damage. This does not allow citizens to kill wildlife out of season or in violation of federal, state or local laws or ordinances. Contact police or local Wildlife Resource Division personnel.

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