Den site selection and movement patterns of female raccoons following removal and exclusion from residences

Anthony J. DeNicola, White Buffalo, Inc., 54 Grandview Ave. Hamden, CT 06514, USA

Michael A. O'Donnell, Department of Biology, 300 Summit Ave., Trinity College of Hartford, Hartford, CT 06106, USA

Abstract: Raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) are one of many wildlife species that have adapted to survive in urban/suburban environments. Classified as a rabies vector species in many eastern states, their disposition after being handled by wildlife specialists is often dictated by this human health concern. Specifically, some states prohibit relocation and mandate that raccoons be released on site or euthanized. Although management using nonlethal means is often preferred by some segments of the human population, several questions remain to be addressed before appropriate agency policies regarding the handling of urban wildlife can be determined. There is little information available regarding the fate of lactating raccoons and their offspring that are trapped and released on site or excluded from human structures. Therefore, our objective was to determine habitat use, home range size, and fate of adult females and their offspring following capture, exclusion, and subsequent release on site. Nineteen adult female raccoons were live-trapped, anesthetized, fitted with radio-collars, and released. Raccoons were captured in Hartford County, Connecticut between April and June of 1998 and 1999. Movements and den-site selection were monitored weekly using radio-telemetry equipment. Home ranges averaged 10.5 ha. Sixty-two percent of the raccoons selected human occupied structures for den sites immediately after release. In total, 73% of the den sites selected were human built. Further insight into nuisance raccoon behavior will permit state wildlife agencies to better develop management policies.

***Key words*:** nuisance wildlife, *Procyon lotor*, rabies, raccoon, urban wildlife