

FAIRFAX COUNTY WILDLIFE



WILDLIFE FEEDING FACTS

Numerous problems arise when we feed wildlife. Many people enjoy feeding wildlife because it allows them to have close encounters with animals, and they believe the food is contributing to the overall health and survival of the animal. However, feeding wild animals, whether on purpose or by accident (such as unsecured trash cans), can have negative consequences for both humans and wildlife.

Feeding of wildlife threatens both human and animal safety. When wild animals gain regular access to human foods, they may lose their natural fear of people. These animals may display bold or aggressive behaviors and pose a safety risk to humans, pets, and the wild animals themselves. Wildlife may also be considered a nuisance after learning to associate people with food, which could lead to animals being removed as pests when they become too familiar with people or cause property damage in search of food.

Other consequences of feeding wildlife include increased risk of disease spread by concentrating animals in higher numbers than would normally occur in their natural environment. Crowding and competition at feeding sites can also lead to fighting and injury among animals. Human food is not healthy for wild animals and can lead to malnutrition and serious health problems. Feeding may also impact the ability of young animals to develop foraging skills needed for survival once they learn to depend on human-provided food.

FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT
ANIMAL SERVICES DIVISION

Wildlife Feeding Regulations

- **Feeding of Wildlife.** It is illegal to feed any wild animal when placement of food, minerals, carrion, trash, or similar substances results in property damage, endangers people or wildlife, or creates a public health concern. See 4VAC15-40-286.
- **Feeding of Bear.** Feeding bears is illegal in Virginia whether deliberate or unintentional (such as allowing continued access to birdfeeders or trash cans following bear activity.) See 4VAC15-40-282.
- **Feeding of Deer.** Feeding deer for any reason is illegal year-round in Fairfax County on both public and private lands. See 4VAC15-40-285.

Please refrain from feeding wildlife to help keep animals safe, healthy, and wild.

- Enjoy viewing wildlife at a distance.
- Securely close trash, recycling, and compost bins.
- Keep trash bins indoors or put garbage out the morning of collection (not the night before).
- Feed pets inside, and store pet food inside.
- Never attempt to hand-feed any wild animal.
- Do not put out food to attract wildlife.
- Do not try to approach or touch wild animals.

*Fairfax County Animal Services Division
Animal Protection Police & Wildlife Section
4500 West Ox Road
Fairfax, VA 22030
Dispatch 703-691-2131*

*Virginia Wildlife Conflict Helpline
Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources
& USDA Wildlife Services
855-571-9003 (toll-free)*



Fairfax County
Police Department,
Animal Services
Division – Wildlife Section:
(703) 246-6868 TTY 711