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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 9, 2011

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Raccoons and other wild animals often wander into residential areas looking for food and shelter. In some cases, they are considered nuisances because of the damage they can cause and the health risks to people and pets. Most negative encounters with wildlife can be prevented by removing whatever is attracting the animals. Some suggestions include:

-  **NEVER Feed Wild Animals**
  -  Leaving food out attracts wildlife to your property. It is very important to remember to bring in your pets' food and water bowls.
-  **Eliminate Unintentional Food Sources**
  -  Barbeque grills and compost piles provide available food sources for wild animals. Be sure to clean your grill thoroughly and secure your compost pile to prevent unintentionally feeding them.
-  **Secure Your Garbage**
  -  Once animals associate your garbage with an easy meal, they will keep coming back. Make sure your garbage is placed in cans with tight fitting lids, and consider using a strap to further keep them in place.
-  **Pick Up Fallen Fruit**
  -  If you have fruit trees, be careful to pick up all the fruit that has fallen from the tree. These are a natural source of food to many animals, and will bring them into your yard.
-  **Avoid Creating Shelters**
  -  Some animals will burrow under a shed or other outbuilding, or find a way inside to sleep during the day or have shelter. Make sure your buildings are secured, and inspect them regularly. Keep your yard free of brush and low branches that can create good hiding spots.
-  **Enlist the Neighbors**
  -  Keeping wild animals away from residential areas is a community effort. If even one resident decides to feed the animals, then they will hang around.

**Florida has no nuisance wildlife removal program.** *If you want to have an animal removed from your property you must do so at your own expense.* State rules regarding relocating animals and a list of registered wildlife trappers are available at [myfwc.com](http://myfwc.com). **If you have questions about an animal's behavior, you can contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 1-386-758-0525 to speak to a wildlife biologist.**

If someone has been bitten, scratched or exposed to the body fluids of a wild animal, (such as a raccoon, bat, skunk or fox) they should contact the Duval County Health Department at 253-1280. After hours or on weekends, you can call the Jacksonville Sheriff's office non-emergency line at 630-0500.

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