

Selecting the Right Wildlife Control Company to Resolve Your Wildlife Problem

By [Robert H. Schmidt](#) © 2005 (used with permission)

This column is for the customer. You are reading this because a wildlife damage management practitioner has given it to you to assist in your selection of a person, an agency, or a company that will help you solve a wildlife-related conflict.



This wildlife-related conflict could range from the simple to the complex. In the simple cases, resolution may require nothing more than a professional consultation. In complex cases, it may involve issues of public health and safety, state and federal laws and regulations, and specialized training, skills, and abilities. Sometimes nothing more is needed to resolve a wildlife problem than a few words of advice over the telephone. In other cases, you need ladders, restricted use pesticides, permits, specialized equipment, and, in some cases, pre-exposure rabies vaccines.

How do you find the best person, agency, or company (called Company from now on) to assist you? When you have multiple choices, how do you make a good selection? What questions can you ask to assist in evaluating these many choices?

There is no specific formula, no exact set of questions that will always connect you with the perfect company to solve your wildlife conflict. I hope I haven't given you false hopes in this regard. However, there are some questions you may want to ask before you sign any contracts or make other commitments.

Issues You Must Consider BEFORE You Hire a WCO

These are offered below in no particular order of priority. You, as the customer, are the best judge as to what is most important to you.

References. Does the company produce happy and satisfied clients? Are they willing to give you names and phone numbers of satisfied customers? What does it mean if they can't give you a single satisfied customer? Ask for references. If company policy prohibits disclosing any client information, ask for a reference from a local, state, or federal agency. Ask how long they have been in business. Ask them if they have liability insurance. Call the Better Business Bureau to check whether there is a rash of complaints, but keep in mind that people don't call the BBB with compliments.

Memberships and Affiliations. Ask whether the company has any professional affiliations. Some professional organizations require adherence to a code of ethics as a condition of membership. You'll find that companies with membership in professional associations are proud of that membership. Look for these professional affiliations in the company's advertisements and on their business cards. For example, check out whether they belong to the [National Wildlife Control Operators Association](#) or a state affiliate of NWCOA.

Professional Appearance and Attitude. Think about the appearance and attitude of your dentist, your teacher, your mechanic, or your plumber. What are the characteristics of appearance and attitude that give you confidence?

Are you concerned at all with the condition of the equipment being used, or with the presence of the company's employees in your home or business? Are they acting professional?

Philosophy. People are not all alike when it comes to attitudes and values. This is particularly true when it comes to the relationships between humans and wild animals. If you have strong feelings about how animals should be managed, discuss these issues with the company. If they can't accommodate your concerns, they should be able to explain why, and you should be able to understand their reasons. For example, if you would like to have an animal trapped and released in another location, and state law or regulation prohibits this action, the company should be able to explain this to you, and quote or show you a copy of the relevant law or regulation. On the other hand, you may not care how a particular animal is captured or killed, but there may be legal restrictions on how the animal can be trapped, handled, and relocated or destroyed. Since you are the customer, understand what you are buying and, when possible, buy what you want.

Expense. As you will discover, professional expertise usually is not free. Free information might be available from your local [Cooperative Extension office](#), your [state wildlife agency](#), or the US Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services program. There is free information available on the Internet. Caution is in order, however. Reading that you can trap a raccoon with a certain type of trap might enable you to catch a raccoon (not necessarily THE raccoon), but you might also catch your neighbor's cat, a striped skunk, or a diseased animal. Then what do you do with the animal you've caught? There is a role for the do-it-yourself type of person, but when you get in over your head, you need professional expertise just as you do with plumbing or electrical problems. This professional expertise comes at a price.

As you call around seeking assistance, you will note that companies offer different pricing schemes. For example, some companies charge an initial consultation fee, while others offer a free consultation but charge a higher animal removal fee. Ask how the charges work, and make sure you

understand the fee schedule up front. Like many things in life, the least expensive option is not necessarily the best option.

General Impression. You've talked with a prospective company over the phone. Perhaps they've stopped by for a consultation. What is your general impression? If they've walked in your house, are clean shoes important to you?

Did they listen to your concerns? Are they talking with other customers on their cellular phone inside your house? Are you getting the level of attention you want? Now, don't mistake this with getting free attention. If you want in-depth advice, ask the company for a professional consultation. For a fee, they will be happy to give you a great deal of personal attention. But they are small business owners, and time is money.

Follow-up Services. Some companies provide certain guarantees depending on the type of service purchased. Other companies provide a follow-up call as part of the overall service plan. If this is important to you, check with the company as to their policies.

In short, treat your wildlife damage management company as you would interact with any other professional service company. Know what you want, ask the right questions, and get the service you expect. And if you are a satisfied customer, volunteer to provide a reference if needed. If you've found an excellent company to help you with your wildlife-related damage, let people know. That will certainly help your neighbors with their choices.