



# G R O U N D H O G

## CHARACTERISTICS

The groundhog is a member of the squirrel family. The groundhog, also known as the woodchuck, has a heavy chunky body (18”- 26”) set atop relatively short but powerful legs well adapted for digging. These animals range in size from 4 –14 pounds. Males are slightly larger than females. The dark-colored, bushy tail is about one fourth as long as the total body length, much shorter in comparison to other squirrels. Groundhogs skulls are broad and flat. Their bodies are covered with long coarse and grayish-brown hair.

They are found in open pastures, woodlots, fields, ditches and roadsides. Groundhogs are daylight creatures and not out at night normally. They are usually seen in the morning and evening hours when the light is lower and they feel safer.

Breeding takes place in early spring. Female groundhogs bear a single litter of 1-9 babies, after a 31-32 day gestation period. These babies are forced to disperse by their first summer of life. However, during the warmer spring and summer months, the day is spent in their cool burrows and feeding occurs during the very early morning and at dusk. If emboldened, however, they can be out at any time during the day. They begin hibernation in mid October and emerge in February

Never approach a groundhog, or let one approach you. They can give a very vicious bite and can carry diseases transmissible to your pets and potentially to humans. In residential areas they may be found beneath homes, patios, under decks, garages and stored lumber.

## FOOD SOURCE

Groundhogs like to eat vegetation that we plant in our yards and gardens. They construct burrows and eat a broad range of vegetation. An adult consumes between 1-1½ lbs. of vegetation a day. One or two animals are capable of eating out a garden almost overnight.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Epsom salts can be sprinkled on the vegetation and fruits of your garden to render them foul-tasting to groundhogs. The good news about this strategy is that Epsom salts will also help some of your garden plants to grow better. But re-application is required after any rain fall.
2. A foul smelling agent such as ammonia soaked cloth scattered around your garden can be used to deter groundhogs. This application must also be repeated after rain fall.
3. Fences such as chicken wire fences can provide a more permanent solution to this pest problem. Beware of two facts however: groundhogs can climb over your fences, and ground hogs can tunnel under your fences. To foil these tactics try; burring the fence 1 foot beneath the ground and constructing it 3’- 4’ high. The buried portion of the fence should be bent at a 90° angle, with the bottom of the fence pointing away from the garden. This discourages burrowing if it is started at the fence line.