

# Beaver



The beaver is the largest rodent in North America and nature's engineer. They are one of the only animals that modify habitat to suit their needs. This often includes building dams and lodges which they use for protection, shelter, and for water access to nearby woodlands. Beaver dams provide many positive environmental benefits such as decreasing the impacts of floods, recharging aquifers, filtering water, and creating wetland habitat used by many other species of wildlife. However, beaver and their dams can cause damage by removing trees and other vegetation, flooding property, cropland and roads. There are a variety of strategies that can be used to manage nuisance beaver.

## Plant Strategically

- Beaver prefer to eat woody species such as willow and aspen (aka poplar or popple), but will take a variety of other species for either food or building material. If you're planting near water native evergreens are less likely to be taken and shrubs that re-sprout like red osier dogwood are more likely to sustain beaver damage and persist.

## Safety

- Beaver are rarely dangerous to humans or pets, but are a wild animal that can move surprisingly fast on land and have very sharp teeth. They will protect themselves if attacked or cornered. Keep pets leashed and away from beaver and do not attempt to get in-between your pet and a beaver.
- Beavers are known to spread the disease giardiasis (giardia) which can be transmitted to humans by ingesting contaminated water. Symptoms include diarrhea, cramping, weakness and mild fever and antibiotics are usually prescribed to treat this ailment. For information on diseases of Wisconsin furbearers search "furbearer diseases" at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov)



## Discourage Beaver

- Protect individual trees and bushes by placing cylinders of hardware cloth or mesh wire fencing at least 30 inches tall around the base.
- Conventional or electric fencing can be used to protect larger areas, especially along shorelines where beaver may be using multiple access points.
- Culverts can be protected with box-type barriers or fencing that extends upstream into the water body to prevent plugging.
- There are several beaver repellents or feeding depressants registered for use in Wisconsin. They can be found at garden stores, but be sure to investigate the product thoroughly to ensure it is listed for beaver. Off label use of a pesticide is illegal.
- For additional help with beaver conflicts, visit our webpage: [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) keywords "wildlife damage" and look for "[Beaver Damage Control Guidelines](#)" (Pub #WM-007).



## Quick Facts

- **Beaver build their own home, known as lodges, with a mixture of branches, mud, and vegetation.**
- **A beaver's preferred foods are aspen, maple, willow, cottonwood, birch, and cherry.**
- **Beaver are most active during the fall, collecting branches and small trees. Beaver will stockpile this vegetation near their lodge, called a "cache", and rely on this food source during the winter.**
- **Beaver continue to grow their entire life, and adults can weigh upwards of 80 lbs. Beaver incisors also grow continuously, so they are not worn down by wood chewing. Chewing on their preferred food also self-sharpens their teeth.**
- **Beaver shooting and trapping is legal year-round without a DNR license on your own property to resolve beaver conflicts. Landowner permission is needed to release a live-trapped beaver. Many municipalities in Wisconsin have specific regulations regarding the discharge of firearms, so check with your local government to ensure adherence to local ordinances.**



For more information, visit our webpage:

[dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov)

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