

Armadillo Control
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Something is digging up our gardens at night. Fairly large holes appear around shrubs, at the edge of houses and in gardens. One homeowner described the damage as 'little tornadoes' in the landscape. I believe armadillos are visiting us.

The armadillo is an interesting creature. It has been adopted as the state mascot in Texas. Armadillo means 'little armored one' - a name contributed by the Indians. These interesting creatures have protective horn-like armor on their head, body and tail. It is designed in rings so that it is flexible. The head is small with a long, narrow pig-like snout. The foot is three toed and has sharp claws for digging. Our armadillos are the size of a possum. Some even call them 'possum on the half shell'.

Though their legs are short, they can run fairly quickly and are excellent diggers. They mainly eat insects and excavation is how they feed and make their homes. This is also how they run afoul of gardeners, as they root up our lawns and flowers. They are most active twilight to early morning and can leave several holes in a lawn in one visit.

How did they get here? They appear to be very adaptable. They travel on foot, swim and even walk along the bottoms of small streams. The female bears live young in a burrow 7 to 8 inches wide and up to 15 feet in length. Burrows are located in rock piles, around stumps or brush piles or near brush or dense woods. She produces one litter each year in March or April. Surprisingly, they are always quadruplets of the same sex, all coming from one egg.

Enough biology - how do we get rid of them? This may be one pest we learn to live with. They are not easy to catch or discourage. Use live traps - the heavy, wire, box type that opens on both ends. Put 'wings' on the trap. Use two six-foot long shelf boards set up on end and attached to the mouth of the trap. These will be angled outward to direct the armadillo into the trap. Try to put the far end of one of these boards up against a wall or fence to funnel the armadillo into the trap. The best traps are those that open on each end but others may work. Do not bait the traps. We know of no baits that attract them any better than an empty trap. Be careful to set up the trap properly as I have mentioned here.

Shooting in the evening or at night is effective but should only be used where it is completely safe, legal and will not disturb neighbors.

Since they eat insects, you may consider treating your lawn or flower beds with a soil insecticide to reduce insect numbers. This still may not work well since this will not kill all bugs and is expensive and could be dangerous. Clean up brushy areas where armadillos hide.

I suggest trying to live with them. You can fence certain areas, consider having a dog to run them off, or just enjoy having a little more wild life in your yard. Considering their life style, they are very interesting and could make a great wild life study. Of course, they would probably be more interesting if they did not dig so much. For more information on controlling wildlife see - <http://wildlifedamage.unl.edu/handbook/handbook/>

You can also contact wildlife removal companies if you want to hire someone to help you. Here are two – AWL (478) 746-4133 or TruTech (478) 922-4407 or (478) 750-0011. This is not an endorsement of these or a lack of endorsement of others I did not list. These are the only two I know of in our area.