How to Clean a Raccoon Latrine

Santa Barbara County Animal Services
5473 Overpass Road
Goleta, CA 93111
(805) 681-5285
FAX: (805) 681-5383

What is a raccoon latrine?
Raccoons establish community latrines—sites where they repeatedly deposit fresh feces (droppings or scat) on top of old feces in a particular area in the environment.

What do raccoon latrines look like?
Raccoon latrines consist of piles of raccoon feces of different ages. Fresh raccoon feces are tubular with blunt ends, and about the same diameter as a dime or nickel. Generally, fresh raccoon feces are dark, but it depends on what the animal was eating. Seeds or shells may be seen in the feces. As feces age, they weather and decompose. Old feces may look like dried leaves or debris.

Where are raccoon latrines found?
Raccoons prefer sites that are flat and raised off the ground, but they also use the base of trees, and occasionally, open areas. Common sites for raccoon latrines are roofs, decks, unsealed attics, haylofts, forks of trees, fence lines, woodpiles, fallen logs, and large rocks.

Why should I clean up a raccoon latrine?
A raccoon latrine may contain roundworm eggs that can be hazardous to human health. The adult stage of the raccoon roundworm (Baylisascaris procyonis) lives in the raccoon's intestine and produces microscopic eggs that are shed in the raccoon's feces. One raccoon roundworm can produce more than 100,000 eggs a day. A raccoon can pass millions of eggs in its feces everyday, depending on how many worms are in its intestines. Once deposited in the environment, the eggs develop into the infectious form in 2-4 weeks, and can survive in the soil for several years. If the infectious form of the eggs is inadvertently swallowed by humans, other mammals, or birds, larvae (immature stage of worms) hatch out of the eggs and move into the organs of the body. The larvae travel throughout the body and, on rare occasions, may cause serious eye disease, spinal cord or brain damage, or death. Discouraging raccoons from an area and cleaning up raccoon latrines reduces the chance that people or other animals will get sick from raccoon round worms.

Is it dangerous to clean up a raccoon latrine?
Serious roundworm disease is rare (11 cases reported in the United States to date), but because the disease can be severe, special precautions should be taken when cleaning up raccoon latrines. If you do not ingest developed eggs, you cannot get the disease. Taking special precautions will help reduce the chance that you will accidentally swallow eggs or contaminate other surfaces or objects. Be sure to avoid spreading eggs further when you clean up a latrine, and keep pets and children away from the latrine area until the cleanup is finished.

Supplies List

- Disposable latex or rubber gloves
- Particle mask
- Rubber boots
- Heavy-duty plastic garbage bag
- Shovel or metal scoop
- Paper towels
- Portable propane torch
- Boiling water
- Bucket of hot, soapy water
- Sponge

How do I protect myself while cleaning up a raccoon latrine?

- Wear disposable gloves—rubber, plastic, or latex.
- Wear disposable plastic booties, or rubber boots that can be scrubbed and left outside.
- If working in a confined area, such as an attic or crawl space, wear a N95-rated particle mask (home renovation or safety supply stores carry them) to prevent accidental ingestion of eggs or inhalation of fungal spores or dust.
- Thoroughly launder your clothes with hot water and detergent after cleaning up the latrine.
- Read the instructions below and follow the instructions carefully.

Santa Barbara County Animal Services
5473 Overpass Road
Goleta, CA 93111
(805) 681-5285
FAX: (805) 681-5383

You cannot contract serious raccoon roundworm disease by inhalation

Inhalation of roundworm eggs has never been documented. Particle masks are recommended for clean up of raccoon latrines in confined spaces, primarily to prevent the inhalation of fungal spores or bacteria that could cause lung infections. A mask will also prevent feces from entering your mouth. You must eat several thousand roundworm eggs to contract life-threatening disease -- much more than you could breathe in and swallow. An egg that is inhaled into the lung will not hatch. Nevertheless, to reduce the chance of swallowing roundworm eggs or inhaling fungi, wear a mask when cleaning up raccoon latrines in enclosed spaces.

How to Clean a Raccoon Latrine

How do I clean up outdoor raccoon latrines?

- Avoid stirring up dust and debris. You can lightly mist the latrine area with a little water from a spray bottle to reduce the amount of dust.
- Use a shovel or disposable rigid scoop to gently lift feces and any other contaminated material and place it into a heavy-duty plastic garbage bag.
- Close the plastic bag tightly with a “twist-tie” or tape, and place it into another garbage bag (“double-bagging”), discard it in your garbage collection can, and make sure that raccoons cannot get into the can.
- Disinfect hard, smooth surfaces (including shovel blades) with boiling water.

If the latrine is on the ground and the soil is heavily contaminated with feces, you may want to remove and discard the top 2-4” of soil and replace it. Large quantities of removed soil are best discarded in landfill disposal sites.

Should I flame the latrine site with a propane torch?

Most chemicals do not kill roundworm eggs and are not suitable for outdoor use. Extreme heat will kill eggs instantly. Flaming with a propane torch is effective, but could cause a fire, burn injury, or surface damage. ***Before flaming any latrine site, call your local fire department for details on local regulations and safety practices.*** Concrete pads, bricks, and metal shovels or garden implements can be flamed without damage. Do not attempt to flame surfaces that can melt or catch fire. Break up and turn over contaminated soil several times, flaming each time.

How do I clean up indoor raccoon latrines?

To clean up an indoor latrine:

- Wear the protective clothing recommended for cleaning up outdoor latrines.
- Wear an N95-rated particle mask if cleaning up a latrine in a confined space such as an attic or crawl space.
- Avoid stirring up dust and debris – you can lightly mist the latrine area with a little water from a spray bottle to reduce the amount of dust.
- Remove feces as directed in cleaning up outdoor latrines.
- If you cannot use heat (flame, boiling water), use hot soapy water and a damp (not wet) sponge to wipe up residual fecal material. Rinse often.
- Flush dirty rinse water down the toilet.
- Place the sponge in a plastic bag and put the plastic bag in the garbage.
- Disinfect the wash and rinse water containers with boiling water.

What do I do if I get raccoon feces on my skin or clothes?

- Wash skin with plain soap and warm water—clean thoroughly under your nails with a brush.
- Wash clothes separately in very hot, soapy water; bleach is not required but can be used if desired.

Cleaning up latrines helps deter raccoons, but removal of attractants (such as pet food, accessible garbage cans, shelter under decks, etc.) and exclusion methods are necessary to prevent raccoons from returning. If you have questions or concerns about excluding raccoons, consult your local animal control agency or professional pest management company.