



## 9-BANDED ARMADILLO

### The Species

Armadillos, while being rather recent inhabitants of our Louisiana landscape, have rapidly become a widespread pest across the state.

Their range has expanded from South America to Central America and into most of Mexico and Texas. The first armadillos to reach Louisiana appeared in the northwest portion of the state around 1925. Since that time, they have rapidly expanded their range eastward and now are found throughout the state.

The ability for these animals to spread so quickly into new areas is evident by the vast numbers that are seen dead along our highways. A peculiar habit armadillos have of jumping upward when startled probably accounts for many collisions with automobiles in situations that otherwise would involve the vehicle safely passing over the animal.

Armadillos do not hibernate and therefore cannot remain in their burrows for long periods of cold weather. This factor, more than any other, limits their northward expansion and is the reason for population declines in our state following extremely cold winters.

Breeding occurs in July and August, but because of delayed implantation, egg fertilization does not take place until late fall. Developing embryos undergo a 120-day gestation period from which identical quadruplets are produced. The reason for this odd reproductive feature that all four young are of the exact genetic makeup involves the fertilization of a single ovum that then divides into four separate embryos.

### The Problem and Control Measures

The burrowing and rooting habits of armadillos often are the cause of the animal coming into disfavor with homeowners. Characteristic armadillo activity in a landscape consists of shallow holes that are 1 to 3 inches deep and 3 to 5 inches wide.

Squirrels, skunks and moles are animals that often do damage similar to armadillos, but smaller and more uniform holes, a characteristic smell and raised earthen tunnels are respectively the calling cards of these other culprits. The majority of the digging activity by armadillos is done while searching for food. About 90 percent of an armadillo's diet consists of insects and larvae, while earthworms, fruits, berries, snails, slugs, ants, amphibians and reptiles also are consumed in small quantities.

Armadillos are classified as outlaw quadrupeds, making it legal for lethal control measures to be used on a year-round basis. Shooting is one method that is legal in Louisiana, and with the recent changes in the regulations for night hunting; armadillos can be hunted during nighttime hours with the aid of artificial lighting. Weapons are restricted to shotguns or .22 caliber rim-fire rifles. Center-fire weapons can be used if permits are obtained from any local Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries field office. These night hunting privileges are only legal when conducted from the last day of February until the last day of August.

In urban situations, where armadillos are quite common and cause many problems, shooting is not a viable option because of restricted firearm use. Trapping with wire box traps was



Armadillo damage often appears as small divots scattered about an area where the animals are searching for food items such as earthworms, grubs and mole crickets.

the recommended method of armadillo control in these areas for many years. To increase the chances of success, boards were placed upright, leading to the trap entrance to form a funnel and guide the animal into a trap. Baits such as overripe fruit also were used to entice animals into a trap.

Recent reports from LSU Ag Center employees experiencing armadillo damage on research plots at Ag Center research stations tend to suggest a more effective method for trapping armadillos. Scented wooden box traps that didn't use the board funnels or bait were found to be much more effective in trapping armadillos. The wire mesh traps reportedly are not able to hold the scent of an armadillo, which appears to be quite an effective lure in drawing other armadillos into the trap. These "conditioned" traps are tainted with dirt, which apparently aids in holding the "armadillo smell" on the trap. Traps of this type are available commercially or can be constructed with the proper tools and knowledge.



These types of wooden traps currently are the most useful in trapping nuisance armadillos around the home. The general dimensions for this trap are:

12 inches wide x 31 inches long

3 uprights: each 24 inches long

3 cross pieces: 14 1/8 inches long, attach horizontally to uprights

The trigger mechanism on the trap is a small finishing nail, with the head filed off, nailed into a small piece of wood that is 10 1/2 inches long and 1/2 inch square. The finishing nail is placed 2 inches down from the piece of wood, into the side of the wood. This piece of wood has a screen door eyelet screw, screwed into the top where the strings run through. The trigger mechanism is activated by pulling down on the strings and placing the finishing nail onto another eyelet screw that is screwed into the side of the block of wood on top of the trap next to the hole in the top of the trap where the trigger mechanism goes down inside the trap.

Each of the two trap doors falls like a guillotine into slotted notches on the sides and bottom of the trap body.

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