



Ask the **FWC**

Illustration by Liz West

Are there any proven products or home remedies to prevent armadillos from coming into my yard and digging up the lawn?

Unfortunately, there are not any products on the market that have proved successful at preventing armadillos from digging in a yard. The armadillos are digging for grubs and insects in the lawn. Some people have had success with putting an insecticide on the lawn, but there have also been other reports that the armadillos will dig deeper instead of leaving the area. Chain-link fencing will keep most armadillos out of a yard. Outside dogs may also serve as a deterrent.

It is lawful for a landowner to live-trap and/or humanely destroy nuisance armadillos although they are difficult to capture with live traps. The discharge of a firearm is prohibited in many areas, so check with local authorities first. Armadillos are not native to Florida. Therefore, it is illegal to transport and release live armadillos. If you would like to hire a nuisance wildlife trapper to trap and remove the animals, you can find a list of trappers on the FWC Web site at MyFWC.com/trappers.

For more information about laws relating to destructive wildlife go to MyFWC.com/critters/policy.htm. For more information about methods of removing armadillos visit MyFWC.com/critters/armadillo.asp.

Is it legal to feed birds and other wildlife?

In Florida, it is illegal to feed sandhill cranes, bears, raccoons, foxes and alligators.

Intentionally placing food or garbage, allowing the placement of food or garbage, or offering food or garbage in such a manner that it attracts black bears, foxes, raccoons or sandhill cranes and thereby creates a public nuisance, is prohibited.

It's never a good idea to feed any wildlife. Feeding animals may cause



them to concentrate on food provided by humans so they become a nuisance or a threat to people. Feeding stations tend to be places where wildlife congregates and diseases are readily passed among individuals. In addition, most food fed to wildlife is junk food. Bread and other human food are generally poor substitutes for naturally nutritious food that wildlife finds on its own.

Often, the human need to offer food is due to strong emotional attachments to animals and the desire to help wildlife. Research has shown, however, that the consequences of feeding wildlife are far more detrimental than helpful. About the only exception is bird feeders and feeding stations that are maintained with the proper food items and cleaned regularly (several times a week) with a 20-percent bleach and water solution.

What should I do if I find a diseased fish?

Most fish caught in Florida's freshwaters that appear diseased are caught during spring and have a minor secondary infection resulting from spawning stress. During spawning, for instance, male bass fan a nest or bed out in

the sand and this abrades their skin, making them susceptible to bacterial or fungal infections.

If you find fish that seem to have something more seriously wrong with them, or are having trouble with fish in your pond, there are several labs that can help. Visit www.floridafisheries.com/docum/dis-labs.html for a list of these labs.

Lesions in estuarine fish have been observed since the late 1970s. If you see or catch any ulcerated fish, call the FWC Fish Kill Hotline at 1-800-636-0511 or fill out an online report at research.MyFWC.com/fishkill/submit.asp. Report what type of fish had a lesion, how many fish had lesions, where you caught or saw the lesioned fish and how to contact you for additional information.

Frozen samples can be used to identify a fish fungus using genetics techniques. The FWC will accept frozen lesioned fish in good condition that have the following information: location (GPS coordinates preferred) and date of capture, species and standard length, total length or fork length. Contact the Fish Kill Hotline for more information on providing samples.