



Information Worth Knowing

ANIMAL INFESTATIONS

ANIMAL INFESTATIONS IN A BUILDING

Animals that enter buildings can pose serious threats whether the building is vacant or occupied. Animal infestations can bring about gnawed support beams, contaminated floorboards due to excrement, nesting and frayed wires.

8% of fires that started in homes and buildings have been caused by rodents in the last 10 years. Rodents such as mice, rats, and squirrels will chew on anything, including electrical wiring, due to their constantly growing teeth. Rodents will also build their nests in or around electrical appliances which will create a larger threat of fire.

Here are some ways that rodents can get into buildings and what you can do to prevent it:

MICE

- Mice only need an entry point of ¼ inch and can enter through garages, basements, and gaps around utility lines.
- Signs of infestation: 1/8-inch-long droppings; smell of urine; noises at night; and holes gnawed in food boxes.
- The best spot for traps are along walls or anywhere you suspect activity.
- To prevent entry, seal exterior gaps with mortar; weather strip the bottom of basement and garage doors; and keep food in airtight containers. You can also stuff copper mesh or bronze wool into foundation cracks.

RATS

- Rats only need an entry point of ¾ inch and can enter through garages, basements, rotted sills or foundations, and damaged or unused drain pipes.
- Signs of infestation: Black, greasy smudges around openings; smell of urine; ¼- to 5/8-inch-long droppings; nests of discarded food; fur; matted-down insulation; gnawing and squeaking at night.
- The best traps for rats are poisoned bait stations outside the building and around the perimeter of the property line.
- To prevent entry, eliminate water and food sources around the building and store food in airtight containers. Cover entry points with hardware cloth or 16-gauge steel flashing.

SQUIRRELS

- Squirrels only need an entry hole 2 ½ inches or larger. They can get into a building where dormers meet roofs or where roof shingles overhang fascia boards. (Squirrels can jump 10 to 12 feet through the air.)
- Signs of infestation: Scampering noises in ceilings or attic; insulation missing from spots near eaves; ½- to 1-inch-long droppings; and piles of nuts.
- The best types of traps for squirrels are live traps that are clamped in place near the spot on the roof where they're getting in. You can bait squirrels with peanut butter, dried corn-on-the-cob, or suet.
- To prevent squirrels from entering a building, prune trees away from the building; keep the roof and exterior trim in pristine repair; and remove bird feeders that are near the building. You can also nail hardware cloth over potential entry points until they can be repaired.

Depending on where you live, you may get an unwanted visit from one of these animals:

Skunks These four-legged stink bombs will seek shelter in the earlier months of winter, and will look for places to mate in late winter. They will burrow under your patio slab or stake out territory in your garage, crawl space, or basement. To keep skunks away from your property make sure that there are no entry points that they can get into. Keep all trash bags in tightly sealed garbage cans. You can repel skunks with ammonia, cayenne pepper, hot pepper spray or predator urine (dogs, coyotes, or other predators) but you will have to reapply these after it rains. If you do have skunks living on your property the best way to remove them would be to call a professional.



Bats can take up residence in your attic for the summer and leave behind potentially disease-ridden guano. Seal off their entranceways with a double layer of insect screen and hardware cloth, after you are able to get them out. Bat species are protected nationwide so you should call a professional to assist in removing them.

Birds tend to build nests in hidden, difficult-to-reach places around a building during the Springtime. You will typically find a bird nest on rooftops, near AC units and vents, under solar panels and around the building's signage. You can mount a plastic hawk on your building, which will scare the birds away. You can also hang reflectors from strings around the building, which mimic eyes of a predator. Another option is to install bird netting. The mesh netting will create a physical barrier below overhangs to ensure birds are unable to reach areas where they can create a nest on your building.

Raccoons will barge down chimneys and into open garages, under decks but prefer attics. If raccoons do inhabit your building they can ruin the insulation, chew on wires, and can dislodge window screens. The best way to capture one is with a live trap baited with peanut butter, suet, raw eggs, or dried corn on the cob. To keep them from entering the home, install a preventative cap on your chimney, keep basement and garage doors closed,

eliminate any type of food source near your building, and lock down trash lids with bungee cords.

Snakes prefer to be in cool, dark places generally where there are rodents and insects. Snakes occupy dense areas so it is best to keep grass short and to trim trees and shrubs to keep branches away from the ground. In the fall, snakes work their way into openings around basement doors or cracks in the foundation looking for a place to hibernate. They will leave when the weather warms up in the spring. To keep snakes out of your property seal any cracks on the building, sidewalks, and foundations.

Opossums You'll occasionally find these nocturnal fruit-and-insect eaters camped out under your deck or in open garages, basements, and crawl spaces. They won't stay, unless they think you're going to feed them. It is unusual for Opossums, but they can break into almost anything to get their next meal. Once an opossum finds good food at your property it will continue to return. If they get into your building they can chew through wood and drywall, gnaw on electrical wires, and rip up the insulation. Pest removers have come across multiple situations where opossums have died inside a building. The best thing to do with these animals is to take preventative measures: make sure garbage cans are secure, any type of food is removed from the property (taking away the food source will get them to leave the property alone), and keep your property lit at night. If you do have opossums in your property the best method to remove them is to call a professional.



ANIMAL INFESTATIONS IN VEHICLES

Mice, squirrels, chipmunks, and other small creatures like to nest in dark, protected places. There is no better place, especially during winter months, than in a vehicle. The warmth of a vehicle's engine provides a cozy place for nesting.

These unwelcome critters can create a mess within the vehicle. Rodents will bring nesting material, nuts and/or acorns into parts of your engine and undercarriage. Rodents have also been found to chew engine wires and belts. If a vehicle is driven with an unaware sense of these factors, your vehicle could malfunction or catch on fire. However, the National Fire Protection Association® has concluded that two-thirds of vehicle fires are caused by faulty electrical or mechanical systems. Animals can also relieve themselves while in a vehicle, becoming troublesome if it occurs near the heating/ventilation ductwork, heater box or evaporator case. The smell will be unpleasant and difficult to remove.

Here are some ways for keeping rodents out of vehicles

- Check for leaks: Rodents like the taste of oil, gasoline, and other automotive fluids. Leaks from the vehicle will attract them to the vehicle.
- Dryer Sheets: Placing dryer sheets in the cab and trunk of the vehicle can assist with keeping unwanted animals out.
- Peppermint Oil: Rodents detest the smell of peppermint. When you have a vehicle that will not be in use for periods of time, a small open bottle of peppermint oil can be placed in the cab and trunk and will evaporate over a storage period. For vehicles that are constantly used, place cotton balls or swabs dipped in the oil and place them throughout the vehicle.
- Avoid Paper Products: Be careful to avoid leaving cardboard boxes or paper bags in or near your vehicle. Rodents will eat the glue used to make boxes. They will also chew and shred paper and cardboard to make nesting material.

- Keep Away from the Greenery: If the vehicle is placed outdoors be sure to, if possible, keep it away from bushes, tall grass, or other places where animals are often found. Parking the vehicle on gravel or cement can help decrease the chances of an animal infestation.
- Mothballs: The smell of mothballs are not only disliked by humans but also rodents. Mothballs can be placed in several different locations such as around the engine compartment and the base of the windshield. Placing them in containers around and under the car instead of inside the car will help diminish the chance of the scent still hanging around inside the vehicle.



Just as rodents will try to find shelter in a vehicle, cats will do the same. Cats will climb on the hood, under a hood in the engine, and in fenders.

KEEPING STRAY CATS OUT OF VEHICLES

- Sprinkle cayenne pepper around the car. Cats don't like it, and they may move on to another place.
- Spread mothballs around your car. Put them in cups and place them on the hood, trunk, and the roof.
- If cats do use your vehicle, honk your horn, or slap the hood of your car every time you get ready to leave.