GENERAL

how to get rid of squirrels

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How to Get Rid of Squirrels: A Comprehensive Guide

When a fluffy tail darts across your roof or a pair of bright eyes peeks from behind your fence, you're probably wondering how to get rid of squirrels without causing them harm. Squirrels are intelligent, quick moving creatures that can become a nuisance when they invade homes, gardens, or commercial spaces. This guide will walk you through the science behind squirrel behavior, practical prevention tactics, humane removal methods, and when to call in the professionals. By the end, you'll have a clear roadmap to keep your property squirrel free while respecting local wildlife laws.

Why Squirrels Are a Problem

Property Damage

Squirrels are notorious for gnawing on wood, insulation, and electrical wiring. Their sharp teeth can chew through plywood, caulking, and even plastic, leading to costly repairs and potential fire hazards.

Health and Safety Concerns

These critters can spread parasites like fleas and ticks, and in some areas, they carry diseases that can be transmitted to humans and pets. Their droppings can also trigger allergic reactions.

Crop and Garden Loss

In agricultural settings, squirrels raid orchards, gardens, and seed piles, reducing yields and increasing labor costs for farmers and homeowners alike.

Noise and Disturbance

Nighttime scratching, day time chattering, and the constant presence of squirrels can disturb sleep and peace of mind.

Understanding Squirrel Behavior

Habitat Preferences

Tree climbing rodents thrive in wooded areas, parks, and suburban neighborhoods with mature trees. They prefer dense foliage for nesting and open spaces for foraging.

Dietary Habits

While they enjoy nuts, seeds, and fruits, squirrels are opportunistic feeders. They'll gnaw on wood, plastic, and even food scraps left outdoors.

Reproductive Cycle

Female squirrels typically have one litter per year, with babies born in late spring. Knowing the breeding season helps time prevention efforts.

Seasonal Activity

In spring and summer, squirrels are most active, while in winter they seek shelter in attics, crawl spaces, or human-

made structures.

Prevention Strategies

Secure Food Sources

- Remove outdoor pet food. Squirrels are attracted to easily accessible meat or fish.
- Store birdseed in squirrel proof containers. Use heavy, sealed bags that squirrels cannot open.
- Clean up fallen fruit. Pick up any dropped berries or nuts promptly.

Trim Trees and Shrubs

Prune branches that provide direct access to your roof or windows. Keep foliage at least 6–12 inches away from the building’s exterior.

Seal Entry Points

Inspect roofs, chimneys, vents, and eaves for gaps. Use steel mesh or metal flashing to block openings larger than 1/4 inch.

Install Physical Barriers

- Roof spikes. Install metal spikes along eaves to deter climbing.
- Window screens. Ensure all windows have tight, undamaged screens.
- Fence extensions. Add a 2–3 foot extension to existing fences to prevent ground entry.

Use Repellents Wisely

Commercial squirrel repellents often contain unpleasant scents or taste. Apply them around perimeter fencing or near suspected entry points, but note that squirrels can become desensitized over time.

Maintain a Clean Yard

Clear debris, piles of mulch, or stacked firewood that could serve as nesting sites. Keep compost bins sealed and secure.

Humane Removal Methods

Live Trapping

Live traps are a humane way to capture squirrels for relocation. Use a baited trap—typically peanut butter or sunflower seeds—and check it frequently. Once captured, release the animal at least 10 miles away from your property, ensuring it is in a suitable habitat.

Professional Relocation

Licensed wildlife control experts can safely remove and relocate squirrels. They have the right equipment and knowledge of local regulations, ensuring the process is legal and ethical.

Deterrent Devices

- Motion activated sprinklers. Sudden bursts of water startle squirrels and discourage return.
- Ultrasonic devices. Emit high frequency sounds that are uncomfortable for squirrels but inaudible to humans.

Behavioral Modification

Use negative reinforcement tactics like spraying a safe deterrent solution (e.g., diluted vinegar) in areas where squirrels repeatedly enter. Over time, they learn to avoid those spots.

DIY Exclusion Techniques

Roof and Attic Inspection

1. Walk up the ladder and look for gaps, cracks, or holes.
2. Check the eaves for loose or missing shingles that could allow entry.
3. Inspect chimney flues for gaps that can be sealed with metal flashing.

Installing Squirrel Proof Gutters

Attach metal or plastic gutter guards that block squirrels from climbing into the gutter system. This also protects your gutters from debris.

Use of Squirrel Proof Cages

Place a small cage around the base of trees or along the fence line. The cage prevents squirrels from accessing the area while still allowing birds and other wildlife to pass through.

Seal Crawl Spaces

Cover vents and gaps in crawl spaces with fine mesh or steel wool. Ensure any holes are no larger than 1/4 inch to prevent entry.

Professional Pest Control Options

Assessment and Inspection

Professional pest control services conduct a thorough evaluation of your property, identifying all potential entry points and assessing the extent of squirrel activity.

Targeted Trapping and Relocation

Experts use specialized traps and relocation protocols that comply with local wildlife regulations. They also provide post relocation monitoring to ensure squirrels don’t return.

Permanent Exclusion Measures

Installation of permanent barriers such as steel mesh, reinforced flashing, and squirrel proof fencing is often recommended for long term protection.

Follow Up Services

Many companies offer periodic inspections to confirm that squirrels haven’t re invaded and that all exclusion methods remain intact.

Maintenance and Monitoring

Regular Inspections

Schedule bi annual checks of roof seams, eaves, and attic spaces. Look for fresh gnaw marks or droppings that indicate recent activity.

Seasonal Adjustments

During winter, inspect for squirrels nesting in attics or crawl spaces. In spring, monitor tree branches for new nests.

Record Keeping

Maintain a log of sightings, entry points, and any actions taken. This helps identify patterns and informs future

prevention strategies.

Community Coordination

Work with neighbors to address shared trees or fence lines. Coordinated efforts reduce the likelihood of squirrels finding alternative routes.

Common Questions About Getting Rid of Squirrels

Is it legal to kill squirrels?

In most regions, killing squirrels is illegal unless they pose a direct threat to human safety or property. Always check local wildlife regulations before taking drastic measures.

Can I use poison to get rid of squirrels?

Poison is generally discouraged because it can harm other wildlife, pets, and even humans. Additionally, it is illegal in many areas to use rodenticides for squirrels.

How long does it take to get rid of squirrels?

Eliminating squirrels depends on the severity of the infestation. Simple deterrents can yield results within weeks, while complete removal and exclusion may take several months.

What should I do if squirrels are nesting in my attic?

Seal all entry points, remove nests gently if safe, and consider installing a squirrel proof roof vent. If the nest is large or the squirrels are aggressive, contact a professional.

Can I keep squirrels as pets?

While squirrels can be affectionate, they are wild animals that require specific care and permits. It’s best to appreciate them from a distance.

Conclusion

Getting rid of squirrels involves a combination of understanding their habits, implementing preventative measures, and employing humane removal techniques. By sealing entry points, securing food sources, and using live traps or professional services, you can protect your home and garden from damage while respecting local wildlife. Consistent maintenance and monitoring are key to preventing future invasions. With patience and the right strategy, you can enjoy a squirrel free environment without compromising ethical standards.

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