

Evicting Those Wild House Guests

Willie Chance

UGA Extension, Houston County
wchance@uga.edu (800) ASK-UGA1

As the holidays approach, we often get company. Family is welcome, but sometimes our guests are feathered or furry and unwelcome. Wildlife makes a poor house guest. How do we evict those wild house guests?

The answer is a simple one to give but difficult to perform. First, we must run the pest out of the house. Then we must locate and seal all entry points. Both must be done to correct the problem.

You can kill the pest, but if the things that attracted them in the first place are not removed (a place to live and food to eat) then expect the problem to return. Many wild creatures are also protected by law - bats, most birds, non-poisonous snakes and squirrels to name a few.

Ways of evicting wildlife vary with the creature. Bats fly out soon after nightfall to feed. Seal up entry points soon after they leave since they return after feeding. Block holes with wire mesh with holes no larger than one-quarter inch. Fall and winter are good times to exclude bats because they generally have no young in the nest then

Squirrels and birds are usually best excluded in the day time. Run them out by entering the attic and making noise. Then seal all entry points by stapling quarter inch hardware cloth over the hole. Staple the cloth on the side of the hole that the wildlife will try to enter. This will make it harder for the animal to push out the hardware cloth.

Trap any squirrels or birds left in the attic. Do not leave them there to starve. This is inhumane and these creatures can damage the attic or wiring. Trap squirrels using a live trap baited with peanut butter on bread or the store bought wildlife food.

Rats must be caught and/or killed and excluded at the same time. Remove the rat's food source - pet food, bird food or waste or stored food. Clean up trash and brush piles and piles of lumber, etc. to remove their cover and to destroy their homes. Store all food out of their reach and periodically clean food storage areas. When building out rodents, seal all holes larger than one quarter inch for mice and one half inch for rats.

Rats are harder to catch than mice. Bait traps with peanut butter, cheese, bacon or other smelly baits. Place traps along the wall in sheltered spots with the trap perpendicular to the wall and the bait closest to the wall. Use a trap sized for the quarry.

If you use poison baits, you may have to use 'bait and switch' to kill rats. Establish a feeding station where you feed the rat. Place food and water together so the rats will eat well. Begin to feed rats in this location until they are used to feeding there. Then switch the rats from food to bait. This way you are surer they will eat enough bait to be killed. Many types of bait need multiple feedings to kill the rats. Keep the bait box full.

It may help to build a feeding box to keep other animals out of the bait, to protect the bait from weather and to provide cover while the pests feed. There should be a hole in each end of the

box. The holes should be two and a half inches in diameter for rats and one inch in diameter for mice. Label the box **Poison** and keep it out of reach of children, pets and beneficial animals. A large pipe will even work as a bait station. Place it parallel to and close to the wall. Use a two to three inch pipe for mice and a three and a half to six inch pipe for rats.

Several companies remove wildlife for a fee. They can evict your wild house guests and take measures to prevent them from coming back. The two wildlife removal companies I know of in our area are TruTech (922-4407 or 750-0011) and AWL Wildlife Management (746-4133).

Evicting unwanted house guests requires hard work and perseverance. However this is important for your family's health and safety. See this website for more information or contact your local UGA Extension Office - <http://wildlifedamage.unl.edu/>