

IF PREVENTION IS MY BEST RECOURSE, WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO ANIMAL-PROOF MY HOUSE?

Inspect your roof.

Common access points for animals to gain entry into an attic are through soffits, fascia, roof vents, loose shingles and the intersecting point where two roofs meet. Once the roof has been inspected and you are aware of any weak spots that need to be secured, use welded wire mesh to animal proof (1" x 1" or ½" x ½" and 16–19 gauge). This welded wire mesh (also known as hardware cloth) can be purchased at most building supply stores.



Do your animal proofing before it gets too cold so animals being evicted have time to find an alternate home. Anytime from early to mid-October should be safe to proceed with roof inspections and repairs. Before doing any repairs, make sure that no animals are in the house. Any animal that is barricaded inside can cause a lot of damage trying to get escape. If you suspect there is an animal in the house, once the time is right, you can initiate a feeding regime to encourage the animal's departure. Contact one of the resources listed at the end of this brochure for more information.

Chimneys represent a shelter, too. An animal will often move into a chimney to have babies or to escape the elements. Squirrels and birds can easily get in, but usually are not able to get out. Once you are sure no animals or birds are in your chimney, install a cap and spark arrester screen on your chimney. A cap alone is not sufficient as animals can still fit underneath, but the screen prevents all access. Most chimney cleaning companies can do the installation, or you can easily fashion a screen using 1" x 1" welded wire mesh. If an animal is inside or stuck in your chimney, it may require some patience, or even professional assistance, to coax him out.

Inspect your window wells. Animals such as skunks can fall into window wells by accident and are not able to get back out on their own. To prevent such an event, purchase a proper window well cover or create your own using 1" x 1" welded wire mesh. If there is an animal already stuck in your window well, you may have to provide that animal with assistance, such as an object to step up onto, to help him leave.

Keep your garbage and green bin well contained. Many animals, including raccoons, skunks and rats, consider garbage a good food. Store your garbage in proper bins with lock-down handles to secure the lids, and store the bins in a shed or garage until the morning of garbage collection so animals can't reach them.

Animal-proof your composter. A composting bin represents another food source, so make sure the bin is sealed properly.

Consider hiring a general contractor when doing animal-proofing. Hiring a professional to animal-proof your home may be easier if you are not able to do the work or do not have the proper equipment to complete the job.



Take a responsible approach to living in harmony with urban wildlife.

URBAN WILDLIFE

Do you have a problem with wildlife in your home or on your property? Although it can be very frustrating at first, a humane solution can be found.



Programs and services provided by the Ottawa Humane Society are made possible thanks to your financial support.

Please support the animals in our community.



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MORE INFORMATION

Contact one of the organizations listed below for more tips on dealing with specific urban wildlife problems.

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
613-258-8204

Ontario SPCA Wildlife Centre
705-534-4350

1-888-ONT-SPCA (668-7722) ext. 386

Email: wildlifecentre@ontariospca.ca



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WHY ARE WILD ANIMALS COMING TO MY HOME?

Ottawa's urban sprawl in recent years has meant a significant decrease in natural habitat for animals and birds. With less green space available, wildlife can easily end up on our properties. Learning to co-exist with wildlife can be easy once you know how to prevent conflicts before they occur.

Wild animals around our homes are generally seeking three things: water, food and shelter. They usually look for shelter during the birthing season (late February through early October) and again before winter. Pregnant females need to find a safe place to have their young, and during the fall, animals seek a safe place to hunker down for the winter.

The close proximity of wild places to the City of Ottawa gives us opportunities to observe wildlife at close hand. But conflicts with wild animals can occur as they are opportunistic, seeking food and shelter wherever they can. To solve your wildlife problem, you must first understand the animal's feeding habits and behaviours, their seasonal changes and reproductive cycles.

WHY ARE THEY "DESTROYING" MY HOUSE?

It might appear that animals are being "destructive," but in fact, most of the time, the animal is a female trying to find a safe place to have her babies, or to protect them from predators

I SEE ONE ANIMAL... ARE THERE MORE?

Although you may see only one animal, it may not be alone. If an animal is in the attic or elsewhere in your home between early March and early October, it is probably a mother with young. During the birthing season, babies are helpless when first born and do not venture out of their nests. Humane treatment of wildlife means not trapping young animals inside their nests, as, with no form of exit, they will perish. Homeowners are left to deal with the foul odours of remains, which, if difficult to locate or remove, may require expensive repairs to the house.

IS THE WILD ANIMAL HERE TO STAY?

In the vast majority of cases, wild animals choose a human home or property to stay in as a **temporary** solution for food, water or shelter. For instance, most nesting animals will leave your house as soon as their babies are bigger and less vulnerable. The mother will then move them to a more natural area.

WHAT SHOULD I DO FIRST?

It is important to figure out what is attracting the animal and then how this attraction can be altered so it is no longer appealing.

SHOULD I TRAP THE ANIMAL AND MOVE IT AWAY FROM MY HOUSE?

While trapping and relocating an animal seems like a natural solution, this is not the case:

- Under the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*, it is illegal to trap and relocate any wild animal beyond 1 km from where it was captured.
- Even if you could take the animal away, one animal trapped and removed simply opens up a space for another animal to move in and use the resources your house and property provide.
- If you've trapped and removed the mother of a litter, you could be left with orphaned baby animals and the unpleasant decision of whether to care for them or have them euthanized.

Trapping and relocating animals causes many more problems than it solves. It is responsible for 70% of the orphaned animals that overwhelm wildlife rehabilitation centres across Canada.

WHAT IF I BLOCK ACCESS TO MY HOUSE TO KEEP THEM OUT?

That's a good idea, but only if you are 100% certain that no animals are left inside. Never risk barricading an animal in or out of its nest, as they can cause a lot of damage to your house if they try to either escape or get back inside to their young.

WHAT IS THE SAFEST AND MOST HUMANE APPROACH TO MY WILDLIFE PROBLEM?

The safest and most humane option is to give a grace period to the animal for the short time needed during the birthing season. The best time to animal-proof your house is once the babies are weaned and coming out with the mother to forage. You can contact a professional wildlife removal company for assistance, but ensure that if you do use such a company, it follows humane practices that won't end up creating orphans or causing the painful death of any animal. Such a company must also operate within the law when relocating wildlife.

