

KEEPING WILDLIFE OUT OF YOUR HOME

Preventing wildlife problems is more effective, less expensive and friendlier than waiting for a bump in the night.



Cities and suburbs are home to many kinds of wildlife. Their presence can be a source of enjoyment or sheer aggravation. The difference often depends on taking a few simple steps to avoid problems.

Wild animals are attracted to your home by food and shelter. Remove these temptations, and you can cut your risks of structural damage, home invasion and other problems.

High-risk Homes

- Past history of wildlife problems
- See wild animals frequently
- Mature trees in yard and/or neighborhood
- Home located near wildlife travel ways or concentrations (forest preserves, parks, golf courses, rivers or creeks, railroad tracks, vacant buildings, power line rights-of-way)

THE FIRST STEP: REDUCE FOOD AND SHELTER

- ▶ Keep pet food and water dishes indoors, especially at night.
- ▶ Use metal or durable plastic trash containers. Build a frame to hold them upright, secure lids with elastic shock cords (available at most hardware stores) or purchase models with screw-on lids.
- ▶ Do not feed squirrels, raccoons or other wildlife that might cause a problem.
- ▶ Do not allow bird food to accumulate on the ground. Install baffles to keep squirrels and raccoons off your feeders or try models with a weight-activated treadle that closes when unwanted animals get on it. Avoid using sunflower, corn and millet close to your home - use thistle feeders instead.
- ▶ If you have fruit trees in your yard, harvest or dispose of fruit when it's ripe.
- ▶ Do not place food scraps in gardens or compost bins.
- ▶ Stack firewood on a frame that keeps logs at least 2 feet above the ground.
- ▶ Trim branches that extend over your roof. You can prevent access to trees near your home by installing a 3-foot-wide band of sheet metal around the trunks at least 5 feet above the ground. This is effective only for isolated trees (the branches of protected trees must be at least 10-20 feet away from those of any unprotected tree of similar or greater height).
- ▶ Remove brush piles and other debris from your yard.
- ▶ Start a community "clean-up" project to remove brush, tall grass and debris from vacant lots.



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THE SECOND STEP: ANIMAL-PROOFING YOUR HOME

Problem Area	Solution
Fireplace or furnace chimney	Install a commercial chimney cap (secure to chimney with bolts or screws; see figure 1). Hardware cloth (use $\frac{1}{2}$ " x $\frac{1}{2}$ " mesh) provides an economical alternative but must be secured tightly. Leave a peak or dome over the flue to keep leaves and sticks from accumulating. Do not use window-screening material because it's too weak and will clog with soot, causing a fire hazard.
Attic exhaust fan opening	Cover bottom of fan from inside the attic with $\frac{1}{2}$ " x $\frac{1}{2}$ " hardware cloth (a piece that's 18" x 18" will cover most openings). Staple hardware cloth to rafters. For added security, nail or screw 1" x 2" lumber to rafters so that it overlaps the edges of the hardware cloth by about 1".
Attic end louvers (vents)	Cover inside with hardware cloth ($\frac{1}{2}$ " x $\frac{1}{2}$ " mesh).
Soffit vents	Cover inside or outside with hardware cloth ($\frac{1}{2}$ " x $\frac{1}{2}$ " mesh).
Soil stack/kitchen or bathroom vents for exhaust fans	Cover outside with hardware cloth ($\frac{1}{2}$ " x $\frac{1}{2}$ " mesh).
Window wells	Cover top with commercial grate.
Decks	Decks that are 2+ feet above the ground aren't a problem. For decks built lower to the ground, dig a trench (at least 10" deep) around the perimeter (see figure 2). Fasten hardware cloth ($\frac{1}{2}$ " x $\frac{1}{2}$ " mesh) or welded wire (1" x 1" mesh) from the top of the outside joists to the bottom of the trench. Leave about 6-8" of extra wire at the bottom and bend it outward to form an "L". Fill in the trench and cover the wire with wood or plastic lattice for aesthetics.
Stoops, cement slabs and sheds	Dig a trench at least 8" wide and 10" deep around base. Place "L" shaped hardware cloth or welded wire in trench so that the top of the "L" extends at least 1" above the bottom of the stoop, slab or shed. Fill trench.
Roof, soffit and fascia	Inspect annually for signs of water damage. Pay close attention to areas where gables or dormers meet the roof line. Repair promptly.

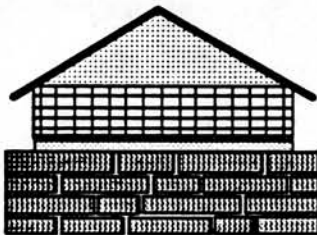


Fig. 1. Commercial chimney cap

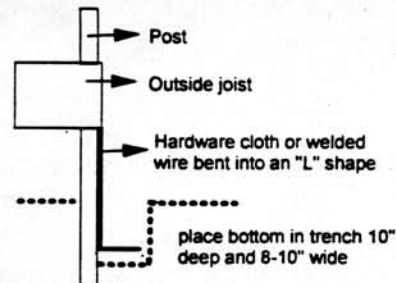


Fig. 2. Animal-proofing a deck

IMPORTANT! Take precautions to avoid sealing animals in your chimney or attic when you install a chimney cap or take other measures to exclude wildlife. Sprinkle flour or talcum powder outside potential entry points. If you don't see any tracks (footprints) for 2-3 days, it's probably safe to proceed with repairs. Holes in your soffit, fascia or roof can be stuffed lightly with 1-2 sheets of newspaper and checked for disturbance.

Visit <http://www.inhs.uiuc.edu/dnr/fur> for more information about the ecology of beaver, raccoon, coyote, striped skunk and other kinds of wildlife. Prepared by Bob Bluett, IDNR-Wildlife Resources in cooperation with Rolling Meadows Police Dept.