

Yeah, they are cute and cuddly, when NOT in the home.



Bats, Squirrels and other rodents have become major pests in homes. Although we may enjoy their antics as they amuse us from a distance on the deck, these same antics in the attic at night or early morning are intolerable. It may not sound so bad that they occupy the attic but the attic often gives them access to other areas of the home. Even when occupying the attic only they do have an impact for our health and safety.

Rodent urine and feces may contain Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome, Rat-bite fever, and leptospirosis. Their habit of constantly gnawing on hard surfaces can damage electrical wires and start fires. Rodents in the attic are responsible for thousands of electrical fires each year. They also often damage air ducts and plumbing. For these reasons alone rodents of any sort in the attic or walls should be prevented and, when necessary, eliminated.

They often seek out attics to live in for many reasons. The primary reason is for a warm, safe, dry, place in which to live. They can smell the air of the attic, they can detect the airflow with their whiskers, and they know that there's a cavity in which to live, so they work hard to get in. They use attics as a place to spend their time when not foraging. They also use attics as a safe place in which to create a nest to have and raise their young, as do many different species of animals.

PREVENTION IS STEP ONE

- Deny them access into the attic by trimming all touching or overhanging limbs around the house. Because they are very good climbers, all openings in the exterior walls, soffits and fascias need to be kept sealed. Many times the roof decking union at the fascias behind the gutters is open enough to allow them to get into the gutters and slip up under the roof shingles for entry into the attic. Small rodents only need an opening the size of a dime. Larger rodents will chew open small holes.

- Seals around and at the bottom of garage doors. Rodents will occupy your garage and will often then find access points into the wall and ultimately into the attic.
- Food opportunities of any kind will attract them. Pet food containers and bird feeders need to be controlled to help prevent access to rodents. Giving them a food source near the home is very convenient for them and attractive.
- There are electronic devices that supposedly will send out an audible signal that will drive them away and prevent them. Studies by the Georgia Department of Agriculture suggest you should save your money instead of purchasing these.

Once the rodents have gotten inside how do you get them out?

- **DO NOT USE A POISON BAIT!** We often find hard baits and dishes containing anti-freeze scattered around attics, and, dead rodents. Many times the target rodent won't take the bait anyway, but if it does you will have a terrible odor within a few days after death. **There is no bait on the market (and never has been) that EMBALMS the rodent so it doesn't smell. If an animal dies, it stinks and is a health concern!**
- The best solution is to trap the pest with a live animal trap. Many pest control companies specialize in wild life control. Capturing the animals allows them to be taken away from the property and if you wish, released unharmed many miles from your home to prevent them from returning.
- Once the pests have been removed, measures must soon be taken to prevent a reinvasion by repairing the entry point and in some cases using hardware cloth. Hardware cloths are often necessary for keeping other pests from re-opening the repairs and reentering.

You may now be rid of the invaders but what did they leave behind?

- The urine and feces and potentially some dead bodies are still present and a concern. The insulation in your home has been used as nesting and is often damaged and compacted. Insulation removed from the vertical walls obviously no longer effective and many types of blown insulation loses its effectiveness R-value when it becomes damp or compacted.
- Chewed electrical wiring is a house fire waiting to happen. Much electrical wiring is hidden below the attic insulation and is not visible for inspection.

What do I do to best ensure my home is safe for my family?

The best practical solution is to have the insulation removed, the attic cleaned and disinfected, the electrical wiring inspected and repaired if necessary and installation of a proper amount of new, unsoiled insulation. In some instances the existing insulation can be disinfected with a spray product.

We want your home to be a Healthy Home.

The following pictures were taken at homes we inspected.



Rodent droppings and a squirrel carcass.



Damaged insulation and chewed wiring.