HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

DISCOURAGING ANIMAL VISITORS

Most urban areas in Northeastern Ohio, including Cleveland Heights, have experienced an increase in the populations of wild “critters” in recent years. The problems they cause can range from the merely annoying to the downright destructive – so, it’s a good idea to look at ways to keep them from setting up housekeeping in your neighborhood.

ELIMINATE THE FOOD SUPPLY

Most unwanted pests come looking for food. If you eliminate the things they like to eat, you can go a long way toward improving the situation.

- Place your garbage in cans with lids (use a “bungee cord,” if necessary, to lock down the top), or – if you use plastic garbage bags – keep the bags in a closed garage until the morning when they’re to be picked up.
- Clean up after parties or barbecues.
- Don’t feed animals outdoors, and keep birdseed off the ground.
- Elevate your wood pile at least twelve inches off the ground, and remove any decaying wood from your yard.
- Since skunks feed on grubs in the soil, you may want to treat your lawn to eliminate this food source. (If you’re not comfortable applying pesticides, there are some “natural” alternatives that may be effective.)

CLOSE OFF NESTING SITES

The other attraction for animal pests is shelter. So, in addition to eliminating their food supply, you should also close off likely nesting sites.

WHERE	WHAT TO DO
Porches	Skunks and other animals like to establish dens in the open areas beneath porches; fasten some wire mesh to the inside of the lattice panels around the porch foundation to keep the critters out.
Vents & chimneys	Seal all vents (such as the vent from your dryer) with 1/2” hardware cloth (a type of wire mesh), and install caps on your chimneys.
Garages & sheds	Eliminate nesting areas in garages and tool sheds, as well.
Steps, decks & slabs	Some animals like to burrow underneath steps, decks, slab additions, and air-conditioner platforms, so check for holes along your house, in the yard, or in the shrubbery and seal them up.
Yard	Remove brush piles, and rotate compost piles regularly.

PROTECT THE ROOF AND ATTIC

Squirrels and raccoons will chew through wood siding or roofing material to gain access to attics and wall cavities; check your roof and gutter area for holes, and repair them as soon as they appear. Again, wire mesh or hardware cloth can be used to prevent the critters from returning.

BATS AND BIRDS

Some bats can squeeze through an opening less than 3/4” in diameter; block the entry hole with sheet metal, foam insulation or metal screening. Birds that nest in your roof area may not pose an immediate problem, unless the nest blocks your gutter. Discourage pigeons from roosting by applying a product such as “Hot Foot” to areas where they congregate.

WORK WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS

Finally, talk to your neighbors. Preventive measures are much more effective on a neighborhood level. Perhaps you could designate a weekend to share labor and hardware cloth to close up potential hideaways.

CHECK WITH YOUR CITY

Some communities provide a trapper who can capture skunks or other critters that have established dens in your neighborhood; others may have traps that you can borrow to capture the animals yourself. Check out the services available through your city, as well as any restrictions on disposing of animals you trap yourself.

Realistically, animals will continue to share our communities – but, with some common sense on our part, we can prevent some of the problems they can cause.

Home Repair Resource center

Home Repair Resource Center empowers homeowners to maintain their homes for sustainable and diverse communities.

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