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Solving Wildlife Problems: Challenges Confronting Property Managers

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In today's society, property managers are finding that solving wildlife conflicts are more challenging than ever before. Not only is the public becoming increasingly concerned about animal welfare, they are also very vocal about the humane treatment of wildlife. This puts pressure on wildlife control operators to be equally passionate. However, passion alone will not suffice.

Only compassionate wildlife removal companies with sufficient staff and resources will be able to safeguard the lives of animals and meet customer expectations. Responsible humane wildlife control is labour intensive as it requires frequent follow-ups of the work in progress while having time available to take on new job assignments. Small-sized operations often take on too much new work in the spring, finding it difficult to effectively follow-up on their work in progress. This results in numerous complaints from customers ranging from incomplete work to inhumane practices. Our studies show that of all the wildlife removal companies in existence in 2003, fifty-three per cent of them had gone out of business by June 2009.



Where to start

Wildlife, opportunistic by nature, are always searching for flaws in building structures to create multiple den sites. Once they locate an existing flaw they will use their teeth and claws to tear open an entry hole in the building. In multi-unit complexes having the same roof designs, these structural flaws may repeat themselves across all units. Gaining entry into structural weaknesses, such as roof vents, is a learned behaviour passed on from generation to generation. Therefore, from a budgetary perspective, it is advisable for property managers to consider a survey of the entire complex for potential

Eavestrough damage can be part of the prevention program; ensuring proper drainage will help prevent water damage from occurring to the roof structure.



entry points, rather than just dealing with one unit at a time.

In an industry lacking any governmental licensing, choosing a nuisance wildlife control operator that can meet everyone's expectations can be difficult. To make informed decisions, property managers would be well advised to get acquainted with the pros and cons of the different wildlife removal techniques. Two decades ago, the most common way to solve wildlife conflicts was to trap and relocate the animal. Today, it is widely accepted that there are serious shortcomings associated with this method.

Why trapping and relocation are not environmentally sound, nor a long-term solution

Trapped wildlife will often suffer from self-injury in their attempts to escape the trap. This is more probable as their confinement in the trap is prolonged. Additionally, observation of a trapped animal often initiates requests directed at property management to have the animal released.

Relocation of the captured animal increases the potential for spreading infectious diseases at the release location. Concerned about this risk, in 1999 the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources introduced regulations restricting the relocation of wildlife outside their home range, approximately one kilometre.

Relocating wildlife without decreasing existing food and/or shelter often results in the remaining animals living longer, having more offspring

and prompting others to move in and fill the void. Studies have shown that after relocation has taken place the resident population of animals will actually increase and therefore more conflicts will occur. Also, trapping and relocation of an adult female during its birthing season can separate the mother from her babies, often resulting in the death of her dependent offspring within the building structure.

Working with, not against, Mother Nature provides the answer!

Recognition of the adverse repercussions caused by trapping and relocation prompted me to explore humane wildlife approaches that safeguard life and provide long-term solutions to wildlife problems. By today's standards, a socially acceptable and humane outcome to wildlife control must significantly reduce the stress to the animal. Development and application of passive removal techniques, onsite release methods, together with effective re-entry prevention measures are providing the answer.

There are many humane wildlife removal techniques that managers should be aware of.



protected, heated release box. This box is then put on the outside of the building, secured close to the point of entry allowing the mother to return and relocate her young to a predetermined alternative den site.

Re-entry Prevention Applications

To avoid new or recurring problems created by opportunistic wildlife, animal-proofing measures must be implemented. This long-term

Passive Removal Techniques

The development of one-way door devices, installed at the point of wildlife entry, has provided a humane alternative to trapping and relocating. One-way doors permit the free exiting of the resident wildlife from the building while preventing re-entry. This method appears to be a simple and effective means of solving wildlife intrusions. However, it can prove to be as inhumane as trapping and relocation. If the device is harmful (impaling), poorly installed (exiting not possible), offspring are not considered (no thorough inspection) and/or the entire process infrequently monitored, inhumane treatment is the outcome and it questions the validity of an otherwise effective tool.

Onsite Release Methods

Leaving animals onsite in their familiar territory allows uninterrupted access to known food and secondary shelter resources. This also allows for close monitoring of the adult female, especially during the birthing season, as her aggressive behaviour will indicate if babies have been overlooked during the removal process. Should offspring be present, they are placed in a specially designed weather

preventative approach prevents potential attractions and unnecessary removal and repair expenses. Animal-proofing measures include trimming tree branches to prevent easy access to the roof, screening chimneys / air vents and other potential animal entry areas, regular roof maintenance by replacing damaged or missing shingles. Cleaning eavestroughs are also part of the prevention program, ensuring proper drainage will help prevent water damage from occurring to the roof structure. Removal of food sources by closing garbage and composting containers and refraining from feeding wildlife will further remove the attraction to the property.

In conclusion, these non-trapping/entry prevention methods will create a more enjoyable relationship with our urban wildlife while minimizing potential conflicts.

Brad Gates, BSc is owner/president of Gates Wildlife Control and a new ACMO Associate member.

Visit www.gateswildlifecontrol.com for more animal-proofing tips.

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