

# Protecting Your Green Image



By Brad Gates

## PROPERTY MANAGERS

have a multitude of business and property-related responsibilities to fulfill in an efficient and timely manner. Added pressure



results when anxious property owners or tenants call looking for an immediate solution to a wildlife problem. The caller's need for a quick re-

solve is fuelled by their heightened stress envisioning damage to shingles, insulation, wires and fearing for the family's health and safety.

Of all the service providers a property manager will need to hire to keep the premises in good repair, making a snap decision in contracting a wildlife removal company can be most detrimental to the property management's image. When animals are mistreated in today's society, intentionally or otherwise, both the public and the media are often unforgiving and become very outspoken. Therefore, selecting a wildlife control company should not be a hit-and-miss approach, but one of careful consideration as to humaneness and overall reputation.

In Ontario, wildlife is suffering at the hands of wildlife control operators each

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and every day. Since this industry does not require a government licence, any newcomer wishing to start a removal company can do so, even though they lack the fundamentals of wildlife biology, behaviour and technical know-how.

Property managers should not ignore the fact that in any given year 25% of wildlife control operators will go out of business, thus increasing the likelihood of hiring a “fly-by-night” company. It follows that past customers of these now defunct businesses have no recourse when it comes to unfulfilled service contracts and warranties. As well, having to hire another company to perform the removal is both time-consuming and costly.

Wildlife operators are fully responsible for the lives of the animals they were hired to remove. However, it is of great concern that many animals are victimized due to the use of devices that cause pain, suffering and even death. Also, monitoring the removal process is often infrequent, haphazard or not carried out, resulting in animals being imprisoned in the attic and / or separated from their offspring.

### ■ Trapping and Relocating

In recent years, trapping and relocating has made a comeback, despite its many serious consequences:

- Animals injure themselves in their relentless attempt to escape the trap
- Animals die of stress caused by being confined in a trap
- Animals die of exposure caused by adverse weather conditions
- Animals’ offspring die of starvation after mother animal is relocated
- Animal relocation accelerates the spread of infectious diseases
- Animals die due to inconsistent monitoring or outright neglect

### ■ How to Protect Your Green Image?

Finding a wildlife removal company that is customer oriented, health and safety concerned and humane can be a difficult undertaking. At face value most wildlife removal companies present themselves on websites, print ads and on the phone to be pro-

fessional operators. Yet, their degree of competence and their definition of humanness vary considerably.

To overcome this challenging dilemma a property manager is well advised to rely on referrals from animal-related organizations, such as humane societies, wildlife rehabilitators and municipal animal services. Over the years, these organizations have accumulated a wealth of knowledge about the companies that have held their customers and the lives of animals in high regard.

Of importance is reviewing documentation that the company under consideration has sufficient liability insurance along with Workplace Safety Insurance Board (WSIB) coverage for their employees. Because of the risky nature of using ladders and working at heights the property manager should also ensure that all employees have been properly trained. To exercise due diligence in this regard, a copy of the company’s health and safety training manual should be requested.

Years in the wildlife business and the size of the operation are further points to be concerned with. Years in business should not be equated with years in the pest control business, since controlling insects is very different than controlling wildlife. As to the size of the operation, only companies with sufficient staff and resources will be able to safeguard the lives of animals and to meet customer expectations. Humane wildlife control is labour intensive as it requires frequent follow-ups of the work in progress. Small sized operations often take on too much new work in the spring, finding it difficult to effectively follow-up on their work. ■

*Brad Gates is owner of Gates Wildlife Control. He can be reached at [gateswildlifecontrol.com](http://gateswildlifecontrol.com)*

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