

Unwelcome guests: How to keep critters out of the house

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With warmer weather ahead, wildlife such as squirrels and raccoons are giving birth, and your attic may be just the place they seek shelter with their newborns.

In seeking warm, dry shelters, raccoons will try to access the house by making tears in roof vents, piping and insulation.

It's a problem many homeowners face, but there are some steps you can take to prevent unwanted guests:

PHOTOS



With warmer weather ahead, wildlife such as squirrels and raccoons are giving birth, and your attic may be just the place they seek shelter. Pest control expert Brad Gates offers tips homeowners can follow to prevent unwanted guests.



Raccoons and other wildlife trying to enter the house can do significant damage. (photo: Gates Wildlife Control)

Trim trees

Brad Gates of Gates Wildlife Control says if there's a will, there's a way: If a squirrel or raccoon wants to get into the attic, they will.

He says the first thing a homeowner can do is cut back the trees that are overhanging the house.

"Animals are opportunistic, they're looking for the easiest way onto the house, to explore ways in," Gates said. "So if you can keep them off the roof of your house, you've caused them to go to your neighbour's house, who might have a tree overhanging on their roof."

Add screens

Regardless of what type of roof you have, pest control can wrap them with a screen to prevent an animal from causing damage.

Capping chimneys is also another way that you can keep animals out, Gates said.

"We often use a heavy gauge, galvanized screen, put it over a chimney, and that prevents them from being able to get back in," Gates said.

Hire a professional

Homeowners should assume that if there are critters in the house, their babies are there, too. For that reason, Gates advises against "taking matters into your own hands" and chasing the mother out.

"If she's locked away from her babies, she's going to do a tremendous amount of damage trying to get back to her babies."

He says homeowners should call a professional to assess the situation. "We need to go into the attic and actually hand-collect the babies, take them on the outside and give back to the mother."

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