

In New Hampshire, extensive squirrel migrations involving numbers in the millions, occur every fifteen to twenty-five years. These mass movements are followed by several years of relatively low squirrel population.



Information contained here is courtesy of
The University of New Hampshire
Cooperative Extension Service,
The Institute on Natural and
Environmental Resources
and the Fish and Game Department
of the State of Connecticut

PORTSMOUTH ANIMAL CONTROL

*Patricia Tate
Animal Control Officer
603-610-7441*



ANIMAL CONTROL

Squirrels

Patricia Tate
Animal Control Officer
(603) 610-7441
Portsmouth Police Department

Legal Status of The Grey Squirrel

Grey Squirrels are classified as game animals under most State wildlife laws. These animals can be trapped or hunted with a license during the open season established by the State Fish and Game Department. Grey squirrel hunting is increasing in popularity in the Northeast. Out of season, grey squirrels are normally protected and can be killed or removed from property only under the conditions set by the Game Department, call Wildlife Services 603-223-6832 for more information. Taking steps to exclude problem squirrels from a dwelling may be performed at any time of the year without special permission from the Game Department.

Problem Squirrels

Most complaints about squirrels are from homeowners with squirrels in their houses. Squirrels will readily take up residence in a building if access to sheltered areas such as eaves and attic crawl spaces is available. Gnawing, scratching, and pattering sounds, in early morning or daylight hours, usually signal their presence. Balls of torn insulation, cardboard, and dried leaves and twigs may pinpoint nests, but nests and young may be totally concealed within eaves or wall spaces. Squirrels in house eaves and attics can damage insulation and electrical wiring and should be removed.

When blocking holes to prevent squirrels and other animals from gaining access, be sure that none are trapped inside. Adults can cause severe damage by chewing to regain entrance to reach their young. If chewing persists, heavy, half-inch wire mesh can be temporarily placed over the problem area. Trimming shrubs and vines and pruning overhanging tree limbs may discourage squirrels from causing problems in the home. In easily accessible areas, squirrels may be evicted by carefully applying an odor repellent like mothballs. Bright lights or noise from radios may also help.

Squirrels are highly excitable and can cause severe damage if trapped inside a building. When frightened, they tend to run around a room with reckless abandon, knocking over anything in their way. By quickly and quietly opening a door or window to the outside and leaving the room, you will give the squirrel its best chance to get out.

To free a squirrel trapped in a chimney, lower a heavy rope down the chimney to provide a means for the animal to climb out. Drop the other end of the rope to the ground to avoid another trip to the roof to retrieve it after the squirrel has left.

Another major complaint about squirrels is the disruption they may cause at bird feeders. Feeders should be placed in an area where squirrels cannot gain access to them, far away from shrubs and overhanging tree branches. Mounting the feeder on a metal

pole at least six feet high and attaching a metal, cone-shaped baffle to the pole will help prevent squirrels from reaching it. Hanging feeders are not recommended, since squirrels will climb down the hanger wire or will shake the wire until the food falls to the ground.

For more information on the management of problem squirrels or for a referral to a licensed Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator, contact Wildlife Services 603-223-6832.

Squirrel Habits

Gray squirrels mate in late winter and spring. After a 44-day gestation period, females give birth to a litter of two to seven young. They are blind and helpless at birth but are weaned and somewhat independent at eight to 10 weeks of age. A second litter is usually born in July. The nest is often in a tree cavity or constructed of leaves suspended in the treetops. These leaf nests are also used for temporary protection against inclement weather or predators.

In a few years, populations of gray squirrels can change dramatically. During successive years of good acorn production, squirrel populations may reach high levels. If food supplies are low the population may decrease substantially. Historically, there have been reports of extensive migrations of squirrels. Although the exact cause of these migrations is unknown, most likely it was a result of a limited food supply.