

Rid Your Home Of Pesty Pests

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GROVE CITY (Mercer Co.) - As the days grow longer and grass begins to grow, many open their doors and drapes to welcome the freshness that comes with spring. Along with the lilies and daffodils come other signs of recent life: A host of insects and animal pests.

What are these pests? Where do they come from? How do we get them out of our homes?

Among the most common summer pests, said Mercer County extension agent Gary Micsky, are the big and little brown bats that often occupy barns and attics. Usually hibernating in caves during winter, the bats emerge in spring, seeking places to bear their young. One reason attics are so desirable is the temperature gradients they offer to bats: air that ranges from very warm to cool and breezy is the most desirable for the maternity colonies, which roost in daylight hours and exit at night to feed on insects.

With the ability to penetrate openings as small as a nickel, the bats have little trouble moving in and out of many attics-especially in situations where slate roofing, chimneys, and siding have begun to come loose. Once inside the attics, it is fairly easy for bats to also end up in the family living space. As a result, Micsky said that in summer months he receives on average five calls per day from people who want to get rid of these "guests."

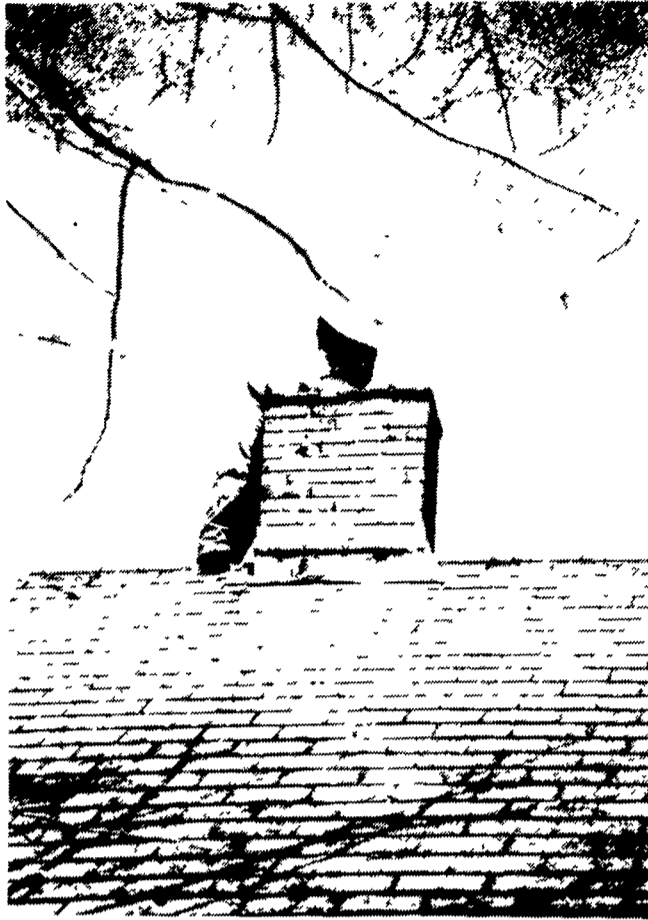
Micsky tells callers that despite the myths that bats will land in and stick to your hair, the mammals will usually leave the house within about ten minutes if contained in a room with an open window. Although they have occasionally been known to carry rabies, it is not too likely that homeowners will contract the disease from association with bats. In fact, it is more likely that homeowners will encounter rabies through dogs and other family pets.

An important thing to remember, however, is that bats eat a variety of undesirable insects like mosquitoes, cucumber beetles, stinkbugs, and other agricultural and garden pests. Since a single bat will eat as many as 500 insects per hour (or 3,000 per night), it is more beneficial for homeowners to relocate the colonies than to exterminate.

Bat boxes can be built and mounted on barns and houses, and the relocation is best done after June and July, when baby bats reside in the attics. During this time the pups are not yet airborne. They would be trapped and die in the attics if entry points were sealed. Although this would reduce the bat population, sealing the entry points in June or July could result in odor problem from decaying bats in the attics.

Homeowners can obtain literature and information on bat-proofing, exclusion, and relocation from their local extension agents, said Micsky. They also have lists of exclusion professionals for those who don't want to tackle the job themselves.

In addition to bat calls, some of the more common pest calls to Micsky are about hornets and wasps, which also benefit man by destroying harmful insect pests. Both species build nests in trees and shrubs as well as under eaves, behind shutters, and on and around porch areas-and both can usually be controlled



Beekeeper Dennis DeVito examines an abandoned hive that is lodged in this chimney. The hive, he decides, is too heavy to lift from the chimney, but must be knocked down and retrieved from the first floor fireplace.



Wildlife pest control operator Dan Lews and beekeeper Dennis DeVito have successfully completed a bat and bee removal job on the same house. The two men work in the area surrounding Mercer County.

with store-bought dusts or aerosol treatments.

Most literature recommends spraying the nests after dark, since by that time most of the hornets and wasps have returned to the nest and are less active than during the day.

Sometimes these species nest in walls, which make them more difficult to eliminate. In these cases it is often necessary to locate the nests by pounding on the walls until a buzzing reply sound is heard-then boring holes in walls in order to spray with a pesticide. It is also possible to use dusts around the flight holes of these hornet and wasp populations as a way of extermination. Often professional exterminators are necessary to eliminate insects nesting in walls.

Other types of bees such as bumble bees, carpenter bees, and

honeybees also set up house-keeping close to areas inhabited by people. Bumble bees and carpenter bees can be dealt with in much the same way as wasps and hornets. However honey bees often require the help of a professional exterminator or bee keeper to help remove the hive and its contents. Since honeybees provide valuable services in their plant pollination and production of honey, often local beekeepers are anxious to remove and transport the bees and hives. If not dealt with properly, hives left in the wall can attract more bees and other insects as well as emit an odor as they deteriorate. Honeybee hives should not be left in walls or chimneys.

For more information about these and other pests, contact your local Penn State extension agent.

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