

# Grey Squirrel Advice Sheet

## What can you do to deter squirrels?

Squirrels are common throughout Britain, and they delight and entertain us with their acrobatics and regular visits to our gardens and parks. They pose no threat to you or your family's health. You may be concerned that they take food intended for birds or fruit from your trees, or that they may nest in your attic and cause damage. Squirrels will only come to your garden looking for either food or shelter. If you deny them these, they will move on.

There are many myths about grey squirrels, including that they chase or kill the less common red squirrels. This is not true.

Killing grey squirrels simply does not work: it is costly as well as unethical and, as squirrels breed twice a year, their numbers will quickly return to the pre-cull figure. If your house or garden remains an attractive proposition, a different squirrel will quickly take advantage of the opportunity. The only winner of a pro-cull policy will be the pest control companies, which have to be called in over and over again as they never succeed in reducing squirrel numbers long-term. Humane methods can deter squirrels effectively, achieving a long-term and cost-effective solution.



If you have a problem with squirrels, it will usually be related to gardens or damage to attics or roof spaces.

### Gardens

Squirrels quickly adapt to any suitable food source available, so if you feed wild birds regularly, you are likely to also attract squirrels. They do not know that this food is not meant for them, and, as irritating as it might be, they will continue to try to take this food. In order to conserve food, squirrels will sometimes 'stash' it for leaner times, burying it in pots as well as in the ground. Whilst this can cause damage to plants, bulbs and lawns, it should be seen as a survival tactic and not an assault on your plants. Squirrels will also eat fruit and nuts from garden trees when available.

### What you can do

Stop feeding wild birds on the ground and tables, and utilise 'squirrel-proof' bird feeders, which are available at most garden centres. These feeders should stop all but the most determined squirrel. Secure feeders tightly to branches or specific poles to prevent removal. A period where you stop feeding birds altogether may also deter squirrels from your garden. Some people have found that adding chilli powder to the bird feed deters squirrels without harming birds. The RSPB recommends that seed mixes be thoroughly coated with, but not hidden in, chilli powder.

Potted plants can be protected from digging and burying through the use of squirrel repellents, available from garden centres. These can be sprinkled around problem areas. But do be aware that it is an offence to use any product or chemical as a repellent unless it is labelled as such and used in accordance with instructions. Scarers, ribbons and balloons (preferably with eyes drawn on) can deter squirrels from trees.

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## Damage to attics and roof spaces

Grey squirrels will sometimes seek a dry and warm place to raise their young, and your attic or roof space can be most appealing to them. If you see a squirrel on your roof carrying dry grass, shredded newspaper or other nesting material, then it is likely to be a female building a nest. They can sometimes damage property in roof spaces or attics as well as causing a disturbance whilst they move around.

## What you can do

Ensure trees, shrubs and particularly climbing plants such as ivy, do not provide easy access to your roof. Tree branches should be at least 20 feet away. Blocking access to roof spaces and attics is the most important thing you can do. Their entry holes tend to be under the edge of the tiles or in the soffits. Squirrels can squeeze through surprisingly small holes so ensuring every potential access point is blocked will help to solve the problem. Be sure that no squirrels, their babies or other wildlife are trapped inside before blocking any access points, as this could put you in breach of current wildlife protection legislation, as well as causing suffering to these animals.

Sonic repellents can be used to evict squirrels from your attic space. These plug-in devices emit electronic and electromagnetic waves, which encourage squirrels to leave but cause them no harm. They are not expensive, and can be bought in DIY stores or online.



**Please note: It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly harm or block bat roosts. Make sure that bats are not roosting before any holes are blocked. If in doubt contact the Bat Conservation Trust: [www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk). Their National Bat Helpline number is 0845 1300 228.**

## SUMMARY

- Reduce available food, and use airtight storage containers and bins
- Do not feed squirrels
- Stop feeding wild birds until squirrels leave, and always use squirrel-proof bird feeders
- Add capsicum or chilli powder to bird food, which will deter squirrels and is harmless to birds
- Block access to roof spaces and buildings (after making sure no animals are trapped inside).
- Use squirrel repellent powder around bird feeders (this is usually capsicum powder)
- Purchase sonic repellents for use in attic spaces. There are also sonic devices suitable to be used outdoors but it is illegal to use these in areas where bats live

As squirrels are widespread, and many people will actively encourage their presence by feeding them, we should learn to be tolerant and to co-exist with these animals. However, if they are a genuine problem and the methods suggested above have failed, then there are other more sophisticated squirrel deterrents available through humane deterrence companies.

We would recommend contacting **Humane Wildlife Solutions** - [www.humanewildlifesolutions.co.uk](http://www.humanewildlifesolutions.co.uk) - 07771 361226



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