

Grey Squirrels

Advice leaflet about Grey Squirrels

The grey squirrel is a common sight in local parks and gardens and because of its prolific breeding has to some extent led to the demise of the native red squirrel. To breed, grey squirrels need a safe and secure site to build their nest, often called a drey, where they can escape predators, bear and raise their young, sleep overnight and escape inclement weather. Usually the nest is constructed in a suitable tree, but other sites can be used.

One of the biggest problems occurs when a squirrel takes up residence in a domestic roof space, causing a great nuisance to the occupiers of the property. It may use roof insulation for nesting material and may chew boxes and other items stored in the roof space.

In some instances they have been known to chew electric cables and roof joists causing a potentially dangerous situation as well as the problem of noise. If squirrels are using a roof space for a nest, often the first reaction to the problem by the householder is to destroy them. This may not be the most successful solution to the problem. For a successful long-term solution it is essential to deny animals access to the roof space.

Before carrying out any works to prevent access to the roof space, it is essential that a thorough check is made to ensure that there are no young present in the nest. Keeping the adult squirrel from their young will result in death for the young and substantial damage to the property where the mother tries to reach her young.

Breeding

Grey squirrels are capable of producing young twice a year. First litters are born in February and March and the second are born in June and July. If young are found in the nest, it will be necessary to wait until the young are taken foraging. Only when all the family is out should the access points be blocked.

Prevention

- Block any access points using chicken wire or metal gauge firmly fixed, or wedged into the access points.
- Repair damaged tiles, soffit or barge boarding.
- Remove any overhanging branches or creepers that may be used to gain access to the roof. When removing tree branches, ensure that the trees are not subject to a tree preservation order.
- Check your roof space periodically to ensure that any treatment is carried out at the earliest opportunity

Grey squirrels are expert acrobats and climbers and will make ready use of nearby plants and trees for access to a nest site.

Grey squirrels are most active during mid morning and mid afternoon. Therefore any exclusion work should be carried out at these times, to ensure that the nest is empty.

Treatment

Scent repellents may be used with some success, but the unpleasant smell is not always recommended in loft spaces. If used as repellent on guttering and telephone wires, it will need replacing after rainfall. Drey destruction and the use of poisonous baits are other methods of control if the environment is suitable for it.

The Environmental Health Department **does not** offer a treatment for Grey Squirrels, however reputable private contractors do offer a service and these can be found listed in your local directory.

