

The Spinneret

Quarterly publication of BEACON Pest Control ©
All Rights Reserved.

Winter 2015



Well, the kids are all back in school and the weather has returned to the windy, drizzly, torrential rain cycle we all know and love. Here's hoping the mountains get a good dose of snow so I can break out the snowboard. With any luck I'll find out where I left my high school physique. I still have the original wrapper so it should be in here somewhere.

-Ed.

Mission Impossible:

I just realized, I am a SUPER HERO!

Well, maybe some people think so because they ask me to do the impossible all the time.

In truth there are no unsolvable pest problems as long as there are no limits on what you are willing to spend and no unreasonable restrictions on what you are allowed to do.



NASA used to send people into space regularly from a place so bug ridden that pests from everywhere else want to move there. Anything going on a spacecraft has to be 100 percent bug free lest some gnat damage a sensitive instrument.

Many people would like to achieve the same level of control for their home but without the NASA sized budget to support it.

Some of the things we have encountered in the mission impossible category include:

- Steps for the second floor deck run past the first floor roof. A Raccoon is using the steps to get on the roof. You may not kill the raccoon. You may not trap the raccoon and relocate it. The home owner will not remove or relocate the steps.

Your mission: Remove the raccoon from the roof.

- The structure is an "A" frame home. The edge of the roof is six inches from the ground. Squirrels are chewing through the wood soffit and getting into the attic. You may not kill the squirrels or relocate them.

Your mission: Remove the squirrels from the attic.

- Bed bugs have taken over an apartment and are hiding in cracks and crevices smaller than the period at the end of this sentence. The occupant is a hoarder and refuses to get rid of anything. They have a 50 gallon fish tank and a water bed.

Your Mission: Eliminate the bed bugs. Don't kill the fish. Don't harm the tenant.

Continued...

We set aside this time to give thanks for our good fortunes and recognize those who have helped make it possible.

From our family to yours,

Best wishes of the season and for the coming new year.

Thank you for your patronage and the trust you have shown in us.

Viking Rats?:



For the last twenty-five years the most common rat on the North coast has been the Roof rat (*ratus ratus*) often referred as the black rat. That all changed last spring with our discovery of the first Norway rats in Ocean Shores.

The Roof rat derives its name from its proclivity for climbing trees and running along the roof tops of London and other European cities.

Norway rats however, seem to have been named due to a belief that they came to

England on Norwegian trading vessels. This origin has been refuted as there were no "Norway" rats in Norway at the time. Now often referred to as the brown rat it appears likely that its origins lie in central Asia, but in spite of all the evidence the taxonomic name (*ratus norvegicus*) has yet to be changed.

To most people there are rats and then there are wharf rats (another common name for the Norway rat).

Continued...

Mission Impossible:

...continued

- Rats have dug under the foundation of a home. The neighbor has half a dozen bird feeders in the yard that are feeding the rats and refuses to take them down.

Your Mission: Stop rats from getting inside the home.

- In a fit of genius, an architect builds a home around an old growth tree. The tree has been damaged by carpenter ants that are also infesting the home.

Your Mission: Eliminate the ants. Convince the homeowner that the tree needs to go.

This doesn't begin to scratch the surface of all of the real conditions we encounter but I have to admit it helps keep the job interesting.

We pride ourselves in solving these kinds of problems, but conflicting demands, regulations, and practical financial considerations often limit what can be achieved and how fast it can be accomplished.

In the end, while I'm sure I'm not super hero, every now and then it feels like it would be easier to put a man in space. ■



Winter Pests Awareness:

When the weather turns cold, it's not just people that head indoors. Many of the pests of summer do too and they can show up when least expected.

Ants seldom forage during winter. Any ant activity in winter should be considered a sign of infestation.

Carpenter ants in particular should be sound asleep. Any workers seen between November and April or winged ants before May are a clear sign of infestation that needs to be addressed.

Other ants, like the tiny black odorous house ants are often a sign of moisture within your home.

Flies and lady bugs that enter the home in late fall to winter over can be roused from sleep by heating your home. If the numbers are high it may be necessary to treat the exterior of your home in the fall to keep them in check.

Fruit flies can also be active. While they certainly infest fruits like apples and pears they can also go after potatoes. Storing these items in a cool, dry area slows down their metabolism and prevents the eggs from hatching.

Be aware of moths in winter. A moth may fly in during the summer but during winter there are none outside and their presence inside is reason to be concerned. Most winter moths turn out to be meal or grain moths that infest food. Check for outdated grain products or bird seed if you keep any in the house.

Fungus gnats can also be an annoying problem. As the name implies they feed on fungus. Their presence may be just overwintering but may also be a sign you are overwatering your house plants. An unused sink, shower or tub drain can also be a place for them to breed. Flying insect spray can be used to deal with the adult gnats but it may be necessary to change out infested potting soil if cutting back on the watering doesn't help. Flushing unused drains with bleach water usually solves drain infestations. ■

Viking rats?:

...continued

The distinction being that wharf rats have become legendary for their size. "As big as a cat" is a common description however they are about the same overall length as a roof rat but they have a longer body and shorter tail and seldom achieve 12 oz. in the wild.

While they share a lot of characteristics with roof rats they are quite different in their social structure and behavioral adaptations.

Physically, Norway rats are stockier than roof rats so they have evolved to be more of a ground dweller and tend to be a bit like a groundhog. This is not to say they won't climb a tree to get to your bird feeder but they are much more likely to dig under your foundation to get into the crawlspace than their cousins.

They are also predatory. So, if you have a Norway rat at your bird feeder there is an equal chance they will go after the birds feeding there or their eggs and nestlings.

They tend to form colonies where dominant animals have access to the best food and shelter. Dominant males have better access to females in the colony and less dominant animals are forced to the edges of the colony where they suffer higher rates of predation and mortality.

As long as there is sufficient food, no amount of predation or trapping will reduce populations for long. Females can produce up to five litters per year and can increase the number of pups in a litter to as many as fourteen depending on the number of rats and the amount of food in their home range. Figuring three weeks for gestation with females reaching maturity in about five weeks that can mean a new generation of animals every eight weeks.

It is important to be diligent about good practices around your property to avoid encounters with this animal. Keep stored items well away from the foundation of your home. That includes Kayaks, lumber, firewood and anything else they can get under.

Don't feed pets outside where rats can steal their food. Don't put up bird feeders. Keep a tight lid on the trash. Don't regularly mulch food in your mulch bin and when you do, thoroughly incorporate it into the pile. Keep tree branches and objects that can act as ladders well away from your roof. ■



Brown rat eating sunflower seeds

Service Targets:

We have entered our winter service cycle and have treated the crawlspace under your home with a concentrated borax dust. This application is made with a device that starts its life as a leaf blower and is applied through 1 or 2 of the foundation vents where it disperses and adheres to all of the components in the crawlspace.

If your home is due for inspection there will be a report with the results and a bid for any repairs we can perform. ©

