

Mangy squirrels

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We have heard reports of nearly hairless squirrels in Lincoln that are afflicted with mange. What is mange? Can pets or humans contract mange from the squirrels and other animals? Can something be done to help these squirrels?

Squirrels are vulnerable to numerous parasites and diseases, including ticks, fleas, internal parasites and mange. Mange is a term commonly used to describe the obvious signs of a burrowing mite infestation on an animal host. Mites are minute to microscopic 8-legged arthropods, related to ticks and spiders. Many mites are parasitic on plants or animals. Each different animal species probably has some kind of burrowing mite parasite associated with it. Most mites are fairly host specific, meaning that the mite variety survives best on one species of animal or closely related animals (like mice and rats). Some of these mites that infect other animals can attempt to feed on humans and non-related animals and cause some discomfort. However, the discomfort should be short-lived because these mites will not permanently establish on these other hosts.

Mange mites burrow into the skin of animals, feeding on subcutaneous tissues. The site of the infestation becomes irritated,

itchy and results in scratching by the host animal. Hair loss results in a very unkempt appearance.

Sarcoptes scabiei is the mite that is parasitic on humans producing a medical condition called "scabies", the common term for human mange. Body areas where skin is thin, like between fingers, the bend of the knee and elbow are often infested. Because skin thins with age, sometimes the elderly are more susceptible to scabies. Intense itching accompanies scabies, and scratching can result in secondary bacterial skin infections. A medical doctor should be consulted for proper diagnosis and treatment of chronic skin disorders.

Dogs, cats and most domesticated animals also have some type of burrowing mite associated with them. Loss of hair and excessive scratching by pets may be a sign of mite infestation. This may also be a sign of fleas or other skin disorders, so a veterinarian should be consulted for a proper diagnosis.

It is sad to see beautiful wildlife animals looking so ragged and pathetic, but very little can be done to help them. Control of burrowing mites requires catching the animal and repeated applications of an insecticidal medication. Like other natural afflictions, mange may be nature's way of eliminating weak individuals, thinning populations so only the healthiest survive.



Misplaced wildlife become problems



Problem wildlife are animals in the wrong place at the wrong time. Although these animals may seem annoying when in your neighborhood, most don't pose a threat and measures can be taken to keep them away.

Raccoons, opossums, squirrels, bats, rabbits, snakes and skunks are the most common problem wildlife that can invade anywhere.

Many factors can contribute to a wildlife population increase, even in urban areas. A depression in the fur market has reduced the mortality factor for raccoons, and humans are expanding residential districts into areas that were once wildlife habitats. Also, humans provide a lot of food and cover that will attract animals.

Wild animals in urban areas often seek food or shelter in porches, chimneys and garages. Dog and cat food left outside or garbage cans with food in them also can lure the animals.

Eliminate these sources of food or shelter. Feed dogs or cats only one to two times a day

and make sure all food is eaten. Put lids on garbage cans tightly. Use steel or plastic containers with a tight seal.

If bats or squirrels seek shelter in chimneys, cap them with a cover that allows smoke to go out but prevents the animals from getting in. Keep garage doors closed. Screen underneath porches with woven wire, or wood lattice for a more attractive look.

If the problem persists, professional pest control operators can be found in the phone book and, for a fee, will come to a home to resolve the problem.

Live traps may be rented from a local humane society or municipal animal control office. These entities will pick up some trapped animals, particularly those that can transmit rabies. Traps also can be bought at most hardware stores.

If an animal is encountered, be alert for abnormal behavior. Raccoon or skunk activity during the day is considered abnormal behavior because they are nocturnal animals. Don't

take chances of contracting rabies. If you do see a skunk or raccoon walking in the yard during the day, contact your local sheriff's department and the local public health department. Tell the officer where the animal is. They should respond. Pets and children should be taken inside.

Beware of handling wild animals due to a risk of rabies, especially in raccoons and skunks. If a person does get bitten, wash the wound immediately because the virus is transmitted through saliva and contact a physician. The offending animal should be captured, killed and the intact head submitted to the state public health department for rabies testing. If shooting the animal, don't shoot it in the head.

Although some danger may exist in wildlife, they can be enjoyed by all, as long as we can prevent and control the problems they may cause.

Source: Scott Hygnstrom, Ph.D., wildlife specialist, NU/IANR. (SE)

Beginning Beekeeping Workshop

What: Two 3-hour classroom sessions and one 6-hour hands-on lab.

When: Two classroom sessions: Tuesday and Wednesday, March 15 and 16. 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Where: Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road

Hands-on Lab: Saturday, April 10. 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. at UNL's ARDC Apiary Lab (near Mead).

NOTE: You should have hive supplies and protective equipment to fully participate in the April 10 lab session. During the evening sessions, you can order the supplies and protective gear you will need.

The cost of this basic workshop is \$15, which includes refreshments and reference materials. Additional family members who will share reference materials may attend for \$8. Please preregister so we can order enough reference materials. Questions? Call (402) 441-7180. (BPO)

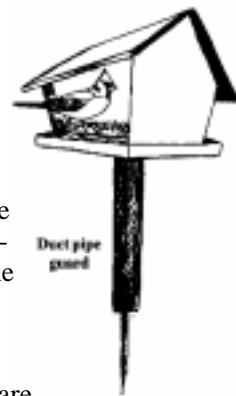


Are squirrels using your bird feeders?

To deter squirrels, place feeders seven to eight feet away from solid tree limbs, fences or railings, and try to situate feeders so squirrels can't jump onto them from above. To prevent access from below, erect feeders about five feet above the ground so squirrels can't leap up to them, and add a guard over the feeder pole. One that is simple and effective can be made from aluminum duct pipe, about six inches in diameter and 24-inches long, installed over the feeder pole directly under the feeder. Squirrels that climb the pole can go inside the duct pipe from the bottom but are stopped when they encounter the bottom of the feeder. For feeders without a flat bottom, cover the lower end of the pipe with hardware cloth so that squirrels are stopped at that point. A variety of commercially available guards and specialty feeders are designed to prevent or discourage squirrel access to bird

feeders.

Another approach is to reduce the attractiveness of the food in feeders where squirrels are a problem. One option is a repellent feed additive called Squirrel Away™ that deters squirrels but not birds. The active ingredient is capsaicin, a derivative of peppers, which may have been nature's way of discouraging seed-gnawing rodents while encouraging pepper-eating birds that spread the pepper seeds. Alternatively, consider offering safflower seeds, which are attractive to several birds but not squirrels. Finally, some people enjoy feeding squirrels hard corn on the cob, and, to increase the



squirrel antics, suspend the cob on a length of chain or place it in on a device that rotates.

Source: *Backyard Wildlife: Tips*

For Success by Ron Johnson, Extension Specialist, University of Nebraska. The fifth in the backyard wildlife series, this NebGuide describes tips for success in bird feeding, adding water, birds to expect, dealing with nuisance wildlife, and others. For your free copy, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Backyard Wildlife G1332, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln, Nebraska 68528-1507, or stop by the extension office for your free copy. (SE)

Try this trash game! It's fun!

You've heard of reduce, reuse and recycle, haven't you? In this game, you can think of lots of ways to put the 3 R's to work on an ordinary can of garbage.

1. On small pieces of scrap paper, write the names or draw simple pictures of ordinary objects you might find in a garbage can. Things like worn out or torn clothing, a glass bottle or jar, a plastic sandwich bag or a foam food container, maybe a paper napkin. What about an empty oatmeal box, old magazine, aluminum can, apple core, banana peel, egg shells or a milk carton. Old toys, junk mail,

a newspaper, an individual juice box would work but...you get the idea! If you have trouble thinking of things, look in your own garbage. It will give you loads of examples. When you have your names and/or drawings completed, put all of the papers in a container. This will be the "trash can" during the game.

2. Reuse a plastic bottle to make a spinner. Sit in a circle, place the bottle in the middle of the group and ask someone to spin it. Whomever it points to must go to the "trash can" and

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Friends, neighbors, co-workers

Each year, over 250 volunteers take part in earth wellness festival activities—people just like you:

- * high school students
- * college students/student teachers
- * business/industry employees
- * parents/grandparents
- * service club members
- * involved citizens

No experience is needed. Just a desire to help make a difference in our community. (SE)