

Wildlife in the Basement



Situation: There is a wild animal in your basement.

Why This Happens:

- In most cases, wild birds or mammals (other than mice) find their way into a basement by accident. For information about how to humanely deal with mice in your house, [click here](#).
- The species most often encountered in basements in our area are Gray Squirrels, Eastern Chipmunks, House Sparrows, and European Starlings.
- They may come in through the chimney, furnace system, dryer vent, a broken door or window, or a door or window that has been left open.
- Most animals will leave your basement on their own if you give them a way out.

FAQs & Humane Solutions:

“I found a wild animal in my basement. How do I get the animal to leave?”

- *Most animals will try to get out of your basement by exiting towards the light coming through windows or doors during daylight hours. Therefore, we recommend turning off the lights in the basement and opening as many windows as possible. Any window(s) that won't open or you don't want to open for security reasons should be covered with closed draperies or blinds, cardboard, or a blanket or towels so that the animal is not attracted to light coming in the closed window or door.*
- If there is a doorway to the outside at the top of the basement stairs, you may also want to open this door. But before doing so, close any doors between rooms upstairs to keep the animal from making a wrong turn and ending up elsewhere in your home.



◀ Chimney caps help keep animals out of your basement.

Animals that get into your chimney may be able to get into the basement through an older-model furnace. ▶



◀ Without a chimney cap installed, animals may get into your chimney, fireplace or basement.

Gray Squirrels often end up in basements after falling into uncapped chimneys. ▶



- The animal should recognize the open door(s) or window(s) as exits and leave within an hour or two. Keep people and pets out of the basement and minimize noise throughout the house so it doesn't scare the animal into hiding.
- A bird should be able to fly out an open window or door, but a small mammal such as a chipmunk may not be able to climb up to the window to get out. To make it easier for a mammal to get out, give it something it can climb on that goes from the basement floor up to the open window. You can give the animal a ramp up to the window by propping up a long board, or you can attach a long sheet or blanket to the windowsill and let it hang down to the basement floor. Climbing animals like squirrels and chipmunks should be able to use this sheet or blanket "ladder" to climb up to the open window to get out.
- If none of the windows or doors to the outside will open, or you don't want to open them for security reasons, you'll probably need to rent a live-trap to capture the animal and carry it outside for release. Call us at (414) 431-6204 to ask us about renting one of our live-traps.

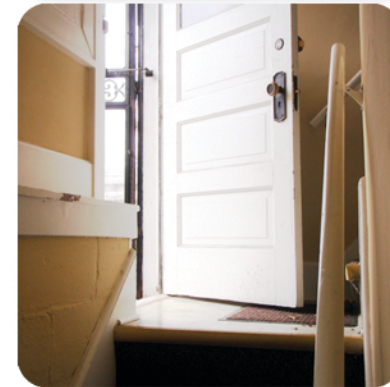
"How will I know if the animal has left my basement?"

- It can sometimes be challenging to know whether or not an animal has left. If you had been hearing or seeing the animal prior to giving it a way out, and after providing an exit you are no longer hearing or seeing it, there is a good chance it has left.
- In situations involving chipmunks and squirrels, if you sprinkle a light dusting of baby powder or flour on the windowsill when you open the window, you may be able to see the animal's footprints in the flour or baby powder if it leaves that way.
- Listen carefully for activity in the basement over the next couple of days and watch for signs such as animal droppings or items tipped over or otherwise disturbed that would indicate that the animal is still in the basement.

"I am unsure of how the animal got into my basement. How do I prevent this from happening again?"

- In our experience, most animals that get into basements come in through the chimney and through older furnace systems attached to the chimney.

Wild birds, such as this House Sparrow, also often find their way into basements. ▶



◀ If the door to your basement leads to the outdoors, consider leaving it open so the animal can escape.

"Climbing animals" such as chipmunks should be able to exit through an open basement window if you give them a prop. ▶



◀ Cover windows that don't open to block the light. The animal will associate sunlight with a way out.

We recommend that chimney cap(s) be installed to keep wildlife out of chimneys and fireplaces. A chimney cap is a wire mesh and sheet metal cover that fits over the top of the chimney pipes outside of your home. Please see our page on this topic, [click here](#).

- Once in the chimney an animal may get into the basement through a loose clean-out door at the base of the chimney. In older homes, these are often rusted and the mortar and bricks around them may be crumbling.
- Wildlife can also enter the basement through the **clothes dryer vent**. A dryer vent guard to keep wildlife out is inexpensive and usually easy to install. Once installed, check the guard regularly to clear away any dryer lint that may accumulate.
- **Broken basement windows** or basement windows that don't latch securely are another way that wildlife may be able to enter your basement. Repair any broken windows and inspect window latches to make sure they latch securely.

“There is an animal in my dryer vent pipe. How do I get him out?”

Chipmunks and other small rodents occasionally get trapped in the pipe running from your dryer to the outside of your home. If this is the case, you have two options:

- Disconnect the vent pipe from the back of the dryer. In most cases, **the chipmunk should be able to exit the vent pipe into the basement** (minimize noise and keep pets and people out of the basement so the chipmunk will not be too afraid to come out). Once the animal has exited the pipe or the dryer, you will need to either give it a way out of the basement, or live-trap it and release it outdoors (*see the techniques we described above for removing an animal from your basement*).
- Disconnect the outdoor-end of the vent pipe and stuff the opening of the pipe with a towel or firmly-crumpled ball of newspaper. Then disconnect the pipe from the back of the dryer and stuff that end with a towel or newspaper as well. **Carry the entire ventilation pipe outside and**

The clean-out door at the bottom of the chimney is usually located in the basement. ►



◀ An unprotected dryer vent

A dryer vent guard fits over the hood of the dryer vent and prevents animals from entering. ►



◀ A ventilation pipe runs from your dryer to the outside of your home to eliminate exhaust.

remove the plugs from each end. The chipmunk should run out of the tube. Then take the tube back indoors and reconnect it to the dryer and the exterior vent. (*Note: There is a chance that the animal may be in the dryer itself and not in the tube. In that case, proceed with the method described in the paragraph above.*)

Once the animal is out of the vent pipe, install a dryer vent guard (see photo at right) to prevent this from happening again. 🐾

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WHS Wildlife Center, 4500 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53208.

Disconnect the ventilation tube from the back of the dryer by pulling in the direction of the arrow. ►



◀ Whether you release the chipmunk in the yard or allow him to escape from the basement, install a vent guard so he can't reenter.