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## **DETECTING NUISANCE WILDLIFE FROM BIRD FEEDERS**

With the cold weather setting in, feeding birds in the backyard becomes an activity that returns many benefits. This may include listening to the songs and calls, enjoying nature in our backyards and connecting kids and grandkids to the outdoor life and its beauty. The downside is the attraction of unwanted guests that consume the birdfeed, damage the feeder or even invite themselves into your home.

There are practical solutions to attract the birds that you want and keep out the unwanted guests such as squirrels, mice, rats, chipmunks, raccoons, deer, opossums, insects and non-native species of birds like starlings, house sparrows and pigeons.

There is no question the birdfeeders that are located on poles provide the most protection from many unwanted guests. Squirrels, raccoons and other animals can access feeders by climbing up trees and wooden poles, running across wires, and leaping up, down or horizontally from nearby perches. While many feeders are designed to hang from trees, attach to a deck rail or suction to a window, a pole 6 to 8 feet away from trees and structures and at least 6 feet off the ground, works the best.

To prevent animals from climbing the pole, secure baffles at least 4 feet off the ground and just below the feeder. Baffles are physical barriers that prevent squirrels from climbing the poles made out of smooth material such as smooth metal. That way sharp claws cannot grip and climb. Stationary baffles need to be 14 to 18 inches long or wide to prevent animals from climbing over them. Spring loaded baffles can move up or down on the poles so when an animal tries to climb, they end up falling to the ground.

Feeders hung on an outstretched wire, like a clothesline, can be protected with tube baffles. Several short sections of PVC tube placed along the length of the line should serve as an adequate deterrent. A feeder hanging from a backyard tree can be baffled but the shape needs to be flat or domed shaped or like sloping cones much like a witch's hat. The sloped cone baffles work the best. Pictures are worth a thousand words, so go to the UNL Extension publication "EC 1783 Selective Bird Feeding - Detering Nuisance Wildlife from Bird Feeders." A shortcut to this publication is at <http://goo.gl/kIclfn> I'm sure from these pictures you can make something that will work.

Don't use grease on a pole to prevent animals from climbing. Grease becomes tacky overtime and allows climbing anyway. Grease also harms wildlife by matting fur and feathers and reducing insulation during bad weather hindering flight.

Birds have seed preferences and by selectively using bird seed, you can eliminate some pests. The publication mentioned has a very useful chart what to feed by bird species. Using catch pans or trays with drainage holes below the feeders can deter rodents also. The trays can minimize seed that hits the ground and the tray should be cleaned weekly. Your feeder type that you chose is probably the single biggest method of deterring pests.



Some say feed the squirrels with a squirrel feeding station and that will solve problems. But now you have well fed squirrels, larger litters and more relatives coming over! With this in mind, the food has to be well stocked. Give them an inch and they may take a mile. Watching squirrel antics can be very amusing but sometimes the problems they cause with feeders and damage outweigh the amusement. Look at EC 1783 for more great ideas on feeding our feathered friends and preventing nuisance wildlife.

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