

KEEPING OUT PESTS

By Roy Bardowell, CDDC

We are only months from summer, and summer is Pest Season. Depending on where you live, pest season could be seasonal or every day. Your garages serve the purpose of protecting vehicles, storing items, and can even double as additional workspace.



While the garage is a practical and adaptable household area, it's also often home to a range of bugs, rodents, and other pests. During a hot summer, insects are looking for a reprieve from the heat and are in need of reliable water source. When you drive a wet car into the garage after rain; water drips on the floor permitting bugs access to water. So unknowingly, you could be building the perfect home for the unwanted. While in the winter, the critters need protection and warmth. Finding critters in your garage is often unsettling and inconvenient, but there are several quick methods to remove unwanted housemates and help minimize future infestations.

As a homeowner, you are probably accustomed to finding pests and insects on your property. These sightings can range from a minor inconvenience like flies or gnats buzzing around to major problems that can lead to property damage, such as mice and birds nesting within the walls and ceiling. Most pests seek shelter in garages because they often represent a steady source of food, water, nesting opportunities, or light.

The most common types of bugs and pests you'll find in garages include:

- Flies
- Silverfish
- Crickets
- Spiders
- Cockroaches
- Ants
- Moths
- Mites
- Mice
- Birds
- Squirrels
- Rats
- In some places—Snakes (to me a snake is like a helper that eats rodents and insects). If you suspect the snake is poisonous, then by any means call in an exterminator.



If you've recently found bugs and other critters living in your garage, it's important to remove them quickly and take the necessary steps to prevent them from returning. Some critters like Mice and squirrels can be hard to get rid of. Squirrels usually enter an attic through an opening in the roof or soffit. You can minimize bugs and pests from getting into your garage with these solutions:

- **Remove existing critters:** Incorporating preventive measures throughout your garage won't do any good if there's

already pests nesting in the space. Inspect your garage and note any signs of an infestation, then call a pest control company to remove any bugs or pests.

- **Inspect your roof and house for holes:** A mouse can fit into really small spaces. A mouse can fit through a hole as small as a nickel. It is the same with birds. Once they begin to breed, you will have a population explosion on your hands that could take years to reverse. Birds can be a big problem also with a special focus on pigeons. Pigeons are dirty birds that will have parasites and bird mites in their droppings when they defecate. If you come in contact with pigeon poop wash your hands immediately. If you accidentally transfer pigeon poop to your eye, you can go blind from a disease that only pigeon's carry. Once birds nest in your garage, they will not leave until their eggs hatch or they are driven out. The offspring may return the following years to nest in their birthplace. To stop the vicious cycle, you may need to get cruel and kill the birds. For me that would be a last resort. A more humane approach is you can purchase a plastic owl at a garden center and place it on a pole outside your garage. This usually will keep birds away. If they ignore the owl, then position it in another spot until you find that sweet spot that scares birds or rodents from your area.



- **Clean out the garage:** Once all insects and pests have been removed, clean out your garage by sweeping the floors, removing debris and replacing boxes with plastic storage containers. If you mop your floor with a 50/50 vinegar and water solution, it can deter critters from entering your garage for a few months. Keep containers and other items on shelving to eliminate hiding spots and nesting opportunities. Remove any food and place pet food in airtight containers. Then, look for moisture sources and dry any standing water with a portable fan. If your garage ceiling leaks during rain, then patch it or place a pale where the water drips to keep a puddle from forming on the floor. A bag of dogfood will attract almost any critter. One evening while walking into my garage I noticed 2 crickets munching on a small chunk of dry dogfood. The next morning, I placed the bag in a plastic container and stored it high on a shelf. However, the cricket infestation continued through the entire summer. Crickets are typically not scary. It's the noise that is annoying. Typically, I am not worried about critters except the odd wolf spider or black widow spider. Living in Arizona, I have had to deal with scorpion's every year, which are the most horrid critter in my book.



- Many homes in Arizona employ a gas hot water heater. The building code calls for ventilation in the garage when natural gas is used. The problem with the vents is the openings are too big, which can permit the insects mentioned a doorway in and out of the garage. To remedy the situation, I had to purchase fly screen and tape in onto the normal vent openings. This helped out a lot, but there was one more place that needed more work to keep out the uglies. My home was brand new meaning the cheapest weather seal were employed. Especially on the garage door bottom seal. Being in garage door business, I was able to locate replacement rubber door-seal and replace the dry, worn out piece that had stopped sealing the door to the floor years before.



Do this also:

- **You should inspect:** your garage door weather seal and weather-strip on the entry door every spring and because of the many different designs, it would be prudent to call a professional garage door service company. They will provide the correct replacement and seal out the pests for good. If the correct rubber astragal is not found, a garage door service company will employ another type of seal. You may choose to purchase extra weather seal from the serviceman, so you can make your own repairs later down the road.
- **Inspect for cracks:** Prevent pests from entering your garage by checking for cracks in the foundation, walls, and ceilings as well as gaps in exterior doorways and windows. Seal any gaps or cracks with silicone caulk.
- **Lay traps:** For sneaky pests that still find a way into your garage, set up traps around entrances and spray pesticides around doors, windows and along walls.
- **Insecticides works well most of the time.** Keep that in stock all the time and spray the garage floor whenever necessary.

Roy Bardowell, CDDC, served as Operations Manager at Guardian Access & Door Hardware until 2014. He has been in the door and operator industry since 1973 and is known as one of the industry's most experienced operator technicians and trainers. Roy received the IDEA Commitment to Excellence award in 2008 and IDA's Jerry R. Reynolds Volunteer Service Award in 2017. Contact him at roythedoorman@gmail.com