



## For More Information Contact

wildlifecontrol@spca.bc.ca  
BC SPCA Animal Helpline  
1.855.622.7722

**BCSPCA**  
SPEAKING FOR ANIMALS

# GREY SQUIRRELS

## WILDLIFE CONTROL BEST PRACTICES

### Species

Eastern grey squirrel, *Sciurus carolinensis*

### Legal Designation

Schedule C, *BC Wildlife Act*

### Disease Risks

Not known to carry *parapox virus* or rabies in BC

### Seasonal Considerations

Up to 2 litters of babies, in early spring and early summer



#### Did you know?

Grey squirrels' gathering and planting of acorns helps trees grow. They eat nuts and seeds, but also like berries and garden bulbs.

Grey squirrel

## Squirrels in BC

Grey squirrels are the most common squirrel in urban areas of BC – they are native to eastern North America, but non-native to BC. They are large squirrels that can be grey, black, or brindle in colour, and have large, fluffy tails longer than their bodies. Other squirrel species are designated as protected furbearers and generally don't come into conflict with people. Other protected squirrel species in BC include: Douglas squirrels, Northern flying squirrels, and red squirrels.

## Common Conflicts

Squirrels sometimes den in structures like chimneys, attics or walls, and chew wires and tree bark. They can also dig up bulbs in garden beds and are attracted to bird feeders.

## Conflict Prevention

Remove potential food sources for squirrels by securing garbage bins and composts, and make sure bird feeders are inaccessible and not overflowing. Maintain roofs and chimneys to prevent squirrels from getting inside. Block access to vents and other entry points, use secure chimney caps, and remove rooftop access by trimming branches and other materials that squirrels can climb.

## Are Grey Squirrels Invasive?

Grey squirrels are often blamed when other squirrels leave an area, but research in BC shows that grey squirrels are better adapted to living in cities than native squirrel species. Native squirrels prefer forest habitat and move out when urban development moves in.

There is little evidence that grey squirrels displace other squirrels. Grey squirrels live alongside red squirrels over large parts of North America. Grey squirrels were introduced to Stanley Park in 1909 and on southern Vancouver Island in 1966. They are now well-established in the Lower Mainland and in the Capital Regional District, but should not be introduced into new areas.

Squirrelepox virus (or squirrel parapox virus) has not been reported in British Columbia, though grey squirrels in their natural range in Ontario have tested positive for antibodies to the virus. To maintain virus-free status in BC, introductions of grey squirrels from their native range should be prevented.

Call an **AnimalKind** accredited wildlife control company if you need help managing squirrels  
Visit [www.animalkind.ca](http://www.animalkind.ca) for



[spca.bc.ca/urban-wildlife](http://spca.bc.ca/urban-wildlife)





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BEST PRACTICES



Grey squirrels can be black or grey in colour



### RECOMMENDED

#### Actions & methods for control

If a squirrel has moved in, try using mild humane harassment. Place lights at the nest entrance or play a radio nearby. Soak rags in apple cider vinegar, place them in a plastic container with holes poked in the lid, and place the containers in or near den or entry points (without blocking access). Do not haze squirrels if there are babies that are too young to leave the nest – this may frighten the mother and cause her to abandon them. Injured or orphaned squirrels should be taken to a wildlife rehabilitator for treatment.

To evict a squirrel, install a one-way door for two to three nights so the squirrel(s) can leave, but not re-enter. If a one-way door can't be used, or has been ineffective, animals should be live-trapped and then released immediately outside the home. Use reuniting techniques if there are babies present, and seal gaps and holes once the whole family has moved out.

### Don't Trap and Relocate

Trapping and relocating wildlife away from their home is generally not a permanent or humane solution. Animals often injure themselves and may die trying to escape a trap. Relocated animals have to set up a new home, may starve trying to find food or get into fights with other animals over territory, and may spend vital energy trying to return home.

When you trap animals, you also risk separating a mother from her babies. Even if you move an entire family, a mother may abandon her young due to the pressure of caring for the babies while trying to find food in a new area.



### NOT RECOMMENDED

#### Actions & methods for control

Trapping and relocating is not recommended, but grey squirrels are designated as a Schedule C species and can legally be trapped and released within short distances. Grey squirrels should only be released in established urban populations, and not spread into new areas.

The BC SPCA does not recommend killing squirrels. However, legal regulated methods may be used for euthanasia to relieve suffering when animals are injured. They may also be used legally to control squirrels, but are not recommended as they can cause suffering, may be high risk to non-target animals, and/or are difficult to administer. Check local bylaws and/or regulations to confirm whether the method is legal in a municipality.

- Trapping and relocating (in accordance with the **BC Wildlife Act** – can only relocate within 1 km on Vancouver Island & Gulf Islands, within 10 km in the rest of BC)
- Blunt force trauma
- Carbon dioxide or carbon monoxide
- Cervical dislocation
- Crossbow
- Gunshot
- Killing neck snare
- Penetrating captive bolt
- Spring trap (e.g. Kania or conibear-style)



### ILLEGAL

#### Actions & methods for control

- Drowning
- Suffocation
- Electrocution
- Freezing (including dry ice)
- Fumigant poisons
- Glue traps
- Leghold or foot snare
- Rodenticides, bait poisons
- Chloroform
- Vehicle exhaust