

Autumn Invaders

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SPEAKERS

Dan Burton, Christa Hartsook

C Christa Hartsook 00:00

Welcome to the Small Farms Podcast, a production of the Small Farms Program at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. This is Episode Five, where I interviewed Dan Burton, Iowa State University Extension Value Added Agriculture Specialist, and talk about some autumn invaders that may be creeping into your home or other buildings on your property. I'm Christa Hartsook, Small Farms Program Coordinator. And we hope you enjoy the show. So Dan, colder weather obviously brings more pests around what should we be on the lookout for this fall?

D Dan Burton 00:31

Well, there's nothing we really have to be on the lookout for, but there are things that will probably end up in your home, whether you're on the lookout for them or not and then you have to deal with that. You've got mammals like bats, mice, chipmunks, and then of course, we in our climate, we have less of a problem with reptiles as they do down south. But we also we have insects and you know, this is the time of year when you find large lady prototype beetles in your home and Boxelder Bugs, that sort of thing.

C Christa Hartsook 01:08

Sure. So let's talk about some of these more prevalent ones individually. Dan, what do we need to do to kind of control or to mitigate the problem before it starts?

D Dan Burton 01:18

Well with bats, they're really not the creepy, horrible little animals most people think they are. They're really neat little colonial mammals that are soft and furry. And when it gets cold, they form colonies. And they get together and they stay warm through the winter. And a lot of times that will happen in the attic of an old house. I lived, once owned a home in Ames that was noble house, 100 years old that had quite a bat colony in it. They'd come bother a lot of people,

usually they're they're quite harmless, but just knowing that they're really bothersome folks. If you do have a serious infestation of bats, you're going to have to talk to professional about sealing up the eaves where they're coming in and also extricating them getting out, getting them out of your dwelling.

C Christa Hartsook 02:08

So bats are looking for warmth, obviously, you know, what do we need to doing to keep them out?

D Dan Burton 02:14

Well, first of all, seal up, find out where they're getting in and seal that up. So then you end up with the problem of getting rid of them if they're in there. Like saying the attic of an old house or something like that. And one thing you can do is in get a piece of duct work at your local home improvement center that type of duct you would be using for dryer exhaust. And then on that with a band clamp or something put on an old sock and cut kind of cut the end out of it a bit. This means that all the bats that are in the house when they go out to forage or you disturb them will go be able to go out this piece of pipe and there's a little flange fitting you can buy to mount this thing. Anyway, bats will go out down the pipe out the sock but they can't come back in. So that's a nice way to passively get them all to vacate your dwelling. And then once that's happened, you can unscrew this little flange like apparatus with the pipe on the sock and throw it out if you want to just put up put a little plate over where that thing was

C Christa Hartsook 03:21

Very good, and how about mice, Dan? You know mice are a common problem in buildings and homes in the fall and winter months.

D Dan Burton 03:29

A person can trap them There are live traps available. If they get into your house, one problem they cause outside is especially chipmunks, they'll route around next to your foundation and in the spring and you get a big rain you might end up with a lot of water in your basement. With respect to mice, I use a live trap made by a major manufacturer. You can buy live traps that actually catch the mice and if you feel bad about knocking them off you can take them out in the country and let them go. But if you have bird seed, and I have, I store a lot of bird seed in the sunroom of my home, I have large plastic totes I always transfer the bags of seed to. They don't seem to be able to get into that. It's not as attractive as bags of birdseed they're sitting around, especially the heavy reinforced paper bags, they'll just gnaw right through.

C Christa Hartsook 04:20

And same would be said for our acreage owners that maybe have animal feed in and outbuilding.

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Dan Burton 04:27

Absolutely, absolutely. And in that situation, then you're talking about the potential of having a rat infestation, which is something a lot more serious than a cute little mouse. I think in the article I wrote for your Acreage Living Newsletter a while back I talked about one of the tried and true old traps out there. Which is a very simple way to if you think you have a rat problem. There are various poisonous baits available at cetera, et cetera if you don't want to go that route, one thing that farmers have been doing for hundreds of years is to.. rats like to run along the base of a foundation or some other structure for cover. So if you sink into the ground a pretty deep.. a pretty good straight walled metal bucket. And within the very top rim of the bucket, put two holes and have a steel rod say with a board on it, that the rat will go out and onto the board and it'll tip and drop them into the bucket. You can also people bait that type of a board. I saw one recently where some very creative folks use actually, on the rod just simply monitored a plastic soft drink bottle that they put some holes into and then they stuck bait into that bottle. And when the rat went out onto the bottle and spun and dropped them into the container. So that's you can either put water in the container and the rats will drowned. Or you can probably try to fish out a live very angry rat, which I wouldn't suggest.

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Christa Hartsook 06:08

So I'm assuming same kind of, you know, precautionary things we could do around the home feeling up gaps.

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Dan Burton 06:16

Yes. And for rats, one of the rat, rats, mice, chipmunks, even snakes that are harmless, that might scare you in this climate, any, like a tarpaulin that you might have laying outside on the ground or covering hay bales or something like that. If you think about it, from an animal's point of view, it's like man, what a beautiful condominium to move into. So any place that you're providing shelter, cover from pret and protection from other predators or from predators, you know, you're going to you're going to be creating a nice habitat for animals to live in. And it's not necessarily a bad thing. It's just whether or not they're real, you know, they're in close proximity to your building. Or if by doing that they're gonna destroy whatever they're in. You know, it's a fabric type of material, there's a good chance they're going to gnaw and destroy it. If it's a bedding material for livestock, they may, you know, deposit feces and urine on it. Who knows, you know,

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Christa Hartsook 07:09

This fall, Dan, I have noticed an awful lot of you know, Asian Beetles, Boxelder Bugs, especially on the south side of my home and around windows and, you know, doors. It seems like everything I do, does not keep these things out. Why are they so prevalent in the fall number one, and what can I do?



D Dan Burton 07:28

Well, they get together they formed huge colonies to overwinter and gap seal your building as best as possible and their various types of materials that worked pretty well for this- expanding foams, silicone caulks, whatever. But you know, again, one way or another, you're providing a habitat for them. They're usually of course on south facing walls, because that's what the sun beats on. It's going to keep them going through the winter, a little bit of radiant heat there. They are just a general problem. Urban dwelling, you're going to have some in there.

C Christa Hartsook 08:01

Are there other types of pests we need to be on the lookout for or things we need to be doing, you know, different types of spiders?

D Dan Burton 08:08

Ahh.. spiders. Central Iowa is one of the hotspots for Brown Recluse Spiders, for example, in North America. A lot people didn't know that.

C Christa Hartsook 08:16

I did not know that either.

D Dan Burton 08:21

Most spiders, of course are harmless. The one you find in your basement that makes cute little those stringy little webs that you see in all the horror movies on TV. That's floaties they're completely harmless. Daddy Long Legs aren't even a spider and they're harmless. But then you get the some of these big brown nasty looking Wolf Spiders and they're quite intimidating in they freak out people and pets and stuff. But most of those are harmless, but then you get to things like the Brown Recluse and some of those other Wolf Spiders can give you a pretty nasty whack if they bite you. A Brown Recluse bite can result in a necrotic bit of tissue that will linger for years. Important thing to remember with those spiders we really don't like, like the Brown Recluse, is that they are extremely attracted to quiet areas with a lot of woody cover as in old Deadwood like Barney, etc. A lot of people that have been bitten by the Brown Recluse it has been a result of poking around and woodpiles. So if you have a wood storage pile, just want to be careful when you're handling that firewood or bring it into the house that you kind of whack it together a little bit knock stuff off it especially later in the year when maybe the spiders in there quite dormant. And then you bring it into the house. So if you do see a big brown spider come crawling out of your firewood, you'll carefully pick it up and dispose of it. With respect to spiders, the spiders are coming in hunting insects and it's the same kind of thing in the fall. They're just tending to come into the building. Best thing is just scoop them up in some kind of container and toss them back outside. Unlike a mouse or perhaps a bat, they're not very likely to come back.

C Christa Hartsook 10:03



Christa Hartsook 10:05

What about the different types of traps that are out there the sticky traps versus the you know Spring Trap?



Dan Burton 10:09

Sure, any kind of trap you're going to use, especially if you have pets, you want to put it in a place where the pets can't get to it. And in general, most things like, well if you're looking at rodents, they want to go to a sheltered, little, quiet area. So any kind of tunnel like enclosed closure or upside down box with a trap in it, a lot of times is more effective. And a small plastic tub with some holes cut in the rims to make nice little tunnels for the guys to enter and set your trap inside maybe throw some birdseed in there and make it attractive to them. This works pretty well.



Christa Hartsook 10:45

Yep, absolutely. What about storage of things in the kitchen, Dan, and keeping things really clean?



10:52

Well that's extremely important just from, you know, a human health standpoint for the health of you and your loved ones. Also, you know, if you should for any reason, one of the main indicators that you've got a problem, especially with rodents is if you're finding feces in your house, like mouse droppings or something. If that's the case it's time to get a trap up immediately. Because mice, house flies, cockroaches, can all mechanically contaminate your food and areas where you prepare foods simply by walking over those areas. So you want to make sure that you keep all of your, you know, food preparation areas extremely clean, and if you do find any mouse droppings or anything like that immediately start running some traps.



Christa Hartsook 11:39

Sounds good. Thanks very much, Dan. This podcast will be up on our website, www.extension.iastate.edu/smallfarms. Along with our Acreage Living Newsletter and other resources of interest. Thanks for listening!