

Question: For four of my last five inspections I have encountered a problem that seems to be abundant in the Gatineau Hills. This problem is animals that seem to be living in our homes rather than outside where they belong. Seeing these homes has made me want to alert you the reader and homeowner that not only can these pests be a destructive nuisance, they can also be a health hazard. So, the question is what can we do about it?

Answer: You must determine where these crafty creatures are getting into your home. Mice, squirrels, bats and raccoons seem to be the main culprits. Mice and bats can enter through a hole as small as 1/4 inch. The area between the concrete basement and the wood framing seems to be a favorite point of entry. The lower corners of basement doors and windows are also a favorite.

Most people are unaware that bat droppings are toxic to humans. Over exposure can make you very ill. If you believe you have problems with bats in your home or attic, you must let a professional deal with this problem. Squirrels and raccoons seem to love the attics. Take a spring walk around your home and look at the trim and woodwork at the edge of your roof for any openings that may have occurred over the winter. Or better yet, take a peek inside your attic hatch and see what you find. Look for leaves or signs of nuts.

These creatures can totally re-arrange the insulation placement to develop nests. Not to mention they do not go outside to use the facilities!! A mother squirrel or raccoon will chew through 2x6 lumbers to get to its babies... so they mean business. Last, but not least, is the ever allusive mouse. I have recently seen basement walls and attics inundated with mouse nests, complete with droppings and significant pee staining. This too is a real potential for health problems. If you suspect that you have mice, you have to deal with them and get them out of your house. They love peanut butter on a trap snap problem solved ! But keep doing it, if you catch one, you will catch anywhere from 5 to 8 or even more. For those of you with a faint heart, I suggest a good cat or professional exterminator. Living in the woods of the Gatineau Hills in close proximity to nature can be fabulous, but for goodness sake, let's keep the wild animals outside !

Peter Weeks has been a general contractor since 1988, he has been doing **Residential Home Inspections** for about four years. He is an Associate Member of OAH (Ontario Association of Home Inspectors), CAHPI (Canadian Association of Home & Property Inspectors) and a member of the BBB in Good Standing.

A home inspection can be one of the most important investments you'll ever make. Choose Peter Weeks to provide you and your family PEACE OF MIND during the buying process.