



No portion of this article may be reproduced without
express written permission of Style Publishing Group, LLC.
©2007 • All rights reserved.



Style Publishing Group
P.O. Box 1676
Frisco, Texas 75034
Phone: 972.335.1181
Toll Free: 877.781.7067
Fax: 214.722.2313

E-mail: info@friscostyle.com
Web: www.friscostyle.com

Ad Sales: (972) 335-1306



Squirrely, the FSM mascot, who lives in the Pecan Tree outside the office of Frisco STYLE Magazine on Main Street. photo by Leah Beckham

clearing out the crawlspace a daunting undertaking, even for the most avid spring cleaner.

The most common culprits in the Frisco area are mice and rats, says Jim Schumacher, founder of All Safe Pest and Termite of Frisco. "We're constructing homes in the fields that are their habitat," Schumacher says. "These creatures scatter - then they create their own 'invisible highways' to specific homes that we can't see and that really don't make much sense to us."

Where those highways lead isn't a matter of housekeeping or hygiene, he says. It's a random rodent selection - and a problem that must be dealt with quickly by the unfortunate homeowner. "Their breeding numbers are incredible," Schumacher adds.

How do you deduce whether your particular rodent is a mouse or a rat? The entry hole tells the tale, says Schumacher. Determining whether you have a mouse or a rat can also impact the strategy needed to rid your family of the pesky problem.

If a rat is your culprit, the edges of the hole will be dark from oils generated in the rat's coat and the hole can be smaller than the size of a nickel. A mouse hole, on the other hand, can be as small as the diameter of a No. 2 pencil. "You've got to know what you're dealing with and have the right trap for the right size," Schumacher says.

He recommends a mechanical trap for mice and rats - they produce the least offensive result. Despite myths in the industry, poisons don't make rodents "leave to go find water" or "dry-up" bodily fluids, he says: "They still usually end up dying somewhere within the framework of your home."

What about the non-rodent visitors you may find in your attic? Schumacher suggests luring birds out of the attic by placing bird food and water on the

Critters in the Attic

By Susan Blomd

WHEN IT COMES TO SPRING CLEANING, it's hard to think you could end up with a good case of the "heebie-jeebies."

However, for those brave souls adventurous enough to tackle their attic - the critters lurking behind those dusty boxes and forgotten cast-offs can be an upsetting discovery.

Take Thom Robinson, for instance. He suddenly found himself going from local suburbanite husband and father to assassin-for-hire. There was a mouse in the attic, and his wife, Gail, had "put a hit out" on it.

Robinson, a 38-year-old manufacturing development engineer for Hewlett Packard, assembled an arsenal of traps, poison bags, sticky glue mats and any other "weapons of mouse destruction" he could find at the nearby Home Depot. What finally worked: a good, old-fashioned mousetrap.

"You'd think there was an army of them up there," says Robinson. "It

came down to one poor little mouse that couldn't have been more than two inches plus a tail." After the deed was done, he made his wife witness the results of her edict before he disposed of the body. "It was traumatic for her," he says.

"He assembled an arsenal of traps, poison bags, sticky glue mats and any other 'weapons of mouse destruction.'"

Aside from the occasional wasps' nest or ant trail, the possibility of invaders - mice, rats, squirrels, possum, raccoons, salamanders - or even birds, can make

top step of the attic's pull-down steps. "Once you get them in your house, it's easier to steer them toward windows or outdoors," he says. However, squirrels are another story – he says trapping them on top of the roof with apples or peanut butter as bait works best.

The City of Frisco will come remove wild animals from any "living area" of your home, but that doesn't include the yard, garage or attic. For "non-living areas" of your home, traps are available.

Whether it's a squirrel, possum, raccoon or any other large nuisance animal in your attic, the city's animal care and control services will bring a trap to your home, bait it for you and even pick up the animal when it's caught, says Sharon Elliott, the city's code enforcement supervisor. "We're ready to help, or we can refer you to a wildlife removal service if needed," she says, but warns, "We don't want someone to bring a wild animal in on their own – a resident could get hurt."

The city's Animal Control Office can be contacted at 972.335.5580, ext. 137 or 188 during normal business hours, 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday. Emergency concerns should be reported by contacting Police Dispatch at 972.335.5505. If the animal-related concern occurs after business hours and is not an emergency, you can leave a message on the Animal Control voicemail at 972.335.5580, ext. 137.

Elliott says what's done with an animal after it's been trapped takes using one's best judgment: "If it's something like a baby bunny, and its mother is right there, we don't want to separate it from

its mother." However, wildlife should be released at least a mile or two outside the city limits, she says. Once an animal is in the city's possession, it goes to either a wildlife rehabilitation facility, the city's shelter agency – which is currently the SPCA of McKinney, or is appropriately released into its natural habitat.

"The City will come remove wild animals from any 'living area' of your home, but that doesn't include the yard, garage or attic. For 'non-living' areas traps are available."

Once the unwelcome guests are gone, how do you go about preventing another incident? Bill Winfrey, of Winfrey Home Services pest and termite control, says sealing all entry points - including where vents and plumbing enters the house - can help but may not be fail-safe. "You start with the obvious places, then you have to keep it up as a work in progress," Winfrey says. Caulk, wire mesh or liquid foam are the usual means for the job, but because rodents must gnaw to "file their teeth down" they have to chew, and will chew through just about anything, he says. "You can't rule anything out."

Susan Bland is a freelance writer living in Frisco.



Mice! photo by Taylor Robinson

Curious vs. Cautious

Did you know that when it comes to setting mechanical rodent traps, how and where you set them makes a difference?

For catching mice, which typically run along the edges of walls it's best to place multiple traps in the same location – they tend to jump and run over just one trap. Moving the traps also stirs their curious nature. So, if you're not getting the quick results you want – do some shuffling.

Rats, on the other hand, are very cautious creatures. They have an aversion to new things in their environment. The recommendation is staying patient and keeping traps in the same place for more the just 2 or 3 days.



Another critter caught in the wilds of Frisco by a FSM staffer. photo by Chris Johnson