



INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT: GROUND SQUIRRELS

Ground squirrels are brownish-gray rodents that forage above ground near their burrows. Ground squirrels are 9 to 11 inches long, not counting their bushy tail, which adds another 5 to 9 inches.

Why are ground squirrels a problem?

Ground squirrels damage garden plants and fruit and nut trees. They can also cause damage to building foundations, fences, and levee systems. Their burrows create tripping hazards.

Ground squirrels can carry diseases harmful to humans. A major concern is bubonic plague, transmitted to humans from the fleas that the squirrels carry. If you find squirrels or other rodents dead for no reason, notify public health officials.

What do squirrels do?

Ground squirrels live in colonies in burrow systems where they sleep, rest, rear young, store food, and avoid danger. They are active during the day, mainly midmorning through late afternoon, especially on warm, sunny days.

IPM Strategies

1 USE TRAPS

Traps work best between February and October when ground squirrel numbers are low to moderate.

Use a trap that kills since it's illegal to release trapped squirrels elsewhere.

Types of kill-traps include:

- ▶ **Box traps**—place box-type traps in a covered box with a 3-inch diameter entrance to reduce hazards to children and pets.
- ▶ **Tunnel traps**—place on the ground near squirrel burrows or runways and bait them with walnuts, almonds, oats, barley, or melon rinds.
- ▶ **Conibear traps**—Place the trap directly in the burrow opening, so the squirrel must pass through it, tripping the trigger.

Inspect traps once a day and remove dead squirrels with protective gear. You can use plastic bags slipped over your arms as gloves. Hold the animal with one hand and slip the plastic bag inside out over the animal and off your hand.

2 HIRE A PEST MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONAL (PMP)

A PMP will know how and when to use toxic baits and fumigants (gas cartridges). While these products are available at local hardware and home improvement stores, they can still seriously harm or kill children when not handled by PMPs.

ACTION PLAN FOR GROUND SQUIRRELS

WHEN TO TAKE ACTION	NONPESTICIDE PRACTICES	LAST RESORT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ When you notice ground squirrel burrows. Burrows are about 4 inches in diameter and are not plugged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Remove brush piles and debris. ▶ Destroy old burrows. ▶ Use traps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Hire a pest management professional to use baits or fumigate.

RESOURCES

- University of California Statewide IPM: *Ground squirrels*
www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7438.html

California Childcare Health Program, University of California, San Francisco School of Nursing • cchp.ucsf.edu



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