

SQUIRREL DAMAGE TO TREES

Tree squirrels can cause a couple types of tree damage. Most commonly they clip the tips of branches. The length of severed branches is often 2 to 3 feet though they can be longer or shorter. When squirrels snip off a branch, they cut it at about a 45-degree angle and the cut is rather tattered. This is a nuisance type of damage and normally does not harm the health of the tree.

More serious damage is caused when squirrels strip the bark off of limbs or rarely, the trunk. Wounds can be quite large and the squirrel can effectively girdle the branch by removing all the bark completely around the circumference. Branches girdled in this way will die and the tree may be ruined if those branches are major.

Why squirrels do this is still a bit of a mystery. Some people think it is simply a means to sharpen their teeth or that they are seeking nesting material or water. Other people think that there are certain squirrels that are high-strung and cause this damage out of nervous energy. If the damage is limited to snipping the ends off of branches, it is probably best to ignore the activity as the tree suffers little harm. But if real damage is occurring due to extensive bark removal, try feeding and watering them. If that doesn't work, control may be necessary. Fox and gray squirrels are game animals and can be hunted in season where it is legal and safe to do so. They can also be trapped and moved away from the area they are causing damage.

Ticks

Ticks are very active throughout the state, and have been for the past month. The most commonly reported species has been the American dog tick, *Dermacentor variabilis*. We have other species also such as the Deer tick and Lone Star tick, All of these critters can carry diseases that adversely affect human health.

The cool, wet weather over the past month has provided great conditions for tick development. These annoying, and potentially dangerous parasites have even been encountered in corn fields, which is unusual as they typically develop in more undisturbed areas of grasses, weeds, and other overgrown vegetation. But, they are very good at finding hosts and getting the blood meal they require for development and reproduction. For more information on ticks in Kansas, please visit: <https://www.vet.kstate.edu/vhc/docs/ticks-in-kansas.pdf>.

Still Early to Treat Bagworms

Many bagworms have hatched and have come out of the mother's bag but we are still a bit early to treat as we may miss those that are late to emerge. The latter half of June is a good target to treat for these insects. Spray applications made between June 10th and July 4th have a great chance of being successful because the bagworms are fairly small and relatively easy to control. However, make sure you have living bagworms as sometimes natural predators and parasites provide good levels of control. Look for a miniature version of the mature bagworm. They are still tiny and are about the size of the lead point on a pencil.

Insecticides commonly used for controlling bagworms include spinosad (Conserve; Fertlome Borer, Bagworm, Leafminer & Tent Caterpillar Spray; Captain Jack's Dead Bug Brew, Bonide Caterpillar Killer), *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Dipel, Thuricide), acephate (Acephate, Orthene, Bonide Systemic Insect Control), cyfluthrin (Tempo, Bayer Vegetable & Garden Insect Spray) and permethrin (numerous trade names). Products containing *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT) are only effective when used against bagworm larvae while they are still small. Note that spinosad and BT are both organic but spinosad is a more effective product, especially on larger larvae.

Thorough coverage is vital for good control. Most failures are due to the spray not penetrating deep enough in the tree rather than the insecticide not working.