

Gray squirrel fact sheet

They are rodents and although known as 'grey' squirrels, their coats may become brown in summer. They are grizzled with tan hairs in body coats and white bellies. They are approximately 18 inches long, including a 9-inch tail. Their droppings vary in shape and colour, depending on diet, and are usually round or elongated similar to those of rats. Generally, they have two litters a year from December to January and then again from May to June. They can have a litter size of one to five. The life span of the female is between four to six years and the male is two to three years. Mortality rate is about 75% per annum.



They were first introduced to this country around 1876 and are now common throughout England, Wales and Scotland, being considered a pest in many areas.

What do they eat?

They feed on buds, shoots, nuts and ripe and unripe fruits. Often, squirrels take food at feeders intended for birds. Sometimes they chew to enlarge openings of bird houses and then enter to eat nestling songbirds. In gardens, squirrels may eat planted seeds and bulbs.

Are grey squirrels harmful?

They may carry fleas and other parasites.

They occasionally damage lawns by burying or searching for and digging up nuts. They will chew bark and clip twigs on ornamental trees or shrubbery planted in yards.

If they get into your property they can cause serious damage. They strip the insulation from electrical wiring, tear up loft insulation to form a nest and sometimes drown in cold water tanks.

The noise they make, particularly at night, scratching and running about can be very disturbing.

Dealing with grey squirrels

Squirrels are protected from ill treatment by the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 and it is illegal, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, to release grey squirrels or to allow them to escape into the wild.

Any treatment service, therefore, should be carried out by a fully trained Pest Control Operative.

Don't feed or encourage squirrels into your garden. Do not put food on the ground, as this may attract other pests such as rats.