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## Bats in the Attic?

While the thoughts of bats can be less than desirable and even scary, they do play an important role in our environment. According to Dr. Craig Harper, UT Extension Wildlife Specialist, a bat can eat thousands of mosquitoes equaling one-third their body weight in 30 minutes. This is extremely important due to the potential diseases carried by mosquitoes. This is a great benefit as long as they stay outside our homes, but they often invade the attic and other parts of houses and buildings.

Bats mate in the spring and raise their young into the summer months. In search of a place to raise their young, they often find their way into attics or other living spaces. Harper notes that bats will leave their nesting sites, possibly our attics, after their young leaves the nest.

One approach of dealing with bats is to just wait until late summer when the bats will leave in search of hibernating sites. If you're patient, they probably will leave on their own. You can also add lights or moth balls to repel bats from an area. One way of removing bats is to place a pvc pipe through a wall into the space with a ninety degree elbow pointing downward. This will allow the bats to exit but not return.

Once you get the bats out of your indoor space, exclusion is the best approach to prevent future invasions. All holes or cracks, 3/8 inch or larger, should be covered with ¼ inch hardware cloth, sheet metal, caulking, or other building material. You will likely need to watch closely to identify where the bats are entering the building. This will help you know where to patch to prevent them coming in again. Eliminating all holes or openings except for one can also be way of getting rid of the bats. Once they exit, then you can close up the hole. If you are unfortunate enough to find a bat inside your living area, then you'll need to open all the doors and maybe some windows to allow the bat to leave. Turn off your lights or the bat may seek a hiding place behind curtains.

Bat feces, also known as guano, poses a health hazard. If you decide to clean an area where you find bat feces, you should use extreme caution such as using gloves and a respirator. Exposure to bat guano can cause dangerous respiratory diseases. You can also contact the local health department for information on removing bat guano.