



BIRDS IN COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS



In North America, birds aren't usually labeled as "pests." However, these flying critters can carry disease, damage buildings and hurt the reputation of a business.

The presence of food along with a safe space for roosting and nesting draws birds into all types of commercial spaces. Especially in cold climates, many small species will find a way to sneak into warm spaces, according to Chris Lesperance, Branch Manager at Abell Pest Control.

Structural damage

Birds perching on a building's exterior can cause substantial harm to a structure. Aside from decreasing the physical appeal of a property, fecal matter and urine from birds can degrade building materials. The waste produced from perched pigeons or gulls is very acidic and can carry fungi that invades porous materials, creating miniscule cracks and crevices. These tiny openings can allow water in which then expands when frozen and can cause larger fissures, according to BuildingConservation.com.

Structures made of sandstone and limestone are particularly sensitive to the acidic excrement and should be protected against birds perching on ledges.

Not only does bird waste eat away at facades and roofs, but also lost feathers and regurgitated meals can clog drains and building gutters, leading to flooding.

Disease and contamination

Medical News Today reported that birds are believed to carry 60 different diseases. These diseases can become airborne or spread by contact with infected fecal matter. The problem is especially pronounced in food preparation areas and restaurants since excrement can find its way into meals. In a factory, a single bird can ruin an entire day's worth of production as the potential for feces is a serious cause for concern.

Of the major diseases, Cryptococcosis, E. Coli and Salmonellosis are some of the most common.

Other annoyances

Aside from structural damage and disease, birds can cause plenty of minor annoyances.

In large retail stores, the presence of starlings or sparrows can annoy customers. Gulls have been known to harass people who are eating, especially in outdoor seating areas. An ill-timed bowel movement from a perched bird on an indoor ledge or beam can damage the reputation of your company.

In office buildings and warehouses, after-hours bird flights can set off alarms and cause unnecessary security calls. Similarly, factories can experience malfunctioning equipment if a bird flies in front of a laser or light.

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How to prevent birds

Once a bird is in a building, you may need to physically remove its nest. However, the only way to permanently eliminate birds is prevention. As with all types of pest control, getting rid of any attractive sources of food, harborage and water is key.

Start by blocking all points of entry. Keep doors closed and cover open entryways with a door screen made of PVC strips, suggested Sciencing. All windows should be equipped with fitted screens, and mesh coverings should be placed on all drain openings and vents.

Remove food sources by storing garbage in bins with fitted lids. In food manufacturing, storage and preparation facilities, proper sanitation is key. Thoroughly clean the floor and all surfaces in the building that may have leftover crumbs.

If you have any leaks or pools of water, make sure to resolve the issue immediately. Standing water in a building looks no different to a starling or sparrow than a bird bath.

Limit access to perches

"If you build a big building with a bunch of nice ledges that a pigeon can sit on, they're probably going to come," explained Lesperance.

Structural changes can help prevent birds from roosting or nesting in a building. Inside a factory, warehouse or big box retailer, large exposed rafters or beams provide perfect areas for perching and nesting. When moving into a new space, it's best to avoid any of those features in the building design. However, if you're located in a building that already has exposed areas where birds like to congregate inside or outdoors, there are ways to fix the problem.

Quality Assurance & Food Safety suggested using exclusion netting with ¾" mesh or smaller to prevent birds from entering and roosting in attractive areas. Spreading nets across the ceiling of a large storage facility or retailer with lots of exposed beams and planks can protect the entire building without major renovation by keeping bird-friendly areas out of reach.

For additional prevention, spikes or wires can be used to prevent these flying critters from landing. Spikes are small metal sticks that are adhered to ledges or sills pointing upward. Even if smaller birds can land between the spikes, they will not be able to get a good view when searching for food and will not be comfortable enough to stay.

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For historic buildings or properties with a distinct design, wires may be more desirable as they are less noticeable and do not detract as much from the appearance of a structure. Sprung wire is made of very thin nylon-coated stainless steel attached by tension springs to tiny metal posts. It's so thin that most species cannot get a good grip when attempting to land, and is bouncy enough that it throws birds of balance if they do try to sit on it, causing them to fly elsewhere.

Gel is also available to prevent landing. Polybutylene gel sealed with a skinning solution can be put on the exterior of a building, but tends to lose effectiveness within a year of being exposed to the elements. This is an even better solution for the interior of a building around vents, pipes, chimneys and drains that may attract birds but are not exposed to constant debris and changing weather. The gel itself never hardens, so when a bird tries to land, it's foot will break through the skin of the gel and get a little bit of sticky goo stuck on it. Since they don't have the ability to remove the goop from their foot, it will remain there for a few days, which can be mildly uncomfortable. From that point forward, anything that looks like gel will deter that individual from landing in that area.

After deciding which prevention method is best for your business, make sure to also perform regular inspections for birds and entry points into your building. They may be cute, but never underestimate the damage these flying critters can cause.

Abell Pest Control is one North America's leading professional pest management companies. White Papers are supplied by Abell's national Quality Assurance team.

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Sources

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