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# Alaska REAL ESTATE BY DAVE WINDSOR

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## WASPS, WOODPECKERS &

## OTHER VARMINTS

### **WASPS:-**

You may be like one of my recent homebuyers who, upon inspection, found multiple wasps' nests in the attic. "We want the seller to remove them, our kids are scared to death, but he says it's too much trouble, and we are not sure whether we should be worried."

You should not be worried. Wasps abandon their nests annually and build new ones. Furthermore, even if a new nest appears, it is unlikely to be hazardous to your family if it occurs at attic altitude. I have heard some people wanting to close off access to an attic to keep wasps out, but that is impossible if it is a ventilated roof.

Calm down, and let's think about this. First, an old nest is of no concern. Second, a new nest would only be of concern if it is proximate to your family – e.g. by a door or window, beneath the eaves near a bedroom window, or under a deck. Otherwise, the wasp is your friend and feeding on local aphids and mosquitoes. They charge no fees for this service.

I called the Pied Piper (Pest Control Contractors) and spoke with Russ Perry, who said that they rarely remove old nests unless they are an eyesore and easily accessible. According to Russ, if they receive a call to remove a live, current year nest that is potentially hazardous, they first will try to physically remove it. If this fails for lack of access, they have options ranging from a gaseous aerosol to a blown-in pesticide dust that will terminate these little guys.

When children (or adults) are afraid of the unknown, a little education opportunity arises and you should talk about this with them. A Pest Control company, such as Pied Piper, is always happy to provide information on the telephone and explain your options, but an old nest is just like an old shell on the beach, used to be someone's home but they don't live there anymore.

### **WOODPECKERS:-**

A Woodpecker has been chewing up the trim on a client's home recently. How do you protect yourself from a bird attack like this? I decided to investigate.

Don't be too hard on this little guy. He is probably a 'Northern Flicker' looking for food.

Yes, there are remedies to deter woodpeckers. Various products are on the market, including everything from miniature cannons that fire off a sonic bang every few minutes, to visual deterrents such as fake owls or other predatory birds, even coatings to paint up your trim as a repellent.

I found a helpful website at [www.aaanimalcontrol.com](http://www.aaanimalcontrol.com) which can even connect you with professional trappers and technicians in Alaska. Apart from the physical damage to wood on your home, the woodpeckers sometimes gain access to the attic and this can cause real problems with waste and urine.

To be fair to 'Northern Flicker', or one of the other six Alaskan species of Woodpeckers, it should be noted that they are seeking to remove wood-boring insects from your home and not even sending an invoice!

## How long to keep Financial Records

Woodpeckers consume up to 15,000 of such larvae and insects per annum, though usually from attacking tree trunks, for which they have both chisel-like bills and specially designed toes to work on vertical structures.

My experience is that Woodpeckers do not usually stay long on one particular site, so you may well find wood chips on the ground for a few days, but then 'Northern Flicker' moves on to a new hunting ground. Please keep in mind that the Woodpecker is hungry, just working his way across the landscape, and is likely the inspiration for the proverb "Peckers can't be Choosers".

### ***OTHER VARMINTS:-***

All kinds of insects, rodents and wildlife can be roaming your neighborhood. If you look in the average garage you will find everything from mouse traps to hornet spray.

However, if you want some free advice on your particular varmints, and possibly service from a professional, I have found the folks at Pied Piper particularly generous with their time. Call 907-344-2538.

The only varmints not covered by the Pied Piper may be the people next door! If you have neighbor issues, you may want to call me instead. Varmints come in all shapes and sizes but there is always a way to fix these issues.

Many folks are confused, and understandably so, about how long to keep financial records. Some feel that to ask this question makes them appear foolish.

There are no silly questions. Fools are identified by the failure to ask questions, not the reverse.

For the most part, how long to keep records is centered on IRS requirements. For this reason, 5 years is a good general rule. All your financial records could be required for audit of your taxes for that length of time. Whilst the IRS normally conducts audits only within 3-5 years from the year of the return, there is nothing to stop them probing even further into your history, but 5 years should be safe.

Credit card details, cancelled checks and bank statements, W2's and copies of your previous tax returns should be kept for 5 years. This would include retention of real estate transaction records since they may also be a taxable event.

For the most part these days, the sale of your personal residence is not taxable unless you make \$500,000 profit as a married couple, or \$250,000 individually. In other words, selling the home in which you lived at least 2 out of the last 5 years is of no interest to the IRS, unless it was used for business purposes.

There are some records, however, that you should keep for longer than 5 years. Records for the acquisition of real estate, and details of major costs associated with improving the property, should be kept as long as you own it.

Deeds can be reclaimed indefinitely from the Public Recorder's office but appraisals, surveys, blueprints and information on upgrades may well assist you when selling the property. Mortgage payoff evidence can also help. Even though the lender is supposed to ensure the recording of a Deed of Reconveyance when the loan is paid off, this doesn't always happen.

Other personal records that you should keep in a safe place are wills, patents, licenses and permits, stock certificates, minute books (if any), jewelry, valuations, insurance policies and birth, marriage and divorce records, as well as your passport.

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