

This column features questions from readers submitted via the website. To submit a question to Small Acre Sam, visit **BarnyardsandBackyards.com**. If your question is featured, you will receive a free one-year subscription to *Barnyards & Backyards!*



# ask Sam

## question

**Dear Sam,**

I have a woodpecker that thinks my house would make a nice woodpecker home as well. What can I do to deter it from pecking a hole into my siding? – *Donnella, Casper*

**Dear Donnella,**

Your culprit is probably a northern flicker. These woodpeckers are notorious home wreckers, especially when there isn't a whole lot of activity outside by humans and other animals. One reason woodpeckers peck on a house is to create a cavity nest. A cavity nest is simply a hole, usually made in a dead tree that woodpeckers drill out to raise their young. Woodpeckers go looking elsewhere when they cannot find a suitable tree, and a

home with wood siding seems like the best next choice. If you discover a hole in your home, put a piece of metal siding or metal plate over the spot and paint it like the house. They won't be able to drill through the metal.

Another option is to put up a nest box in that location. The box should measure at least 7 x 7 inches wide and 16 to 18 inches deep, with a 2 1/2-inch diameter nesting hole. Fill the box with sawdust. Cavity nests are important to a large number of other wildlife. Northern flicker cavity nests are often used by great horned owls once abandoned.

Another reason woodpeckers will peck on a house is to attract a mate by repeated drumming because, unlike songbirds, woodpeckers can't sing. Many homeowners have been awoken first thing in the morning to what sounds like a jackhammer on the roof. Woodpeckers that make the loudest drumming sound are the most attractive to females, and the metal flashing on a roof makes a very attention-getting racket. To deter this, place something "fluttery" like a CD or plastic metallic streamers on the area where the bird is working. Or follow the suggestion of Bill Andelt, Colorado State University wildlife specialist, and cut out a hawk shape from a milk jug, paint it black, and suspend it from the house corner on fishing line. Woodpeckers don't like this kind of movement. Many people try to use a plastic owl, but the stationary decoy will not do the trick. For more information, see <http://bit.ly/northernflicker> or <http://bit.ly/preventwoodpeckerdamage>.

– Sam



answer

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