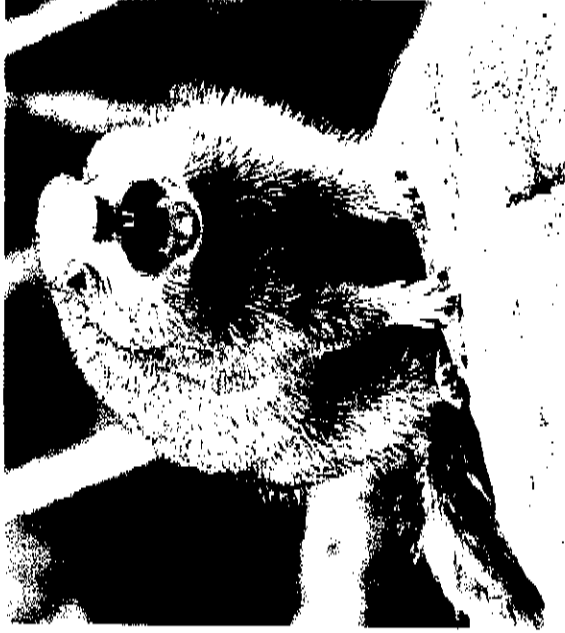


## Fighting Squirrels



Squirrels, like other rodents, are small mysterious mammals just trying to find a nut. They are sometimes considered pests because of their need to chew on various edible and inedible objects in order to prevent their teeth from over-growth. Their diet varies from nuts, leaves, roots, seeds, and various insects. Squirrels often become a problem to homeowners. They tend to nest in attics and insulation which causes expensive damage to homes. In order to survive, squirrels must be aware of danger at all times. Some work in groups and warn each other with whistles to protect themselves and their community.

Like other animals, squirrels usually do not go out of their way to harm other animals unless on the hunt. Squirrels are social animals and aggression increases their bond between each other. Violence is seen when establishing dominant hierarchies, determine order during mating chases, defending a mate or territory/resources, and protecting their young. Most disputes between squirrels are settled with minimal or no physical interaction because fighting is costly in time and energy. It can also result in serious injury, which sometimes isn't worth the fight. They show aggression in order to control a certain situation but are violent when another conflicts with their territory/resources and their young or mate. The alpha male, like the ones in rats, will result in violent fights with intruding male competitors. Barbara Clucas, a scientist at UC Davis' Animal Behavior Graduate group, said a fight would actually start off with a head to tail grooming contest. "The 'groom-off' starts with the squirrels scent marking an object (for example, rubbing their backs on a tree), then they do a quick head to tail grooming bout - at this point the fight could escalate into the two squirrels approaching each other or one of the squirrels could back down. It is thought that the scent marking and grooming are visual signals that communicate the squirrels' ability to fight or readiness to fight but in a way that they won't get hurt. If the fight does escalate, the squirrels will line up side by side and start a sort of shoving contest, which then can escalate into a biting and

insects

somersaulting in the air fight. At this point the squirrels can, and do, get injured. So, it is thought that if a squirrel starts by the grooming display but sees that the other squirrel is bigger or recognizes it as a squirrel that has beaten it in the past, it can back down before the biting and injury stage." From my own observations, I can see a since of reconciliation when two squirrels are chasing each other, it isn't necessarily violent but could be viewed as a technique to tolerate others without leading to a vicious war. It is like an aggressive play between two adolescent human brothers, who fight back and forth.

Squirrels aren't much different than the rats in the studies we've read. In The Biology of Violence by Debra Niehoff, Ph.D. said "In rats if the alpha male sense an intruder he will size up his component. It follows a sequence pursuit, threat, attack, & aggressive posture. They do not violently attack others unless there is a threat to it's young, territory/resources, and mates. As a warning, keep all openings in you home closed to keep our fury friends in the trees and out of the house. Overall squirrels are very social creatures. In fact my grandpa had one squirrel come everyday to his window. where he would feed him peanuts and pecans. Also one night we caught a flying squirrel. As we tried to retrieve it after it got loose in the house it climbed up my head and flew off from the top. After that experience squirrels were the first to come to mind.

Alucida

$$\frac{76}{80} + \frac{17}{20} = \frac{93}{100}$$

gotta be.

## Resources:

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/squirrels.html>

<en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Squirrel>

[www.squirrels.org/faq.html](http://www.squirrels.org/faq.html)