



Box 1676
Camrose, AB
T4V 1X6
(780) 678 6450
sales@scottqualitylawncares.ca
scottqualitylawncares.ca

“Your Home Turf Advantage”

WHAT YOU'RE NOT TOLD – About Bats & Their Guano Good For Us Or Bad For Us? All-Natural Fertilizer Or Not?

Why would a lawn care company be talking about bats? Well, read on... We're going to let you know about some things you're not normally told about bats...



Bats often get a pretty bad rap due to countless myths and common misconceptions. Sadly, it's that kind of thinking that's actually helping drive the species towards extinction. But in reality, these “scary creatures” (to some people) have an extremely important role in our environment, managing insect populations and pollinating plants.

Given that there's over 1200 species of bats in the world, and believe it or not, they account for about 20% of all classified mammals on the planet, (most people don't know that fact), they're rather important for quite a number of reasons.

1. Just like bees, bats pollinate many plants and facilitate seed dispersal.
2. Bats also eat countless numbers of bugs, thus reducing the amount of pesticides used by farmers (which also means less pesticides polluting the environment). In fact, scientists estimate bats in the U.S. have saved Americans somewhere between \$3.7 billion and \$54 billion in pest control services every year. (We have no idea how they figure that out...)(And sorry we couldn't find any stats for that in Canada)
3. That being said, bats are an essential part of the ecosystem, and they play a vital role in keeping everything in balance. Without bats, the world would be overrun with insects. Bats eat insects that spread diseases to humans and livestock. We may not realize it but humans and animals would catch diseases in much higher numbers, and many types of crops would be damaged or destroyed if bats weren't doing what bats do. As we said, bats are even responsible for a significant portion of pollination!

So without doing any further in-depth analysis of bats, here's a question that has come up a time or two that's related to lawn care, and hence the reason for this article ---

“I have a bat house in my back yard that's working great... I've got bats coming and going from it every night and my mosquitoes are few and far between in my back yard thanks to the bats...”

“Your Home Turf Advantage”

But I also have an ever-increasing amount of bad guano (droppings) accumulating on my grass below the bat house. I have two questions: Is it safe to have this guano on my grass, and is it safe for me and my family and also for my dog? And secondly, I've heard that it can be used as a natural fertilizer... Is this true and can I use it on my grass and in my garden?"

That's actually a few questions which we'll attempt to answer.

Most of the information you're about to read in this article comes from people who know a lot more about this than we do as lawn care specialists. The following info is based on what experts in their respective fields have said about bats (and their guano) and whether they pose any risk to our health or our pet's health... and to our lawns. We encourage you to glean from this document whatever you're comfortable with and believe to be good solid advice.

We'll cover a few health basics first and then specifically answer this client's lawn care question.

Bats prefer to avoid human contact and typically pose little threat to the safety of people or animals —

- They have few parasites or diseases that affect people.
- However, in very rare circumstances, people have been bitten by bats and contracted rabies, a virus with serious human health consequences ---
 - That doesn't mean we should live in fear of bats but for this reason, you should never handle bats with your bare hands, and avoid placing a bat house in areas with high human traffic.
 - Of course, if you suspect you have been bitten or scratched by a bat, seek immediate medical attention. However, just to dispel a common myth --- if you ever touch a bat, it does NOT mean you're going to contract rabies.
 - If pets or livestock have been bitten, contact your veterinarian.
 - That being said, lessen any potential risk of being bitten by NOT handling bats directly.

Bat guano rarely poses a human health risk in Alberta ---

- Some experts say to avoid bat guano --- Others say it's no problem as long as you're wise in using it.
- So, the verdict is still out on whether it's totally safe or not --- The choice is yours.
 - If in doubt, don't use it; but if you're following recommended practices when using it, you should be fine.
 - Many experienced gardeners swear by bat guano and have never had any problems all the years that they've been using it.
 - Also, as an extra measure, you could compost it, along with some other organic materials, and the decomposition heat should kill any pathogens.
 - Then when fully composted, mix it with some good soil and you'll have an excellent soil amendment you can use.
 - It can be such a potent fertilizer that only 1 to 2 tsp per gallon of soil is all you need for incorporating around plants. [See below]

The fact is, bat droppings that are scattered pose very little risk —

- If, however, the fresh guano is accumulated in large piles, there is a risk of Histoplasmosis exposure.
 - Histoplasmosis is an infection caused by a fungus called Histoplasma.
 - The fungus in one of many that lives in most outdoor environments, particularly in soil that contains large amounts of bat or bird droppings.
 - I won't get into exactly what that's all about as our desire is for you to avoid any possibility of that.

So what can you do about it then? Should you try to use the guano or not bother?

“Your Home Turf Advantage”

- Firstly, remove the bat guano regularly, (not allowing it to accumulate into a big pile that will start to breakdown over time, and potentially if it's windy, send airborne guano dust into the air.)
 - This will greatly reduce any risks.
- Compost it before using it, and you'll even further reduce any possible risks.
 - As previously mentioned, the heat normally generated as it decomposes should kill off any pathogens.
- Common-sense would also say --- Simply avoid inhalation of guano dust particles in areas where bats or other wildlife have defecated, especially within confined areas where guano is present.
 - If having to be nearby your guano pile for awhile, just wear a dust mask.
 - And if you're ever needing to handle it, wear some disposable gloves.
 - **The bottom-line is... As long as you wear a mask and don't make direct hand contact with bat guano, there is very little if any risk to your health.**

Does the bat guano carry fungus spores that can potentially infect your dog with Histoplasmosis?

- Yes it does, and though this is a common fungal disease, it's not a common one for dogs.
- Just to be safer, don't allow your dog (especially younger dogs, 4 yrs old or less) to play near, roll in, or eat any of the bat guano below your bat house.
 - Additionally, as some people have wisely done... **let the guano fall and accumulate in some kind of catch-enclosure some feet above ground that you construct directly below the bat house.**
 - If dogs can't see it nor reach it, then they're not apt to even be curious about it let alone have anything to do with it.
 - And of course, remove the accumulating guano regularly so it doesn't create any big pile that might be affected by wind.
 - Mix it into soil in recommended small amounts [See below] and/or spread on lawns or within gardens and around plants.
 - Sufficiently water it in, too, which will help break it down and enable it to get more quickly to the grass and soil below it, to do its magic.
- If by some chance your dog is exhibiting any gastrointestinal issues within 2 to 3 weeks after directly eating any fresh guano or inhaling a lot of guano dust, and thereby potentially getting infected, take your dog to the vet just be sure what the actual cause may be or not.

Despite everything said above, BAT GUANO CAN BE USED AS AN EXCELLENT FERTILIZER OR SOIL AMENDMENT WITHOUT ANY RISK TO HUMAN HEALTH —



- This natural fertilizer will promote root growth and hardiness while stimulating production.
 - As previously mentioned, many experienced gardeners swear by bat guano.
- Guano is ideal as an organic soil amendment, a prized source of NPK.
 - The nitrogen in bat guano is going to green up grass and get new plants growing fast.
 - The phosphorus contributes toward seed creation and flowering.
 - The potassium helps move the nutrients throughout the plant's system and if your soil is dense, it helps aerate it.

“Your Home Turf Advantage”

- It can be either dug-in around plants or watered-in as a tea when watering your plants.
 - Guano tea can be prepared by mixing 1 cup of guano with a gallon of water, then allow the mixture to sit overnight. Then strain the tea and apply it to the plants.
- Guano makes an ideal backbone to any soil recipe, and has the unique characteristic of not being capable of burning plants like some overly aggressive or excessive fertilizer treatments can do.
 - You don't need a lot --- For new plantings, add 1 to 2 tsp per gallon of soil and mix thoroughly or add 2½ to 5 lbs per cubic yard.
 - To feed established plants via a routine regimen, lightly mix 1 tsp per gallon into the soil surface once each month during the growing season.
- Fruits and vegetables grown with guano soil amendments tend to be more flavoursome and resistant to disease.
- Fresh bat guano has a pH range of 5.1 to 7.3, making it somewhat acidic to neutral.
 - However, as it ages, the guano becomes strongly acidic, reaching pH levels of 2.7 to 4.1.
 - In our part of Central Alberta where oftentimes our soil tends to be more on the alkaline side, fresh bat guano can help re-balance our soil pH levels ---
 - However if it's critical gardening you're doing, where pH levels have to be optimized for the particular plants you're growing, be sure to regularly monitor the acidic versus alkaline levels within your growing medium.

And finally, the big question asked about whether it's good for our lawns or not ---

*** Likewise for lawns as in gardens and around plants --- YES, bat guano provides a powerful nutrient shot in the arm to your lawn with an NPK ratio of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium averaging 10-3-1 —**

- The nitrogen helps build a thicker lawn while making the green color pop.
- It works as a slow-release fertilizer, so it continues to add nutrients to the soil for 2 to 3 months after application.
- Mix it with some weed-free soil and top-dress your lawn periodically to give it that nutrient boost...
 - Be sure to water it in to get it down to the soil where it can do its magic.
- If you're planting grass from scratch or before laying down any new sod, add the above recommended amounts of bat guano to the soil, mixing it up with the existing soil, before planting your grass or laying down any new sod, etc.

So, some of the above you may not have been aware of. Oftentimes, what we only hear are the fears or the misinformation about bats, when in fact, they're not a bad natural friend to have around, truth be told.

We hope the above information has been a help to those of you who may have a bat house in their yard. Like anything, if you follow recommended guidelines, it should be safe for you and your family, and your pets, and your lawn, too.

All the best to you this lawn care season!

The Scott's Quality Lawn Care Team

***** SPECIAL NOTE *****

We love helping our clients have great-looking lawns! Of course, we always welcome your inquiries, but we also want to help educate you, too. So many of you have told us how much you appreciate the articles we make available to you.

“Your Home Turf Advantage”

If there are any questions you may have about your lawn or any challenges or problems you may occasionally encounter with your lawn, don't hesitate to give us a call. As with the above info article you've just read, we also have other highly beneficial lawn care articles, too...

Here are some we've created to support you with your lawn care efforts. They can help you identify any problems as well as offer some possible solutions for some of those occasional challenges lawns can encounter.

These info articles are not meant to be one-time definitive cures for whatever might ail your lawn. We all wish it was only that simple... But, there are no magic "spray this once and your lawn will be perfect thereafter" solutions... Unfortunately, those don't really exist, as much as we might all like them to. However, there are many things you can do to get your lawn in great shape and keep it that way. We encourage you to glean what you can from any of the following articles that may interest you. And for what you're not sure about, give us a call, let's talk about it, and we'll do what we can to help you.

You may reach us at 780-678-6450 if you'd like to receive any of these via email. It would be our pleasure to do our part to help you "make your lawn the envy of your neighbours"...

From Our **"PROACTIVE LAWN CARE"** Series Of Articles —

7 Steps To A Great Lawn

Caring For Our Lawn Over The Winter

Proactively Preparing Your Lawn For Drought Conditions

From Our **"WHAT YOU'RE NOT TOLD"** Series Of Articles —

What You're Not Told About All-Natural & Organic Lawn Care Alternatives

What You're Not Told About Bats & Their Guano

From Our **"WHY?"** Series Of Articles —

Why Is My Grass So Thin?

Why Dead Spots On My Lawn?

Why Am I Getting Mushrooms In My Lawn?

Why Are The Pine Needles Killing My Grass?

From Our **"HOW TO GET RID OF..."** Series Of Articles —

How To Get Rid of Ants

How To Get Rid of Dew Worms

How To Get Rid of Fairy Rings

How To Get Rid of Quackgrass

How To Get Rid of Thistles

From Our **"DAMAGE BY DOGS & OTHER CRITTERS"** Series of Articles —

Fixing & Preventing Dog Spots

Damage Caused by Voles

From Our **"SEEDING LAWNS"** Series Of Articles —

Grass Seeding For New Lawns

Overseeding For Existing Lawns

From Our **"DIY"** Series Of Articles —

DIY_Alternate Ways To Remove Weeds In Gravel Areas

...See next page...

"Your Home Turf Advantage"

From Our **“COMMON LAWN FUNGAL DISEASES”** Series Of Articles —
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases (Compendium Of All Common Ones)
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_The Usual Causes
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Snow Mold
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Leaf Spot & Melting Out
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Ascochyta Turf Leaf Blight
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Brown Patch
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Summer Patch
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Pythium Blight
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Red Thread
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Rust Diseases
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Powdery Mildew
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Dollar Spot
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Fairy Ring

INFORMATION ON OUR FIVE PRIMARY LAWN CARE SERVICES —

FERTILIZER & WEED CONTROL:

Our Fertilization & Weed Control Program
Possible Reasons For Still Having Weeds
Ten Reasons Our Program is Different

ENRICH SOIL ENHANCER:

Our Enrich Soil Enhancer Program
Different Soil Types Have Different pH Levels

WEEKLY MOWING:

How The Weekly Lawn Mowing Works
Our Quality Control Program
Ten Reasons We Are Different

CORE AERATION:

Why Aerate Your Lawn?

POWER RAKING:

Why Power-Rake Your Lawn?

“Your Home Turf Advantage”