



## Looking after your Thatch Roof

Your thatched roof insurance may not cover you for every eventuality and it is better to prevent a situation where there is a need to claim on your thatched roof insurance and less chance of underwriters disputing a potential claim because of neglect.

Owning a thatch property requires different care to properties whose roofs are made of slate, tiles, metal or concrete. This list provides a brief guide to looking after your thatched roof:

1. Inspect the roof periodically, any problems you identify should be dealt with sooner rather than later to prevent the lifespan of the thatch being reduced, as well as the potential expense of the repair.
2. Inspect the eaves close to the wall, if there are dark wet patches this is a good indication that a thatch roof is leaking.
3. The thatch needs to be able to breathe by staying exposed to the sun and the wind, heavy build ups of moss and algae will prevent the roof from drying out.
4. If you can see gullies emerging, or deep vertical patches of rot, you should seek an experienced thatcher.
5. A thatch roof that looks shabby and has fixings exposed all over is usually a good indication that the roof is nearing the end of its lifespan.
6. Thatch roofing not only provides protection for your family and buildings against the weather but also wildlife if given the chance. Without the correct precautions and maintenance measures it will not take long before you have a few little neighbours!
  - It is advisable to take a walk around your property and look for evidence of birds and animals setting up residents in your thatch every week or so. Animals if given the chance can be quite destructive and quickly, so you want to ensure you spot any unwanted intruders early.
  - Evidence of mining in the thatch with small clumps sticking out and around the surrounding area is a good indication that animals and birds may be nesting in the thatch.
  - The saying 'prevention is better than cure' is relevant here, providing a thatch roof is kept in a good state of repair and the necessary prevention measures are taken, pests rarely pose a problem.
  - **Cover the roof with wire netting to prevent pests from gaining entry.** This is not always necessary for well-maintained roofs where there is no evidence of pests nesting in the thatch but is recommended if you get persistent problems.
  - **Provide alternative accommodation and food sources.** Put up bird boxes around the garden, in areas where they feel safe to nurture their young.
  - **If you have a problem with squirrels or vermin such as rats.** These can arguably do the most damage burrowing quite extensively through the thatch as well as through any cables they may come across on route. Make sure you dispose of waste food and bones in such a way that vermin can't smell or get access to it, do not put meat in your compost bin. Place bird feeders as far away from the property as possible and if necessary bring them in at night. To get rid of vermin, put poison down in strategic areas where they are likely to 'take the bait', call in a professional pest controller if necessary, alternatively get a pet cat, these natural pest controllers will scare of any rodents and what they don't they will almost certainly kill, eventually.  
To deal with squirrels there are now several humane traps available on the market, alternatively contact your local pest controller.
7. You should seek the advice from a professional thatcher when you spot any problems or damage to the thatch.
8. Never climb or let a contractor climb onto the roof or put ladders directly on the thatch without consulting a professional thatcher first so as to prevent any potential damage to the thatch.