



MICE & RATS

PREVENTION & CONTROL

MEET THE PEST

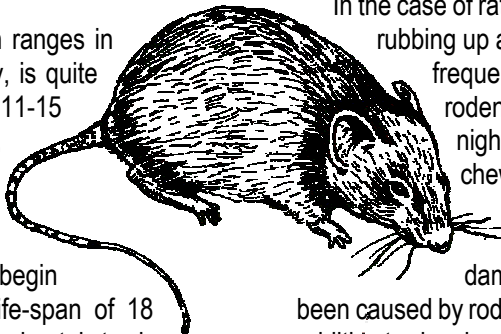
Gnawing mammals like mice and rats have long been an annoying pest to home owners. These rodents will eat a wide variety of foods and have adapted over the years to take advantage of living with humans. Both mice and rats can be very destructive to property and may carry disease. Entrance to a building is often made by enlarging existing holes or cracks in an effort to find food and shelter. Mice and rats are smart and may be difficult to control once a population is established.

Mice

The common house mouse, which ranges in color from dark brown to light gray, is quite small, measuring 4 ½ - 6 inches (11-15 cm) in length. They have large ears, a pointed nose, sharp, flat teeth and a long tail which is darker in color than the body. At the age of two to three months, a mouse can begin reproducing. During an average life-span of 18 months, a mouse can produce approximately twelve litters of five or six young per litter. The first litter is usually born three weeks after mating. Mice like dry areas and often obtain their water requirements from their food source.

Rats

The Norway and roof rat species are the most common rat species in the Atlantic Provinces. Both species of rat have very sharp teeth and poor eyesight. The Norway rat is light brown and measures 12 to 18 inches (30-45 cm) including the tail. They have a blunt nose, small close-set ears and a long tail. Nests of the Norway rat are found in burrows. The roof rat is slightly smaller than the Norway rat. It can also be distinguished by its sharp nose, large hairless ears and a longer tail. Nests of the roof rat are found in walls, attics and trees. Rats



have a lifespan of up to 18 months although many die before reaching this age. Rats will reproduce approximately nine times in their lifetime with a litter of 6 to 14 young being born three to four weeks after each successful mating.

DAMAGE AND MONITORING

The presence of rodents is easily detected by signs of chewing damage, fecal droppings (often found in cupboards or storage areas) or by squeaks, chirps or gnawing sounds coming from within walls and ceilings.

In the case of rats, dark grease marks (from their fur rubbing up against something) may be seen on frequently traveled runs. Occasionally rodents will be seen as they travel at night in search of food. Rodents will chew or gnaw on almost anything. They will also chew to gain entrance to a dwelling and may create a lot of damage. Many unexplained fires have been caused by rodents chewing on electrical wiring. In addition to chewing damage, food and food supplies can become contaminated when urine and feces are deposited on it by rodents. The fecal droppings of mice are 1/4 inch (6 mm) long with pointed ends while rat droppings are 3/4 inch (19 mm) long and oblong-shaped. Flea infested rodents may also introduce a flea infestation to a pet or dwelling. Exercise care when approaching a rodent as they have been known to bite people.

CONTROL

Physical

Since rats and mice reproduce quickly and in large numbers, it is important to protect your home and health by denying them access. Search for potential entrances and take steps to avoid rodent infestation. Repair all openings with a strong material (cement, metal, etc.) which should prevent rodent entry. Avoid leaving hiding

places and concealed runways for rodents. Do not pile wood on the ground - instead lay it against raised posts. Remove any vegetation close to the house and keep grass short to limit hiding places.

Sanitary measures also aid in control. Do not leave food in containers or packages which rodents can chew through. Instead store food in heavy plastic or glass containers. Keep doors to pantries or other food storage areas closed and rodent-proof. Look around the house for other conditions which might attract rodents.

Traps can be used to control rodent populations but they require monitoring and follow-up. Gloves should be used when handling traps because rodents have a very good sense of smell and may avoid anything with the scent of humans. The main types of traps include snap, multi-catch and glue board. Since rodents follow familiar paths again and again, these traps should be placed at right angles to the wall where activity has been spotted. Place traps two to three feet apart. Bait can be used to lure rodents to these traps. Some effective baits to use are peanut butter, bread, dried fruit or cheese.

Snap traps are generally the least expensive rodent trap. It is important to leave the trap un-set for a period of time first so the rodents will become comfortable with it. Another option is to use glue boards which can be very effective. If a rodent steps on the surface of the board, it will become stuck and remain there until it dies or is removed. Glue board traps come in various sizes, but are more effective on mice. They are easy to handle (and eliminate the possibility of snapping fingers!). Flexible glue boards can also be placed around pipes or other enclosed areas where rodent activity has been observed. A multi-catch trap can catch several rodents, resetting itself after each one is caught. The unfavorable characteristic of this type of trap is that the captured rodents are alive and must be eliminated, either by drowning or in some other manner. It is a good idea to wear gloves when removing dead rodents from traps.

Biological

The oldest and most common control of rodents is the cat. People have adopted cats as pets for this purpose for centuries. However, some cats may be afraid of large rats, and others may simply not be interested in rodents.

Chemical

If biological and physical control measures are not effective, use a pesticide which will have a minimal impact on both you and the environment. Anticoagulant baits are the least hazardous to humans and animals. If using baits, make sure they are secured from tampering by children and pets. Keep rodenticides out of areas that children and pets frequent. Use bait stations to limit bait access to rodents only. Bait stations hold the bait inside and contain a small hole through which the rodents can climb to access the bait.

Always use a registered domestic class pest control product labeled for rodent control and carefully follow the label directions.

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