

## House Mouse



House mice thrive under a variety of conditions around homes. They consume food meant for humans and pets and they contaminate food-preparation surfaces. Their gnawing causes damage to property. Their presence is indicated by droppings, fresh gnawing and tracks. An adult weighs about ½ ounce and is 6 to 7 inches long, including the tail. They are constant nibblers and like cereal grains, but will feed on many kinds of food. They like sweets and seeds. They are excellent climbers and can slip through a crack that is only a quarter inch wide.

Mice build their nests from shredded paper or other fibrous material and like a sheltered area. They have a very small range, often staying within a range of 10-15 feet of their nest. A musty odor will often be present from a mouse nest. And, they may be heard inside a wall or attic when they are most active at night. And, mice do not come in ones and twos. Mice are sexually mature in two months and can produce 8 litters in a year with 4-7 in a litter. Do the math. You probably have more mice than you think you do.

**Do house mice carry disease and do damage?** Yes. However, they are not known to carry the hantavirus. That problem is associated with deer mice. Deer mice are usually found in rural areas and are not likely to infest a commercial building or home in a populated area. The house mouse can cause disease, however, by contaminating food with salmonella. They can also gnaw through electrical wires and ruin insulation.

**How do they get in my home or building?** In commercial buildings where food is stored or processed mice are sometimes brought in on shipments. They may ride from a farm or warehouse hidden inside crates or pallets. The most likely way they get in your home is through small openings from the outside.

**Eliminating and controlling mice** The key is prevention. Most important is sealing all the openings. Look for gaps under doors and space around plumbing pipes (such as under the kitchen sink). Next is sanitation. Be sure all spilled food is picked up and all food containers are tight. Eliminate all unnecessary “dead areas,” such as unused boxes. To eliminate existing infestations there is nothing better than an old-fashioned wooden snap trap. Use a little peanut butter for bait. Glue boards and mechanical traps may be helpful. Poison baits are usually not effective against mice and we don’t usually recommend them in a residence.

**Cleaning up after rodents** Always wear protective gloves when handling dead rodents or their droppings. Do not sweep up dried droppings without a protective mask. Put dead rodents in a tightly sealed plastic bag and put in outside garbage. Wash any contaminated surface in hot water with a bleach solution.

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