

PEST CONTROL BULLETIN NO. 20

HOUSE MICE



GENERAL INFORMATION

House mice may become a serious nuisance to homeowners, businesses, and others at certain times of the year. This is a phenomenon that occurs in many areas of California and is partly a result of housing and commercial construction advancing into former agricultural areas.

The house mouse may be described as a small, fragile, and slender animal with the adult measuring three to four inches long and weighing from 1/2 to 3/4 ounces. The color may vary but are commonly a dusky gray color above and light cream color below. They have large prominent ears and semi-naked tails as long as the head and body. They have a gestation period of 18-21 days and can become sexually mature in one to two months. The litter size can average about five to six young.

Mice differ from rats in that they are nibblers (eat smaller quantities of food). They are also known to live their entire life span in small confined areas such as under a sink, or underneath a refrigerator or stove. They are not trap shy like rats and readily adapt to areas inhabited by humans.

Although a problem with mice may have originated on neighboring agricultural land, there is little that can be done to eliminate or control them at the source once the mice migrate to residential areas. In this case, control then becomes the responsibility of each homeowner. It is unfortunate that these situations develop; however, there is little that can be done for residents in an agricultural area in the way of prevention.

A natural, cyclic rise in mice population occurs every few years during the late spring and summer months. The population usually starts a natural and rapid decline and stabilizes before the end of winter.

DAMAGE

When mice invade homes, they may cause considerable damage to furniture and bedding by gnawing with their sharp incisor teeth. Mice are capable of harboring such diseases as leptospirosis and salmonellosis, and may contaminate food and food utensils from urine and fecal matter.

CONTROL

When mice invade your property, the best way to control them is through poisoning, trapping and other appropriate means:

1. Place all garbage in tightly covered rodent-proof containers.
2. Remove all rubbish, debris, and trash in which rodents may seek harborage.
3. Store all lumber, wood scraps, crating, etc. at least 18 inches off the ground and keep weeds under control.
4. Pet foods should be stored in rodent-proof containers and uneaten pet food should not be left outdoors.
5. Fruits and nuts should be properly harvested and stored where mice cannot gain access to them.

6. Repair all openings through which the mice may enter your home. Check doors, house vents, water and gas lines entering the house. Small holes should be patched with plaster patch and doors fitted tightly so there are no openings larger than one-fourth inch.

POISON BAITS

Mice can be controlled chemically by a number of anticoagulant (toxic to blood) baits that are ingested either at a single or several subsequent feedings. These types of poisons are usually slow acting and require several days to take noticeable effect. Anticoagulant baits also are toxic to humans, pets, and wildlife; therefore, baits must be placed in a manner that denies direct access by children and pets plus all other vertebrates that potentially may come in direct contact with the bait.

Within several days from the date of placement, the bait should begin to show its effects. Dead mice occasionally begin appearing in the open on the lawn, porch, patio, and garage floor. Do not panic because the carcasses can be disposed of safely by carefully wrapping them in newspaper and depositing the wrapped remains in a garbage container that is picked up weekly.

BAIT STATIONS

Recent changes in Environmental Protection Agency regulations regarding the placement of anticoagulant baits requires that all baits be placed inside "tamper resistant" bait stations. The stations must be securely anchored to prevent access by children, pets, and wildlife. For best results outdoors, secure stations

along rodent runs and near access holes in the building foundation. If there are children and pets (primarily dogs) in the family, please secure stations at least six feet above ground level. Stations are designed to be attached to most vertical surfaces and to the limbs of trees.

CAUTION

KEEP POISON CONTAINERS ADEQUATELY LABELED AND STORE UNUSED PORTIONS WHERE CHILDREN AND PETS DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO THEM!

TRAPPING

When trapping mice, remember that they prefer to travel close to walls and behind boxes and other objects offering protection and concealment. Knowing this will help you do a more effective job of trapping.

Mouse traps should be placed at right angles to a wall or other vertical object in areas of mouse activity (indicated by gnawings, droppings, nests, and holes). In this way the trigger mechanism of the trap, if placed next to the wall, will intersect the path that the mouse is most likely to travel. Double sets of traps often prove more successful than a single trap placed in an area of activity. Glue boards may also prove effective when trapping mice.

Mice are attracted to almost any bait: Peanut butter, nut meats, bacon, cheese, and soft candies. **REMEMBER TO USE PLENTY OF TRAPS AND PLACE THEM PROPERLY.** If one trap is good, **TEN** traps are that much better.



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