

Rodent Control Tips

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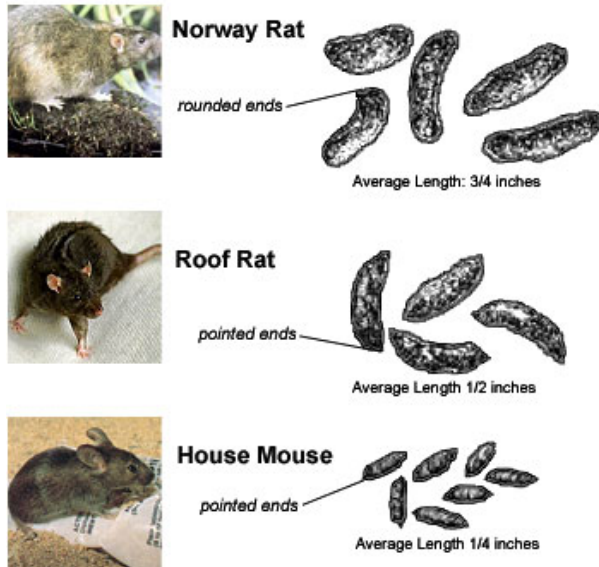
As mice and rats seek shelter it's not unusual for rodent problems to become common in the colder months. It's well known amongst pest professionals that rodent calls increase during the fall and winter months. The most common rodent species encountered in homes include the house mouse (*Mus musculus*), the Norway rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) and the roof rat (*Rattus rattus*). Practical tips are presented in this article to help you deal with your rodent related questions and concerns.

How do I know I have a rodent problem?

All pests may be detected by their telltale signs. Anyone can tell they have a rodent problem through the recognition of telltale signs of rodent activity. These telltale signs include but may not be limited to the following:

- ☞ **Fecal droppings** – mice and rats make about twenty to thirty droppings each day. Fecal matter may be the most easily observed telltale sign of rodent activity. Refer to photos provided.
- ☞ **Gnaw marks** – rodents habitually gnaw and may gnaw on various surfaces and materials within the home. These surfaces will appear chewed and damaged along the edges. Stored food and other items may be damaged or chewed. Often time's accumulations of chewed materials will be present as a result of rodent gnawing.
- ☞ **Rub marks** – oils from the rodent's body and fur can cause a darkened rub mark along walls and entry points where the rodents travel frequently.
- ☞ **Hairs** – shed rodent hairs will be found in areas that rodents frequent.
- ☞ **Odor** – rodent fecal matter and urine can cause a detectable odor. This is especially so when the infestation has been long established due to the accumulation and volume of rodent waste materials.
- ☞ **Staining** – occasionally rodent urine deposited repeatedly in the same location(s) may cause staining of surfaces. This is commonly encountered when roof rats are active above painted sheet rock ceilings.
- ☞ **Burrows** – usually Norway rats burrow outdoors but they are not the only animals which burrow. Rat burrows typically are found with a surrounding pile of soil which was excavated by the rat. Note that chip munks also burrow and create a rat sized hole but that chip munks typically remove the excavated soil.

- 🐭 **Noises** – rodents are active at night and occasionally may be heard as they travel, tunnel and gnaw within your home. Such noises are best heard at night when the home is very quiet.
- 🐭 **Fleas** – rodents are susceptible to having ecto-parasites such as fleas. At locations where long standing populations have been present, the resident may notice the presence of fleas even though they do not have a pet cat or dog.



Norway rat droppings are about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch long and blunt. Roof rat droppings are about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long and pointed at one end. Mouse droppings are about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch long and pointed at both ends.

What do I do about rodents in my home?

As with any pest problem the first thing to do is educate yourself about rodents, what to look for, how to look and where to look. This article, our website and other resources will provide you with suitable information. Now, once you've educated yourself, the first thing you need to do is conduct a thorough inspection such that you can detect the areas of activity and attain a better understanding of the extent of the existing rodent problem.

Note that you're also inspecting for conditions conducive to rodent infestation such as pest entry points, poor food storage, poor trash storage, clutter, weeds and overgrown vegetation and other such items.

The following are practical inspection tips for your review and consideration:

- 🐭 Use a decent LED type flashlight when inspecting for pests.

- ☞ Do NOT touch or disturb rodent droppings. Rodent droppings may contain certain disease pathogens which can be harmful to you and your family if contacted or inhaled during an inspection or cleanup process.
- ☞ Rodents avoid the easily observed areas so you will need to inspect areas which are difficult to access and see.
- ☞ Items to look for when inspecting for rodents include but may not be limited to:
 - Fecal droppings
 - Gnaw marks & chewed surfaces
 - Damaged food packages
 - Fecal and urine odor
 - Entry points
 - Rub marks
 - Conditions conducive to pest rodent activity
- ☞ Areas to inspect for rodents include but are not limited to:
 - Pantries
 - Kitchen cabinets
 - Any area where food stuffs are stored
 - Basements
 - Crawl spaces
 - Attics
 - Under furniture
 - Under shelves and stored items
 - In and under insulation materials
 - Beneath stored items
 - Around exterior wood piles and storage sheds
 - Under decks and other exterior fixtures

What do I do to get rid of my rodent problem?

Rodent elimination methodologies include baiting, exclusion and trapping. Overall, the use of baits should be carefully considered since we cannot control where poisoned rodents expire. This can be problematic since decomposing rodent carcasses can cause unpleasant odors, flies and other secondary problems. Trapping eliminates rodents in a positive fashion and exclusion serves to keep rodents out of your home long term. Of course, if you can afford to hire a pest professional this is usually the best course of action. However, there are many folks who simply cannot hire a pest professional for various reasons. The following practical tips are provided for your consideration and review:

- ☞ **Trapping:**
 - The most popular type of traps include snap traps, multiple catch traps, electrocution/shock traps, sticky traps and catch live type traps.
 - Snap traps are likely the most effective and widely used trap type.
 - Set more traps than rodents present.
 - Use suitable bait substance in your traps which will be accepted by the rodents.
 - Suitable bait materials can vary depending upon the rodent type:

- Mice – peanut butter, nuts, seeds, candy, others
- Norway rats – peanut butter, tuna, dog food, cat food, beer, candy, others
- Roof rats – nuts, seeds, dried fruits, peanut butter, apple juice, others
- Avoid placing too much bait in your traps, you're trying to kill rodents not feed them.
- Place traps in areas where rodents are active.
- Rodents often travel alongside walls and structure so it is wise to place traps in close proximity to these objects.
- Traps may be placed inside tamper resistant rodent bait boxes or other suitable enclosure to safe guard pets and children as needed.
- Re-use the traps in which rodents are caught.
- Do not handle trapped rodents. Use gloves and wash your hands with soap.



Two mouse traps and a bait station were placed after the range was moved to provide access to this hidden area where mice travel.



This trap design is highly effective, easy to use and available in both mouse and rat size from a few manufacturers.

Exclusion:

- Do not do exclusion work until you have eliminated the existing rodent activity. This is so because you may alter rodent activity and/or the rodents may create additional entry points in response to your premature efforts.
- A burrow or entry point can be tested for activity by placing a wad of paper in the opening. If still active the rodent will simply remove the paper.
- Inspect for possible entry points to be sealed.
- Entry points, holes and structural gaps may be sealed using caulk, hardware cloth, screening, wire, concrete, aerosol foam and other such materials.

Baiting:

- Rodent baits are toxicants and must be used carefully to mitigate hazard.
- Read and follow label directions when using pesticide products.
- Baits should be placed in tamper resistant bait stations to avoid exposure to children, pets and off target animals.
- Bait placements should be checked at least once per week and replenished as needed.
- Indoor placement of baits must be carefully considered and is not recommended for all situations.
- Baits may be removed when the rodent activity has ceased.
- Note that rodents killed by bait may expire in inaccessible areas.
- Rodent carcasses can cause unpleasant odors, flies and other secondary problems.