



YUCH! There is no other way to describe the feeling when you find evidence of rodent activity around your home and garden. The current rodent explosion can be tied to two years of wet springs and mild winters. These have made an excellent growth period for rodent food sources and, with plenty of food, comes increased reproduction. The nocturnal, disease carrying rodents in our area include:

- **Norway Rat: (*Rattus norvegicus*).** 11 to 19 inches long, including tail. Large body, gray with white underside. 4 to 6 litters per year, litter size from 7 to 8. Habitats are burrows beneath woodpiles/rubbish piles and moist areas. In buildings, usually stays on ground floor or basement. Eats variety of foods, prefer cereal grains, meats, fish, nuts, and some fruits.
- **Roof Rat: (*Rattus rattus*).** 12 to 18 inches long, including tail. Thin body, grayish black with pale yellow underside. 5 to 8 litters per year, litter size from 5 to 8. Agile climbers with habitats and nesting areas in shrubs, trees, and dense ivy. In building, found in attics, walls, ceilings, and cabinets. Prefers warmer climates.
- **Cotton Rat: (*Sigmodon hispidus*).** 10 inches long, including tail. Large body with blackish to gray grizzled appearing fur. Multiple litters throughout the years with 2 to 15 per litter. Habitats include grassy fields and roadsides. Prefers roots, stems. Can be damaging to fruit, vegetables and grain.
- **House Mouse: (*Mus musculus*).** 5-8 inches long, including tail. Small body with grayish-brown fur. Up to 13 litters per year, litter size of 5 to 6. Habitats include houses, barns, and other types of outbuildings. Varied diet.
- **Evidence of rodent activity** includes finding droppings, noises (gnawing/squeaking) in walls/ceilings/attics, burrows/runs, and damaged fruits/vegetables in the garden and yard, presents from your dog or cat of dead rodent bodies, and nests in garages/boxes/woodpiles.

As with most pests, it is easier to control the pest while the populations is small rather than waiting until you are overrun. The methods for control are listed below.

Changing Environment: Clear waste, trash and wood piles. Keep grass cut and tree limbs from touching house. Do away with bird feeders. Don't leave pet food outside all the time. Store materials at least 18 inches off the floor and away from the wall. Store food (human/pet/bird) in rodent-proof containers. Put garbage in tightly closed containers, preferably metal. Fix leaky faucets and remove water sources.

- **Rodent-proofing:** Cover all potential entry points with rodent resistant materials such as steel wool, metal screen, or concrete. Keep doors closed and all gnaw-able areas covered with metal.
- **Traps:** Snap/cage traps and glue boards placed where evidence has been found. Baits

should be changed daily with types including fruit, peanut butter, and nuts. Rodents are wary. When setting traps, for the first 2-3 days, use bait but do not set the trap. Then set traps when bait is being consumed.

- **Rodenticides:** Most contain an anticoagulant, causing internal bleeding when ingested. Rats and mice normally begin dying anywhere from 3 to 10 days after feeding on the baits. These rodenticides are formulated as cereal grains, pellets, parafin all-weather blocks, tracking powders, or water soluble formulations. It is impossible to recognize anticoagulants by trade names alone. The active ingredient is identified by such chemical names as chlorophacinone, diphacinone, fumarin, Rival, PMP, prolin, warfarin, brodifacoum or bromadiolone.
- **Proper placement of baits** can be as important as the type of bait used, or more so. Place all baits in rodent travel ways or near their burrows and harborages. Do not expect rats or mice to go out of their way to feed on the baits, even though they do occasionally. The best idea is to locate the bait where it will be in the rodents' normal line of travel.
- Results cannot always be measured by counting dead rats and mice. When baits are no longer being eaten, when there are no fresh droppings, and when no live rats or mice are seen, results are as good as can be expected from any type of bait.
- It is delivered via baits placed along the rodents' usual travel routes and near burrows. Care should be taken to avoid possible ingestion by humans or domestic animals. Read and strictly follow label instructions.

References:

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