

PEST CONTROL ADVICE SHEET

MICE



WHAT DOES A MOUSE LOOK LIKE?

The house mouse is generally dusty grey with a lighter coloured underside. The head and body of a mouse measures between 70mm and 95mm, with the tail measuring as much again.

Adult mice can be confused with juvenile rats, but there are two main features which distinguish between them. A juvenile rat has large feet and a large head relative to its size; an adult mouse has smaller feet and a smaller head. Mice breed rapidly and under optimum conditions a female can have a litter of around 6 every 40 to 50 days. The potential to cause problems is therefore vast.

WHAT DO THEY EAT?

Mice, like rats, will eat virtually any kind of food including meat, grain, cereal, vegetables, chocolate and even soap. A mouse will consume around 3 grams of food and drink up to a teaspoon of water in a day. The amount of water drunk depends largely on the moisture content of its food.

Mice differ in their eating habits to rats. A rat, once it finds a food source, will sit and devour the whole lot. Mice however rarely feed this way but prefer to nibble here and there.

HOW CAN YOU TELL IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH MICE?

The most obvious indicators of a mouse infestation are:

- 1 **Droppings** - Mice are virtually incontinent and produce between 80 and 120 droppings per day, depending on their diet. Droppings will be found scattered wherever mice have been. The droppings are usually black, spindle shaped and measure around $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6mm) in length. Note: in loft spaces mouse droppings may be confused with the droppings of bats.
- 2 **Damage** - As stated, mice gnaw simply to keep their teeth in good condition, therefore look for signs of teeth marks. Also look for any holes in the skirting boards and floorboards, especially where pipes enter as mice often move around in ceiling voids and cavity walls.

WHAT DAMAGE DO THEY DO?

Quite a considerable amount! Mice, despite their small size, can cause extensive damage to foodstuffs, furniture, upholstery, clothing and paper. They attack items not only as food but for use as nesting material.

The house mouse is inquisitive by nature and will investigate all parts of the area it lives in, gnawing at objects as it goes. This habit can cause problems in loft spaces where they damage electrical cabling which can lead to fires.

The sharp front teeth of mice grow continuously throughout its life and so it will gnaw non- food items, such as pipework and wood, simply to wear its teeth down. Mice carry diseases which may be transmitted to man. Mice contaminate food with their droppings, urine and even their fur, causing salmonella food poisoning and other diseases. Mice must therefore be regarded as a serious health risk and should not be tolerated in the home.

HOW TO GET RID OF MICE

Many people, quite understandably, find the use of traps distasteful. There are now "live traps" available that will trap a mouse without killing it. If you do choose these traps, ensure that you release the mouse at a considerable distance from your house. If you don't, it could find its way back in again.

The use of poison is the commonest and one of the most humane methods of controlling mice. A variety of mouse baits is on sale to the public, but they can be expensive and you may well not rid your home of mice.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES TO TAKE

In order to prevent the entry of mice into the home, there are a number of steps to take:

- 1 Ensure the gap beneath the external door is less than ¼" (6mm). A rough guide is if you can get a pencil beneath a door then a mouse can enter. You can fit draught excluder strips made of bristle to prevent this.
- 2 Block off any holes in the building fabric, paying particular attention to where pipes enter.
- 3 Make sure all airbricks, particularly those beneath the floor level, are undamaged.
- 4 If you have creepers growing up the outside of the house, be aware that mice can use these to climb upwards and enter loft spaces.

Even if you take all reasonable precautions, mice can still sometimes enter the home. There is no such thing as a totally "mouse-proof" building, but if you do take the steps listed above you will certainly greatly reduce the chances of a mouse infestation.

SAFETY ADVICE: **Children and pets must be kept away from poisons!**