



Tompkins County SPCA

Wildlife Series

Humane Mouse & Rat Deterrents

Mice and rats are intelligent, adaptable creatures capable of surviving in virtually any landscape—a quality surprisingly few animals share. Rats and mice are nocturnal, generally shy away from people, and are social with their own kind.

For those attempting to minimize contact with wildlife, it is important (and easy) to use humane methods. Devices such as glue traps, snapping traps, and poison can cause terrible suffering to both the intended and unintended victims, such as other wildlife, children, or pets. And as long as conditions are favorable, removing one animal merely makes room for another to move in. Trapping and killing wave after wave of newcomers, therefore, is both inhumane and ineffective. Humane animal proofing is now widely considered to be the most effective and long lasting solution to excluding mice and rats from our dwellings.

Prevention

- Do not leave out any food. Store food in sealed containers or in the refrigerator. Clean up all spills—even a few grains of rice can feed a mouse. Clean your pet's bowl as soon as she is finished eating.
- Be sure your compost bin is a "rodent-proof" model.
- Do not allow thick patches of ivy or other foliage to grow too close to the sides of your home.
- Do not store old clothes, books, or papers in bags or cardboard boxes. Sell or donate items you no longer need and store the rest in sealed plastic bins.
- Seal up any holes leading from the outside of your home to the inside. Check under the dishwasher, behind the stove, under the sink and under cabinets.



Deterrents

Effective deterrents encourage animals to leave on their own, often eliminating the need to humanely trap. Use these methods before you start working on proofing, so animals are not stuck inside your house:

- The most effective deterrent is cleanliness. Cleaning with a dilute bleach solution will eliminate scent trails. If mice are in the kitchen, don't forget to clean under your stove and refrigerator.
- Place cat hair around entry holes. Collect it from friends who have cats or a groomer in your neighborhood. It really works!
- Rats and mice are also repelled by pure peppermint oil.

Exclusion

It is best to begin exclusion after you have started using deterrents. If the animals' entry hole does not lead outside but into a wall, be sure not to inadvertently wall up an animal. Sprinkle a layer of talcum powder on the area directly outside the



opening. Once you see a set of footprints in the powder facing away from the opening, you know your tenant is out and about, and it is safe to proceed.

- Mice can fit through very small holes. Common entry areas include holes or spaces around pipes under the sink, holes under the dishwasher, behind or under cabinets, and vents.
- Purchase some metal hardware mesh, screening, or steel wool. Secure the mesh across or stuff into the hole. Cover with plaster or quick-drying cement. Regular caulking or expanding foam caulk can be used in small or hard to reach places.
- If mice are coming in under doors, attach rubber or metal runners along the bottom for a tight fit.
- If a rat is in an area where she can leave on her own, put something enticing outside the exit and block off the hole once she has left.
- If you would rather have someone else do the above work, contact a professional proofer who uses non-lethal methods.

Humane Trapping

While it may be tempting to humanely trap and release your unwanted guests outside, trapping should almost always be a last resort. It can be disorienting, traumatic, and can break up families. Besides, as long as conditions remain the same (e.g., holes under the sink, pet food left out, etc.) trapping one animal simply opens up space for another to move in. For these reasons, we recommend trapping only after you have used deterrents and finished mouse proofing. Humane traps are available at hardware stores and many natural food stores.

- Trapping will not be successful unless all other food sources are removed. Follow prevention and deterrent tips above.
- Set the traps against walls in areas you suspect the mice or rats to be. Use peanut butter, popcorn, or crackers for bait.
- Check traps frequently, at least every few hours. Do not leave traps unchecked for more than a few hours—trapped animals can die from fear, dehydration, or starvation.
- Release in an appropriate area just outside the home or business. Most mice who are relocated to parks, open fields, and/or other areas away from their trapping location do not survive.
- Traps may be cleaned and reused.

Ideas That Do Not Work

Killing does not work because it simply opens up a space for another animal to move in. In addition, these methods can cause terrible pain and suffering to the intended and unintended victims such as wildlife, pets, and children.

- Rat and mouse poisons are usually anti-coagulants. These toxins cause painful internal hemorrhaging and can take days to kill.
- Sticky glue traps can cause an animal to tear off patches of skin or gnaw off a leg in their panic to escape. Many will die slowly of hunger or thirst. Others will suffocate when their faces become trapped in the glue.
- Snapping traps may catch a leg, tail, or simply pin the frightened animal in place where she struggles to free herself before eventually dying of her injuries, dehydration or starvation.

