

Rats and Mice

Rats and Mice can transmit diseases such as salmonella and leptospirosis (Weils disease) and cause considerable damage. They are active creatures and can cause a surprising amount of damage. They will gnaw (chew) through cables, plastic, plaster, some metals and many other household materials.

Both require food, water and shelter however mice may be able to gain enough moisture from food to survive without a water supply.

How do I know if I have rats or mice?

Mice

- Droppings – small to large grain of rice sized depending on the type of mouse, black in colour.
- Body size – approximately ranging from 7 to 9.5cm without tail for a House Mouse and 9.5 to 12cm without the tail for a Yellow Necked Field Mouse. Some may mistake the larger mouse for a young rat if not seen properly.
- Colour – the House Mouse is generally dark grey-brown in appearance, the larger Yellow Necked Field Mouse and Wood Mouse are a darker brown on top with a lighter underbelly, the yellow neck distinguishes the difference between the two.
- General signs
 - They have fine teeth therefore any marks from gnawing will be very small serrations.
 - They produce lots of droppings which may lead you to believe you have a large numbers when in fact it may just be one.
 - They can be very active making quite a noise when in loft spaces and cavity walls giving the impression that it is something much bigger.
 - They will often appear to play with or move small things and pest control professionals often find items in their bait boxes such as stones, nails and nuts and bolts.

Prevention

Mice are very agile creatures and it may not always be possible to keep them out of your home. They may not always be coming in from gaps above ground level.

- Mice can squeeze through gaps and holes larger than 6mm. Repair or fill gaps around door thresholds, pipework and brickwork. Repair or replace broken airbricks.
- Look at where services such as water, gas, electric and waste pipes enter and exit through the floor at ground level. As an example often the hole where the mains water supply comes through the floor is much larger than needed.

What you can do if you discover mice

Mice can be dealt with in a number of ways:

- Poison can be bought over the counter. You must follow the instructions on the label.
- You can use traditional traps.
- Employ a professional if you are not confident that you are able to deal with the problem safely and effectively

Rats

There are two types of rat, the Common Rat (Brown Rat) and the Black Rat (Ship Rat) this information is related to the Common Rat which of the two is more likely to be encountered.

- Droppings – baked bean sized, 1- 2 cm, black or dark grey in colour.
- Body size – approximately 23cm without tail
- Colour –a brownish dark grey appearance with a lighter underbelly.
- General signs
 - Their teeth are approximately 1.5mm wide and any marks from gnawing will be chisel like rather than the fine serrations of a mouse.
 - They produce fewer droppings than mice and they tend to be grouped together.
 - Greasy marks on walls and other structures from where they habitually use the same routes.
 - Smooth narrow runs (worn paths) through grass and mud.
 - Holes to burrow entrances are about 8cm or the size of a tennis ball

Prevention

Rats are agile creatures and good climbers. They may not always be coming in from above ground level.

- Rats can squeeze through gaps of 1.5cm. Repair or fill gaps around door thresholds, pipework and brickwork. Repair or replace broken airbricks.
- Look at where services such as water, gas, electric and waste pipes enter and exit through the floor at ground level. As an example often the hole where the mains water supply comes through the floor is much larger than needed.
- If you have periodical problems within the home and there are no obvious entry points it may suggest that the drainage system may be a route into the property. Proofing or repair of the surface water (rain water) or repair of the foul water (sink and toilet waste) may be required. A specialist drainage survey may be required especially if a problem is suspected in the foul water system.
- Compost heaps are a haven for rats as they generate warmth, Turn them over regularly.
- Feeding birds and wildlife may lead to problems, try to place food on something higher that avoids spillage on to the ground food or removed it at the end of the day.

What you can do if you discover rats

Rats are much more cautious than mice and are prone to neophobia which means they will avoid a new object until they become use to its presence. This can make controlling them difficult in certain situations

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- You can use traditional traps.
- Employ a professional if you are not confident that you are able to deal with the problem safely and effectively.