



CONTROL OF RATS AND MICE

Rats and mice have no respect for economic level or status. You may be very careful about how you store your household garbage but if you let the apples from your tree lie on the ground or feed your dog outside, you are inviting rodents to dinner. Rats and mice have adapted to live in close association with people where they cause tremendous damage and spread disease.

COMMON RAT (Norway or Sewer)

Small ears
Small eyes



14" to 18" from nose to tail tip
Fecal droppings: 1/2" to 3/4", long, capsule shaped
long, rod shaped

HOUSE MOUSE

Large Ears
Small Head



Pointed Nose

5" to 7" from nose to tail tip
Fecal Droppings: 1/8" to 1/4"

The two most common rodents encountered by citizens of Montgomery County are the Norway rat and the house mouse. Both of these rodents are good jumpers, climbers, swimmers and gnawers.

The Norway rat is a burrower, usually nesting in a dirt burrow up to 150 feet from its food supply.

The house mouse usually nests indoors within stored materials, but can also live outside, burrowing in areas around fields and lawns. Mice often become a problem where they enter homes in the fall seeking warmth. Mice occupy a small territory, traveling only 10 to 30 feet from their nests for food.

CHECKING FOR RATS AND MICE

The most important signs of rodents are burrows, droppings, tracks, runways, gnawing, urine stains, odor, live or dead rodents, nests and rodent-gnawed food. Rodents are more apt to be seen or heard shortly after dark and in the early morning.

Look for rat burrows, especially around concrete slabs and building foundations, under materials stored outdoors and along fencerows or embankments. A rat's ground burrow will have an irregularly rounded opening, 2 to 3 inches in diameter. A mouse's burrow is much smaller. An active burrow entrance will be hard-packed and clear of leaves and other debris.

To find out if the burrow is active, **loosely** fill the opening of the hole with dirt. If a rat is still present, it will reopen the hole. Remove droppings and check to see if more appear. Do not completely fill or destroy burrows until after the rodents have been exterminated. Rats **cannot** be eliminated by blocking their burrows.

Rodents use the same runways to move from place to place. Active runways will be clean and smooth, frequently following along a wall or fence. Along well-used runways, the oils from the rodent's fur leave dirty, greasy rub marks on the areas they frequently touch.

Because the incisor teeth of rodents grow continuously, they must gnaw to keep them worn down. You may find gnawed wood or other items.

RODENT PROOFING

Rodents can enter homes through open or unscreened doors and windows, ventilators, floor drains, cracks and breaks in foundations and holes around electric conduits and pipes where they enter foundations or go through floors and walls. Rats and mice require only a very small opening to gain entry.

Rats can gnaw a hole if they find a chipped or indented edge from which to start. Close all openings and cover edges that can be chewed with gnaw-proof materials such as sheet metal, cement or hardware cloth.

Doors should close tightly with no gaps at the bottom. All windows, especially basement windows near ground level should have tight fitting screens.

Seal openings around pipes or conduits. Where pipes enter wood, nail sheet metal around the pipe. Where pipes enter masonry, force heavy hardware cloth or steel wool into the opening, and then fill with concrete.

ELIMINATING FOOD SOURCES

- DO NOT store garbage outside in plastic bags. Plastic garbage bags are not rodent-proof. Plastic bags should only be used inside garbage cans with tight fitting lids.
- DO NOT allow birdseed to accumulate on the ground. Do not leave pet food outside. Store pet food or birdseed in container with a tight fitting lid.
- DO NOT leave ripe fruit and vegetables under trees or in the garden to decay.
- DO NOT place food scraps in compost piles.
- DO remove any piles of debris or building material such as old brick or boards that may provide shelter for rodents.
- DO clear brush, weeds and heavy ground covers, especially around foundations.

TRAPPING

Rodent snap traps or glue boards can be useful in situations where poison baits could be hazardous to children, pets or wildlife, or where it is important to remove odor-causing carcasses.

If possible, purchase a snap trap with an enlarged bait trigger. To bait the trap, smear peanut butter in the center of the trigger. Other baits are bacon, oatmeal, gumdrops and apples.

A glue board is a tray containing a non-toxic strong adhesive. When a rodent steps onto the tray, it is held there by the glue and can then be disposed of. Bait can be added to the middle of the glue board or the board and bait can be placed inside a bait box. Always follow the manufacturer's directions.

Place traps or glue boards only in hidden, out-of-the-way places where children and pets can't touch them. It is very important to place traps or glue boards in the pathways normally used by the rodents. Traps should be placed perpendicular to a wall or runway with bait next to the wall.

BAITING

There are single feeding and multiple-feeding poison baits. Multiple-feeding, anticoagulant baits must be eaten repeatedly for several days before the rodent dies. This offers some protection for a child or pet that may accidentally eat the bait. Single-feeding baits can kill a rodent after only one feeding although it may take up to five days for death to occur if the bait is an anticoagulant.

DO NOT place poison bait or bait packs in the open. Make sure children or pets cannot reach the bait. Place the bait in commercially available bait boxes or fasten down a board or length of pipe to conceal it and keep it dry. Be sure to read and follow all the directions on the package. **REMEMBER--baits are toxic poisons!**

Rats are wary of new objects and foods in their environment, so bait boxes or traps may be avoided at first. **Check the bait daily and replace it as needed.**

Although mice are not suspicious of new foods, they can be difficult to control with anticoagulant baits. Mice are nibblers so they may not eat enough to get a lethal dose. Also, some mice are resistant to certain anticoagulants.

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If you have rats nesting on your property, you will need the cooperation of your neighbors since chances are they too are sheltering or inadvertently feeding rats. You can contact a qualified pest control company to handle the rodent control for you or you can do the job yourself.

You can contact the Department of Health and Human Services' Rat Control Office at 240-777-3986 to speak with a sanitarian who is trained and experienced in rodent control.