

# Mice & Rats

## The Rodent Problem

Mice and rats can be a nuisance and may spread several diseases to humans, including *Hantavirus* (36% mortality) and *Salmonellosis* through contact with droppings, urine, saliva, or bites. Mice and rats can be found outdoors or indoors. They enter your home searching for food and shelter.

## Resolving the Problem

To permanently remove rodents, you need to deny them everything they need to survive (shelter, food, and water). It can take a few weeks to fully resolve an infestation, so just take one step at a time.



## Look for Evidence

- Look for shiny, dark-colored droppings with the same size and shape as a grain of rice.
- Identify any cracks, holes, or gaps that are larger than 1/4 inch (the width of a pencil).
- Chew marks or grease trails on walls, skirting, and entrance holes.
- Look at your trash cans and food containers for signs of damage.
- You can detect mouse urine, which lights up under a black light in a dark room.



## Clean Up

- Protect yourself from disease while cleaning. **Open doors and windows to provide adequate ventilation and turn off all heating and air-conditioning units while cleaning up after rodents. Wear gloves and dust masks/respirator.**
- Remove clutter from your home. Dispose of newspapers, cardboard and bottles.
- Spray the droppings with a 1 part bleach to 10 parts water solution (always follow label instructions) and use a wet mop or wet paper towel to clean up and dispose of rodent droppings. **Do not vacuum or sweep as this may make viruses airborne.**
- Wash hard surfaces with soapy water and disinfect with the same bleach solution described above.
- Clean any areas with food debris including countertops, microwaves, and toasters.
- Clean up after your pets: remove uneaten pet food daily and pick up all pet droppings.
- Keep your yard and surrounding property tidy. Wood piles and grills can provide great homes for mice and rats.
- For more on cleaning up rodent nests, droppings, or urine go to: <https://www.cdc.gov/rodents/cleaning/>

## Starve Them

- Put food away nightly. Ensure that all dirty dishes, counters, and tables are cleaned after every meal.
- Repair leaky faucets that may provide rodents with a water source.
- Keep trash in metal or heavy plastic cans with tight fitting lids.
- Store all loose and boxed foods in plastic, sealable containers.

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## Shut Them Out

- Fill in holes and gaps larger than 1/4 inch around your home with silicone caulk, copper/steel wool, joint compound, or spackle as appropriate.
- Remove gaps by attaching door sweeps to the bottom of outside doors.
- Repair any holes in screened doors or windows.
- Use mesh screens to cover ventilation panels in the kitchen and bathroom.



## Wipe Them Out

- If you followed all of the above steps and still have rodents in your home, traps or poisons may be used. Rodenticide baits are preferred if you see rodents occasionally.
- Store all chemicals safely and do not use poisons (ex. poison pellets) or traps where children or pets could get to them. **Do not use poisons in retail food establishments and childcare facilities.**
- Place traps perpendicular along the base of walls and in corners of rooms. Glue or snap traps should be checked daily. Keep replacing the traps until you do not catch anything for at least one week.
- If using poison, you **must** follow the directions on the product label.

**If you have rats in your home, or a severe mouse problem, you may need to hire a professional pest control company. The pest control company must be a licensed pesticide applicator by the Colorado Department of Agriculture.**



## Rodents as Pets

- Always wash your hands immediately after touching, feeding, or caring for your pet rodent.
- Pet rodents can shed germs and contaminate surfaces in areas where they live and roam. Make sure your rodent is properly secured so it doesn't contaminate surfaces throughout the home.
- Clean-up your rodent's cage outside whenever possible. Don't forget to disinfect with the 10 parts water to one part bleach solution (always follow label instructions). Never clean rodent habitats in the kitchen, other food preparation areas, or bathrooms.
- Tell your doctor if you have been around pet rodents especially if you are sick or have been bitten or scratched.

For more information, visit <http://www.tchd.org/387/Animals-Bugs-Pests> or if you have any questions, please call your local Tri-County Health Department office.