House Mice – Fact Sheet

Biology and Behaviour
House mice can be a hazard to public health as they can potentially transmit several diseases to humans, which can cause issues in the young or the elderly. They also carry disease organisms such as Salmonella bacteria, viruses and parasite such as fleas.

House mice can live and breed in houses, buildings and other structures such as garages and garden sheds, which provides protection from the cold and wet weather and which provides them with the three essentials for survival food, shelter and warmth. House mice can survive on a relatively poor diet eating between 3 and 4 grams of food per day and can survive without daily access to water obtaining these needs from their food supply.

House mice use the buildings dead space that is places which are left undisturbed for longer periods of time but that are close to food and water. House mouse are extremely good climbers, climbing walls, pipes and cavities with ease. Like rats house mice have very strong incisor teeth, which can penetrate materials such as concrete, lead and aluminium. This can result in expensive damage to a property and in some cases can result in fires being started through mice chewing through electric cables in roof spaces or under floors.

House mice always like to know the area where they live and will familiarise themselves with their home surroundings; in most cases mice will be restricted to an area of up to 10 to 15 metres (30 to 45 feet). They use the same familiar routes, producing smears by rubbing their fur against surfaces.

In urban areas, house mice are able to breed throughout the year, producing between 5 and 10 litters each of approximately 5 to 8 young (that’s one mouse producing up to 80- young per year). House mice can live for up to 18 months, though their average life span is about 12 months.

House mice are inquisitive animals with unpredictable feeding habits; they will feed on several different sites each night rather than one or two sites close to their nests. They will feed on almost anything, but prefer cereal-based foods such as biscuits, rice, pasta, pet foods etc. In some areas house mice have become unable to digest cereal-based food, preferring high protein foods instead. These house mice have been termed ‘behaviourally resistant’ because of their avoidance to normal foods seems to be genetically based.

What can you do to prevent an infestation?
- **Do not** leave open food out in the kitchen overnight
- **Do not** leave uneaten pet food in dishes out overnight
- **Remove** all food waste spillages as they occur
- **Empty** food waste bins regularly, composting where possible
- **Ensure** that your rubbish/waste is placed in an approved bin with a good fitting lid
- **Place** food in rodent proof containers (preferably aluminium)
- **Ensure** that refuse is not allowed to accumulate in the yard or garden
- **Place** food intended for garden birds on a bird table or approved feeder, **do not** place food for birds directly onto the ground
- **Ensure** that any gaps, holes and broken air vents in outside walls are sealed to prevent mice gaining access into your home (mice can squeeze through a gap bigger than 5mm (1/4 on an inch).

If you notice any signs of infestation, for example, fresh droppings, gnaw marks, damage, smear marks, you must take immediate action to control the infestation.
If you decide to treat an infestation yourself do not leave mouse bait down for extended periods, remove baits as soon as the infestation has been controlled, this will reduce the risk of rodenticide resistance.

If a baiting programme is to be successful
• It is vital to maintain an uninterrupted supply of bait for the mice.
• Do not interfere with the position of the baits and
• Keep children and pets away from baits at all times

Remember: before using pesticides always read the label and carryout the instructions, this is a legal requirement.

If you find you cannot treat or control the infestation yourself please contact the City Council’s Pest Control team.

For further information, advice and treatments please contact

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