

**Yard and Garden – 11-23-2013- Ted Griess / Extension Horticulture Assistant**

I miss them at the cinema. As a child, I often attended Saturday afternoon matinees at our local theater. Then, a cartoon always preceded the main movie. Many cartoons of the day personified animals— all with loveable qualities: cute and adorable. There was Porky, the pig; Donald, the duck; Bugs, the bunny; Foghorn Leghorn, the rooster; Wylie, the coyote; and even Woody, the woodpecker. They all had a knack of getting into trouble that made me cheer for their success. Mice, too, were often portrayed in cartoons. How well I remember Mickey, Dixie, Pixie, Jerry, Mighty and even Speedy Gonzales. They also were adorable, and I found myself cheering for them, too.



Stephen Vantassel, Project Manager of Wildlife Damage Management for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Natural Resources, sent to me a few years ago an article titled *The Mice are Coming*. Having recently re-read his article, I momentarily longed to see those adorable cartoon mice; however, somehow I had lost that childhood innocence. Today, I despise mice. There is nothing cute about them.

With the onset of colder weather, *Mus musculus*, more commonly known as the house mouse, wants to come indoors, and we need to make preparations to keep him out. Stephen suggests the following:

- Tighten up all holes in buildings that are one-fourth inch or larger (provided the holes aren't being used by bees or wildlife larger than mice).
- Keep a sharp eye out for mouse droppings.
- Respond aggressively when mouse evidence is seen. A common mistake is the failure to use enough traps. For mice, the more traps the better. Think two dozen for a single family ranch-style house and more for larger houses.
- Don't bother with those silly ultrasonic devices, house cats or repellents. They don't work.

Stephen recommends the following web site for more information about mice.

- <http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/epublic/live/g1105/build/g1105.pdf> “**Controlling House Mice**”

House mice are well adapted to human environments. Homeowners typically become aware of mouse activity after discovering droppings. Scratching and squeaking sounds emanating from ceilings and walls also indicate their presence.

Mice consume and contaminate food meant for humans, livestock and other animals. House mice, unlike deer mice, are not known to be carriers of the Hantavirus. However, since few people can conclusively identify the rodents in their homes, caution should be taken when cleaning up after mice.

Mice have remarkable sensory and physical capabilities. They can clearly perceive objects within two feet and see movement up to forty feet. Their sense of smell is highly developed. They are capable of climbing any rough surface and are adept at jumping vertically twelve inches. Mice can squeeze through openings slightly larger than one-fourth inch in size. In a single year, a female house mouse can raise ten litters of five to six mice per litter.

Although total control cannot be accomplished by sanitation alone, one should take measures to reduce available shelter by cleaning debris areas where mice might nest. Also, reduce the availability of food, such as bird and pet food, and store food items in tight containers.

Mouse-resistant construction begins by securing all openings to the home larger than three-sixteenth of an inch using steel wool and caulk.

Mouse populations can be managed through the use of traps and toxicants. Traps are the preferred method for several reasons. Traps are pesticide free. The effectiveness of traps can be easily observed. And lastly, traps allow for the disposal of dead mice thus eliminating odors caused by decaying carcasses.

It is a fact. I do miss the old cartoons at the cinema featuring Mickey, Dixie, Pixie, Jerry, Mighty and even Speedy Gonzales. However, in real life, like Jinks the cat, "I hate those meeces to pieces."