

Views from VanDeWalle

Brandy VanDeWalle, Extension Educator in Fillmore County

October 12, 2016

Do you have uninvited houseguests?

You are sitting at home and all of a sudden a little gray rodent with relatively large ears and small black eyes scurries across the room! It is about 1/2 ounce in weight and if an adult 5 1/2 to 7 1/2 inches long, including its 3 – 4 inch tail. Of course, you must know by now that I am describing a house mouse. The house mouse is considered one of the most troublesome and economically important rodents in the United States. They can cause damage to property and transmit diseases such as salmonellosis and swine dysentery. You will know you have mice if you see small droppings, fresh gnaw marks and mouse nests made from fine shredded paper or other fibrous material. They are active mostly at night, but can occasionally be seen during daylight hours. Mice are excellent climbers and can jump up 12 inches from the floor to a flat surface; they can squeeze through openings slightly larger than 1/4 inch in diameter.

Sanitation, mouse-proof construction, and population reduction allow for effective control of mice. Mice cannot survive in large numbers if they have few places to rest, hide, or build nests; however a few mice can survive with limited amounts of food and shelter. Proper sanitation is an important step to control mice. Most buildings that handle food will have problems with mice not matter how clean they are, but the house should be mouse-proofed. To mouse-proof a house, eliminate all openings larger than 1/4 inch. Steel wool can be used as a temporary plug; cracks in building foundations and openings for water pipes, vents, etc. can be sealed with metal or concrete. Doors and windows should fit tightly. Cover doors and windows with metal to prevent gnawing. Latex, plastic, rubber, and wood are unsuitable for plugging holes.

Once you find mice in your house, traps can be used to control the population. The advantages of traps are 1) it does not rely on hazardous rodenticides, 2) it permits the user to view his/her success, and 3) it allows for disposal of trapped mice therefore eliminating dead mouse odors that may occur when poisoning is done. Peanut butter works great to put on traps because it is easy to use and very attractive to mice. Simple inexpensive wood-based snap traps are effective, as well as glue traps. Glue traps must not be in extreme temperatures and can lose their effectiveness over time with dust collecting on them. Whatever traps, you decide to use, be sure to set them behind objects, in dark corners, and in places where evidence of mouse activity is seen.

For more information on mouse control, refer to *NebGuide, Controlling House Mice* that can be accessed at <http://extensionpubs.unl.edu> or through your local extension office.