

April 29, 2014

THEY ARE NOT LIKE MICKEY

Mice and rats are common problems on farm, acreages and homes. They eat and contaminate feed, damage facilities, and are carriers of disease. Fall is a big time for reports of mice activity, as field mice are joining house mice in livestock buildings, garages, and homes. The best prevention time is now, a spring summer and fall of weather to make repairs to exclude mice.

Many people see mice and place traps or bait. The initial harvest is good. The surviving mice quickly replaced the mice that were harvested. After a few more attempts of baiting and trapping with limited success, they learn that controlling mice takes a well-organized effort. The old saying is don't go to war with one tank, or one weapon. The casual approach of putting out a trap with little attention to cleaning or removing feed sources has little effect on reducing the mouse population long-term.

There are three key elements to rodent management: prevention, monitoring, and control. Proper construction and maintenance of buildings helps prevent rodents from entering. If rodents get in, then eliminating hiding places and nesting sites are important. Mice can climb and jump so it's recommended that equipment and feed be kept at least 12-18" off the floor and at least 9-18" from a wall. Our maintenance crew built a metal table ~2' high to store pallets. Mice are capable of gnawing through many different materials, including plastic, rubber, vinyl, and wood. Mice can squeeze through an opening as small as 1/4". Steel wool and caulk can be used to fill in the small openings. Reducing and cleaning up feed spillage is critical also.

Monitoring is important to identify early signs of an increasing mouse population. Common signs include:

- Droppings along walls, behind objects, and near feed that are ~1/4" in size (rice size).
- Sounds of gnawing and climbing in walls and ceiling.
- Gnawing marks that result in pieces of wood or other material on the floor or around bins and pallets.
- Smudge marks that are on walls, pipes, or rafters left from the dirt and oil on the fur.
- Musky odor.
- Visual observation of mice during the day indicates an established population since mice are most active just after dusk and shortly before dawn. One rule of thumb is that there are ~25 mice for every one that is seen.

Mice are very prolific, so monitoring and early intervention is key. A mouse can start reproducing at 6-10 weeks of age and have 5-8 litters with each litter having 5-6 pups. The pregnancy is short (21 days).

Good rodent management is an integrated approach that focuses on minimizing feed sources, hiding places, and nesting sites, cleaning to remove scent trails, and using rodenticides (toxic bait) and traps. These tidbits of knowledge will give you some sense of the challenge. Mice

can sense movement from 45 feet, but can only see clearly for one or two feet. Mice can hear sounds below 45KHz. They can detect smells at the 250 parts per billion level. Mice maintain contact with the wall with their whiskers to guide them on night raids. Mice climb rough vertical walls and balance on wire, cable or rope. They have a 12 inch vertical jump and can race across the floor at 4 to 6 miles per hour and leap 3 foot gaps with ease. Mice can survive 9 foot falls and squeeze through one-quarter inch openings. And they do all this without one sip of water. They get the water they need from the food they eat. In other words they are well equipped to live with man and have made a habit of it for eons.

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